

Monergism



# **The Church of Christ**

**JAMES BANNERMAN**

Monergism



# **The Church of Christ**

**JAMES BANNERMAN**

# **The Church of Christ**

A TREATISE ON THE NATURE, POWERS, ORDINANCES,  
DISCIPLINE, AND GOVERNMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

**by JAMES BANNERMAN, D.D.,**

PROFESSOR OF APOLOGETICS AND PASTORAL THEOLOGY,  
NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH; AUTHOR OF "INSPIRATION: THE  
INFALLIBLE TRUTH AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY  
SCRIPTURES.

EDINBURGH:

T. & T. CLARK, 38, GEORGE STREET.

LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO. DUBLIN: JOHN  
ROBERTSON & CO.

MDCCLXVIII.

## **Table of Contents**

[EDITOR'S PREFACE](#)

[PREFACE BY PRINCIPAL CANDLISH](#)

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[PART I.—NATURE OF THE CHURCH](#)

[CHAP. I. The Church as defined in Scripture](#)

II. The Church a Divine and Spiritual Institution

III. The Church as Visible and Invisible

IV. The Church as Catholic and Local

V. The "Notes" of the Church

VI. The Members of the Church

VII. The Church in its relation to the World

VIII. The Church in its relation to the State

SEC. I. Essential Distinction and Mutual Independence of Church and State

II. Lawfulness of the Connection of Church and State

SUBSEC. The Non-Identity of Church and State among the Jews

III. Duty of the Connection of Church and State

IV. Necessity of the Connection of Church and State

V. Spiritual Independence and the Principles of Toleration

VI. Liberty of Conscience; its Extent and Limits

VII. Doctrine of the Westminster Confession on Church and State

PART II.—POWER OF THE CHURCH

CHAP. I. The Source of Church Power

SEC. I. The Headship of Christ

II. Opposing Theories—Erastian and Popish

CHAP. II. The Rule or Law of church Power

III. The Nature and Character of Church Power

IV. The Extent and Limits of Church Power

V. The End and Design of Church power

VI. The Primary Subjects of Church Power

PART III.—MATTERS IN REGARD TO WHICH CHURCH POWER IS EXERCISED

DIV. I.—CHURCH POWER EXERCISED IN REGARD TO Doctrine

CHAP. I. The Power and Duty of the Church in regard to Matters of Faith

CHAP. II. Church Creeds and Confessions: or, Subordinate Standards, their Lawfulness and Use

CHAP. III. Objections to Creeds and Confessions

DIV. II.—CHURCH POWER EXERCISED IN REGARD TO Ordinances

SUBDIV. I.—THE PROVISION FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

CHAP. I. The Divine Origin, Permanent Obligation, and Legitimate Parts of Public Worship

CHAP. II. Rites and Ceremonies in Public Worship

SEC. I. Extent of Church Power as regards the Public Worship of God

SEC. II. Limits of Church Power as regards the Public Worship of God

CHAP. III. Liturgies, or Prescribed and Imposed Forms of Prayer

SUBDIV. II.—THE TIME FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

CHAP. I. The Christian Sabbath

II. Ecclesiastical Holidays

SUBDIV. III.—THE INSTRUMENTALITY FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP,  
OR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

CHAP. I. The Ministry a Divine and standing Ordinance in the  
Church,—the Ministerial and Pastoral Title

CHAP. II. Apostolical Succession

III. The Independent Theory of the Ministry

IV. Ordination

SUBDIV. IV.—POSITIVE DIVINE INSTITUTIONS IN ADDITION  
TO THE ORDINARY PUBLIC WORSHIP OF THE LORD'S DAY, OR  
THE SACRAMENTS

CHAP. I. The Sacraments in General

SEC. I. Nature and Efficacy of the Sacraments of the New Testament,  
and Difference between them and Non-Sacramental Ordinances

II. Unscriptural or Defective Views of the Sacraments

CHAP. II. The Sacrament of Baptism

SEC. I. Nature of the Ordinance

II. The Subjects of Baptism as regards Adults

III. Infant Baptism

IV. Objections to Infant Baptism

V. Efficacy of Infant Baptism

VI. The Modes of Baptism

CHAP. III. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

SEC. I. Nature of the Ordinance

II. Transubstantiation

III. The Doctrine of the Real Presence and the Priestly Theory.

IV. The Sacrifice of the Mass, and other forms of the Sacrificial Theory.

DIV. III.—CHURCH POWER EXERCISED IN REGARD TO Discipline

CHAP. I. Nature, Design, and Limits of the Discipline of the Christian Church

PART IV.—PARTIES IN WHOM THE RIGHT TO EXERCISE CHURCH POWER IS VESTED

CHAP. I. Divine Appointment of a Form of Church Government

II. The Extraordinary Office-Bearers of the Christian Church

SEC. I. Office of Apostles

II. Offices of Prophets and Evangelists

CHAP. III. The Popish System of Church Polity.

CHAP. IV. The Prelatic System of Church Polity as opposed to the Presbyterian

SEC. I. No Evidence in Scripture, but the reverse, for the Appointment by our Lord or His Apostles of an Order of Bishops as distinct from Presbyters

SEC. II. No Evidence in Scripture, but the reverse, of the Exercise of the Powers of a Diocesan Bishop by any distinct and permanent Order of Office-Bearers, apart from that of Presbyters

CHAP. V. The Independent System of Church Polity as opposed to the Presbyterian

SEC. I. The Congregational Principle as opposed to Presbyterianism

SEC. II. The Independent Principle as opposed to Presbyterianism  
APPENDIX

A. Bearing of Scripture Principles on the Lawfulness and Duty of Union between separate Churches

B. Doctrine of the Confession of Faith as to Recognition and Endowment of the Church by the State; Articles of Agreement and Distinctive Articles of the Churches now Negotiating for Union in Scotland, with respect to the Civil Magistrate

C. Note on the History of Voluntaryism

D. Practical Aspects of the Relation between Church and State

E. Relative Obligation of Scripture Precept, Example, and Principle

F. Scripture Consequences

G. The Book of Common Order

H. The Imposition of Hands in Ordination

I. Notes on the Literature of the Subject of this Treatise



## EDITOR'S PREFACE

THIS treatise is made up of the Lectures delivered by Dr. Bannerman during each Winter Session of the New College to the students of the fourth year. The MS. was left by him in a very perfect state, the course having been fully written out from the first, and the changes and additions made of late years being, so far as the Editor is aware, confined to matters of detail. The completeness and symmetry of the plan on which the Lectures were arranged, and the intimate relation of the several parts to the whole which they make up, left room for little modification in preparing the work for the press, save in the way of omitting recapitulations and a few purely academic allusions. In no case has any freedom been used with the Author's language which could in the slightest degree alter or obscure his meaning. Notes and references added by the Editor are marked with brackets.

The following analysis of the work may be here inserted, for which the Editor is indebted to Professor Rainy:—

"In this treatise the principles and leading applications of the doctrine of the Church are discussed; the Church being here considered chiefly as it becomes visible, and exercises definite appointed functions; and the fundamental principles laid down being those commonly received among Scottish Presbyterians. The importance of the topic, and its eminently practical character, will not be disputed. Questions such as those regarding the sense in which the Church is a Divine institution,—regarding the powers entrusted to her, the principles on which they are to be exercised,

and the virtue to be ascribed to her action in the use of them,—the various controversies regarding offices, discipline, sacraments, schisms, and the like,—these are not only important at all times, but at the present time they become continually more urgent. It will perhaps also be admitted, that those who have to handle them do not always give evidence of mature thought and of a consistent scheme of principles. Hence, the difficulties necessarily arising from conflicts of opinion are aggravated by those which result merely from perplexity and confusion. The eminently clear and connected treatment which the subject here receives, will therefore, it is believed, reward the attention of careful readers. Even those who belong to other schools, and do not concur with the Author in his conclusions, may benefit by the specimen here given of a coherent scheme of doctrine, and by the obligations which it may be felt to impose on any one who sets forth a counter scheme.

"The arrangement of the course is simple; and a very brief explanation with respect to it will suffice. In contemplating the Church, it is natural to ask, first, under what authority this Society has been constituted, what is its essential nature, what its peculiar characteristics. These topics accordingly are first taken up; and they naturally lead to the inquiry, how this Society stands related to the other great and permanent forms of human fellowship, and, in particular, to the State. Next, the functions of the Church come into view. But before entering upon these in detail, a preliminary set of questions present themselves as necessary to be determined. In discharging her functions, the Church professes to exercise some kind of power and authority. But much depends on the view that may be taken of the nature of this power, and of the efficacy to be ascribed to it. The second general head, therefore, is occupied with the subject of Church power,—its source, nature, limits, and ends. Nor is this all; for it is an old, and not in all respects an easy question, in whom, i.e. in what members of the Church, this power has its primary residence and seat. The discussion, therefore, of the question touching the primary subject of Church power follows, and closes the second head. The principles so far established have next to be applied in

detail to the various kinds of matter in and about which the Church exercises her powers, and her specific rights and duties with respect to each have to be considered. These matters may be reduced to three heads: Doctrine, Ordinances or Worship, and Discipline. Each of these heads involves a variety of subordinate points. The second of them, Worship, is especially comprehensive. The Church discharges important functions with respect to the various parts of worship, the seasons for it, and the agents who ought to conduct it; and, in particular, the peculiar institutions called Sacraments give rise to a large class of questions which require separate and detailed consideration,—so various have been the apprehensions of men concerning their nature, and the office of the Church in connection with them. These topics, then, constitute the material of the third general head. Finally, the question regarding the persons to whom the exercise of Church power ought to be committed, leads into the discussion of the Scriptural form of Church government. This constitutes the fourth general head, and completes the scheme.

"It would not be easy, it is believed, to point to any one work in which this class of subjects is treated so comprehensively, and with the unity and thoroughness which characterize these Lectures. In the older systems, the head *De Ecclesiâ* comprehended topics all of which fall within Dr. Bannerman's scheme; but only some of them received full and satisfactory treatment. Separate works of a more exhaustive kind, such as the *Politica Ecclesiastica* of Voetius, did not cover, nor profess to cover, the whole ground. In modern German writings the discussion of these matters, though often very learned and able, will not be regarded in this country as satisfactory, nor even very helpful as regards the questions which are most important for us. The condition of the German Churches is not favourable to an equal and searching survey of the whole field. Moreover, in their Theological systems, the topics, so far as discussed, are taken up partly under Systematic and partly under Practical Theology, and the treatment suffers from this dispersion. In our own country the discussion of Church questions has been extremely active, and it is likely to continue. Many able writings have appeared, bearing on

larger or smaller sections of the field. Without wishing to detract from their value and ability, it may perhaps be fairly said that the objects which the writers had in view have generally led them to spend their strength chiefly on those questions which are matters of exciting discussion, and to pass by others, more recondite perhaps, or less debated, but well entitled to a place in a full survey of this great subject. A comparison of the topics dealt with in the volumes of Litton, or of Palmer and Wordsworth (to name representatives of different theological schools), with those comprised in this volume, will illustrate the remark. From the Presbyterian point of view, Dr. Bannerman's work has of course a special interest and value. It is a fresh statement of our fundamental principles in their application to the whole range of questions; and it is carried through with an eye, not only to the permanent conditions of the discussion, but also to the form which recent controversies have assumed."

The Editor's best acknowledgments are due to the Very Rev. Principal Candlish for his kindness in undertaking the Preface to this work. He wishes also to express his warm thanks to the Rev. John Laing, Acting Librarian, New College, for the labour and pains bestowed by him upon the Index, and for occasional help in verifying the few references, to identify which it was necessary to travel beyond the shelves of Dr. Bannerman's own library.

In thus ending the task entrusted to him, the Editor cannot refrain from saying how very greatly the impression, strong as that was, left upon his mind by these Lectures, when he first had the privilege of listening to them a few years ago in the New College of Edinburgh, has been strengthened by a closer study of their contents. He has been led to appreciate, as he never did before, the depth and thoroughness and extent of a learning that never encumbers its possessor, that shows itself not in any purposeless parade of quotation and authority, but in the unfailing grasp taken of the whole question at issue in all its bearings, in the clearness and decision with which all that is central and essential in the controversy is singled out and separated from what is subordinate or irrelevant, in the ease

and certainty with which the argument is wielded. He has been taught afresh and more intelligently to recognise the union of high and rare qualities, not too often brought to bear together on this field of Theological discussion,—the unvarying fairness and courtesy to controversial opponents, the calm, judicial wisdom with which evidence is sifted and reasonings are summed up, the power and effect with which great leading principles of Divine truth are grasped, and established, and vindicated in their right to rule the controversy, the masterly precision and clearness of insight with which the lines are drawn round some of the most delicate and difficult questions in all Theology, the reverence for the Word of God. But of these things it may be more fitting that others should speak.

These Volumes will find acceptance, the Editor believes, with all who are competent to form a judgment regarding them, and who, whether agreeing or not with the positions maintained by the Author, love to see a great subject worthily handled. They will have a more powerful interest still, he is well assured, to many now scattered throughout almost all parts of Christendom, who trace some of their strongest and highest impulses in the work of the ministry to the Chair in the New College which Dr. Bannerman filled so long, who learned there, perhaps for the first time, something of the worth and meaning of Theology, and of the spirit in which the study of it ought to be pursued, who have cause to remember not only the weight and power of his public teaching, but words of wise and ready counsel and deeds of efficient help in times of private difficulty and questioning, to whom the written argument of these Volumes seems almost to carry a personal influence, and to whose ears the music of its grave and stately eloquence is deepened by the memories of a voice and a bearing not often equalled among men.

D. DOUGLAS BANNERMAN.

ABERNYTE HOUSE, INCHTURE,

October 1868.

## **PREFACE BY PRINCIPAL CANDLISH**

I HAVE been asked to introduce these Volumes to the Christian public, and I gladly consent to do so. They do not indeed require any introduction outside of themselves; nor, if they did, could mine be of much avail, for I cannot pretend to anything like such a systematic and scholarly acquaintance with the department of Theology to which they belong, as might give me a right to speak with authority. The book, therefore, as to its intrinsic merits, must speak for itself, so far as I am concerned; it will do so all the better for the brief analysis of its contents which Dr. Rainy has furnished. I may be allowed, however, to say that, whether exhaustively or suggestively, Dr. Bannerman seems to me to have mastered the entire field, not only in the way of a general survey, but in the way of insight also into all details.

Exhaustively or suggestively, I have said; for these would seem to be two different methods of professorial prelection. Of the two, the suggestive method is clearly the preferable one. To send students away under the impression that they have got all that needs to be got for solving every problem and settling every question in the branch of study to which they have been giving one or two years of attendance on professorial lectures, is a serious mistake on the part of the Chair, and a sore evil to its victims,—discovered often only when it is too late to have it remedied. No such fault can be found with these Lectures. But a special good can be found in them. They are exhaustive, in the right way of exhaustively mapping out the entire ground to be surveyed minutely and particularly; while at the same time they are not exhaustive, but the reverse, as regards the actual surveying of the ground thus mapped out. They are suggestive, and highly suggestive, in themselves and in their references, on all

questions of detail, while at the same time they bring out clearly and fully the entire doctrine as a whole, and the bearing of these detailed questions upon the entire doctrine as a whole.

But I may be allowed a few words about the Author, if not about this work of his.

I can testify, with the utmost confidence, to his being competent, and admitted on all hands to be competent, to give a fair and full representation of the theory of Church polity, all but unanimously adopted in Scotland at and after the Reformation,—not under influences from without, such as regal supremacy or papal dictation; but inwardly and directly from the study of the Divine Word, and the honest application of its principles to the problems of Divine Providence as they came up. For that is what we claim to be the characteristic of our Scottish Reformation,—that in all the departments of doctrine, worship, and government, it was no mere modification of the Romish system, in accommodation to altered circumstances, but a reconstruction of the Divine plan, freshly based on the old foundation.

For the exposition of the doctrine of the Church upon that footing, and in that view, Dr. Bannerman was eminently qualified. He was a close and thorough biblical student; and he was an authority in ecclesiastical history and law.

I can recall his first public and prominent service rendered to the Church in the years 1839–41, when it fell to him mainly to conduct a case of heresy, involving very delicate and difficult points in Theology. And I can recall also his valuable service rendered in connection with the gravest question raised in the course of our 'ten years' conflict,'—that of the Strathbogie interdicts. In both instances Dr. Bannerman won for himself the full confidence and esteem of the whole Church; and it was felt to be only a suitable acknowledgment of his worth and his work when he was called to occupy the professorial Chair.

Of his manner of occupying that Chair, I need not speak. But I must express the deep feeling of regret with which all parties in the Church received the tidings of his death, at the very time when he was coming forward more than his special professorial engagements had previously permitted, in the discussion of matters widely and deeply affecting the general interests of Christian peace and union in the Church catholic, as well as in our own branch of it. In that view, one is constrained to wonder, and stand in awe, and say, 'It is the Lord.'

R. S. C.

## **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

### **INTRODUCTION**

THE Bible is a revelation from God of truths immediately bearing on the state by nature, and the recovery by divine grace, of individual men. But it is more than that: it is also a revelation of truths bearing on the character and condition of men formed into a society of believers, and constituting one collective body, holding together the faith of Christ. The difference between these two aspects in which the Bible may be regarded, marks the point of transition from the departments of Apologetical and Doctrinal Theology to the department on which we are now about to enter,—that, namely, of the nature, powers, and constitution of the Christian Church. To individual men, whether in a state of sin or a state of salvation, the Bible is a communication from God, telling them of truths and doctrines, through the belief and renewing influence of which they may individually be recovered from the spiritual ruin of the fall, and made partakers, under the Divine Spirit, of complete and everlasting redemption. But to the body of believers, not individually, but



collectively, the Bible is also a communication from God, telling them of truths and doctrines, through the right appreciation of which they may be fashioned into a spiritual society, with divinely authorized powers and ordinances and office-bearers,—an outward and public witness for God on the earth, and an instrument for the edification of the people of Christ.

Perhaps there are few who confess Jesus Christ to be the Author and Finisher of their faith, who do not also confess, in one sense or other, that He is the Founder and Head of a society destined to embrace all His followers, and fitted to be of permanent continuance. Men may differ widely as to their notions of the kind of community which Christ has actually established; but few, if any, will be found to deny that Christianity was designed to be something more than the religion of individuals, bound together by no tie, and gathered into no outward society. In its primary and most important aspect, indeed, the revelation of God contained in the Bible is a revelation to me individually. Its discoveries of sin and announcements of judgment, its intimations of grace and its proclamations of a Saviour, its offers of an atoning blood to expiate, and a regenerating Spirit to purge, transgression,—these are addressed to me individually; and if I deal with them at all, I must deal with them as if there were no other in the world except myself and God. Alone with God, I must realize the Bible as if it were a message from Him to my solitary self, singled out and separated from other men, and feeling my own individual responsibility in receiving or rejecting it. But the Bible does not stop here: it deals with man, not only as a solitary unit in his relation to God, but also as a member of a spiritual society, gathered together in the name of Jesus. It is not a mere system of doctrines to be believed and precepts to be observed by each individual Christian independently of others, and apart from others: it is a system of doctrines and precepts, designed and adapted for a society of Christians. This agreement and co-operation of men holding the same faith and the same Saviour is not an accidental or voluntary union which has grown up of itself: it is a union designed beforehand, appointed from the beginning by God, and plainly

contemplated and required in every page of the New Testament Scriptures. There are precepts in the Bible addressed, not to believers separately, but to believers associated together into a corporate society; there are duties that are enjoined upon the body, and not upon the members of which it is composed; there are powers assigned to the community, to which the individuals of the community are strangers; there is a government, an order, a code of laws, a system of ordinances and officers described in Scripture, which can apply to none other than a collective association of Christians. Without the existence of a Church, or of a body of believers, as contradistinguished from believers individually, very much of what is contained in the Bible would be unintelligible, and without practical application.

There are two aspects in which the Church, as a society of believers, in contradistinction from individual believers, is represented in Scripture, that serve to place it in an important and solemn point of view.

I. In the first place, the Church is spoken of as "the body of Christ," in a sense in which the words cannot be applied to the individual believer. It cannot be said of any individual Christian, however richly endowed with spiritual gifts from the Saviour, that he is "the body of Christ." But in some sense, not the same with but similar to that in which the human nature of Christ was His body during His life on earth, can the Church, and not individuals, be said to be His body now. And just as the indwelling of the Son of God in the human nature of Christ richly endowed and gloriously exalted that nature with all spiritual graces and gifts and powers unknown to any other person, so the indwelling of Christ in His Church, in a way and manner unknown to individual believers, exalts and endows the Church with gifts and graces and powers which no Christian individually possesses. The Church is "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."<sup>2</sup>

II. In the second place, the Church is spoken of in Scripture as the residence or earthly dwelling-place of the Spirit, the Third Person of the glorious Godhead. It is no doubt true that the Spirit of God dwells in each individual believer, making his soul and body His temple, and glorifying the place of His presence with all heavenly and sanctified graces. But, over and above this, and in a higher sense than can apply to any individual Christian, the Spirit of God makes His dwelling in the Church, enriching that Church with all the fulness of life and power and privilege, which no single believer could receive or contain. As the body of the Son of God, as the earthly dwelling-place of the Spirit of God, the Church more than the Christian—the society more than the individual—is set forth to us as the highest and most glorious embodiment and manifestation of Divine power and grace upon the earth. And it is in reference to the society, and not to the individuals of which it is composed—to the Church and not to its single members—that very much of the language of the Bible refers.

The field of discussion opened up by a consideration of the Bible, as a revelation of truths bearing on believers not individually, but as formed into a collective body and constituting the Church of Christ, is a very wide and important one. It embraces a vast variety of topics, many of them involving discussions the most delicate and difficult within the whole range of theology. It is a field which, in so far as regards a comprehensive and separate survey of it, is comparatively new and untrodden. It is indeed briefly adverted to in most of the ordinary systems of theology, and particular departments of it have been traversed, to a greater or less extent, on particular occasions of controversy; yet, as a whole, it has seldom been opened up at length, and systematically.

It was with no ordinary feelings of doubt and distrust in my own powers, that I first set myself to cope with this high argument. With that measure of ability which God has given me, and which the Church has called upon me to exercise in the Chair in this College to which the Doctrine of the Church belongs, I have endeavoured to

open up the general principles of a subject, almost entirely new in academic prelections, and especially arduous.

I have found the task to be one beset with difficulties neither few nor small. Not the least of these has been the entire absence of any adequate guide—or often of any guide at all—to aid me in shaping my course and forming my opinions with respect to many of the most difficult and delicate questions connected with my subject. I have been compelled to take up these opinions very much at my own hand, and to become myself a learner before I could attempt to teach; and upon such points as these it would be the very reverse of wisdom to dogmatize.

I shall be more than rewarded for the time and labour spent upon this great and arduous subject, if I have been enabled, in however small a measure, to impart some knowledge of the truths, or to suggest some of the grand principles, or even to awaken some interest in the argument of a department in theology, a thorough acquaintance with which is so essential for those who hope to occupy, or who already fill, that honourable yet responsible place, held by those who are put in trust with the work of the ministry in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

# **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

## **PART I**

### **NATURE OF THE CHURCH**

#### **CHAPTER I:**

##### **THE CHURCH AS DEFINED IN SCRIPTURE**

MANY, perhaps indeed most, of the controversies which have arisen in connection with ecclesiastical theology, are to be traced back to fundamental differences of opinion regarding the essential nature and character of that society which Christ has instituted. The different or opposite notions which men have professed to gather from Scripture, in regard to the origin and essential principles of the Christian Church, have necessarily led to conclusions widely different in regard to its functions, its authority, its ordinances, and its government. It is highly important, therefore, to lay down at the outset those scriptural principles as to the nature and character of the Church of Christ, which may prove to us guiding principles in our subsequent investigations into its powers, and the offices it is appointed to discharge. And the first question which naturally arises is regarding the meaning which ought to be attached to the word "Church." Different societies or associations of Christians are found claiming to themselves, and denying to others, the character and privileges of a Church of Christ; and opinions widely differing from each other are held as to the meaning of the designation. In such circumstances we must have recourse to the Word of God, in order

that, by an examination of its statements, we may ascertain in what sense, or in what senses, the term Church is to be understood by us.

The word ἐκκλησια, which is translated Church in our version of the New Testament, in its primary meaning denotes any assembly gathered together from a promiscuous multitude, whether it be or be not regularly organized, and whether it be for civil or ecclesiastical purposes. Examples both in classical and inspired writers are at hand to prove the extensive meaning of the term; and the same wide signification belongs to the corresponding word in the Hebrew of the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup> In the application of the term to secular assemblies, we find it used to signify the city council, convened in an orderly manner by the magistrate for the determination of civil matters; as in Acts 19, where the town-clerk of Ephesus is represented as addressing the citizens: "If Demetrius, and the craftsmen who are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. But if ye inquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined (ἐν τῇ ἐννομῷ ἐκκλησίᾳ) in a lawful convention." In a similar application of the term to secular assemblies, we find it employed to denote a riotous assemblage of people, gathered together in a disorderly crowd, for purposes of tumult; as in the same chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, when it is said, in regard to the mob who assaulted Paul and his companions: "Some therefore cried one thing, and some another, for (ἡ ἐκκλησία) the assembly or crowd was confused." With this wide use of the term, as applied to secular assemblies, it is plain that the precise signification of the word, in any given instance, is to be gathered from the manner in which it is employed, and from the context. The same is true in regard to the use of the term ἐκκλησία, when applied to sacred or ecclesiastical assemblies of people. Here, too, the range of its application is a wide one; and the precise meaning of the word, in any particular case, must be ascertained from the general sense of the passage and from the context. There are five different but closely allied meanings of the term "Church" to be gathered from Scripture.

I. The word Church signifies the whole body of the faithful, whether in heaven or on earth, who have been or shall be spiritually united to Christ as their Saviour.

There are many examples in Scripture of the use of the term in this wide sense. The first occasion on which the word occurs in the New Testament is one of these, when our Lord declares that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church,"—language which plainly refers to the society or association of all those who had believed or should believe in Him. All history proves that particular and local Churches may fall away from the faith into complete and final apostasy. The promise of our Lord can apply to no special community except the universal Church of Christ, invisible to human eye, and known only to His, consisting of all true believers, and of none else. Again, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, we are told that Christ "loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."<sup>2</sup> That society of men for whom Christ died, and who shall, each one of them, be presented at last holy and without spot before God, is plainly a society the members of which no man can number or declare by any external mark; which can be restricted to no geographical locality, and can be recognised by no features visible to the outward eye. It is the society of the elect, and not identical with any outward Church or Churches of whatsoever name. It is the spiritual and invisible Church of the Redeemer, known only to Himself, of which Scripture thus speaks; and in entire accordance with this use of the term Church in Scripture to denote a society comprehending the whole body of the elect, and none else, are other names or titles given to it in the New Testament. The Church is at one time spoken of under the mysterious name of the Bride or Spouse of Christ,—an expression which can apply to no local or particular Church—to no society, indeed, at all, measured and recognised by the eye of man under any form, or under all forms, of Christian profession,—but must be intended to mark out those, and

those only, who have been espoused to Christ through the holy union of His Spirit with theirs. At another time it is spoken of as "the temple of the Holy Ghost," "a spiritual house," "an habitation of God through the Spirit,"—language plainly designed to mark out a society defined by no outward limits, but identical with the whole number of spiritual Christians of whatsoever society throughout the world, who have been quickened by the Spirit.

And, finally, the Church is described as "the body of Christ," all the members of which are united to Him as the Head of life and influence and grace to them,—a description not applicable to any outward body of professing Christians made up of any or all communions, but only to be realized in that great multitude which no man has seen or numbered, who make up the invisible Church of the Redeemer, and whose names are written in heaven. In these passages, and in many others, we have a society defined and described, which embraces the whole number of Christ's elect, and none but they,—a society not identical with any known on earth, and not to be recognised by any local names or notes or boundaries,—a society marked out from any other by the possession of certain high and mysterious privileges, and standing in a very close and peculiar relation to Christ, but unseen and unknown of man,—a society whose members are unreckoned and unobserved on earth, but all of whom are numbered and known in heaven. Such is the invisible Church of the Redeemer. "The catholic or universal Church," says the Confession of Faith, "which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been or shall be gathered into one under Christ, the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

II. The term Church is made use of in Scripture to denote the whole body throughout the world of those that outwardly profess the faith of Christ.

Over and above that unseen society, consisting of the whole number of the elect, who are spiritually united to Christ, there is set forth to



us in Scripture another society, externally connected with Christ, and standing out visibly before the eyes of the world. This is the visible Church of Christ, known to men by the outward profession of faith in Him, and by the practice of those Church ordinances and observances which He has appointed for His worshippers. It is not to be identified with the invisible Church, for men may belong to the one society, who do not truly belong to the other; and the relation in which the one body stands to Christ is different from the relation occupied by the other. Neither are the two to be wholly placed in opposition to each other; for they form, not so much two separate Churches, as one Church under two distinct and different characters or aspects,—the invisible Church being spiritually united to Christ, the visible being externally united to Him for the sake of the other. This outward society of professing Christians is frequently spoken of and delineated in Scripture under the term Church. It is spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles, when it is said that "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." It is spoken of in the Epistle to the Corinthians, when mention is made by Paul of the outward provision which God has made for the order and government and edification of the Church: "And God has set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."<sup>2</sup> It is spoken of again, in reference to the same matter, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, when the same inspired writer says that Christ "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." In such passages, it is plain that a visible society of professing Christians is referred to, known and marked out among men by certain outward ordinances and observances peculiar to them, but not to be confounded with the invisible Church made up of the elect. Under the outward form of the visible Church, the invisible society of true believers may to a great extent lie concealed; but under that outward form there may be multitudes also, not truly members of the body of Christ, and only joined to Him by external profession and external ordinances.

That a Church visible and outward, known and recognised by the profession of the faith of Christ and the administration of Christ's ordinances, and yet not to be identified with the invisible society of true believers, is acknowledged and described in Scripture, may be distinctly ascertained, from a careful consideration of the various acceptations in which the word Church is made use of in the New Testament. But if additional evidence were desired on this point, it would be found in various parables of our Lord, in which He more especially describes the visible Church under the expressive title of "the kingdom of heaven." "The kingdom of heaven," said our Lord on one occasion, "is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away." This separation of the good from the evil in His kingdom or visible Church is to take place, as He expressly adds, "at the end of the world," when "the angels shall sever the wicked from among the just,"—the visible Church in this world being made up, in the meantime, of a multitude of true and feigned believers under one common profession, and yet being recognised by Christ as His Church. "The kingdom of heaven," said our Lord in another parable, "is like unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also." And was this introduction of the tares into the visible Church inconsistent with its character as a Church, and immediately to be remedied by their removal? "Nay," continues the parable, "lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest."<sup>2</sup> To exactly the same effect is that remarkable similitude, in which our Lord likens the relation between Himself and His Church to the union subsisting between the vine and the branches. "I am the true vine," said He, "and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." "I am the vine, ye are the branches." "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." It is plain that in such language

our Lord recognised a twofold union to Himself,—one, a living union, like that of the fruitful branch in the vine; the other, a dead or mere external union, such as the unfruitful branch in the vine, that was cast forth and withered; and such precisely is the two-fold connection with Christ, exemplified in the case respectively of the invisible and the visible Church. Those who are united to the Saviour by a living union,—unseen indeed of men, but known to Him,—constitute that society of believers spoken of in Scripture as the spiritual or invisible Church of Christ. Those, on the other hand, who are united to the Saviour by an external union of outward profession and outward privileges, known and seen of men, numbering among them the true believers in Christ, but not exclusively made up of true believers, constitute the visible Church. "The visible Church," says the Confession of Faith, "which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation."

III. The term Church is frequently employed in Scripture to denote the body of believers in any particular place, associated together in the worship of God.

This third meaning of the word lies on the very surface of Scripture, and requires almost no illustration. Even in the case of two or three professing Christians, met together for prayer and worship, whether publicly or in private houses, the term ἐκκλησία is applied to them in the New Testament; and that, too, before such a congregation might be organized, by having regular office-bearers and minister appointed over them. In the Acts of the Apostles we are told that Paul and Barnabas "ordained them elders in every Church" as they journeyed through Lystra and Iconium and Antioch,—language which plainly recognises the congregation of professing believers as a Church, even previously to the ordination of office-bearers among them. The body of believers in any particular place associating

together for worship, whether numerous or not, have the true character of a Church of Christ. Thus the Apostle Paul on some occasions recognises as a Church the meeting of believers in the private house of some one or other of his converts. "Greet," says he in the Epistle to the Romans, "Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus; likewise greet the Church that is in their house." In his Epistle to the Corinthians the same apostle sends to his converts, first, the salutation of the Churches of Asia, and second, the salutation of the congregation or Church assembling in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. "The Churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the Church that is in their house."<sup>2</sup> In like manner, in the Epistle to the Colossians, we hear, "Salute Nymphas, and the Church which is in his house;" and in the Epistle to Philemon, "To the Church in thy house: grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ;"—so numerous and distinct are the testimonies to this third meaning of the term Church, as a company of professing Christians, however small, associated together in any one place for the worship and service of God.

IV. The word Church is applied in the New Testament to a number of congregations associated together under a common government.

It is not necessary to suppose that the term "Church," when used in reference to the society of professing Christians belonging to one locality, was limited to a single congregation meeting in one building. On the contrary, there seems to be the strongest evidence for assuming that a plurality of congregations, meeting for worship in separate houses, but connected together under one ecclesiastical order, was designated by the general term of a Church. It is not necessary at this stage to enter at length into the discussion of a point, which will more naturally fall to be argued when we come to speak of the government of the Church. It may be enough at present simply to indicate the kind of argument by which it can be shown that the word Church is not restricted in its application to a single congregation, but is used in reference to more than one connected together under one common ecclesiastical arrangement. This will

sufficiently appear if we take the case of the converts at Jerusalem, who are spoken of under the general name of "the Church at Jerusalem," but who, nevertheless, must have constituted more than one congregation in that city. There is enough recorded in the Acts of the Apostles regarding the vast number of Christians at Jerusalem, to forbid the supposition that they could have met all together in one congregation, or under one roof, for their ordinary religious services. On one occasion—that of the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost—we are expressly told that "there were added" to the number of believers previously at Jerusalem "about three thousand souls." After this it is declared that "daily the Lord added to the Church such as should be saved." At a later period still, when Peter had preached after healing the lame man at the gate of the temple, we are told that "many of them that heard the word believed; and the number of the men (άνδρων) was about five thousand,"—a number evidently exclusive of women. Even this vast number of converts was still further augmented; for in the next chapter we are told that "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."<sup>3</sup> And at a subsequent date we have the testimony of James, speaking to Paul respecting the converts at Jerusalem: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands (literally, myriads, ποσσι μυριαδες) of Jews there are which believe." With such facts as these before us regarding the multitudes of converts at Jerusalem, it seems impossible to maintain that the Church there consisted of no more than one solitary congregation, worshipping together under a single roof. No one building could have contained the many thousands of believers that crowded Jerusalem at that time in the fulness of a Pentecostal harvest; nor is it possible, except under the influence of some misleading theory, to believe that they formed no more than one congregation. The conclusion, then, seems to be inevitable, that when we read of the Church at Jerusalem, we find the term applied, not to a single congregation of believers, but to a plurality of congregations, connected together as one body or Church by means of a common government. An examination of the cases of the Church at Corinth and the Church of Ephesus would lead to a similar conclusion, and would justify us in affirming that the word Church in

these instances also denotes, not a single congregation of worshippers, but several congregations associated together by vicinity of place, but still more by a common ecclesiastical rule and order. I do not stop at present to inquire under what form of government separate congregations were thus connected together. The fact that they were so is all that is necessary for us to know in assigning to the term Church this fourth signification.

V. The word Church is applied, in the New Testament, to the body of professing believers in any place, as represented by their rulers and office-bearers.

The principle of representation is fully and frequently recognised in Scripture as having a place in the dispensations of God, as well as in the ordinary transactions of life; nor can it seem anything new to find the body of believers in any given place represented by their office-bearers, and the term primarily descriptive of the one applied to the other. An example of this application of the term Church is to be found in Matthew 18, when our Lord is laying down the principles on which a Christian ought to proceed in the case of a brother who has trespassed against him. If, after dealing with the offender as to his fault, first in private with himself alone, and then in the presence of two or three witnesses, he shall still neglect to hear and acknowledge his offence, the command of our Lord is to "tell it to the Church." In such an injunction our Lord referred to the synagogue Court known and established among the Jews, which had its elders and officers for the decision of such matters of discipline; and in the expression "the Church," which He made use of, the Jews who heard Him must have understood the authorized rulers, as distinct from the ruled, to be the parties who were to determine in such controversies. An impartial consideration of this text in its connection seems to justify the assertion that the word Church is in Scripture, among its other meanings, employed to denote the rulers or office-bearers of the Christian society.

Such are the five different senses in which the word Church is used in the New Testament Scriptures; and it is not unimportant to remark the connection between them, and the order in which they stand related to each other. The primary and normal idea of the Church, as set forth in Scripture, is unquestionably that of a body of men spiritually united to Christ, and, in consequence of that union, one with each other, as they are one with Him. From this fundamental idea of the universal invisible Church of Christ, all the others are derived. Add to this first idea of a Church, as indicated in Scripture, an outward provision of government, ordinances, and office-bearers, appointed for the purpose of ministering to the edification of its members, and you have the visible Church, as laid down in the New Testament,—an outward society formed upon the inward and spiritual one, and established and maintained in the world for its benefit. Add to this second scriptural idea of a Church the further notion of locality, so that instead of being viewed in its universal character as extending over all the world, it is viewed in its local character as existing in certain places, and limited to them,—and you learn the third meaning of the term as found in the New Testament, namely, a body of professing Christians assembling together in one place for the worship and service of God. Further still, annex to this third notion of the Church, as existing in particular localities and congregations, the additional idea of co-operation and union under some one form of ecclesiastical government, and you arrive at the fourth meaning of the word Church in Scripture,—a number of particular congregations associated together under one Church order and authority. And lastly, to this fourth idea of a Church conjoin the principle of representation, so largely developed both in the dispensations of God and in the arrangements of civil society, and you reach the fifth and final use of the term as found in the Bible, namely, to denote a society or societies of professing Christians, as represented by their office-bearers and rulers. From the single germ of one believer or of several believers, vitally united to a Saviour, and in the enjoyment of the privileges belonging to that union, it is not difficult to trace the Church of Christ under all the different yet

closely allied characters in which it is defined and delineated in Scripture.

It is of great importance, at the outset, to fix with some measure of precision the different significations in which the word Church is used in Scripture, because of the opposite opinions entertained by different parties as to this matter,—opinions which cannot fail to bear directly or indirectly upon every step in our subsequent discussions. For example, the Romanist sets himself in opposition to the first of those meanings which we have found to be attached in Scripture to the term Church. He is prepared to deny altogether, or, if not to deny abstractly, yet practically to set aside, the idea of an invisible Church as the primary and fundamental one, and to substitute that of a visible Church in its stead. Bossuet, in his *Variations of the Protestant Churches*, goes so far as to charge upon the Reformers the invention of the idea of a Church invisible, with a view to meet the alleged difficulty, so often urged by Romanists, of the visible existence of no Church, identical in principles and character with the Reformed before the Reformation. And more recent Romanist controversialists, if they do not in so many terms deny the existence of a Church invisible, endeavour to substitute in its stead that of a visible body as the leading and normal idea of the Christian society. Now, concede to Romanists the position they are so anxious to assume, and deny that there is an invisible and spiritual Church at all, or at least that this is the primary and leading idea of the Christian society; grant that the outward and visible Church is the source from which the inward and invisible is derived,—and you open up the way for some of the worst and most characteristic errors of Popery. That single admission with respect to the fundamental idea of the Christian society, prepares the way for making communion with an outward Church take the place of a spiritual reality, and substituting the external charm of priestly arts and sacramental grace for the living union of the soul to the Saviour.<sup>2</sup>



Or, take another example from the case of the Independents. Independents deny the second of the five meanings which we have found ascribed to the word Church in Scripture. They repudiate altogether the idea of a visible Church, sustaining a real, although external, relation to Christ, and composed of His professing people. Now, concede to the Independents this position, and set aside the idea of a visible Church with its outward order and privileges, and you concede to them at the same time all that is necessary to determine in their favour the question regarding the character and qualifications of Church members, and to establish their principles on the subject of "pure communion." In like manner the Independents reject the fourth and fifth meanings of the word Church. They deny that it is ever found in Scripture to signify either a plurality of congregations under one government, or simply the representatives or office-bearers of the congregation as contradistinguished from the congregation itself. Here, too, the difference of opinion in regard to the use and meaning of the term in Scripture is a fundamental one, giving rise to other and no less fundamental differences at future stages of the discussion. Admit the narrow position taken up by the Independents in regard to the true meaning and nature of a Church as defined in Scripture, restrict the term to one or other of the two significations of either the invisible Church at large, or a single congregation of believers in a particular locality, and you, in fact, concede every principle that is necessary for them to establish their views as to the form of the Church, and the nature of its government. There cannot be, in fact, a more important question, or one in the determination of which more fundamental principles are involved, than that in regard to the real nature of the Christian Church, as delineated in Scripture; and if we have succeeded in discovering the meaning of the term according to New Testament usage, we shall have done much to prepare the way for our future discussions.

## CHAPTER II:

### THE CHURCH A DIVINE AND SPIRITUAL INSTITUTION

ALTHOUGH it is with the Church invisible,—the whole body of the elect vitally united to the Saviour,—that the idea of a Church begins, yet, in proceeding to investigate into the form, ordinances, and government of the Christian society, we shall find it necessary to view the Church mainly, if not exclusively, in its character as a visible society. To the Church visible belong the privileges, the character, the order, about which it is our duty to inquire. Our future discussions, therefore, will consist in an examination of the nature, powers, and ordinances of the Christian society as an outward and visible institute, standing in a certain external relation to Christ,—whether you regard it as universal or local, as an association made up of many congregations under one government, or an association represented by its office-bearers and rulers.

What, then, are the primary characteristics of the Christian society, made up of the professing disciples of the Saviour in this world?

I. In the first place, the Church is a Divine institution, owing its origin not to man, but to Christ, and associated together not in consequence of human arrangement, but by Christ's appointment.

No doubt there is a foundation laid in the very nature of the religion which Christ came to promulgate, for the union of His disciples in one body or society. The faith which each man holds for the salvation of his own soul is a faith which joins him to every other believer. The close and mysterious union which is constituted by faith between him and his Saviour, is a union that connects him through that Saviour with every other Christian. In becoming one with Christ, he

becomes at the same time, in a certain sense, one with all who are Christ's. The spiritual fellowship that a believer enjoys with his Redeemer, is not a solitary or a selfish joy, but one which he cannot possess alone, or except in common with other believers. It is the very nature, therefore, of the Gospel to be not a solitary religion, but a social one. When Christ, through the mighty operation of His Spirit, brings a sinner into reconciliation and communion with Himself, He ushers him also into the fellowship of reconciliation and communion with all other Christians. When the work of grace is done upon the soul of man, and the barriers of separation between him and his Saviour are cast down, and the sinner who was afar off is brought near to God, the very same work of grace removes the obstacles that hindered his union with other men; and in the fellowship of one faith and one Lord he discovers a new and mightier bond of attachment and union to his fellow-believers. Were there no positive command or appointment, therefore, requiring Christians to unite together and to form on earth a society joined together by the profession of the same faith, the very nature of Christianity would force such a result. In the profession of it in common, men would find themselves insensibly drawn to other believing men with a power not to be resisted; and in the bonds of the same Saviour and the same Spirit they would feel and own a nearer tie than that of kindred, and a holier relationship than one of blood. In the common joys and sorrows which Christians, and none but Christians, share,—in the one faith and one Saviour in which together they rejoice,—in the same hopes and fears, the same sin escaped, and the same salvation won, in which they participate, there is a union of the most intimate kind produced and cemented, which is not with them a matter of choice, but a matter of inevitable necessity.

We may assert, therefore, that that Christian society which we call the Church of Christ is a society framed by Divine appointment, even did we see in it nothing more than a body of men brought together by the constraint of the same faith and same affections wrought in them by the Spirit of God. But there is much more than this intimated in Scripture, on which we ground the assertion that the Church of

Christ is a divinely instituted society. There are express commands in Scripture, leaving the believer no alternative in the matter, and requiring him to unite together with other believers in the outward and public profession of his faith before the world. He is not left at liberty to hide that faith within his own heart, and himself to remain alone and separated from his fellow-believers. It is the office of the Christian society to be a witness, by means of an outward and public profession, for Christ on the earth; and it is not a matter of choice, but of express obligation, with a Christian man to join with others in that public profession. The command is "to confess Christ before men;" and upon the ground of that command, then, is laid the foundation of a society, each member of which is called upon, whether he will or will not, to lift up a public testimony for his Saviour jointly with other believers; and that public profession is one to be made not merely with the lips, uniting with others in a common declaration of the faith believed. The outward ordinances of the Christian society are so framed and devised as to be themselves a significant profession of faith on the part of those who join in them; and communion in ordinances is with Christians not a matter of choice, but of express command. Christ has judged it proper to appoint that His disciples shall be solemnly received into His Church by the initiatory rite of baptism; so that the very entrance of life, or, at all events, the admission into the Christian society, shall be itself a public testimony to Him. He has enjoined the public and open commemoration of the central and most characteristic doctrine of His faith, by the celebration, at stated intervals, of the Lord's Supper; and as often as the first day of the week returns, the disciples are commanded "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together," but to unite in the outward and joint worship of the Saviour. In short, in the whole divinely appointed institutions and ordinances of the Christian society we see the provision made for, and the obligation laid upon, His disciples to be joined together into one outward body, and to form a common society of professing believers. That community is one, therefore, of Divine institution; and in the duty laid upon them, not as a matter of choice, but of express command, to become members of it, we see the ordinance of God for

the existence and permanent establishment of a Church on earth. A solitary Christian is seen to be a contradiction in terms, if you view merely his faith as a principle of affinity naturally destined to draw to it the faith of other believers. A solitary Christian is worse than a contradiction, he is an anomaly, standing out against the express institution of God, which has appointed the fellowship of believers in one Church, and made provision in its outward ordinances for their union and edification. The Christian society is a kingdom, set up by express Divine appointment, and differs from every other society on earth in this remarkable fact, that the builder and maker of it is God.

The institution of a society by Christ under the name of a Church, and the establishment and permanent continuance of that society as a Divine institution in the midst of this world, is a fact of fundamental importance in all our future inquiries. That fact stands opposed to the views of two distinct classes of men, who, differing in their opinion as to the origin and nature of the Christian society, yet combine in denying or setting aside its claims to be regarded as of Christ, and owing its appointment to a Divine authority.

1st. There are those who regard the Christian Church simply as a human society, owing its origin and establishment to voluntary agreement among its members.

Of course the idea of a merely voluntary association of Christians, brought together by the common belief of the same doctrines and the common practice of the same precepts, is totally opposed to the notion of a Divine institution, claiming to be of God, and appealing to His authority for its existence and outward establishment on the earth. If the principles already laid down are correct, the theory which makes the Church to be a merely human and voluntary association of Christians must come very far short indeed of what the statements of Scripture demand. No doubt there is in the very nature of Christianity, viewed as a system of truth and duty, apart from any mention of a Christian Church, enough to have laid the foundations of a society voluntarily brought together among the men who should

have embraced it. In the fellowship of one faith uniting them to each other, and separating them from the rest of the world,—in the observance of the same worship and religious ordinances as a distinguishing mark of their Christianity,—there was enough, even without an express appointment to that effect, to have gathered the Christians of the early ages into one body, and to have led them voluntarily to unite themselves into a distinct society. More than that may perhaps be conceded to those who view the Christian Church as nothing beyond a voluntary association. Three things seem essential to the very idea of a society, whatever be its character or proposed objects. Men brought voluntarily together into any association are necessarily led, for the purpose of order and the better attainment of the common aim that unites them, to appoint officers of some kind or other, to enact laws or regulations for the transaction of business, and to exercise the right of admission or exclusion in regard to members. All this is implied in the very nature of a regular and organized society, whether voluntary or not; and no community can long exist without it. It may be granted, then, in the case of the Christian society, that the power of a common faith, and the affinity of a common worship, would have been enough, without express Divine appointment, to have brought the believers into one; and further, that the very necessities of the society so constituted would have led them to adopt a form of order and government for it, apart from a positive institution by Christ. But all this furnishes no presumption against the fact of the positive appointment of the Christian society by Christ. Over and above the general tendency of the Gospel to become a social system, and over and above the general sanction of a Christian society implied in that tendency, Christ expressly laid down the main principles of order and government for the formation of His Church. He did not wait for the historical development of the Christian society, or leave His disciples to organize for themselves its system of government and office-bearers and laws: He laid upon His disciples the express injunction to meet together in His name; and in order the better to enforce it, annexed the promise, that when they were thus assembled, He would be in the midst of them to bless them and to do them good. He

commended to them the duty of confessing Him before men; and the more surely to prevent mistake, appointed certain public ordinances, such as Baptism and the Lord's Supper, through which that confession was to be made. He warned them "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together;"<sup>2</sup> and, to provide against uncertainty and misapprehension, He appointed one day in seven for this meeting, and instituted the ordinance of public worship for their observance. He commissioned the first office-bearers in His Church, He gave them the power of ruling, and He prescribed the terms for the admission of members. In all this there is evinced or implied the positive institution of a society by Christ Himself, having from Him a Divine authority. The voluntary power of association, implied in Christianity as a social system, is there, and is not by any means to be denied or overlooked; but, over and above that, the Christian society has the sanction and authority of a Divine appointment.

2d. There are those who regard the Christian Church as a society created by the State, owing its form and existence to those regulations which the State may enact in regard to it.

The Erastian theory of the Church is no less directly opposed to the claims of the Church as a Divine institution than the theory of a merely voluntary association. If, however, the principles already enunciated be correct, they may absolve us from the necessity of entering into details in the consideration of such a system. If there be warrant in Scripture for asserting that Christ has not merely lent a general sanction to the formation of a Christian society among His followers, but, as if to prevent the possibility of mistake, has specified in His own words Himself, or by His inspired servants, its office-bearers, its laws, and its ordinances, then this is enough to set aside by anticipation the Erastian scheme. In virtue of the appointment of its Divine Head, the Church has an existence, an authority, a government, totally independent of any power which it may or may not derive from the State; and the Church actually exercised the rights resulting from its Divine institution, and conferred by Christ, both in the times of the apostles and in subsequent ages, when it

received no gift from the State except the gift of persecution and of blood. It is not necessary, at this stage of the discussion, to anticipate the inquiry which will afterwards meet us, as to the extent of the power or the form of government appointed by Christ for the Christian society. It is enough for our present argument to know that some kind of authority does belong to the Church in virtue of its original appointment by our Lord; that as it existed at first independently of the favour of the State, and in the face of its hostility, so it may continue to exist without any external connection or support; and that, for all the purposes on account of which it was established, it has powers complete and entire within itself, the original gift and permanent endowment of its Head. As a Divine institution, designed for a continued existence on earth, the Church is divinely equipped with all the powers necessary for its own being and welfare, without owing anything to man. Without doing more than merely glance at the argument at present, it is enough to say that the Erastian theory proceeds upon the mistake of identifying the Church and State, and denying those essential differences between them, which demonstrate them to be distinct and separate ordinances of God, having each an independent existence. Apart altogether from the direct evidence we have in Scripture for the Divine institution of the Church, as a society owing nothing to the State and everything to Christ, the differences between the two prove them to be independent of each other. They differ in their origin, in their objects, and in the means by which those objects are attained. They differ in their origin,—the State being the ordinance of God as universal sovereign, and appointed for all nations whether Christian or not; the Church being the ordinance of Christ as Mediator, and appointed only for those nations among whom Christianity is professed. They differ in their objects,—the State being intended to advance directly the secular interests of the nation, and only indirectly to promote its spiritual well-being; the Church, on the contrary, being designed directly to further the spiritual interests of its members, and only indirectly to contribute to their temporal or secular wellbeing. They differ in their means for attaining the ends they have respectively in view,—the State being armed with the



power of the sword for securing its object; the Church, on the other hand, being armed with weapons not carnal but spiritual. These, and other essential differences between the Church and the State, evince that they are separate and independent institutions of God, and that the one cannot owe its existence or authority to the other.

So much, then, for the general fact that the Christian society is a Divine institution, owing its existence not to man, but to Christ, and not merely a voluntary association, or the creature of civil appointment.

II. In the second place I remark, the Church of Christ is a spiritual institution; or, in other words, in its primary character it is a spiritual instrumentality for working out the spiritual good of man.

The Christian Church which Christ established on the earth before He left it, is the last of the dispensations of God; and, in a peculiar sense, it is the dispensation of the Spirit. The earthly and carnal elements of former dispensations were step by step removed, in order to make way for one more spiritual and inward, and fitted to minister, by a more entirely spiritual agency, to the souls of men. The era of the Christian Church is emphatically that of the manifestation of the Spirit; and the administration of the Church is, in its primary character, a spiritual one. No doubt, in the New Testament Church, there are still found outward ordinances and an outward service,—an external provision made by rites and solemnities, that minister to the senses, for the edification of the body of Christ. Perhaps it is necessarily implied in the very condition of sense and sight in which Christians are in this world, that the Church should not be wholly without such external provision, and that the Spirit of Christ should minister to our spirits, not directly, but through the medium of the outward word and the outward ordinance; but in its main character, the administration of the Spirit through the Church is a spiritual one, to the exclusion of observances wholly outward, and influences purely external. The written word is no doubt an outward sign, speaking, in the first instance, to the eye; but it is the truth in the

letter, and not the letter itself—that is, the spiritual instrument—that operates upon the soul. The external ordinance of Baptism or the Lord's Supper is no doubt an outward provision, ministering, in the first instance, to the senses; but it is not the sensible signs themselves, but the thing signified, that becomes, in the hand of the Spirit, the spiritual seal upon the soul. Even in the use of outward ordinances, the Church employs an instrumentality not wholly outward, but one capable of exerting a spiritual power upon the conscience and the heart. The ordinance is but the avenue through which the Spirit of God more powerfully reaches to the spirit of man. There is no virtue and no power in the outward action or the sensible sign in itself, and apart from the Spirit of God, conveyed through it to the human soul. Even in the employment of an external provision for the good of her members, the Church does not employ a mere external power; her primary influence is an influence of a spiritual kind, conveyed through the channel of outward ordinances; and her great ministration is, when the Spirit in the ordinance meets with the spirit in the heart, and they become one in the believer. It is, then, the distinguishing characteristic of the Church in these latter days, that her administration is spiritual in its nature and its aims; that although making use of outward ordinances, the influence operating upon the soul is not outward, but spiritual; and that the administration of this kingdom is altogether different from that of the kingdoms of the world.

The standing ordinance of a spiritual Church in the world, distinct in its origin, in its objects, in its instrumentality, from the kingdoms of this world, is the grand and public lesson taught by God as to the fundamental distinction between things civil and things spiritual. To draw the line of demarcation between the province of the one and the other, is the great problem that involves in it the question of freedom of conscience on the one side, and the rights of the State on the other,—the spiritual liberty of the Church, and the legitimate authority of the civil magistrate,—the things that belong unto God, and the things that belong unto Cæsar. The grand fact, that Christ has instituted a spiritual society on the earth, and destined it to be

perpetual, is one never to be lost sight of, as affording a solution, and the only possible solution, of these questions. The identification of this spiritual society in any manner or degree with the civil society, the annulling or confounding of the essential distinction between the Christian Church on the one hand, and the civil State on the other, involves in it errors equally detrimental to both. The Erastian theory is guilty of this error, when it makes the Church the creature and portion of the State,—thereby confounding two ordinances of God, essentially distinct and separate. But the very same error is committed in a somewhat different manner by the theory of the late Dr. Arnold, where he affirms that, "in a country where the nation or government are avowedly and essentially Christian, the State or nation is virtually the Church." According to such a system, the State and the Church are, under certain circumstances, identical, quite as much as on the theory of Erastians; although, according to Arnold, this identity is brought about by the State merging its own existence in and becoming part of the Church; while, according to the other system, it is accomplished in the opposite way, of the Church merging its own existence in and becoming part of the State. In neither system is that grand and fundamental distinction recognised which God has set before our eyes so prominently in the fact of the ordination by Himself of the two separate and independent societies,—the one for spiritual, and the other for civil purposes; and the forgetfulness of which inevitably leads to errors ruinous on the one side or the other. Deny or ignore that distinction, and there is no security remaining against either the State becoming the tyrant of the Church, or the Church the tyrant of the State,—against a civil supremacy over the conscience which would trample all spiritual freedom in the dust, or an ecclesiastical usurpation over our temporal rights that would lay all civil liberty in ruins. In the Divine institution of a spiritual society, distinct from and independent of the State, God has taught before our eyes the grand and vitally important lesson of the fundamental distinction between things civil and things spiritual; and has made provision that the Christian Church, His own appointment, shall never become either the tyrant or the slave of the kingdoms of men.

## **CHAPTER III:**

### **THE CHURCH IN ITS TWOFOLD CHARACTER AS VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE**

IN attempting, as has been already done, to ascertain the various meanings of the term Church in Scripture, I had occasion to speak of the distinction between the Church invisible and the Church visible. That distinction is so important in itself, and involves in it principles so fundamental in respect to our future discussions, that it may be desirable to inquire into the grounds and nature of it at somewhat greater length. To this subject the present chapter will more especially be devoted.

Now, at the outset, it is not unimportant to remark, that when we speak of the Church invisible and the Church visible, we are not to be understood as if we referred in these designations to two separate and distinct Churches, but rather to the same Church under two different characters. We do not assert that Christ has founded two Churches on earth, but only one; and we affirm that that one Church is to be regarded under two distinct aspects. As the Church invisible, it consists of the whole number of the elect, who are vitally united to Christ the Head, and of none other. As the Church visible, it consists of all those who profess the faith of Christ, together with their children. There are many things which can be affirmed of the Church of Christ under the one aspect, which cannot be affirmed of it under the other; and it is most important that the distinction be kept in view, in order to a right understanding of the declarations of

Scripture in regard to the Church. There are two things, the statement of which may serve to exhibit and define the difference between the Church invisible and the Church visible.

1st. The Church invisible stands, with respect to its members, in an inward and spiritual relationship to Christ, whereas the Church visible stands to Him in an outward relationship only. In so far as the Church invisible is concerned, the truth of this statement will be readily admitted by all. There can be no difference of opinion on the point. The proper party with whom the covenant of grace is made, and to whom its promises and privileges belong, is the invisible Church of real believers. It is this Church for which Christ died. It is this Church that is espoused to Him as the Bride. It is the members of this Church that are each and all savingly united to Him as their Head. The bond of communion between them and the Saviour is an invisible and spiritual one, securing to all of them the enjoyment of saving blessings here, and the promise of everlasting redemption hereafter. None but Romanists deny or ignore this.

The case is altogether different with the visible Church. It stands not in an inward and saving relationship to Christ, but in an outward relationship only, involving no more than the promise and enjoyment of outward privileges. In that mysteriously mingled condition of being in which believers are found here, with souls in fellowship on the one side with the Spirit of God, and on the other side with the body, an outward provision has been judged suitable even for their spiritual edification and improvement, with a view to prepare them on earth for their destination in glory. There is an outward government established for the order and regulation of the society of the elect; there are outward ordinances adapted and blessed for their improvement; there is an outward discipline designed and fitted for their purification and protection. All this necessarily implies an outward and visible society, embracing and encompassing the invisible and spiritual one; in other words, an outward Church, within which the invisible Church of real believers is embosomed, protected, perfected. Admit that some external

framework of privileges and ordinances has been erected by Christ around His own elect people in this world, and you are led directly to the idea of a visible society, distinguished from the invisible by the outward form which it bears, and the outward relation in which it stands to Christ. The form of the invisible Church cannot be distinguished by the eye of man, for the features and lineaments of it are known only to God; whereas the form of the visible Church is marked out and defined by its external government, ordinances, and arrangements. The members of the invisible Church cannot be discerned or detected by the eye of man, for their call is the inward call of the Spirit, and their relation to Christ a spiritual and unseen one; whereas the members of the visible Church stand revealed to the sight of all by the outward profession they make, and the external connection in which they stand to Christ, as they enjoy the privileges and ordinances of His appointment. The members of the Church invisible are joined in an inward relationship to Christ, in consequence of having listened to His inward call by the Spirit, and being vitally united to Him through faith. The members of the Church visible are joined in an outward connection with Christ, in consequence of having obeyed His outward call by the Word, and being now made partakers by Him in the external privileges and ordinances of a Church state.

This external relationship, in which the members of the visible Church stand to Christ, as having been brought into a Church state from out of the world, has been often spoken of by theologians under the name of an external covenant or federal relationship. Whatever name may be given to it, there is no doubt that there is a real and important relationship into which the members of the visible Church have entered, to be distinguished alike from the state of the world without, and from the state of the invisible Church within. It is to be distinguished from the condition of the world at large; for the members of the visible Church have received and obeyed, at least outwardly, the call of Christ, and have made a profession of their faith in Him, and in consequence have entered into the possession and enjoyment of certain privileges and ordinances that belong to a

Church state. It is to be distinguished from the condition of the invisible Church of true believers; for although the members of the visible Church may have outwardly obeyed the call and entered into possession of the external privileges of the Church, yet the inward grace and vital union to the Saviour may be wanting, and theirs may be a relationship wholly of an outward kind. But although it be an outward relationship, and no more, it is nevertheless a real one, under whatsoever name it may be represented.

There are two things plainly implied in it. First of all, there is an external provision of ordinances made by Christ in His Church, ensuring both outward privilege and blessing, not of a saving kind, to those who use them aright; and with this there is the invitation addressed to all men to enter in and to partake of them; and secondly, there is a compliance with this invitation on the part of those who profess their faith in Christ and join themselves to His Church, and the actual enjoyment and experience of the privileges so promised,—in so far, at least, as they are of an external or temporal kind. All this, the mere profession of faith in Christ, and the act of joining himself in external observance to the visible Church, will secure to the formal professor. He may not possess that faith unfeigned and that vital union to the Saviour which will obtain for him the internal and saving blessing which the real believer will find in the ordinances; but there are external privileges which he may and does obtain in consequence of his mere outward profession and observance; and although he falls short of the saving benefit which the spiritual Christian finds in Christ's Church, yet the benefits he actually enjoys are both real and important. This relation of the mere formal professor and member of the visible Church to Christ may be called an external covenant and outward federal union, or not. But under whatever name, it is important to bear in mind that there is such a relationship, involving both real responsibilities and real privileges; and that it is this relationship, as contradistinguished from an inward and saving one, that makes the difference between the members of the visible and the members of the invisible Church of Christ.

2d. The Church invisible is made up of true believers, and of none else; whereas the Church visible is composed of those who outwardly profess their faith in Christ, and may include not only true believers, but also hypocrites.

This follows, as a necessary consequence, from what has already been stated. If the members of the Church invisible stand in an inward and spiritual relationship to Christ, they must be, all of them, His true disciples, and in the number of the elect; and if, on the other hand, the members of the visible Church stand in an external relation, and no more, to the Saviour, they may at least include in their number those who are in reality strangers to Him. If indeed the edification and perfecting of the body of believers were to be secured in their journey through this world by the help and use of outward ordinances and an outward administration, then the admission of formal professors as well as true Christians to the enjoyment of those external privileges, would seem to be a matter unavoidable. If a visible Church, with its outward means of grace, is to be established for the edifying of the body of Christ, it were impossible, without the help of some inspired and infallible judge, qualified to detect the formal and feigned profession, to shut out from such a Church the hypocrite and the formalist. An outward Church, administered by human and fallible instruments, must necessarily share its benefits of a mere external kind with the feigned believer, as well as with the true. Up to a certain point, the formalist and the spiritual man will partake in common of the outward privileges which it bestows on all within its pale. Those privileges were indeed provided and intended, in the first instance, for the spiritual advantage of the true believer. It is for his sake that a visible Church, with its outward administration of word and ordinance, is established and kept up in the world. But side by side with the real Christian will be found the formal Christian also,—both alike sharing in external ordinances, and brought under a certain external relationship to Christ; but one of them contented with the name, while the other only enjoys the reality of the saving privilege in addition. Such has been the condition of the Church in all ages, and such was it always intended to be. Under a former



economy there were Church ordinances of an outward kind shared in by Israel after the flesh, no less than by Israel after the spirit,—by the natural as well as by the spiritual seed of Abraham. There was a Church visible standing in an external relation to God, and embracing in it many who belonged to God only after the flesh; and within the bosom of that external Church there was another, the invisible, standing in a spiritual relation to God, and embracing in it none but His spiritual people. That former dispensation has passed away, and another has succeeded to it, of wider range and more elevated character. Yet the principle of God's dealings with His people is still one and the same,—God still provides for the benefit of His own believing people an outward framework, so to speak, of ordinances and external administration, within which His invisible Church is hid. To the external privileges of that visible society even sinners are invited,—not that they may rest there, but that they may go on to the invisible and spiritual society within. And even formalists are permitted to mingle in outward fellowship with true believers, in order that, if possible, they may be brought to seek for something higher and more blessed. Like the field in which there sprang up the mingled crop of tares and wheat, the visible Church will ever reveal a mixed communion of real and merely nominal believers. It is not until the end of the world, when the harvest comes, that the invisible Church of Christ will stand disclosed in contradistinction to the visible, as a communion of the elect only.

The difference, then, between the Church invisible and the Church visible, may be exhibited and defined under these two heads: 1st, The one stands in an inward and saving relationship to Christ, whereas the other stands in an external relationship only; and, 2d, the one is made up of the elect solely, while the other embraces in its communion nominal as well as real believers. The principles now illustrated, in regard to the real distinction and yet the real connection between the Church invisible and the Church visible, bear with them very important consequences. It may be well to indicate, without illustrating in detail, their bearings in four different directions.

In the first place, the doctrine in regard to the visible and invisible Church which we have laid down, if it be a correct and scriptural one, has a most important and decisive bearing upon the principles of Independents in reference to Church communion. I do not intend at present to enter at length upon this question, as it may be necessary to advert to it more largely when treating of the members of the Church. But it may be well at present to indicate the conclusions to which the principles already laid down, in regard to the Church in its twofold character of visible and invisible, seem to lead on the subject of its membership. Independents in general have rejected this distinction, and denied that there is ground in Scripture for asserting the existence of an outward society of professing Christians standing in an outward relation to Christ, and made up of nominal as well as actual believers. In his work on Congregational Independency Dr. Wardlaw has ranked, under the title of "Unauthorized Uses of the word Church," the employment of it in the sense of the invisible and visible Church; and he restricts the meanings of the word to these two,—either "the whole body of the faithful, the entire spiritual Israel of God," or "a society of believers in any place." In Dr. Samuel Davidson's work on the Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament we have the very same statement, and almost in the same words. Hence, in rejecting the doctrine of a visible Church, and denying any use of the term Church, except in the sense of the whole body of believers or a society of believers in one place, Independents are forced to take up the position that none but true believers can be members of the Church. And in order to carry out this principle, they are constrained to demand, as the only ground of admission to Church fellowship, positive and distinct evidence of grace and regeneration on the part of the candidate. This principle of "pure communion," as it is called, besides the inextricable difficulties of a practical kind, in which it is involved, seems to be directly opposed to the views already deduced from Scripture as to the nature of the Church itself. It is to the Church as a visible society that the ordinance of discipline has been entrusted; and it is in conformity with its character as the Church visible, that the administration of discipline in the admission or rejection of members must be

conducted. If the Church visible stands in an external relationship to Christ, and is made up not merely of real but of professing believers, then there can be required for admission into that society no qualification beyond an outward profession of faith in Christ, such as in itself, and in the circumstances connected with it, may be fairly regarded as a credible one. To demand more than this, is to demand more than Scripture warrants or requires. It is to confound two things which are essentially distinct from each other,—the qualification and character necessary to constitute a man a member of the invisible, with the qualification and character necessary to constitute him a member of the visible, Church. If the principles in regard to the Church already enunciated be correct, the evidence on which a candidate for admission may be rightly received into the communion of the Church is not a positive proof of regeneration—which no man can give to or receive from another,—but the evidence of a credible profession of faith in Christ, and a corresponding conduct.

In the second place, the principles in regard to the visible and invisible Church already indicated have a very important bearing on the question of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of Infant Baptism. It will be sufficient to point out this, without entering into the general question, which will more naturally fall to be considered at a subsequent stage in our discussions. But I may remark, that the doctrine of the visible Church and its external covenant relationship to Christ, lays the foundation for those views of Church membership which justify us in regarding the infants of professing Christians as entitled to share the communion and privileges of the Church. According to that doctrine, a saving faith on the part of a man is the ground on which he is admitted a member of the invisible Church of Christ, not the condition demanded for his reception of Church privileges within the visible Church. It is on the ground, not of a faith, which an unconscious infant cannot have, but of that external relationship to Christ, which the child may share with the believing parent, that we are warranted in holding that the infants of such as belong to the visible Church are themselves members also, and

therefore entitled to the enjoyment of its privileges and its ordinances along with the parent. The Independent view, which insists on the possession of a saving faith in Christ as the only footing on which Church membership can be conceded, and the only title to the enjoyment of Church ordinances, tends very directly, if consistently carried out, to deprive the infants of professing Christians of their right to be regarded as members of the Church, or to claim the benefit of its ordinances. The tendency of these views to lead to such a conclusion—notwithstanding of many exceptions to the contrary—seems to be evinced in the fact of the large number of the Independent body who actually hold opinions hostile to Infant Baptism; and it seems to be further evinced by the progress, among the same religious denomination, of views like those of Dr. Halley, in his work on the Sacraments, in which he advocates the opinion that they are no more than signs; and justifies the practice of administering Baptism to infants on that very ground. There cannot, I think, be any doubt that right and intelligent views regarding the scriptural distinction between the Church visible and invisible goes far to prepare the way for a sound decision on the question of Infant Baptism.

In the third place, the principles already laid down in regard to the Church invisible and the Church visible have a very wide and important bearing on the differences found between the Church system of Romanists and the Church system of Protestants. The existence of an invisible Church, and the relation it bears to the visible Church, lie at the very foundation of the controversy between them. The strong desire and tendency with Popish controversialists is to deny the existence of the invisible Church; or, when they are not bold enough to do that, at least to give the decided precedence to the Church visible. I had already occasion to remark that Bossuet, in his celebrated work on the Variations of Protestantism, charges upon the Reformers the invention of the theory of an invisible Church to meet the so often repeated objection, couched sometimes in the form of the question, "Where was your Church before Luther?" The late Dr. Milner, in his work entitled *End of Controversy*, repeats the charge

previously made by Bossuet. But even when less extreme views are entertained, and the reality of a Church invisible is not denied, yet the doctrinal system of Roman Catholics requires that it should be made entirely subordinate to the visible. In the very able and interesting work by Möhler, late Professor of Theology at Munich, entitled *Symbolism, or Exposition of the Doctrinal Differences between Catholics and Protestants*, we have the following statement in regard to this point: "The Catholics teach: the visible Church is first,—then comes the invisible: the former gives birth to the latter. On the other hand, the Lutherans say the reverse: from the invisible emerges the visible Church; and the former is the groundwork of the latter. In this apparently very unimportant opposition, a prodigious difference is avowed." This statement by Möhler, taken with some little qualification, may be regarded as not unfairly setting forth the general doctrinal difference between Romanists and Protestants on the subject of the Church.

The doctrine of the Church of Rome starts with the idea of an outward Church, to which an invisible and spiritual one is completely subordinate, and before which it must give place. The spiritual character of the gospel in all its relations to man is superseded by the relations to him of an outward Church; and on this foundation many of the worst and most characteristic errors of Popery are reared. Instead of the inward working of the Word upon the soul, Popery substitutes the outward authority of an infallible Church; instead of an inward faith uniting a man to his Saviour, Popery substitutes an outward union with a visible society; instead of the internal operation of the Spirit upon the heart, renewing and sanctifying the inner man, Popery substitutes the outward cleansing by penance and absolution, appointed by the Church; instead of the unseen Priest in heaven, with His unseen intercession and His one ever-sufficient sacrifice, there is the visible priest and the material sacrifice to be found in the outward Church on earth. To repeat the words of Möhler: "The Catholics teach: the visible Church is first,—then comes the invisible;" or, rather, "the visible Church is first, and the invisible comes not at all." If the principles already laid down are correct, the

reverse, very nearly, of all this is true. The primary and leading idea of the Church is unquestionably the Church invisible, comprising the whole body of the elect, for whose sake a visible Church has been established on this earth at all. In the spiritual union of believers to Christ, and in the privileges resulting from that union, we recognise the foundation of all the privileges that belong to the visible society. The Church, in its character as invisible, and spiritually united to Christ through all its members, is a fact not to be set aside or superseded by the outward communion of a visible Church. Right views as to the existence of, and relations between, the two will go far to prepare the way for an intelligent understanding and discernment of Popish errors.

In the fourth place, the principles already laid down in regard to the Church, as invisible and visible, are necessary to enable us to interpret the different statements of Scripture in connection with the Church. On the one hand, there are averments made in Scripture in regard to the invisible Church which are true of it, but not of the visible Church; and, on the other hand, there are assertions made in regard to the visible Church which are true of it, but not of the Church invisible. And there is not a more frequent source of perplexity and error in Theology than the confounding or identifying the character and properties belonging to the one with the character and properties belonging to the other. To apply thus interchangeably, and as if properly convertible, what is spoken in Scripture of the invisible Church to the visible, and vice versa, is a frequent and favourite resource of Romanist controversialists, when called upon to illustrate their theory of Church principles, or to defend their pretensions to Church power. There are statements, for example, in Scripture, in regard to the oneness of the body of Christ, which attribute to the whole collective number of the elect a unity of faith and hope and character of the most perfect kind,—statements which apply mainly or only to the invisible Church, but which, once transferred by Romanists to the visible Church, have been developed into that system of outward and formal unity characteristic of the Papacy, and beyond which there is no possibility of salvation. In like

manner, there are intimations not a few in the New Testament, giving promise of the continued presence of the Spirit with the body of believers, and affording an assurance that they shall be led into and kept in the truth,—a security, indeed, without which they would soon cease to be believers at all. And these intimations, applicable as they are to the invisible Church, have been misapplied by Romanists to the visible, and have been interpreted into a promise of infallibility to be bestowed on the Church at Rome. It is thus that the language of our Lord or His inspired disciples, in regard to that Church which He purchased with His own blood, and which is one with Him, has been outraged and misapplied from age to age in justification of the claims and pretensions of the Romish Church. Such a system of interpretation or misinterpretation of Scripture language in regard to the Church, has led to some of the worst errors in Theology; and nothing but a clear discernment of the principles that connect and yet distinguish the Church invisible and the Church visible, and a right application of these to explain the statements of the Word of God on the point, will save us from mistakes fraught with the most ruinous consequences both in doctrine and practice.

## **CHAPTER IV:**

### **THE CHURCH IN ITS TWOFOLD CHARACTER AS CATHOLIC AND LOCAL**

IF all professing Christians throughout the world could meet together in one place, and join in the observance of ordinances in one assembly, they would form a visible society in the strictest sense of

the term one,—being united among themselves, and separated from the rest of mankind by the profession of a common faith, and by fellowship in the same outward solemnities. Such a state of things, however, has not been realized on earth since the day when the hundred and twenty disciples met together in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, or rather since the day when around one table, and in the fellowship of one loaf and one cup, the disciples of Christ sat down together with their Master to eat the first Lord's Supper before He was offered. It was not the intention of our Lord that this local and visible unity of His followers should continue, because its continuance would have been inconsistent with the progress of His Gospel in the world. In a very brief period the word of that Gospel went forth from Jerusalem to the most distant regions of the earth, being planted in cities and countries the most remote from each other, and gathering together into separate Christian societies, where it was received, men who had never seen, and were never destined to see, each other in the flesh. The unity of one Christian society, met together under one roof at Jerusalem, was soon exchanged for the diversity of many distinct societies of Christians meeting together for worship in separate places, and scattered, more or less, over the whole civilised world. The preaching of the glad tidings of salvation that began at Jerusalem, was not destined to be confined within its walls: the Gospel was to be proclaimed to every creature under heaven. Distance of place, difference of country and race and language, soon necessarily intervened to break up the visible unity of the disciples of Christ.

Now, taking the actual historical fact of the separation thus effected among the followers of Christ, so soon as Christianity was diffused through the world, the question meets us: What is the relation in which these separate societies stand to each other and to the whole number of believers on earth? Is there anything in the principles which they profess in common, or in the objects at which they aim, sufficient to overcome the distance of place and distinction of language, and to give to all these worshipping societies a real unity, notwithstanding of a local and outward separation? The answer to



this question opens up the consideration of the twofold aspect under which the Christian Church may be regarded as local and catholic,—local, as limited to one spot, and separated by distance of place and by other obstacles from visible ordinary communion with other societies; and yet catholic, as possessing a high unity in the faith or profession of one Lord and Saviour.

The property of catholic, as contradistinguished from local, which belongs to the Christian Church, is to be explained in two senses, as it refers more especially to the invisible or to the visible Church of Christ. In both cases the Christian society is to be regarded as catholic, although under somewhat different aspects.

I. In the first place, the invisible Church of Christ, made up of the whole number of true believers throughout the world, is catholic, or, in other words, not confined to any place or people. In this respect, it stands contrasted with the limited and local economy of the Church under the Jewish dispensation. In so far as the Jewish Church constituted a society of the worshippers of God, it was local, not catholic. It had its centre at Jerusalem, and its circumference at the geographical limits of Judea. With one local temple for the worshippers, and one altar for their gifts, with the command to repair thrice a year to Jerusalem to observe the solemn feasts, with a national priesthood and a national membership,—the Church, under the former dispensation, was designed and fitted to be no more than a limited and partial one. There is a striking contrast between all this and the Christian Church under the Gospel. There is now no local centre for the religious service of Christ's people,—no holy place to which they must repair personally for their worship, or towards which, when at a distance, they must turn their face in prayer. Neither at Jerusalem, nor in the temple, are men now to worship the Father. Wherever on the wide earth there is a true worshipper, there is a true temple of Jehovah, and there He may be worshipped in spirit and in truth. There is no more a national priesthood limited to one blood, and found only among the sons of Aaron. There is one Priest for all, who has taken upon Him the flesh, not of the Jew only,

but of man; and whose blood is kindred to that which flows in the veins of the whole human race,—a Priest sufficient for all, and common to all. There is now no national membership in the Church of Christ, limited to one hereditary family or favoured race; but in the fellowship of one faith and one spirit, all, of whatever tribe or tongue or nation, are one with Christ, and one with each other. The narrow barriers of a former economy have been thrown down; and in the gift of the Spirit to all believers, and in the fellowship of the Spirit coextensive with all, there is laid the foundation of a Church, no longer confined to one nation as before under the law, but worldwide and universal. In the universality of the one Spirit, as embracing all, and co-extensive with all who are the real disciples of Christ throughout the world, we see the provision made for a Church limited to no country, and peculiar to no people. In the unity of the Spirit, as undivided, notwithstanding of division of place and kindred and language, we see the provision made for binding into one all of whatever name or class to whom that Spirit has been given. Earthly and outward causes of separation are overborne and controlled by this higher principle of unity. Separation in race or tongue is no separation to be accounted of among the followers of Christ, who are joined together in that one Spirit. Distance on the earth is no distance to be regarded between those who are partakers together of the same Holy Ghost. Local Churches or societies, divided in place and outward worship, become merged in the oneness of a higher fellowship. Separated in the outward act of worship, they are joined in the communion of the same Spirit. The assemblies of Christians in every quarter of the globe, who worship God in sincerity and truth, are one in such a sense as their distance from one another admits of; and they must all be regarded as branches of the universal Church of Christ throughout the world,—the great community of believers, separated by distance and kindred and tongue, who cannot meet together in the body, but who really meet together in the Spirit. The invisible Church of Christ on earth is local, but it is also catholic.

II. In the second place, the visible Church of Christ, consisting of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, is also

catholic or universal. The catholicity of the visible Church rests upon somewhat different grounds from those on which the catholicity of the invisible Church is founded; but it is not less real, nor less clearly recognised in Scripture. In the one case we speak of the invisible Church as catholic, because the bond of union among its members is the fellowship of one Spirit, embracing all, and co-extensive with all; in the other case we speak of the visible Church as catholic, because the bond of union among its members is a common public profession, and an outward federal relationship to Christ. The catholic visible Church is not a mere abstract idea,—a convenient expression for the number of all those Christians who visibly profess the faith of Christ throughout the world. It is much more than this: it is made up of all Christians who, visibly professing the faith of Christ, are constituted by that profession into one corporate body, and stand in one outward covenant relationship to Christ. This, in so far as regards the visible Church, is the primary and usual application of the term in Scripture. The application of it to local Churches or separate congregations is only a subordinate and secondary meaning. This catholic visible Church is recognised in Scripture as a real society, having certain corporate privileges, and standing in a certain outward covenant to Christ. Its privileges are, an outward provision of government, ordinances, and worship, appointed by Christ for the benefit of all who will partake of them, and rightly use them. The bond of connection among its members is a common profession of the faith, and a common submission by them to a Church state and a Church fellowship. In the unity, and yet the universality, of this outward profession and outward relationship to Christ, we recognise the foundation laid for the catholicity of the visible Church on earth. There is a unity in the outward profession of all its members, which, notwithstanding of minor and accidental diversities as to place and condition and administration, remains undivided, and knits them together into one body,—one among themselves, and separate from the rest of mankind. There is a universality in this outward profession and relationship to Christ in a Church state, that embraces all the professing disciples of Jesus throughout the world, and is limited to no class, and peculiar to no

people. The separation, then, of the congregations of this visible Church from each other by distance of place, by difference of language, by varieties of administration, by different modes of worship and different outward observations, is a separation accidental and not essential, and cannot affect the fact of that higher unity that belongs to them as knit together in one profession of faith in Christ, and included together in the bond of an external covenant. The local and accidental differences are merged in the higher and essential oneness that belongs to them, as equally the members of a society which Christ has sealed with the seal of outward privileges, and recognised as His kingdom in the world. Those differences that do obtain in this world among professing Christians and separate Churches, both as respects opinion and practice, may indeed be very numerous and very great; and the importance of them is not to be undervalued or denied. But so long as these differences are not such as to sever them from the outward communion of Christ, and to set them aside as no longer His Churches, there is something still higher and more important than these diversities, however great they be. They are not to be accounted of in comparison with the common privilege of the covenant relationship in which all His Churches stand to Him; and all lower and accidental differences become lost in the unity of an outward fellowship with Him. Among the many Churches existing in New Testament times, separated from each other by distance of place, and difference of language, and variety of opinion and administration, we hear but of one kingdom of God, and no more than one. The visible Church was one and universal, embracing all and uniting all; and the many local Churches, severed far and wide from each other, were merged and combined in the one catholic Church of the Saviour.

Whether, then, we speak of the invisible or of the visible Church of Christ on earth, they are, as societies, catholic or universal, and not merely local and limited to one spot or people. The primary and fundamental idea of the invisible Church is that of a society co-extensive with all true believers throughout the world, and, as a society, standing in a spiritual relationship to Christ. The secondary

and subordinate idea of the invisible Church is that of a society limited to one place, and forming the local body of true Christians in that place. In the same manner, the primary idea of the visible Church is that of a society co-extensive with all professing Christians throughout the world, and standing in an outward federal relationship to Christ. And the secondary idea is that of the visible Church defined by the boundaries of some special locality, and forming the separate local Church in that place. In these we recognise not two Churches of Christ, but one Church under different aspects. We have, in short, in both cases, the Christian society in its twofold character of catholic and local.

Now there are various conclusions of an important nature that stand connected with the principles now illustrated. To some of these I would briefly advert.

I. In the first place, the principles laid down as to the Church local and catholic, serve to evince the nature of the relation in which both members and office-bearers of separate Churches stand to each other, notwithstanding of the separation. Remoteness of place, which the dissemination of the gospel throughout the world rendered unavoidable, has conspired with other causes to produce an apparent breach in the unity of the catholic Church. More than this, and worse than this: different interpretations of Scripture have introduced among professing Christians a difference of belief regarding the doctrines of Christianity. Opposite opinions, too, as to the forms of administration and modes of worship appointed for the Christian Church, have led to apparently irreconcilable breaches among them. And now the vast society of professing Christians throughout the world is broken up and divided into distinct sections, which not distance of place, but distance of opinion and practice, keeps apart; so that, while they profess to worship one God through one Mediator, they would not meet together for that worship in common, even although they could. Now it is of importance to mark how much of this separation among the body of professing Christians is due to the weakness or wickedness of man, and how little of it is due to the

essential character and nature of a Church of Christ. It is not to be forgotten that the visible Church of Christ, although broken down, from the very nature of the case, into local and separate societies, is nevertheless catholic, and that the members of the Church are, in their character as members, not nominally but really one. The character that Christians sustain as members of the Church, is a character that bears reference primarily and principally to the catholic, and not to any particular and local Church. That they are members of this or that local society of professing Christians, is an accidental circumstance, due to the place or the social community in which Providence may have ordered their habitation; but in becoming members of that local Church, they become members of the Church catholic and universal. Their admission by baptism into the particular society or congregation of any one place made them free of the Church at large; and their rightful exclusion from that society by excommunication, cuts them off from the privileges of the universal Church. The believer is not so much a member of any local Church whatsoever, as he is a member of the catholic Church of Christ, which is not confined to any place or people. In like manner, the office-bearers of the Christian Church are not the office-bearers of any particular society alone, but the office-bearers of the whole visible community of believers. It may be necessary, for the advantageous exercise of their office, and profitable for the Church, that particular ministers should be set apart to labour in particular charges, as more exclusively theirs. But their ministry is not limited to these. Their commission as preachers of the Gospel is a commission co-extensive with the visible Church of Christ; and they are free to exercise their ministry wherever and whenever they have a regular opportunity to do so. Both members and office-bearers stand related, in the first instance, to the Church catholic or universal, and only, in the second instance, to the Church local or particular. In the relation which all professing Christians, whether office-bearers or members, thus sustain in common to the catholic Church, notwithstanding of separation by place or other circumstances, we see the foundation laid for local Churches holding fellowship with each other. Difference of doctrine or administration or worship may

indeed hinder their fellowship,—and not without sin on one side or other; but it ought never to be forgotten, that both members and office-bearers, however separated, if they belong to the Christian society at all, belong not to many Churches, properly speaking, but to one; that they are in communion, not so much with various local societies, as with the one catholic Church of the Redeemer.

II. In the second place, the principles laid down demonstrate the evil of schism, or of causeless separation in the Church. The visible Church of Christ was intended by Him to be catholic and one; and notwithstanding of the dissemination far and wide throughout the world of the separate societies of professing Christians, it would be one in reality, as comprehending all and uniting all, were it not for the sinful infirmities of its members. That can be no light offence which gives to the one kingdom of God in this world the appearance of a kingdom divided against itself, and liable to fall. It were impossible, indeed, to deny that there may be real and sufficient ground for separation from some particular local Church. That a particular Church may itself apostatize from the faith, or be guilty of imposing upon its members terms of communion, to comply with which would be sin, there cannot be a doubt; and in such a case separation becomes a duty to be discharged, and not an offence to be avoided. But in separating in such circumstances from the Church, the schism lies not with the parties who separate, but with the Church that compels and causes the separation. In thus going forth from it, we maintain, in fact, rather than infringe on the higher unity of the one Church of Christ. But for parties to separate wantonly, and on insufficient grounds, from the communion of the visible Church, is a grave and serious offence against the authority of Christ in His house. To go out from the communion of the visible Church, and to widen its breaches wilfully, and for trivial reasons, is to set ourselves against the desire and design of Christ that His kingdom in this world should be catholic and one. And when schism is aggravated by the permanent abandonment of a Church profession and Church state,—when causeless separation from any one Church of Christ is followed by the disavowal of all,—when the outward profession that

makes a man a member of the visible Church is cast off, and all Christian fellowship is disowned, the guilt incurred is of a ruinous kind. "The visible Church," says the Confession of Faith, "is the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation."

III. In the third place, the principles already enunciated are fitted to throw considerable light on the principles of unity exhibited in the Christian Church. We have had occasion to remark that the Church invisible and the Church visible are both catholic or universal, but that they are so in somewhat different senses; the catholicity of the Church invisible being of a higher and more perfect kind than that of the Church visible. The same thing is true in regard to the unity of the Church. The Christian Church is one, whether you speak of it in its character as invisible, or in its character as visible. But a much higher unity, as well as a more complete, belongs to it in the one character than in the other. As the invisible Church of Christ, the unity characteristic of it is a spiritual unity, susceptible of a much higher character, as well as of a more complete realization, than in the case of the visible Church. The members of the invisible Church, or true believers, are, one and all of them, united to Christ, and united to each other in the communion of the Holy Ghost. They are one with their Head in heaven, and with His members on earth, in consequence of the common participation in the same Spirit; and the unity thus resulting to the invisible Church is one far higher, as well as more intimate and complete, than any relationship of an external kind can possibly be. The one and undivided Spirit of God is the bond and measure of the unity of the invisible Church. It is very different in regard to that unity which alone can be attributed to the visible Church of God in this world. The members of the visible Church are united together in an outward fellowship of privilege and ordinance in a Church state by means of an external profession; and their union with Christ, as members of the visible Church, is, like their union with each other, of an external kind. This unity of the visible Church can be neither so exalted in its character, nor so complete in its degree, as the unity of the invisible. It is lower in its



character; for it is an outward and not a spiritual union. And it is less complete in degree; for it is a formal union, admitting under it of manifold inward diversities. The outward profession of the faith and outward relation to Christ implied in the union of the members of the visible Church, may consist with many differences and divisions as to other matters by which that union is made less complete and intimate. The history of the Christian Church, indeed, is a melancholy evidence of how great and manifold may be the differences as to doctrine and practice, which may consist with an outward union among men, standing all of them in an outward relation to Christ, as members of His Church. Beneath the formal and external union of the visible Church the marks of deep and sore division may be seen. In this respect, then, the unity of the invisible Church is a unity much higher in kind, and more intimate in degree, than the unity of the visible Church; and it is one of the greatest difficulties in the application and interpretation of Scripture language in reference to the Church, to discriminate the occasions on which it refers to the higher unity of the invisible from those on which the lower and less perfect unity of the visible Church is spoken of. The Church of Rome has not failed to profit by this difficulty, and has been accustomed to confound, as if they were interchangeable, the statements of Scripture in regard to the unity of the invisible, with the statements of Scripture in regard to the unity of the visible, Church. And hence the outward and formal unity of the Popish Church has been set forth by its adherents, as realizing all that is said in the New Testament of the oneness of the Church of Christ. But it is never to be forgotten that the spiritual union of believers in the invisible Church of Christ is one of a much higher and more intimate kind than any to be realized visibly in the form or features of any outward society. The oneness of the invisible is the ideal, to which, amid all its breaches and divisions, the visible Church can only approximately approach. The distance between the oneness of the invisible and of the visible Church is, in the present state of the world, wide and great. The glory of a millennial age may perhaps make the actual in the latter approach indefinitely near to the ideal

in the former; but until the day of the consummation of all things they can never completely coincide.

IV. In the fourth place, the principles laid down in regard to the Church catholic and local are fitted to explain the promise of perpetuity given to the Christian Church. There are statements in Scripture that seem distinctly to intimate that the Christian Church shall always continue to exist in this world, notwithstanding that all is earthly and hostile around her. God will never leave Himself without that witness which the Church bears to His name and cause on this earth. He has founded it upon a rock; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. But while there is such a promise given to the Church at large, there is no such assurance vouchsafed to particular Churches. The promise of perpetuity, and the fulfilment of that promise in the continued presence of Christ through His Spirit with the Church, belong to it in its character as catholic and not as local. That Christ will be with His Church "alway, even to the end of the world," ministering the needful support and grace for its permanent existence on earth, we cannot doubt. But in regard to no particular Church on earth have we warrant to cherish the same assurance. There are threatenings in Scripture not a few, of judgment and desertion, directed against particular Churches, to the extent of utter extermination because of their unfaithfulness and apostasy; and history tells us how, in the case of the seven Churches of Asia, such threatenings have been fulfilled. The Epistle to the Ephesians still stands in the canon of Scripture, and is read throughout the world; but the Church of Ephesus is desolate, and there are none within its walls to read it now. Local Churches may perish under the burden of their own unfaithfulness and sins; but the universal Church cannot perish, because upheld by the promise and protection of its Head. The catholic Church may indeed be more or less visible in the world. There may be multitudes added to it daily of such as shall be saved; or it may be reduced to the hidden seven thousand in Israel that have not bowed the knee to Baal. But with that catholic Church the promise abides; and it is sufficient for its preservation on the earth. It is but one of the many perversions of Scripture of which

Popery has been guilty, to transfer the promise of perpetuity given to the catholic and universal Church of Christ on earth, to the Church of Rome.

V. In the fifth place, the principles already laid down serve, in like manner, to explain the statements made in Scripture, which give the assurance that the Church of Christ shall never fall away from the truth. That there are such assurances, there can be no reason to doubt. To believers generally was given the promise of the Spirit, not only to lead them into, but to keep them in all the truth; and that promise will continue to be fulfilled until the Church on earth has no longer the need of it, and when its members shall be placed beyond the reach of temptation to fall away from the truth. But this promise, like that of perpetuity, is made to no special society of professing believers. It is made to the catholic, not to any local Church of Christ; and it gives to particular Churches no security whatsoever that they may not depart from the truth and fall into error. The history of the Church on earth but too plainly and unequivocally records how the purest have become corrupt, and in what manner they have first ceased to contend as before for the faith, and then greedily embraced the opposite error. The Church of Christ, as catholic and universal, is indefectible, or, in other words, will be kept from falling away entirely from the truth, but not so the particular Churches of which it is composed; nor is it anything else but one of the lying cheats practised by the Church of Antichrist, first to transmute the promise of indefectibility into that of infallibility, and then to appropriate it to itself. "The purest Churches under heaven," says the Confession of Faith, "are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall always be a Church on earth to worship God according to His will."

## CHAPTER V:

### THE NOTES OF THE CHURCH

IN the case of a number of individual men, differing, it may be, widely from each other in religious opinions and practice, in creed and in character, yet all of them claiming alike to be called Christians, there must be some criterion or test by which to ascertain and decide which of them are, and which of them are not, truly entitled to the name. Such a test we actually employ when we bring the professed creed of any man to the bar of the Word of God; and according as it fundamentally agrees with or fundamentally differs from that standard, judge him to be deserving or not deserving of the name of Christian. In like manner, in the case of a number of organized societies, no less widely differing from each other in profession and in practice, in the confession of faith that they own, and the form of order and government they adopt, yet all of them claiming in common to be called Churches of Christ, and not a few of them denying that name to any body but their own, there must be some criterion or test by which to discriminate amid such opposite and conflicting pretensions, and to decide which are and which are not entitled to the name. Now, unless we are prepared to disown the Protestant principle, that the Bible is the only standard in matters of faith, we must have recourse to that volume for materials to enable us to adjudicate in the controversy. The Word of God alone can furnish us with a test whereby to decide what are or are not true Churches of God; and if the essential marks and characters of a Christian Church, which distinguish it from all other societies, are plainly enough laid down in Scripture, there ought to be no great difficulty in fixing upon the true criterion. In the same manner as the Bible lays down the principles by which, in their application to

individuals, we are enabled to judge whether or not to concede to them the name of Christian, so also does it lay down the principles which, in their application to professedly Christian societies, will enable us to judge whether or not we ought to concede to them the title of Churches of Christ. Practically, indeed, there is considerable difficulty in the application of these principles both in the case of the individual and the society,—the difference between each respectively and the Bible standard being a question of degree, and justly depriving them of their title to be regarded as Christians or Churches, only when that difference becomes fundamental. But whatever difficulty may be found in the practical application of them, there can be no reasonable doubt that there are principles in Scripture which enable us to say what is the essential mark or character both of the man and the society who are entitled to the name respectively of a Christian and a Church of Christ. The notes or marks of a Christian Church are a proper subject for our consideration, both on account of the importance of the subject in itself, and on account of the somewhat disproportionate interest attached to the inquiry in consequence of its bearing on the Popish Church. We proceed, then, to consider what are the essential characteristics of a Church of Christ, or the notes by which it may be known and recognised.

Now, in entering upon this question, there are two preliminary distinctions, which it is of much importance to bear along with us in our inquiry.

First, there is an important distinction between what is necessary to the being of a Church, and what is necessary to its wellbeing. There are articles of belief to be found in the Word of God, or to be deduced, "by good and necessary consequence," from it, which it is both the duty and the privilege of a Christian Church to receive and embody in its creed; the denial or rejection of which, however, would not necessarily infer that it had forfeited its essential character, and ceased to be a Church at all. In like manner, there are departures from Scripture authority or example in respect to outward order and

administration in a Church of Christ, in respect to its government and discipline and worship, which, although wrong in themselves, and injurious in their operations and tendency, yet do not suffice to unchurch the Christian society, or to deprive it of its claim to be regarded as a branch of the visible Church of Christ. There is much, in short, that may be necessary to the perfection of a Church, measured and judged of by the Word of God, that is not necessary to the existence of a Church in such a sense that the want of it would exclude it from the title or privileges of a Church at all. We recognise this distinction every day in regard to a Christian man; and it is no less to be recognised in its application to a Christian society. There is many a doctrine and truth of revelation, in regard to which a man may err without ceasing on that account to be a Christian man; and there is many a duty recognised in Scripture as binding upon all, in which he may be totally deficient without forfeiting his Christianity. In other words, there is much in doctrine and duty, in faith and practice, necessary to the perfection of a believer, which is not necessary to the existence of a believer as such; and so it is with a Christian Church. What is essential to its existence as a Church, is something very different from what is essential to its perfection as a Church; and although a departure from the standard of the Word of God, either as to creed or outward administration, may be in itself sinful, and must, like every departure from Scripture, be injurious, yet it may be an error neither so fundamental nor extensive in its character as to imply, on the part of the Christian society which has been guilty of it, a forfeiture of its Church state, leaving its ministers without authority to preach, and its ordinances without virtue to bless. No doubt there is a difficulty—and that a very great one—in the practical application of such a distinction as this. It may be difficult to draw the line between what is fundamental and what is not,—between what is essential and what is non-essential to the being of a Christian Church. But the practical difficulty in applying the distinction does not do away with the distinction itself, which, in one shape or other, will make itself to be recognised as just and well founded. The difficulty in drawing the line between what is necessary and not necessary to the existence and character of an individual

Christian is exactly similar to, and not less perplexing than, the difficulty in laying down what is essential or not essential to the existence and character of a Christian society. In both cases there is a practical difficulty in applying the distinction; but in neither can it be overlooked or rejected.

Secondly, there is a distinction not less important to be borne in mind, in connection with this matter, between the things for which the Church was instituted, and the things that have been instituted for the Church. This second distinction is one very often recognised and made use of by the old divines in regard to the Church; and in the present case it serves to give precision and definiteness to the first. Taken by itself, and apart from other considerations, it is not easy at first sight to lay down a principle by which to answer the question, what things are and what are not fundamental in the idea of a Christian Church; and hence the difficulty in applying practically the distinction already laid down. But if our first distinction is taken in connection with our second, the practical difficulty is, to a considerable extent, removed. There are things for the sake of which the Christian Church was itself instituted,—things, therefore, in their nature and import, paramount to the Church itself; and there are other things instituted for the sake of the Christian Church,—things, therefore, that must be subordinate in their nature and importance to the Church. This distinction is of considerable value, and not difficult, under the teaching of Scripture, to be applied. We read in Scripture that the Christian Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth," and that "for this cause the Son of God Himself came, that He might bear witness to the truth." In other words, we learn that the very object for which the Church of Christ was established on the earth was to declare and uphold the truth, with all its spiritual and saving blessings, among mankind,—that truth which exhibits at once the glory of God, and in harmony and connection with that, the salvation of the sinner. For this thing, then, the Church of Christ was instituted; and this thing, or the declaration of the truth, must therefore be, in its nature and importance, paramount to the Church itself. Again, we read in Scripture that Christ "gave some apostles,

and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."2 In other words, we learn that ordinances and office-bearers have been established for the object of promoting the wellbeing and edification of the Church. These things, then, unlike the former, were instituted for the sake of the Church, and not the Church for the sake of them; and these things, therefore, must be, in their nature and importance, subordinate to the Church. Wherever this distinction can be readily and obviously applied, there can be little difficulty in answering the question: what things are fundamental and what things are not fundamental to the existence of a Church of Christ. If inquiry is made whether some particular thing is essential to the idea of a Christian Church, and to be reckoned among those fundamental characteristics without which it must cease to be a Church at all, it may not be difficult to apply the test through which an answer to the inquiry is to be obtained. Is this thing to be numbered with those for the sake of which a Church was instituted on the earth, or, rather, among those which have been instituted for the sake of the Church? If the Christian Church has been established and maintained in the world for the sake of this thing, then we cannot err in making it to be fundamental and necessary, not only to the perfection, but to the very existence, of a Church at all. If, on the other hand, this thing falls to be reckoned among those that have been instituted for the sake of the Church, then we may affirm that it is necessary for its wellbeing and advantage, but we cannot affirm that it is essential to its being.

Now, with the help of these two preliminary distinctions, it is not difficult to gather from Scripture what constitutes a Church of Christ, and what are to be accounted the real criteria or distinguishing marks of a Church.

In the first place, what is the great object for which the Christian Church was instituted, apart from those secondary and subordinate ones, which it may attain, but for which it was not primarily established? There can be no doubt that Scripture represents the one



great object of the establishment of a Church in the world to be the glory of God, in the salvation of sinners, by means of the publication of the gospel. For this end the Church was instituted at first; for this end it continues to exist from one generation to another; and it is only in so far as it accomplishes this one grand object of its existence, that it serves the proper and primary purpose of a Church at all. Judging, then, by this first test, we are warranted in saying, that to hold and to preach the true faith or doctrine of Christ is the only sure and infallible note or mark of a Christian Church, because this is the one thing for the sake of which a Church of Christ has been instituted on earth. A true faith makes a true Church, and a corrupt faith a corrupt Church; and should it at any time apostatize from the true faith altogether, it would, by the very act, cease to be a Church of Christ in any sense at all. The Church was established for the sake of the truth, and not the truth for the sake of the Church.

In the second place, what are those things which, unlike the truth, have been instituted for the sake of the Church, and not the Church for the sake of them? Such, unquestionably, are the ordinances, office-bearers, and discipline which have been established within the Christian society. These being instituted for the advantage and edification of the Church, are, from their very nature, subordinate and secondary to the truth, for the holding and publication of which both they and the Church itself exist. They may be necessary, and are necessary, for the perfection of the Church, but they are not necessary for its existence. They cannot be accounted fundamental, in the sense that without them it would cease to exist as a Church at all. The single thing essential to the being of a Christian Church on earth is the faith or doctrine of Christ. According to the distinction already laid down, for this thing the Church was instituted, and not this thing for the Church.

Other things, such as sacraments and ordinances, the ministry, and the outward administration of the Church, are not essential to it, but only accidental; they are necessary for its wellbeing, but not for its being. According to the same distinction, these things were instituted

for the Church, and not the Church for them. The only true and infallible note or mark of a Church of Christ is the profession of the faith of Christ. According to the well-known saying of Jerome, when speaking of the prevalence of Arianism in the Church of the fourth century: *Ecclesia non in parietibus consistit, sed in dogmatum veritate; Ecclesia ibi est, ubi fides vera est.*

The one note or mark, then, which is common to every true Church, and peculiar to every true Church, is the profession of the faith of Christ. Whatever be the differences in other respects,—whatever be the distinction in outward form or administration, in ordinances, in government, in worship,—these things are subordinate to the one criterion of the profession of the true faith, which marks by its presence a true Church, and declares by its absence an apostate one. It is not the succession of outward forms and ordinances, the hereditary derivation from primitive times of a ministry and sacraments, that constitute a Church of Christ, or lay the foundation for its character and privileges. These things were made for the Church, and not the Church for them. These things may be good to provide for its wellbeing; they will not suffice to prove its existence. It is the succession of the truth alone that marks out a Christian Church; and the stamp of birth and lineage that belongs to it is not the outward apostolic pedigree of its ministers, but the heritage of that faith which apostles first taught and published. It is not the want of a spotless ecclesiastical genealogy, or of sacraments derived by regular succession from primitive times, that will unchurch a Christian society, but the want of that apostolic doctrine which alone marks out a Church of Christ. At this point, and in the very definition of a Church, begins that error which is developed in the intolerant principles of many in the present day who would unchurch all denominations but their own; and which manifests itself also in that outward formalism—Popish or Tractarian—which ascribes to external ordinances a value and sacredness which belong only to the truth as it is in Jesus. Admit that the possession of a true faith, and that alone, is of the essence of a Church,—and you assign to the truth the place and importance that rightfully belong to it. But join to the

possession of the true faith the administration of outward ordinances, as necessary to constitute a Christian Church,—and you assign to outward ordinances a rank and value which are not justly theirs, and make them of primary, and not, as they truly are, of secondary importance.

There is a difference in this respect, and not an undesigned or unimportant one, in the definition given of a Church in the Articles of the Church of England on the one hand, and the Confession of Faith of our Church on the other. The Westminster Confession limits the definition of a Church to the profession of the true religion, as the one essential mark of a true Church. The Articles of the Church of England include, under the definition of a Church, not only the profession of the true religion, but also the right administration of the sacraments. "The visible Church," says the Westminster Confession, "consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children." "The visible Church of Christ," says the 19th Article of the Church of England, "is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."<sup>2</sup> We are told by Bishop Burnet, that the language of this Article and of the 23d ("of ministering in the congregation") was so selected, as not necessarily to include in the idea of a Church the doctrine of an "apostolical succession" of the ministry as requisite to the valid and regular dispensation of the sacraments; and not, therefore, necessarily to exclude those Christian communities who claimed no such ministry. But the introduction of the idea of the administration of the sacraments, as being of the essence of a Church, marks the difference between the definition of the Church as given in the XXXIX Articles and in the Westminster Confession. There is no doubt that the profession of the true faith by a Christian Church will, in all ordinary circumstances, necessarily lead to the establishment and administration of the sacraments also; and in this way the profession of the faith may be said to imply or infer the outward ordinances likewise. In this somewhat loose and popular

sense, the sacraments, as well as the profession of the faith, may be said to belong to the idea of a Christian Church; and many writers, in so defining a Church, have meant no more. But, in a strict and logical definition of it, there enters into the essence of a Church nothing but what is assigned to it in the Westminster Confession,—namely, the profession of the true religion of Christ. And I have no doubt that it was to avoid the danger of those intolerant and mischievous consequences that might be deduced from the introduction of it, that the element of the administration of the sacraments is excluded from the definition of a Church in our Confession. That outward ordinances are not fundamental or essential to a Church, is plain from the fact that they are of those things made for the Church, and not of those for which the Church was made. That the possession of the truth is, on the contrary, fundamental and essential to the idea of a Church, is apparent from the fact that the Church was instituted for the truth, and not the truth for the Church.<sup>2</sup>

The adherents of the Church of Rome have been accustomed to exclude from the notes or marks of the Church the only one really essential to it,—namely, the possession of the true faith of Christ,—and to multiply the number of other marks, which are not essential or peculiar to it. It was impossible for them, consistently with their own principles, to admit that the true faith was a note or mark through which the Church might be known; for the very foundation of their system is, that the faith can be known only through the Church, and not the Church through the faith. And they have been accustomed to multiply non-essential marks of the Church, of an outward and formal kind, with the twofold object,—first, of more certainly unchurching all other religious bodies destitute of these marks; and, secondly, of building up the better the external system of rites and observances of which Popery consists. Cardinal Bellarmine, for example, lays down fifteen different notes or marks of the true Church: 1. The possession of the name Catholic; 2. Antiquity; 3. Continued and uninterrupted duration; 4. Extent or multitude of believers; 5. Succession of bishops; 6. Agreement in doctrine with the ancient Church; 7. Union of members among themselves and with

the Head; 8. Sanctity of doctrine; 9. Efficacy of doctrine; 10. Holiness of life; 11. The glory of miracles; 12. The right of prophecy; 13. The confession of adversaries; 14. The unhappy end of the Church's adversaries; and, 15. Temporal felicity. The more modern champions of Rome have generally abandoned the greater number of the notes which Bellarmine has ascribed to the Church, and have contented themselves with a somewhat more moderate list. Perrone, the present Professor of Theology in the Jesuit College at Rome, has, in his *Prælectiones Theologicæ*, laid down four marks or notes of the Church. These are taken from the terms of the Nicene or Constantinopolitan creed, and are: 1st, Unity; 2d, Sanctity; 3d, Catholicity; 4th, Apostolicity. Now, there are three observations which it may not be unimportant to make on these notes of the Church.

In the first place, were we to take these four notes in the ordinary meaning of the terms in which they are announced, we might still object to them as not in strictness to be accounted of the essence of a Church, and therefore not properly entering into the definition of one, but rather as properties belonging to it, more or less, although not peculiar to it, and not distinguishing it from all other bodies. This would be a valid objection; although it might be hardly worth while to found a controversy upon it. In the proper sense of the terms, Unity, Sanctity, Catholicity, and Apostolicity belong, more or less, to the Christian Church, in consequence of the Church holding and professing the true faith of Christ; and, taking them in this meaning, all that we could object to them, as notes of the Church, is, that they are not peculiar to the Church, but may belong to other societies as well.

But, in the second place, the ordinary and proper meaning of the terms, "One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic," is not the meaning put upon them by Perrone and other Romish controversialists, when they use the words as notes of the Church; nor would that meaning serve their purpose in employing them. That "unity," which is a mark of the Church in the estimation of Perrone and other Papists, is not a

spiritual unity, consisting of the fellowship of all true believers in one Spirit or one faith, but an outward unity, resulting from their external submission to one central authority and one infallible head in the visible Church. That "sanctity," which is held out as a note of the Church, is not a holiness through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth, but is the outward holiness of penance and absolution and indulgence, and the outward manifestation of supernatural grace and miracle in the Church. That "catholicity" which is appealed to as marking the Church, is not the unlimited adaptation of the Christian Church to all, without exception of classes or countries, but a formal and outward uniformity both of profession and administration, of belief and worship, through all the branches of the Christian society. And, finally, that "apostolicity" which is laid down as a distinguishing criterion of the true Church, is not a conformity to apostolic faith or example, but a public and formal succession of ministers and sacraments, without interruption or mixture, since the days of the apostles until our own. The notes of the Church as laid down by Perrone, when thus understood, are plainly designed to support and extend the pretensions of the Romish power, by unchurching all other denominations, and leaving them without the name and the privileges of a Church at all.

In the third place, the Romish notes of the Church are fitted and designed to invert the order in which the Church of Christ and the truth of Christ stand to each other. I have already remarked that the possession of the truth is, with Romish controversialists, no mark of the Christian Church at all. It is expressly excluded by them; and for this reason, that, according to their system, the truth is known through the Church, and not rather the Church through the truth. With Popery the first and leading idea is the Church, viewed as a system of outward authority and outward ordinances, and known by certain visible and formal marks. According to the Romish theory, the first and primary obligation incumbent on all is to recognise the Church, and to submit implicitly to its authority and observances. Second merely to the Church, and subordinate to it, is the idea of the truth of Christ, which can be known only through the teaching of the

Church; and the inferior obligation, and not the principal, is the obligation of embracing the truth of Christ on the authority of the Church. I do not stop to point out the strange and vicious circle in reasoning which such a system necessarily implies, sending us to the authority of Scripture to find the notes of the true Church, and then sending us to the true Church to find the authority of Scripture; but it is plain that the Popish doctrine on the subject of the Church goes to invert the order in which the truth of Christ and the Church of Christ stand in relation to each other. That doctrine would be a reasonable and even scriptural one, if, to recur once more to our former distinction, the truth had been instituted for the sake of the Church, and not rather the Church instituted for the sake of the truth; or if in any sense it could be alleged that the faith of Christ was, in place and importance, secondary and subordinate to the outward Christian society. But the very reverse of all this is the case. The very first and leading element in the idea of a Christian man is the faith that he holds. It is the true faith that makes and marks him a true Christian; and so it is with the Christian society which we call the Church. It is the true faith that makes and marks the true Church, and not the true Church that makes the true faith. And instead of seeking, in the first instance, and as the primary duty incumbent on us, for the true Church, in order that we may have and know what is the faith, we must just reverse the process, and seek, in the first place, and as the primary duty, for the faith, in order that we may be able to know what the Church is. In reversing the order in which the truth of Christ and the Church of Christ stand to each other, and in making the former depend on the latter, instead of the latter on the former, the Popish doctrine has succeeded in working out amid its adherents these two objects,—first, the support of its own arrogant and exclusive pretensions to unchurch every denomination but its own; and, secondly, the substitution of a huge system of outward authority and outward observances in the place of a living and spiritual faith in the truth.

## CHAPTER VI:

### THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

IN close connection with the subject of the notes or marks of the Church stands the question: What are the qualifications that give a right of admission within the Christian society? In other words: Who are entitled to the position and privileges of members of the Church? To this subject it seems desirable that we should now direct our attention.

In entering upon the discussion of this question, it is necessary to take along with us the important distinction, so frequently referred to, between the invisible and the visible Church. What is necessary to constitute a man a member of the invisible Church, is a very different thing from what is necessary to constitute a man a member of the visible Church of Christ. Let us, in the first place, advert briefly to the question: What is necessary to make one a member of the invisible Church?

I. Now, in answering the question, Who are and who are not members of the invisible Church of Christ? all that is necessary is, to keep distinctly in view the true nature and real character of that society. The Scriptures assure us that there is a Church which is the holy Bride of Christ, united to Him in an everlasting covenant,—a society which He calls His spiritual Body, and of which He is the exalted Head,—a community described as "a temple of the Holy Ghost," the members of which are "lively and spiritual stones" in the building. Such marks and privileges as these belong to no visible and outward society, whose features can be traced, and whose character



read, by man. In such statements of Scripture we recognise the invisible Church of Christ, known only to Himself, the members of which are included within the bonds of His electing grace. "The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible," says the Confession of Faith, "consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ, the Head thereof." It is restricted to no one time and no one place, but embraces the elect of all times and all places, without distinction and without exception. In the history of the past, it comprehends all who from the beginning have been chosen unto salvation, and effectually called by the Spirit; and in the history of the future, it embraces all who, till the dispensation of grace is brought to a close, shall be numbered with those who are adopted into the house and family of Christ. In heaven it can count a multitude, which no man can number, of those who have already been redeemed from the earth; and in this world it can reckon up another multitude, one with the family in heaven, who are either already believers, or who shall yet believe unto life eternal. The Church invisible consists, in short, of the whole number of the elect; and the terms of membership in the Church invisible are, to have a place and a name within the bonds and the privileges of the everlasting covenant.

In thus defining the members of the invisible Church of Christ to be the whole body of the elect throughout all places and all time, we are met by the counter-statements of the Popish Church. There is some considerable difference of opinion, at first sight at least, between former and more recent Romanists, regarding this matter. In former times, controversialists on the side of Rome were accustomed to deny the existence of an invisible Church altogether, and to affirm that the Christian society was singly and exclusively to be regarded as an outward and visible kingdom. And it followed as a necessary consequence from this assertion, that the terms of membership were not an interest in the covenant of grace, but an outward union to an outward Church. By Romanists in former times, the question, "What is necessary for admission to the Christian Church?" was met by the simple reply: "A professed submission to the see of Rome." In more

recent times, the denial of an invisible Church, as possessing a corporate existence and privileges, has been in some measure abandoned as untenable; and the extreme opinions of Bossuet and other Romish controversialists have been, to a considerable extent, modified by their successors. Perrone, the present Professor of Theology in the Jesuit College at Rome, admits in some sort the twofold character of the Church as invisible and visible, but denies that the members of the invisible Church are made up of the elect, and of them only. There is a twofold difference in this respect between his views and the principles already laid down. In the first place, he denies that the invisible Church is made up of all the elect, and affirms that such of them as have not yet obeyed the outward call of the Church, and are not found in its visible communion, although numbered with the elect of God, cannot be reckoned as members of the invisible Church; and, in the second place, he denies that the invisible Church is made up of the elect only, asserting that those who have ever received grace through the ordinances and communion of the Church, even though they should afterwards fall away and become reprobate, are nevertheless to be accounted true members of the invisible Church of Christ.

In both these respects, in which Romanists differ from the received doctrine of Protestants in regard to the members of the invisible Church, it is not difficult to trace the one ruling and predominating idea which runs through the whole of the Popish system,—namely, the necessity and virtue of the outward grace communicated by the Church, instead of the inward call and election by God. We see it in their denial of the name and right of members of the invisible Church to those who have been elected and chosen by God, but who, being still unconverted, have not yet joined themselves to the visible Church on earth, or become partakers of its outward ordinances. We see it, in like manner, in their ascription of the title and right of members of the invisible Church to those not chosen and not elected by God, but only joined to the visible Church, and sharing in its outward grace, notwithstanding that they shall afterwards fall away, and prove themselves to be reprobate. In both cases it is the grace

given or denied by the Church to the sinner, that confers or withholds the title of a member of the invisible Church of Christ, and not rather the purpose and election of God, calling him to the adoption and privileges of a son. In the one instance, although actually chosen and elected by God unto salvation, the man is no member of the invisible Church, because he has not yet shared in the grace which the Church on earth confers. In the other instance, although reprobate and rejected by God, the man is a member of the invisible Church, because he has been privileged to receive from the Church on earth the grace that it imparts to all in outward communion with it. Such principles as these, if they do not, as in the case of former Romanists, lead to an open denial of the existence of an invisible Church at all, yet plainly supersede it in reality, or make it virtually subordinate to and dependent on the visible Church. The membership of the invisible Church is a right not waiting to be realized, or needing to be confirmed, through the grace imparted by an outward society; the terms of that membership hold of a higher source. The right is a right conferred by the election of God. The invisible Church is made up of the whole number of the elect throughout all time, who have been chosen of God unto the salvation of Jesus Christ.

II. But let us next advert to the question: What is necessary to make one a member of the visible Church of Christ?

To answer this second question, it is only needful to bear in mind the true nature of the visible as contradistinguished from the invisible Church. The visible Church consists of the whole body, not of the elect, but of professing Christians, scattered throughout the world. The profession of the true faith is that which is the essence of the visible Church, distinguishing it from all other societies, and constituting it the Church of Christ; and what constitutes the mark of the visible Church, considered as a separate body, is also the mark of every member of the Church, considered simply as a member. The profession of the true faith, as it makes a Christian Church, so also is it the single element that makes a member of the Church, giving a

right to its privileges, and a place in its communion. A visible profession of belief in the Gospel—comprehending under the word profession not only the confession of the lips, but also a corresponding life and conduct—is the single qualification necessary to rank a man a member of the visible Church of Christ.

Now, the principle just enunciated stands opposed to the views of the Romanists on the one hand, and the Independents on the other; and it may serve to illustrate both its import and its truth, to contrast it with the doctrines of these two parties in succession. I have said, that to give a man a right to the membership of the visible Church there is needed that he maintain a visible Christian profession, including and accredited by a corresponding life and conduct. Now, this is objected against by the Independents as insufficient, while it is objected against by the Romanists as unnecessary, to constitute a man a member of the visible Church. Let us advert, in the first instance, to the principles of the Popish Church in their bearing on this question.

1st, I have already had occasion to remark that the predominating principle of the Romish system, in reference to the Church, is the substitution of an outward authority and the grace of outward ordinances in the place of any spiritual or inward influence on the heart, and the subordination of the truth of Christ to the external Church. With this leading idea, it is not to be wondered at that Romanists should make an outward conformity to Church authority and ordinances the single test of membership in the Christian society, altogether apart from an intelligent profession of the truth, and from an outward conduct in accordance with that profession. The virtue of submission to the authority of the Church visible, and the grace communicated by its outward ordinances, are enough of themselves, independently of a voluntary profession of faith and corresponding conduct, to constitute a man a member of the Christian society. This would be true, if it were also true that the profession of the true faith is not the essential mark of a Christian Church; or if its character consisted primarily in being an outward institute for the communication of sacramental grace. But if, on the

other hand, it be of the essence of a Christian Church to profess the faith of Christ, it must also be a requisite, on the part of a member of the Church, to make the same profession; and further, that his conduct and character do not make the profession void and worthless. The mere surrender of the understanding to the dictation of the Church in matters of faith, and the formal subjection of the outward man to its ordinances, can be no proper substitute for the intelligent profession of the truth of Christ, and the voluntary conformity of the life to the profession, which constitute the true qualifications for the membership of the Christian society. To receive as from the Church the truth to be believed, and the profession to be made, is the very opposite of bringing to the Church the testimony of the truth already believed and professed. To submit our outward conduct to the authority of the Church blindly and mechanically, is the very reverse of the willing and intelligent obedience which accredits and confirms the belief or profession avowed. The Popish theory of Church membership inverts the relation in which the Christian society and the members of the society stand to each other. A member of the Christian society is not to receive from the Church, but to give to it, the profession of his faith, as a voluntary testimony, on his part, to its character as the true Church of Christ. He is not to take his rule of obedience from the Church, but to bring to the Church his obedience, as a pledge and evidence that his profession is sincere. A mere outward conformity to Church authority, and a blind submission to Church ordinances, can never, if we judge by the Scripture standard, entitle a man to the place or privileges of a member of the Christian society.

2d, But let us advert next to the principles of Independency, as they bear upon the question of the membership of the Christian Church. I have said that Independents regard the qualifications already laid down as insufficient to entitle a man to be called a member of the visible Church of Christ. Something more than this is demanded. Positive evidence of a credible kind that a man is a true believer, and savingly united to Christ, is alone held to be a sufficient warrant to admit him within the Christian society,—the work of grace effected in

his soul being accounted the only ground or condition of Church membership. The difference between the principles of the Independents on the one hand, and those of Presbyterians on the other, is broad and fundamental. With Independents, a saving belief in Christ is the only title to admission to the Christian society; and the candidate for admission is bound to bring with him at least credible evidence to prove that such a title belongs to him, and that he has been effectually called unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. With Presbyterians, on the other hand, an intelligent profession of belief in the Gospel is the title to admission to Church membership; and the candidate for admission is only required to show that his conduct and life are in accordance with and accredit his profession. Let us endeavour briefly to apply the principles of Scripture to these different systems.

In the first place, the Independent system of Church membership is founded on a denial of the distinction between the invisible and visible Church of Christ.

We admit that the title of admission to the Church, viewed as the invisible Church of Christ, is a real and saving belief in Him; and that none can be members in reality of that society who are destitute of such a faith. In regard to this there can be no dispute. A mere outward profession of faith, however credible in itself, and however strongly confirmed by an outward walk and conversation, can never, as an outward profession, and no more, give a title to the privileges, or a place among the number, of the elect of God. And were there no other aspect under which the Church was spoken of or recognised in Scripture, we would not be warranted in saying that any were members of it save true believers only. But we have seen that there are manifold statements in Scripture which cannot well be reconciled with the notion of a purely invisible Church, and which appear to require us to admit the existence of another Church, or rather the same Church under a second aspect, having a character and a membership altogether different from the first. It is not merely that the invisible Church is made up of a number of men whose outward

profession as Christians is visible publicly to the eye. There seems to be good ground in Scripture for asserting that the Church, as a visible society, has a corporate existence and character, and that in this character it has certain privileges and certain members, distinct from those that belong to it as an invisible society. That some outward provision of ordinances has been made by Christ for the benefit of His Church, no one can deny; that men are invited and warranted to make use of this outward provision, and that certain benefits and privileges in consequence of their obeying the invitation are made over to them, apart from those of a saving kind,—seem to be no less clearly shown in Scripture. The Church of Christ stands revealed before the eyes of men, embodied in an outward system of administration and ordinances and discipline; and men are called upon to enter within this Church, and are promised that, if they do so, they shall enjoy certain advantages even outwardly, and distinct from any saving benefits in this Church state.

That such is the amount of what may be gathered from Scripture, it were not, I think, very easy to deny. And if so, what is the conclusion to which we are shut up? We have plainly seen a visible society, marked out as a corporate body by privileges and promises, belonging to its members, not as individuals but as members of the society; and we have these privileges and promises, apart altogether from other saving blessings, conferred upon it by Christ its Head. In other words, we have a visible Church, standing in an outward relation to Christ, distinct from the inward and spiritual relation in which it stands to Him as the invisible Church, and made up of members complying with His external call, entering into a Church state, and receiving in return outward privileges, and the fulfilment of outward promises from Him.

By whatever name it may be called, this outward relationship with Christ is, to all intents and purposes, a covenant or federal one. We have the two distinguishing characteristics of a covenant,—namely, first, certain outward conditions enjoined; and, second, certain outward promises annexed to a compliance with these conditions.

On the one side, we have an outward profession of faith and an entrance within a Church state, as the conditions fulfilled on the part of those who join themselves to the Christian society; and, on the other side, we have, as following upon this fulfilment, the bestowment of certain outward privileges, to be enjoyed by the members of the Church in its ministry, ordinances, and administration. In short, we have a visible or outward Church, distinct from the invisible or inward; and we have members admitted to that Church upon grounds and conditions different from those on which the members of the other are admitted.

In the second place, the principles of Independency seem to be contrary to the analogy of all God's dispensations with men.

In the history of God's former covenants there seems always to be the principle of an outward and an inward life. There are two covenants, as it were, the one within the other,—the one outward and, so to speak, carnal, and the other inward and spiritual; and the outward one designed and intended to lead on to the inward. So it was in the covenant established with Noah. It had its outward and its inward form, its more carnal and its more spiritual character or aspect. There was the outward covenant made with Noah and his whole posterity, without exception, whereby God promised that the settled order of nature should never again be subverted, but that seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, should not cease; and there was the inward covenant or promise of grace given to God's peculiar people, on the ground of the sweet-smelling sacrifice, which He accepted as the type and earnest of a better to come. Within the bosom of the outward covenant, which promised forbearance and long-suffering to all men, there lay hid the promise of grace to the Church of God; and the forbearance and long-suffering ensured by the outward covenant were designed to lead men onward to the grace promised by the inward. So it was in the case of the covenant with Abraham. There was the outward promise of Canaan, and the admission to the benefits of that promise by means of the external rite of circumcision; and there was the



spiritual promise, that lay within the other, of a higher rest, and "a better country, that is, an heavenly;" and the admission to that promise by means, not of the circumcision of the flesh, but of the faith of the heart. In this case, too, the outward covenant was designed to lead on those who shared in it to the saving benefits of the inner and spiritual one. So it was in the case of the covenant with Israel of old. Here, likewise, there was an outward and an inward covenant. There was an outward covenant made with Israel after the flesh, embracing many advantages and privileges of a temporal kind; but there was an inward covenant made with Israel after the spirit, comprehended and encircled within the former, and containing the promise of blessings, of a spiritual and saving kind, to the true Israel of God. And here, in like manner, the outward was made subordinate and subservient to the inward, and designed to lead men on from the one to the other.

There is a close parallelism in this respect between those ancient dispensations of God, and that under which we now live. We have now, as we have ever had in former times, an outward and an inward covenant,—the one comprehended and encircled within the other. We have an outward and visible Church now, characterized, as of old, by an external administration, and numbering among its members those admitted by an external profession. But, embraced within that outward Church, and encircled by it, we have the invisible and spiritual one characterized by the promise, not of outward but of inward blessings, and numbering among its members none but those spiritually united to the Saviour. And precisely as in former instances of the kind, this outward Church is subordinate and subservient to the interests of the inward, and is designed to guide and advance the members onward, until they reach the blessings of the spiritual Church within. Is there no reason to say that, if there had been, as the Independents allege, no visible Church with its outward provision of ordinances, and membership embracing the invisible and spiritual, it would have been traversing the analogy of all God's former dispensations towards men, and reversing the principles of all His previous dealings with them? In the doctrines of a visible and

invisible Church we simply see the realization, in the present, of the principles of every former economy of God.

In the third place, there seems to be much more than a mere analogy to be gathered from Scripture in favour of a visible Church, made up of outward or professing Christians, and not of true believers exclusively. The express delineation of the visible Church given in Scripture, and that frequently, seems to be totally inconsistent with the idea of a society, the terms of membership in which are, a true faith and saving interest in Christ.

It is unnecessary to go over at length the numerous passages of Scripture, sufficiently familiar to all, in which such an idea seems to be expressly excluded or contradicted. The kingdom of God, or visible Church, is compared at one time to a field, where both tares and wheat are found growing together; at another time, to a net cast into the sea, and enclosing and bringing to shore both good and bad; at a third time, to a house in which there are vessels, some to honour, and some to dishonour; at a fourth time, to a wedding supper, where there are guests without the marriage garment; and again to a fold, with a mingled flock of sheep and goats. Such, as described in Scripture, is the condition of the visible Church of Christ in this world, made up of the real and the nominal believer, of the true and the hypocritical Christian, of the elect and the reprobate. It is vain to allege, as the advocates of Independent views are fond of alleging, that such descriptions merely indicate the actual state of the Church on earth, in consequence of the infirmity or charity in judgment of those whose office it is to receive or exclude the candidates for admission, and that it by no means represents what the Church was intended or in duty bound to be. As if to anticipate and meet such a plea beforehand, our Lord, in the parable of the tares, expressly declares it to be His will, that His servants should not attempt to separate between the righteous and the wicked, the tares and the wheat, even when the difference was known to them, but should let both grow together until the harvest; adding as His reason, the danger lest in pulling up the tares they should destroy the wheat also.

There cannot, I think, be a more express and explicit answer to the objection of Independents, that such delineations refer to the Church as it is, not to the Church as it ought to be; and it seems to leave no reason to doubt, that in regard to the Christian society on earth, it is neither possible, nor designed, that it should be a community framed on the principle of excluding all but the regenerate from among its members. The visible Church can never be completely, or in all its parts, identical in this world with the invisible; nor can its members ever be restricted to the elect alone.

In the fourth place, the principles of the Independents in regard to Church membership seem to transfer the responsibility of the admission or non-admission of parties to the Christian Church, from a ground on which it may be competent to exercise it, to a ground on which it is not competent to exercise it.

So long as the terms of Church membership are acknowledged to be a visible religious profession, and a corresponding character and conduct to accredit it, there can, with ordinary intelligence and singleness of desire for the purity of the house of God, be no great difficulty in deciding upon such kind of evidence. Thus far, and up to this point, there is a definite rule to walk by, and a competent knowledge to enable the office-bearers of the Christian society to judge in the matter. They have power to judge of the outward profession and outward conduct of the candidate for Church membership; and having the power, they are responsible for the right exercise of it. But when the judgment is transferred from the external profession and character to the inward conviction and experience of the candidate,—when, instead of being called upon to determine the credibility of what is seen and may be known in the outward man, the office-bearers of the Church are charged to decide upon the reality of what is unseen and cannot be certainly known in the inner man,—it is plain that there is a task committed to them which they are utterly incompetent and unqualified to discharge. They can be no witness to the secret work of God done on the soul of a brother; they can have no knowledge of the reality of that

mysterious transaction by which to himself, but not to other men, it may be made manifest that he has passed from darkness to light; they can have no evidence sufficient to guide them in seriously pronouncing a judgment on the state of grace, or the opposite, of a candidate for Church membership. The knowledge and the evidence of such a saving experience must, from the very nature of the case, lie only between God and the man with whom God has graciously dealt; and are a knowledge and an evidence which another can neither understand nor receive. The man himself, whose experience it is that God has done the work of conviction and conversion on his soul, may have the knowledge, and underlie the responsibility involved in it. A stranger can neither share in the one, nor is competent to undertake the other. And if, in the admission to the membership of the Church, direct evidence of a state of grace on the part of the person admitted is required, the decision upon the question involves a responsibility which the office-bearers of the Church cannot take, because they cannot have the knowledge necessary for it, and a responsibility which the person himself cannot transfer to them, because he cannot communicate along with it that knowledge. The power to look upon the heart, and to judge of its spiritual state, is a power which God challenges as His own; and man, even although willing to transfer such judgment to a fellow-man, has not the power to do so. In leading evidence, and attempting to sit in judgment on the spiritual state, as in the sight of God, of others, men are trespassing into a province where it is not lawful for them to enter. In erecting a spiritual inquisition for the judgment of such matters, they are setting up a tribunal whose inquiries they have not knowledge to direct, and whose decisions they have not received authority to pronounce. It is not the judgment of charity, in defect of more perfect knowledge, pronounced about the spiritual state of any man, that ought to form the reason for his admission to Church membership; but it is the judgment of justice, with competent knowledge, pronounced on his visible profession and his outward conduct. The judgment on his spiritual state belongs only to God, and may form the reason for his admission among the members of the invisible Church. The judgment on his outward profession belongs to man,

and ought to form the only ground of his admission to, or exclusion from, the membership of the visible Church.

## **CHAPTER VII:**

### **THE CHURCH IN ITS RELATION TO THE WORLD**

WHEN Christ, having finished His obedience on earth, ascended up on high, and was no longer seen among men, the work wrought by Him during His earthly life did not cease with Him, but was destined to lay the foundation for a permanent and enduring system in the world. He Himself, by His obedience unto death, had prepared the way for the return and reconciliation of mankind to God; and when He left this earth, He made provision for the progress and development, in His absence, of that great work by which, from out of every nation and through every age, His own elect people were to be redeemed, sanctified, and fitted for glory. Christ no longer, as once on earth, carries forward by His visible presence and power this great and mysterious work; He is no longer to be seen and heard in the midst of us. But He has left behind Him an agency, of an enduring and effectual kind, for the accomplishment of His purpose of grace; and the work of conversion and sanctification and preparation for heaven is still going on, and will continue to do so, until the number of the elect shall be completed, and there shall remain none else to gather from a world of sin to a world of everlasting blessedness. Had He Himself remained on earth, His own right arm might have wrought this salvation, and the power of His abiding presence might have ensured success. But it was expedient

for the disciples that Christ should go away. He has gone away. And now, in His absence from the world, where shall we look for that powerful and mysterious agency which shall do the work of Christ in His absence, and carry forward and complete that mighty plan, on which His heart is set, for the regeneration and recovery of His lost and banished ones? In answer to that question, the Scriptures tell us that there is a twofold agency to which Christ has entrusted this task. First, there is His Spirit; and, secondly, there is His Church.

When it became expedient that the Second Person of the blessed Godhead should depart and return to the Father, His place on earth was taken and His departure supplied by the coming of the Third Person in His stead. The Spirit was the gift of the Son to this world, when He Himself could no longer tarry here, but must hasten unto the Father in heaven; and the promise was given, that the habitation of the Spirit with men should not, like His own, be one merely temporary and short-lived, but that it was destined to be uninterrupted and permanent. First in place and in importance, the agency of the Spirit is the grand means appointed by Christ for carrying forward that work of spiritual recovery and redemption among men, which He Himself, when on earth, had only begun.

But, second and subordinate to the Spirit of God, the Church, with its rich provision of Word and ordinance, is another instrument in the hand of Christ for carrying forward and accomplishing His purpose of grace on the earth. To that Church, in like manner as in regard to the Spirit, there is given the promise that it shall endure for ever on the earth, until the work of gathering and perfecting Christ's people shall have been completed. These are Christ's two instruments in the world, of standing and effectual might, for working out His great work in the conversion and sanctification of His people,—the one an inward and unseen power, and the other an outward and visible agency; but both combining to carry forward, without failure and without ceasing, the mighty and mysterious task entrusted to them. Although no longer seen in the midst of us urging forward, through means of His visible presence and power, the plan of grace, Christ

still worketh hitherto, and will work, through the twofold agency of His Spirit and of His Church.

It is deeply interesting, then, to inquire into the place and office assigned to the Church of Christ in the world. What is the peculiar and important work given to the Christian Church to do upon earth? What is the place assigned to it in the economy of grace that Christ is now carrying forward? What are its relations and office as regards the world in which it is established and upheld? It is a Divine institution, while all others around it are human. It is a city whose builder and maker is God, while all other societies have been created by man. And the Christian society, thus founded and maintained by God in the midst of a world, where all around it is human and earthly, must have been established for no trivial or ordinary end. What, then, I ask, is the mission of the Church on the earth, and its office in relation to the world? There are three separate considerations, the statement of which may serve to indicate and explain the office of the Christian Church in reference to the world, and at the same time will bring out the erroneous views entertained by various parties in regard to this point.

I. In the first place, the Christian Church, in reference to the world in which it is found, is designed and fitted to be a witness for Christ, and not a substitute for Christ.

At the mouth of two witnesses, at the least, is a testimony for Christ declared and confirmed to the world. That Spirit which He left behind Him on the earth is ever witnessing to the hearts and consciences of men on behalf of a Saviour. Unseen, but not unfelt, the Holy Ghost is always testifying to the souls of men in favour of Christ, both in His ordinary and His peculiar operations on the understanding and the conscience,—leaving a witness with them, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear,—whether they reject the testimony and continue in their unbelief, or receive it and turn unto a Saviour. This is the unseen and inward witness for Christ on the earth, that can never be silenced or superseded. But there was

needed a visible and outward witness also, to join in the testimony and to confirm its words; and, over and above the Spirit of God in the heart, there is the Church of God appealing to the outward ear and eye, and lifting up a public testimony, seen and known of all men. By the Word of Christ, which it declares in the hearing of all, by the ordinances of Christ, which it administers in His name, by the authority of Christ, which it exercises in subordination to His appointment, the Church is intended and adapted to be a standing and outward witness on behalf of Christ on the earth.

It requires no lengthened illustration to show by what wise and gracious arrangements the Christian society has been fitted to accomplish this grand end of its appointment. Is it the Word of Christ that is proclaimed aloud in the hearing of the world by means of the Church, as a teacher and minister of Divine truth? That Word testifies of Christ; and when its sound is heard through all the earth, and its accents unto the end of the world, it is but the standing and unceasing testimony of the Church in every age to the glory of Christ's character, and the preciousness of His grace. Is it the ordinances of Christ that are dispensed by the Church before the eyes of the world,—those outward signs and inward seals which it has been given to the Church to administer to her members? Those ordinances, in their main and primary character, are a public testimony for Christ. The washing of Baptism in His name declares the sprinkling of His blood and the renewal of His Spirit; and the ordinance of a Communion Table openly and emphatically proclaims the virtue of His dying and the glory of His Cross. Those ordinances are the speaking and emphatic testimony of the Church, lifted up from age to age in the hearing of the world in behalf of its Head. Is it the authority of Christ that is administered in the way of government and discipline within His own house? Then that authority, when wielded in His name, speaks directly of Christ, and forms part of that testimony which the Church is continually bearing on the earth to the presence and the claims of her Head. In making the Church the depository among men of that Word which He at first inspired, and still continues to bless, and of those ordinances which He originally



appointed, and still vouchsafes to sanctify to the good of His people, Christ has established on the earth an outward and visible witness to Himself, of an enduring and perpetual kind, the utterances of which, in the hearing of the world, can neither be lost nor nullified. On the one hand, the testimony of the Church on behalf of Christ may be disregarded or rejected, and men may continue in their unbelief; but its voice, if not heard to save, is sufficiently heard to justify the condemnation of those who have disbelieved it. On the other hand, those who have been led by it to turn to a Saviour, and have received the testimony that it bears to Him, become, in a manner more emphatic still, the living evidences that the witness of the Church is both real and true. In either case the Church is, along with the Spirit, the standing and perpetual witness on the earth on behalf of a Saviour.

The Christian Church, in reference to this world, is fitted to be a witness; it is neither designed nor adapted to be a substitute for Christ. And yet this is the very place and character assigned to the Church by the Popish doctrine regarding it. With Romanists, the Church is not the witness on this earth, silently by its public ordinances, or articulately by its preached Word, pointing upward to Christ, avowing its own insufficiency and dependence, and bearing testimony to His power and grace. It is not the witness to Christ, no longer present on the earth, but ascended to heaven,—it is the substitute for Christ in His absence, usurping His place among men, and arrogating His powers. "The visible Church," says one of the ablest and most learned defenders of the Popish system in modern times,—"the visible Church is the Son of God Himself everlastingly manifesting Himself among men in a human form, perpetually renovated and eternally young,—the permanent Incarnation of the same; as in Holy Writ even the faithful are called the body of Christ." "The Church is the body of the Lord; it is, in its universality, His visible form,—His permanent, ever-renovated humanity, His eternal revelation."

According to this system, the Church of Christ on earth embodies in itself all the powers and offices which once belonged to Christ incarnate; and its mission in regard to the world is to administer those powers and discharge those offices, as the only vicar or substitute for an absent Lord. This is very different indeed from being the witness to Christ, pointing upward continually to Him, in acknowledgment at once of its own dependence and of His ever present and prevailing power. Was Christ Himself when on earth the teacher of His people, revealing to them the Word and wisdom of the Father, and instructing them in all saving and infallible truth? In Christ's absence now, the Church, according to the Popish theory, is His substitute,—the unerring teacher, qualified and sufficient for the same work, and having in itself the power and gift by its traditions to declare, and by its unerring authority to interpret infallibly, the will of God unto His people. Was Christ Himself when on earth the fountain of supernatural grace, communicating to the weary and heavy-laden sinner forgiveness of sin and the purification and renewal of the Spirit? In Christ's absence the Church is the fountain of that same grace now, conveying through its ministers and its Sacraments the absolution from sin, and the cleansing and sanctification of the sinner. Was Christ Himself while on earth the visible Head of the Christian society, exercising authority and administering rule? The same authority and rule, in His absence, now belongs to the Church itself, as supreme and infallible in all matters of faith and government and administration. In short, the Church is not the witness for Christ, but the substitute for Him on the earth, sitting in His seat of authority and power, qualified and commissioned to exercise, on behalf of men, all His offices as Mediator, and to be at once and equally the Prophet, the Priest, and the King in the visible kingdom of believers. Such, in substance, is the Popish view of the Church in its relations to the world,—a system which holds out before the eyes of men the Church on this earth as standing in the stead of Christ, and exercising all the powers and offices of Christ on their behalf.

It is hardly needful to say that there is in the Word of God, not only no ground for such a system as this, but that it is directly opposed to its pretensions and claims. The Lord Jesus Christ, although absent in the body, has not resigned or delegated to any mortal substitute His office and work as Mediator. The mode of administration, since He has departed from this world and ascended up on high, may be changed, but the administration itself is still in His hands. He is still the sole King and Head of His Church. The Church itself may be the witness on earth to Christ in heaven, but has not been permitted to usurp His place, or to arrogate His peculiar authority and incommunicable powers.

This great truth, that the Church of Christ is fitted and designed to be a witness for Christ in the world, is subverted not only by the Popish system, which makes the Church to be not a witness but a substitute for its Head, but also by those systems which would make the Christian society one of mere human origin or arrangement. If the Church is not an institution established and upheld by Christ, but merely the creature of man in one shape or other, then the conclusion is inevitable, that it ceases in any sense to be a witness for Christ, and becomes merely a witness for man. Concede to the advocates of such a theory, that the Christian Church is merely a voluntary association, gathered together on the same principles and for similar ends as any other human society, and you at once silence its testimony for Christ, and you no longer see it pointing upward to heaven. Or admit the same general doctrine in another shape, and confess that the Christian Church is the mere creature of the civil power, owing its existence and character and prerogatives as a Church to the state, and you no less deprive it of its character as a witness on earth for its Divine Head, and make it speak, if it speaks at all, of the wisdom and power of man, and of these alone, in its existence and arrangements. If the Christian Church is to occupy the place and fulfil the commission assigned to it as a standing and perpetual witness for Christ on the earth, it must be able to evince unequivocally, that it owes its origin, its character, its authority, and its power to Christ alone; and in so far as these are in any respect

interfered with by human enactments, to that extent there is a silencing of the testimony that the Church bears to its exalted Head. The Popish system tends to make the Church not a witness, but a substitute for Christ on earth; the Erastian system tends to make the Church not a witness for Christ, but a witness for man.

II. In the second place, the Christian Church in the world is an outward ordinance of God, fitted and designed to be the instrument of the Spirit, but not the substitute for the Spirit.

The external provision which God has made in the Church in the way of Word and Sacrament and government, for the purpose of promoting the edification and advantage of its members, viewed merely as an external provision, is fraught with manifold and important benefits, apart altogether from those of a supernatural and saving kind. That provision is naturally, and apart from the extraordinary ministration of the Spirit of God, fitted to work out the advantage of the Christian society; but, unquestionably, the grand and distinctive advantage of such an outward provision is the fact, that with that provision is mysteriously linked the power and presence of the Third Person of the Godhead, and that with Word and Sacrament and discipline in the Church stands connected the influence of the Holy Ghost. The outward provision of teaching and ordinance and administration in the Christian society, is the ordinary and accustomed channel through which the deep and mysterious tide of Divine and supernatural power flows to the members from God. The ministry of the Word, viewed merely as human teaching, has a natural influence on the understanding, in the way of instruction and improvement; but along with that natural influence of knowledge or persuasion on the mind, and over and above it, there is the supernatural influence of the Spirit of God, making the reading and preaching of the Word a Divine power to enlighten and inform and convince. The Sacraments of the Church, merely as speaking and teaching signs, may undoubtedly be affirmed to be adapted to the spiritual nature of man, so as to exercise naturally a moral influence over his feelings and his heart; but beyond that moral influence, and

altogether above the ministry of natural means, there is a supernatural grace imparted by the Spirit, making Sacraments not only signs, but seals of saving blessings to those who rightly partake of them. The authority of the Church, regarded merely as an external authority, is unquestionably adapted to exercise a beneficial control over its members in the regulation of their conduct and life; but far beyond and surpassing this, is that supernatural control and power of the Spirit, which binds the conscience with a sense of obligation, and constrains obedience as a duty done to God. The outward and formal ordinance of Word and Sacrament and authority in the Church is linked with the mysterious and supernatural influence of the Holy Ghost; and the Church becomes a living and spiritual power in the soul, as the instrument of the Spirit of God in His dealings with our spirits.

Why God has been pleased thus to conjoin the natural influence of outward ordinances with the supernatural influence of His Spirit, and why, over and above all that reason can discern in the natural provision of the Church, as suitable to the spiritual advantage of man, there is a virtue which reason cannot explain, we may be utterly unable to understand. But without being able to explain it, we are assured of the fact, that to those who use them after a spiritual manner there is a supernatural grace to be experienced through ordinances, which is not elsewhere to be found, and that this virtue resides not in themselves, or in their natural adaptation to man's understanding and heart, but in the supernatural presence within them of the Holy Ghost. The outward provision of the visible Church of Christ is mysteriously impregnated with Divine grace. The Church itself is, in an especial and supernatural manner, the residence of the Holy Ghost; and in the right and faithful use of its ordinances the spirit of man meets with the Spirit of God, and finds a blessing beyond the reach of ordinances.

But if the visible Church in the world is an outward ordinance fitted to be the instrument of the Spirit, it is not a substitute for the Spirit. At this point, once more, we come into conflict with the Popish

system of the Church, as exhibited in some of its deadliest errors. The doctrine of the "opus operatum"—or the efficacy of ordinances and Sacraments in themselves, and as mere external appointments in the Church, apart from the spiritual state and faith of those who make use of them—is characteristic of the Romish theory of the Church, and goes, in point of fact, to make the Church, as an institute for the spiritual advantage of its members, not the instrument of the Spirit of God, but the substitute for the Spirit of God. According to this system, the doctrine, that the Spirit is the immediate source of all life and virtue to ordinances, in the case of those who spiritually employ them, is superseded or denied; and the ordinances of the Church are made mere charms, working in themselves—and without regard to the state or character of the partakers—that work of grace which the Spirit alone accomplishes upon believers. Is it the ordinance of the Word that is inquired about, and do you ask what is the virtue of that ordinance as exhibited or asserted in the teaching of the Church of Rome? It is not the virtue or power of the Spirit of God. The power and the virtue of the ordinance, according to the Romish system, are manifested and exhausted when the infallible teaching of the Church is followed by the formal submission and implicit surrender of the understanding to its dictates, and when, *ex opere operato*, an outward uniformity of profession as to articles of faith is secured,—apart altogether from that intelligent understanding and reasonable conviction of the truth of the dogmas, which even the natural man can render, and still more apart from that spiritual discernment and saving belief in them, which none but the Spirit of God can impart. Is it the Sacraments of the Church that are inquired after, and do you ask what is their power according to the theory or practice of the Church of Rome? Here, too, it may be answered, that it is not the power of the Spirit of God. The grace communicated to the participators is a grace that resides in the outward ordinance, and not in the Spirit of God, communicated through the channel of outward ordinances to the soul of the believer who rightly employs them; and it is to be enjoyed in consequence of the outward observance, independent altogether of that meeting and communion of the believer with his God, without which outward

observances are the signs, but not the seals, of supernatural grace. Is it the authority of the Church that is inquired after, and do you ask what influence has such an outward authority according to the system of Romanists? Once more I reply, that it is not the influence of the Spirit subduing and bending the whole man, binding the conscience, and constraining it as a willing servant in the day of Divine power. It is an outward and formal submission to the supreme authority of the Church,—altogether apart from that surrender of conscience and will, affection and life, as a voluntary sacrifice to Divine authority, which Divine grace alone, in the case of any man, can effect. According to the theory and practice of the Popish system, the Church, with its outward provision of Word and Sacrament and authority, is not an instrument for the Spirit of God to employ, but a substitute by which the Spirit of God is superseded and set aside.

III. In the third place, the Christian Church in the world is fitted and designed to serve as a means for effecting the communion of Christians with each other,—not to be a substitute for the communion of Christians with their Saviour.

It cannot be doubted, that one of the great ends to be accomplished by the establishment of a Christian Church on earth was the union of the disciples into one fellowship, and the substitution of a social for an individual Christianity. Not that the individual Christianity of the believer was to be superseded or set aside as subordinate to the social, but rather that it was to be developed and expanded by means of union and intercourse with his fellow-believers. There is something in the very nature of man that makes union and fellowship with other men essentially necessary to develop the whole faculties and powers of his being; and this characteristic of man's nature has been taken advantage of in the economy of grace; so that, under the power of association, believers are not merely or only units in the dispensation of God, but brethren also in the enjoyment of communion with each other collectively, as well as in the enjoyment of communion individually, each one with his Saviour. According to

the arrangement of God, the Christian is more of a Christian in society than alone, and more in the enjoyment of privileges of a spiritual kind when he shares them with others, than when he possesses them apart. There is an added blessing on the fellowship of believing men, which they cannot experience except in fellowship with each other; and within the bosom and communion of the Christian society there is an enlargement and augmentation of privileges, not to be enjoyed apart from it. Such, for example, is the blessing promised to "two or three" when "gathered together in the name of Christ," over and above what is promised to the solitary worshipper; and such is the more abundant and gracious answer that will be returned to prayer, when men, even a few, "shall agree together to ask anything of God," rather than when they ask separately and alone. The Christian Church was established in the world, to realize the superior advantages of a social over an individual Christianity, and to set up and maintain the communion of saints. In his union to Christ the Head, the individual believer becomes ingrafted into the same body, and partakes of the same privileges with other believers. He is one with them in the same Spirit, in the same faith, in the same baptism, in the same hopes, in the same grace, in the same salvation. The bonds of that spiritual union go to strengthen his own individual Christianity, the sympathy of it to call forth his own individual affections, and the incitement of it to enlarge his own personal faith and hope; so that, in the fellowship of the Church, and within the magic circle of its influences, the believer is in a more eminent sense a believer, than apart from them. One of the grand offices which the Christian Church has to discharge in the world is thus to be the centre and home of union to believing men, and to become a sanctuary, within the holy fellowship of which Christians may meet, and enjoy in common their spiritual privileges, and find that those privileges are doubled, because shared in common.

But the Christian Church, although fitted and intended to effect a communion of Christians with each other, was not intended to be a substitute for the communion of Christians with their Saviour. Here,



once more, we come into collision with the system of the Romish Church. According to that system, the only possible union to a Saviour is the union to a visible Church; and a sinner becomes grafted into Christ only and solely by being first grafted into the outward community of Christians. "The individual worshipper of Christ," says the same modern expounder of the Romish system already quoted,—"the individual worshipper of Christ is incorporated into the Church by indissoluble bonds, and is by the same conducted unto the Saviour, and abideth in Him only in so far as he abideth in the Church." "The fellowship with Christ is accordingly the fellowship with His community,—the internal union with Him, a communion with His Church." According to this theory, the union of a man with the outward and visible Church is a substitute for His spiritual union to the Saviour. The Church must stand to the sinner in place of Christ. It is almost needless to say that there cannot possibly be a doctrine more directly opposed both to the letter and the spirit of the Gospel. If ever a sinner is to find relief from the burden of sin and the anxieties of a guilty conscience, it is when alone, as if there were no other sinner in the world but himself, with neither Sacrament, nor priest, nor Church between, he goes directly to the Saviour, and face to face deals with Christ for his soul, and seeks rest in Him. In direct and immediate union with Christ, through His Spirit, are life and pardon to be found. The Christian Church on earth was designed and fitted to be the home where Christian might meet with Christian, and hold fellowship together; it was neither designed nor fitted to be a substitute for the union and fellowship of the sinner with his Saviour.

## CHAPTER VIII:

### THE CHURCH IN ITS RELATION TO THE STATE

IN the course of our former discussions we have been led to assert the existence of a society different from any other that is known on earth, claiming in its origin to be from God, professing in its character to be spiritual, and established among men for the purpose of carrying forward the great ends of the Gospel dispensation towards this world. This is the Church of Christ. But we know, both from history and the Word of God, that there exists another society on earth, of a different nature, and with different aims, claiming also to be of God, having a character not spiritual but secular, and established for the purpose of promoting, at least in the first instance, the temporal and social well-being of men. This is the body politic, or the state. The Church of Christ, or the visible community of professing Christians on earth, is a body corporate, having, in its collective character, or in its separate sections, a certain order, government, and administration appointed to it, for the purpose mainly and primarily of advancing the spiritual wellbeing of the members of the Christian society, although not without reference to the temporal interests of the community. The state is a body corporate also, composed of the members of the civil society, having a certain authority and power and constitution appointed to it, evidently for the purpose, in the first instance, of advancing the temporal interests of the community, although not without reference indirectly to the higher advantage of its members.

These two societies, both of them claiming a Divine origin and sanction, and aiming chiefly at separate objects through a separate instrumentality, co-exist in this world, and are found side by side among men. Wherever the Gospel has been preached and the faith of the Gospel professed, a new element has thereby been introduced, in addition to the civil order and constitution of society previously established. Over and above the civil state, which in one shape or

other is found to exist in all organized societies of men, and without which society itself could not exist, we have the outward and visible society of the Christian Church, oftentimes composed of the same members, and at all events established within the same community. And the question arises: What are the relations of these two societies to each other; upon what terms are they fitted by their constitution or character to stand in reference to each other; and in what respects are they calculated to hinder or to help each other's aims and objects? This is an inquiry of the deepest interest and importance, as directly affecting the office and standing of both institutions. The Church and the state have each a separate existence and a joint place in the world. Wherever Christianity is professed among men, there they must be found together, asserting their different objects and claims. We cannot have Christian association among men without a Church; and we cannot have civil association among men without a political government in one shape or other, and under one name or other. The inquiry, therefore, is forced upon us at the very outset: How do these two corporate societies stand to each other; and in what respects are they fitted to exist in harmony or to act in connection? Are there grounds for asserting that there is no basis to be found on which these two separate yet co-existing powers may meet and co-operate; and are they to be accounted fundamentally heterogeneous, or even hostile? Or is there a groundwork laid in the nature and functions of the two societies for an amicable alliance and harmonious co-operation between them, without confounding the two, or making the one subordinate to or dependent on the other? These questions open up a very wide field, which it is impossible for us at present fully to traverse. They stir controversies which we can hardly afford even to enter upon. All that we can do is rather to indicate the ground on which the matter may be argued than to give the argument itself, and to point out the heads of reasoning instead of unfolding the reasoning in detail.

The subject of the relation of Church and state naturally divides itself into two parts in connection with the answers given to two questions, which meet us at the outset of the discussion.

I. In the first place, are the two societies, co-existing in this world under the names of Church and State, really and essentially different and independent, or are they fundamentally one, and only manifested under different forms, and subsisting under different modifications? Is it possible to identify them with each other in their essential nature, so that the Church may ultimately be resolved into the state, or the state into the Church,—the one forming a part and parcel of the other, or the one being a subordinate member or inferior department of the other? This is the first question that demands an answer in investigating the relations of the Church to the state; and here it will be necessary to make manifest the fundamental difference and the essential independence of the two societies, and the impossibility of resolving them into one, or of making the one dependent on the other. In dealing with this point we shall be brought into conflict with the two forms in which the principle now stated is denied,—namely, the Erastian theory, which makes the Church subordinate to the state, and the Romish theory, which makes the state subordinate to the Church.

II. In the second place, if the Church and the state are essentially different, and rightfully independent of each other, are there any grounds on which it is possible that an alliance can be formed between the two, without sacrificing on the one side or other their independent character or public functions, and on which it may be their duty to act in concert for the promotion of certain common ends? This is the second question that meets us in inquiring into the relation in which the Christian society stands to the civil government; and, in connection with it, it will be necessary to show that there is a common ground on which, in consistency with their separate character and independent offices, it is both possible and right for the Church and state to meet in an amicable alliance, and for the purpose of friendly co-operation. Under this division of the subject we shall be brought into collision with the Voluntary theory, which denies the position now laid down.

## **SEC. I.**

### **ESSENTIAL DISTINCTION AND MUTUAL INDEPENDENCE OF CHURCH AND STATE**

That the Christian Church and the civil state are essentially different, and rightfully independent the one of the other, may be satisfactorily demonstrated from various considerations.

First, the state and the Church are essentially different in regard to their origin.

The state, or the ordinance of civil government, owes its origin to God as the universal Sovereign and Ruler among the nations. The Church, as the visible society of professing Christians in the world, with its outward provision of authority and order and government, owes its origin to Christ as Mediator. This difference is a most important one, as it involves and implies other differences characteristic of the two bodies. The civil government is an ordinance of God, founded not in grace, but in nature, and therefore intended for human society as subsisting in all nations, whether Christian or not, and carrying with it the authority and sanction of a Divine appointment wherever human society is found. As an appointment of God, in His character of universal Sovereign, the authority of the state, and the duty of subjects in regard to it, are entirely independent of the Christianity of rulers or subjects; and the rights and responsibilities of the two parties are as valid and as binding in heathen as in Christian lands. On the other hand, the Church, as an ordinance of Christ, is founded in grace, not in nature, and is limited to those nations where Christianity is actually professed. As an appointment of the Mediator, in His character of special Ruler or Head over His own people, it carries with it His authority, and is restricted in its jurisdiction to those who profess their subjection to Him, and join themselves to the Christian society which He has

established. Different in their origin, and in the source from which they derive their authority, the state and the Church are thus based on distinct and separate foundations, and are entirely independent of each other. Nor is this fundamental difference cancelled or overruled by the fact that the state or civil government is now put under the dominion of Christ in the character of Mediator, as well as the Church. It is true that the civil governments of the world, like everything else, are subordinated to the Redeemer, that He may make use of them for promoting His own mediatorial purposes, and that Christ is not only "Head of the Church," but "Head over all things to the Church." But this authority of Christ over the civil governments of the earth is a thing superinduced upon their original character as the ordinance of God, in His capacity of universal Sovereign. It does not in the least affect or supersede that character. The state, although it is now delegated to Christ to be under His authority for the good of His Church, has not ceased to be what it originally was—an appointment of God as the God of nature—any more than the creation of God has ceased to be the creation of God, because it also is now subordinated to the dominion of Christ for the interests of His people. In their origin, and in the basis on which they rest, the civil society and the Christian society are two ordinances essentially independent and distinct.

In the second place, the state and the Church are essentially distinct in regard to the primary objects for which they were instituted.

The state, or civil government, has been ordained by God for the purpose of promoting and securing, as its primary object, the outward order and good of human society; and that object it is its mission to accomplish wherever it is found,—whether in Christian or heathen lands. Without civil order or government, in some shape or other, human society could not exist at all; and as the ordinance of God for all, its direct and immediate aim is to aid the cause of humanity as such, without limitation or restriction to humanity as christianized. On the other hand, the Church of Christ has been instituted by Him for the purpose of advancing and upholding the

work of grace on the earth, being limited, in its primary object, to promoting the spiritual interests of the Christian community among which it is found. No doubt there are secondary objects, which both civil government on the one hand, and the Church on the other, are fitted and intended to subserve, in addition to those of a primary kind. The state, as the ordinance of God, can never be absolved from its allegiance to Him, and can never be exempted from the duty of seeking to advance His glory and to promote His purposes of grace on the earth. And in like manner the Church, in addition to the objects of a spiritual kind which it seeks to accomplish, may be adapted, and is adapted, to further the mere temporal and social wellbeing of society. But still the grand distinction cannot be overlooked, that marks out the primary objects of the Church and state respectively as separate, and not to be confounded. They are instituted for widely different ends. The one, as founded in nature, was meant primarily to subserve the temporal good of mankind; the other, as founded in grace, was designed primarily to advance their spiritual wellbeing. They may indirectly, and as a secondary duty, fulfil certain ends common to both; they may concur in contemplating certain objects together; but as they differ in their origin, so also they differ entirely in the primary and immediate purpose for which they are respectively established on the earth.

Thirdly, the state and the Church are essentially distinct and independent in regard to the power which is committed to them respectively by God.

Civil government has been ordained by God mainly for the purpose of securing the peace and the rights of civil society; and for this end the administration of it implies a power of coercion fitted to protect the well-disposed in the enjoyment of their privileges, and able both to punish and repress the evildoers in the wrongs that they commit. To the civil government belongs the power of the sword, as the instrumentality adapted to its purposes. But the Church of Christ, having been established, not to prevent or redress human violence and civil wrong, but rather to promote the grand purposes of God's

grace towards a fallen world, is armed with no such coercive power. Its weapons are not carnal, but spiritual. The power which Christ has vested in His Church is one that does not imply the exercise of force, but is concerned only with the understandings and convictions of men. To the Church Christ has given the power of the Spirit, the force of truth, the might of saving grace, the influence of spiritual authority; and in the administration of that power, through means of the ministry of the Word and the dispensation of ordinances, the Christian society claims no right over the persons and properties, but only appeals to the hearts and consciences of men. This fundamental distinction between the kinds of power wielded by the Church and the state respectively, draws a broad line of demarcation between the two societies, as essentially separate and independent. From the very nature of the state it cannot, without departing from its proper place, usurp the office or assume the jurisdiction of the Church, because it has received no authority to perform, and is not competent to exercise, spiritual functions; and, on the other hand, the Church has no power to assume to itself the powers and prerogatives of the civil magistrate, because those powers and prerogatives, being civil and coercive, are wholly alien to its character and jurisdiction. In the employment of civil authority, with respect to the rights and lives of its subjects, the state is fenced round with the sanction of God, the supreme and universal Sovereign; it holdeth not the sword in vain; and its legitimate power, in the execution of punishment, reaches to the confiscation of property or the infliction of death. In the use of spiritual authority, as regards the understandings or consciences of men, the Church, in like manner, is fenced round by the sanction of God,—that authority implies a right to use instruction, admonition, reproof, censure, in the case of those who offend; but when those means are used, and used in vain, the power of the Church is exhausted in regard to the offender, and its office of authority is at an end. The rights that belong to the one society are rights that cannot be interchanged with or belong to the other: in their power and office the two are entirely distinct and independent.



Fourthly, the state and the Church are essentially distinct and independent in regard to the administration of their respective authorities.

The Word of God has not enjoined the form of civil government to be adopted, or the particular officers through whom its authority is to be administered; it has sanctioned neither a despotism nor a democracy, as such. But under whatever form civil government may be found, as adapted differently to the character or wishes of different nations, it is an ordinance of God; and the appointed organs of government, whoever they may be, bear with them His authority "for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise and protection of such as do well." The civil magistrate, as the organ of the state, is fenced about with a Divine warrant when, in the lawful exercise of his office, he lays his hand upon the property and life of man.

The office of civil magistracy is appropriate to the civil society, and is vested with its awful and mysterious power, in consequence of its being the ordinance of Him who is the sovereign Lord of man's property and life. But there are offices appropriate to the spiritual society also, and, in consequence, vested with its peculiar authority, to be exercised in the name and under the appointment of Christ. It is not necessary at present to enter into the question of who, according to the Word of God, are the persons selected to be the magistrates of the Church, or who, in consequence of His appointment, are warranted to wield the authority of Christ within His house. This question will come up for discussion at a subsequent stage in our investigations. It is enough for us, in the meantime, to know the general fact, which lies on the very surface of the New Testament, that the Christian Church has persons appointed to rule and exercise authority within it; being, like every other organized association, made up of two classes,—the governors and the governed. In other words, it belongs to the Christian Church to have its office-bearers as well as its members,—those office-bearers being the organs of the society to exercise a certain kind of authority over the rest, and being fenced about with a Divine sanction in the rightful

discharge of the duties pertaining to them. In their hands the order and government of the Church are vested; and the office that they hold, as well as the authority that they administer, are derived from the ordinance and appointment of Christ.

Now, in the separation thus established between the two societies of the Church and state, in respect not only to the kind of power committed to them, but also to its administration, we see the clear and unquestionable evidence, that they are designed to be distinct and independent the one of the other. They have a separate jurisdiction; they have separate organs and office-bearers to exercise it. There is a magistracy that appertains to the state,—the appointment and ordinance of God to exercise the functions which God has intrusted to the state. There is a different magistracy that appertains to the Church,—the appointment and ordinance of Christ to discharge the duties which Christ has intrusted to the Church. The two are wholly apart from each other, and cannot interchange office or authority or duty. Each magistracy is peculiar and appropriate to the province within which it bears rule. The office-bearers of the state are not known within the Church; and, on the other hand, the office bearers of the Church are not known within the state. In their respective authorities, and in the administration of that authority, the state and the Church are different from and independent of each other.

Upon these four grounds, then, there may be laid the foundation of a proof clear and abundant: that these two institutions, the Church and the state, equally of Divine appointment, have a separate existence, a distinct character, and an independent authority; and that it is impossible to identify them, or to make the one dependent upon the other. These principles may be applied in a twofold way.

In the first place, they may serve to expose the fallacy of the Erastian system, which seeks to subordinate the Church to the civil government.

It was the doctrine of Erastus, as laid down in his Theses touching Excommunication, that the general government of the visible Church is part of the one function of dominion intrusted to the state; that the office-bearers in the Christian society, as such, are merely instructors, or preachers of the Word, without any power or right to rule, except what they derive from the civil magistrate; and that ecclesiastical censure, and more especially excommunication, is a civil punishment, which the magistrate may employ the office-bearers of the Church to inflict, but which owes its force to civil authority alone. The principles of Erastus were more fully developed in after times by those who adopted his views,—more especially in Holland; and they are sufficiently recognised now as that system of opinion which in any shape ascribes to the civil magistrate a proper jurisdiction in spiritual things or ecclesiastical matters. Such a system cannot be consistently maintained, except by those who to a large extent overlook or set aside the fundamental distinction between the Church and state, as societies wholly separate and independent, and who, in one way or other, are disposed to confound or identify the two. In this way the Erastian theory is opposed more or less to all those principles already indicated, as furnishing, with their appropriate evidence, a satisfactory proof that the Church and state are distinct and independent in their origin, in their primary objects, in the power exercised by them, and in the administration of that power. It is more especially opposed, however, to the third and fourth of the positions already laid down. If it be true that the nature of the power appertaining to the state is wholly different from the nature of the power intrusted to the Church,—the one being coercive and civil, and the other purely spiritual,—then it would seem undeniably to follow, that the province and jurisdiction of the one are fundamentally distinct from those of the other; and that, so far from subordinating the Church to his own authority, the civil magistrate cannot lawfully trespass into a region where he has no jurisdiction, and the Church alone has. Again, and still further, if it be true that Christ has appointed in His Church not only a power distinct from that of the civil magistrate, but an administration of that power equally distinct,—if He has given to the Church not

merely an authority separate from that of the state, but office-bearers to administer that authority distinct also,—then there would seem to be in this an additional security against the encroachments of the one upon the province of the other, and an additional reason for asserting, in opposition to the Erastian doctrine, that the Christian society can never, in any circumstances, be merged into the civil, nor the kingdom of Christ be made the slave of the kingdoms of men.

The principles already laid down serve to evince very clearly also the fallacy of the argument which is perhaps most often employed to justify the encroachments of the state on the spiritual independence of the Christian Church. Erastians are accustomed to contend, that it is inconsistent with the very idea of civil society to permit another and an independent society within it. They assert that the claim of the Church involves the setting up of an "imperium in imperio," and that the state cannot stand if another body is to exercise a separate and not subordinate jurisdiction within the very bosom of the commonwealth. Now, the third principle enunciated by us, as marking the fundamental difference between the Church and state, is quite sufficient to remove the apparent plausibility of this objection. If the Church and state wielded power of the same kind, and exercised jurisdiction to the same intent, there might be, and very possibly would be, collision and contradiction between them, inconsistent with the co-ordinate authority or existence of both. If both exercised a separate and independent control over the persons and properties of men, or both claimed an equal and distinct authority over the conscience,—if, in short, both wielded a power either exclusively temporal or exclusively spiritual,—the Church and the state could not exist in the same country, without endangering the peace and harmony of the community. But if, as we have already seen, the nature of the authority exercised by each be wholly and fundamentally unlike,—if the one claims jurisdiction in temporal and the other in spiritual matters,—they may exist together, and embrace as members the very same individuals, without provoking any collision, or requiring that, for the sake of harmony, the one should be made subordinate to the other. In the fundamental distinction

between the province assigned to each, we see provision made not only against the risk of collision, but for a friendly and harmonious co-operation.

In the second place, the principles already laid down serve no less to evince the fallacy of the Popish system, which would subordinate the civil power to the spiritual.

The supremacy of the spiritual authority over the civil, and the title belonging to the Church to dispose of the temporal rights and property of men, are doctrines put forth in the broadest and most offensive form by the Church of Rome, in the Fourth Council of Lateran, accounted by Romanists to be œcumenical and authoritative. "Let the secular powers," says the third canon of the Lateran Council, "whatever offices they may hold, be induced and admonished, and, if need be, compelled by ecclesiastical censure,—that as they desire to be accounted faithful, they should, for the defence of the faith, publicly set forth an oath, that, to the utmost of their power, they will strive to exterminate from the lands under their jurisdiction all heretics who shall be denounced by the Church." "But if any temporal lord, being required and admonished by the Church, shall neglect to cleanse his lands of this heretical filth, let him be bound with the chain of excommunication by the Metropolitan and the other co-provincial bishops. And if he shall scorn to make satisfaction within a year, let this be signified to the Supreme Pontiff, that thenceforth he may declare his vassals absolved from their allegiance to him, and may expose his land to be occupied by the Catholics, who, having exterminated the heretics, may without contradiction possess it, and preserve it in purity of faith." The atrocious doctrine thus authoritatively set forth by the Fourth Lateran Council, has frequently been disavowed by individual members or doctors of the Church of Rome; and, more especially in later times, has been put as much as possible into the background by those who did not, or could not, disavow it. But it has never been denied or disavowed by the Church of Rome itself; and the greater number of her theologians have ever maintained the dispensing and

deposing power of the Pope. Bellarmine, her ablest controversialist, lays down and defends the proposition, that "the Pope has, in order to spiritual good, supreme power to dispose of the temporal affairs of all Christians." And if additional proof were wanted on the point, it would be found in the fact, that the Gallican Liberties, the first article of which denies this deposing and dispensing power ascribed to the Pope, have been disapproved by successive Popes, have by the majority of Romanists been accounted heretical, and have been maintained by few beyond the boundaries of the French Church. It is needless to say that the inherent superiority of the spiritual power over the civil, and the consequent right of the Church to dispose of all temporal matters, are flagrantly opposed to the scriptural principles respecting the relation of the Church to the state already laid down.

Not less opposed to the scriptural principles, which determine the proper relation of the Church to the state, is the assertion of the same general claim, although in a somewhat modified shape, in the exemptions and privileges demanded for the clergy by the Church of Rome, in all countries where it has been free to develop its principles, and reduce them to practice. In accordance with the general policy of the Popish system, which seeks to make the clergy a distinct body throughout the world, subject only to the Church, and in conformity with its claims of spiritual power, the Church of Rome, wherever it has had the power or opportunity, has demanded, on behalf of the priesthood, more or less of exemption from the ordinary jurisdiction of the civil magistrate, and has claimed, on behalf of ecclesiastical persons and property, rights and immunities not vouchsafed in the case of the rest of the community. It is in opposition to those exemptions and powers claimed by the Church of Rome on behalf of the clergy, that the Westminster Confession declares, in its 23d, that "ecclesiastical persons are not exempted from paying to magistrates tribute and other dues, from obeying their lawful commands, and from being subject to their authority for conscience' sake." Such claims are but part and parcel of the general principle maintained by the Popish system, of the inherent supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal power; and nothing but

a right understanding of the position already illustrated, in regard to the relation of the Church to the state, and their mutual independence and essential distinction, will enable us successfully to resist such pretensions, and to "render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."<sup>3</sup>

## SEC. II.

### THE LAWFULNESS OF THEIR CONNECTION

In dealing with the subject of the Church in its relations to the state, we have found that the two societies, ecclesiastical and political, are essentially distinct and independent, having each of them a separate existence and action, a co-ordinate authority and will. Upon this fundamental principle we must be prepared to proceed in considering the further question of the possibility and lawfulness of a connection and friendly co-operation between the two. There can in fact be no connection, in the proper sense of the term, when a previous and independent existence is denied to the one or to the other. Deny, on the one hand, the separate character and independent authority of the Church as a visible society, and you supersede the possibility of an alliance between it and the state,—you merge the ecclesiastical in the political body, making it merely one member, and a subordinate one, in the constitution of the state. Deny, on the other hand, the separate character and independent existence of the state, and you equally prevent the possibility of a proper alliance between the two,—you merge the civil in the ecclesiastical body, and make the state a mere function or inferior office of the Church. There have been a number of different theories of the connection between the Church and the state, which have proceeded on an entire forgetfulness of this simple principle, and so have been in reality, not so much theories of the connection or alliance of the two societies, as schemes for their identification, or for the subordination of the one to the other. The essential idea, I repeat, that lies at the foundation of any true conception of a connection

between the Church and the state, must be the acknowledgment of their previous existence as separate and independent societies, capable of entering into an alliance upon equal terms, but not capable, without a surrender of their essential character, of becoming one with each other, or subordinate to each other.

How much this has been lost sight of in the attempts made to construct a scheme of the alliance of Church and state, the briefest reference to the history of such attempts will evince. In the eighth Book of his Ecclesiastical Polity, we have Hooker's views of the relations of the Church to the state. He there lays down the fundamental position, that in the case of nations professing Christianity there can be no essential distinction between the Church and the state; but inasmuch as they are composed of the same individuals, who on the one hand are subjects of the commonwealth, and on the other are members of the Christian society, these two must be one and the same; and only differ as the same man differs when dealing at one time with secular, and at another time with spiritual, concerns. "The Church and the commonwealth," says Hooker, "are in this case personally one society; which society is termed a commonwealth, as it liveth under whatsoever form of secular law and regiment,—a Church, as it hath the spiritual law of Jesus Christ." It is upon the fundamental principle, thus laid down, of the essential oneness of the Church and state in a professedly Christian country, that Hooker proceeds to explain and justify the actual relations of the civil government and the religious society, as witnessed in the case of the Church of England, against the objections taken to them by the Puritans. Upon this ground he defends the royal supremacy over the Church, inasmuch as the king, in the common society, is the "highest uncommanded commander," and generally maintains the proper jurisdiction of the civil magistrate within the department of the Church as, in fact, but another department of the commonwealth. The fundamental errors in Hooker's system are, the denial of the essential distinction and independence of the Church and state as two separate bodies, which may co-operate, but cannot merge into each other, and the



unfortunate assumption, that the individuals of a professedly Christian nation necessarily compose only one society under two names, rather than two separate societies, accidentally the same to a large extent as to the members they embrace, but not the same as to their true character and proper functions. The moment that the line between the body politic and the body ecclesiastical is obliterated or drawn amiss, that instant the true theory of a proper alliance between the two is hopelessly lost.

The doctrine of Coleridge, in his work *On the Constitution of the Church and State* according to the idea of each, is very similar in this respect to Hooker's. He makes the Church to be one out of the many various estates of the body politic, not essentially distinct from them, and necessary to harmonize and cement together the rest. Like Hooker, he overlooks the fundamental separation between the Church and state as two corporate societies, which, from their very nature, are distinct and independent.

Warburton, in his work *On the Alliance of Church and State*, although taking up somewhat different ground from Hooker, yet virtually lies open to the very same objection. He does not deny, as Hooker does, that the visible Church on the one hand, and the body politic on the other, are two societies, originally separate and distinct in their character; but he denies that the distinction is so fundamental and essential that it cannot be modified or surrendered. The doctrine of Warburton is indeed the doctrine commonly adopted by all the defenders of an Erastian connection between Church and state who have not thought very accurately or earnestly on the subject; and it virtually amounts to this, that although the two societies are originally distinct and independent, yet the difference is not so vital, nor the independence so essential to their nature, but that the Church may consent to the surrender of its inherent rights, as the price of certain advantages obtained from the state in return. The state requires the assistance of the Church to accomplish some of the objects it has in view; and the Church requires the aid of the state to uphold and protect it. Each, therefore, has reasons of its own

for seeking a voluntary alliance and co-operation with the other. And this alliance is completed, when the state endows the Church with a competent maintenance for the clergy, and with certain civil rights for the protection of her authority and discipline; and when the Church, on the other hand, foregoes her original and distinct independence, and becomes the instrument or engine of the state for certain civil purposes. Here, again, we meet the very same disregard of the fundamental and ineffaceable distinction between the two societies as before. With Warburton, the difference between the Church and state is not a difference essential to the idea of each, and therefore never to be abandoned; but one non-essential, and to be surrendered in return for certain accidental advantages. The original independence of the one from the other is admitted; but it is denied that it is an independence belonging to the essence both of the body politic and of the body ecclesiastic, and which cannot, therefore, be sacrificed without the sacrifice of the essential character of the one or the other. With Warburton, the independence of the Church with respect to the civil magistrate is a thing accidental, to be bartered away without the surrender thereby of the true character of a Church of Christ.

The argument of Paley, in his *Moral and Political Philosophy*, for the connection of Church and state, proceeds apparently upon the disavowal of a visible Church as a corporate society altogether. According to Paley, the state, in seeking an ecclesiastical connection, forms an alliance, not so much with another society equally independent and equally organized with itself, as with a form of religion, apart from any corporate religious body. To quote his own words, "the single view under which we ought to consider any of them is that of a scheme of instruction; the single end we ought to propose by them is the preservation and communication of religion." In conformity with this idea, Paley tells us that the only three things comprehended in the notion of a religious establishment are: "a clergy, or an order of men excluded from other professions, to attend upon the offices of religion; a legal provision for the maintenance of the clergy; and the confining of that provision to the teachers of a

particular sect of Christianity." From Paley's notion, then, of a religious establishment, the idea of a Church as a visible and corporate society, vested with certain powers and rights and privileges as a corporate society, is totally excluded; and the Church is regarded in the single aspect of a number of men set apart to teach a certain form of religious faith. It is plain that such a scheme denies or ignores the existence of a visible Church altogether,—affording another example of the position, that there can be no true conception of the proper alliance of Church and state which does not set out from the fact of the distinct and independent existence of the two as separate societies.

There is one other theory of the connection between the Church and state, of which the late Dr. Arnold of Rugby may be taken as the most eminent English representative in recent times. It is in some respects the opposite of those already mentioned, and yet it stands exposed to the very same objection in point of principle,—that, namely, of denying the essential distinction between the two societies of the Church and state, and proceeding upon the possibility of identifying or confounding the two. When a nation turns Christian in outward profession, instead of the Church being, according to Hooker, merged in the state, the state, in Arnold's theory, is merged in the Church. "By so doing," says Arnold, "it—i.e. the state—becomes a part of Christ's Holy Catholic Church,—not allied with it, which implies distinctness from it, but transformed into it." Under what is apparently an opposite phraseology, the theory of Arnold, like some of those already referred to, proceeds upon the principle that it is possible to merge into one two societies which, according to the Scripture view of them, are distinct and independent in their origin, in their aims, in the power that belongs to them, and in the manner of administering that power. Grant that the Church and state are thus separate and independent, and it is plainly impossible that the one should be merged in the other, or the office of the one discharged by the other, unless either the ecclesiastical or the civil society is to sacrifice something of the proper character and essential nature that belong to it. It is competent for the two to enter into connection upon

equal terms; it is not competent for them to enter into connection through the surrender, on either side, of an independence that essentially and inalienably appertains to each.

There is one fundamental condition, then, essential to an alliance between the Church and state, and on which both parties in the alliance have equally a right to insist: the condition, namely, that the Church and the state, as distinct societies, shall be recognised as mutually independent in their existence and entire offices and functions. Without this, there can be no true or scriptural alliance; and any connection formed must involve an Erastian or Popish encroachment on the one side or other. Now, what is implied in this fundamental condition of the alliance? First, on the side of the Church, there is implied that the Church has a right, from her Divine Head, to the full possession and free use of all the powers and prerogatives which He has vested in her, without interference or obstruction of any kind from the civil magistrate. In preaching the truth according to Christ's Word, in administering ordinances according to His appointment, in exercising authority and discipline in conformity with His gift and injunction, the Church must be free to judge and act for herself according to the law of Scripture, without responsibility to or interference from the state. All this is implied in the office and function of a Church as essentially belonging to her, and which she can on no terms surrender, but must ever and uninterruptedly assert. In any alliance between the Church and the state, the Christian society has a right to expect that these things shall be expressly guaranteed to her by the civil magistrate, as the fundamental condition of the alliance; or, in other words, the Church has a right to expect from the state a legal recognition of her character, powers, and freedom, as a Church. Second, on the side of the state, there is implied that the state has a certain province and express authority appointed to it by God, and that, in the administration of the civil powers and offices thus belonging to it, it shall be free from the encroachment or opposition of the Church. In following out the office and duties of the civil magistracy, the magistrate has a right to expect that the spiritual society shall

interpose no let or hindrance in the way of that authority and freedom which, within their own province, God has given to the civil powers as His ordinance for good. In other words, in any alliance entered into between the Church and state, the state has a right to demand a guarantee from the Church in regard to its principles and practice, or a Confession of Faith, in which the civil magistrate may receive a declaration of the doctrines which the Church is to promulgate, of the rule of discipline by which she acts, and of the extent and limits of that authority which she claims. These two things seem to be implied in any safe or scriptural adjustment of the terms of alliance between the Church and state, and are necessary to secure the equal and mutual independence of the two parties in the alliance: first, a legal recognition, on the part of the state, of the freedom and powers of the Church; and, second, a confession of its faith on the part of the Church, for the satisfaction and security of the state.

Taking, then, these two conditions as essential to any true or scriptural basis for the alliance of Church and state, the question at once meets us: Is it possible, on these terms, for the state to form a connection with the Church, or is it lawful for the Church, on such conditions, to enter into an alliance with the state? Can the state, on receiving from the Church an authoritative declaration of its form of faith and rule of discipline and claim of authority, and approving of the same, enter into friendly cooperation and compact with it? Can the Church, on receiving from the state a legal recognition of and security for its spiritual powers and privileges, accept of the alliance and sanction of the state? The higher and further question of duty in the matter—the question of the obligation that may rest upon one or both of these parties to form such a connection—I postpone for future consideration. I confine myself at present to the single point of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of such an alliance between the Church and state; and in briefly considering it, I shall give rather the principles on which the question may be argued, than the argument itself.

I. In the first place, there is a foundation laid for a friendly alliance between the Church and state, in the fact of the twofold character which Christ sustains of Head of the Church, and also of Head over all things to the Church.

That civil government is an ordinance of God, as the God of nature and not of grace, is a most important truth, and one that lies at the foundation of the essential difference between the state and the Church, which owes its origin to Christ as Mediator. But it is no less true that God has handed over to Christ, as Mediator, the ordinance of civil government, to be employed by Him in subordination to the great purposes of His mediatorial reign. Among "the all things" over which Christ is now made Head to the Church, is to be numbered the ordinance of magistracy or civil government in this world,—a truth which seems unquestionably to draw with it the conclusion that, in the hands of Christ, and under His control, the civil government of nations may be made instrumental in advancing the interests and promoting the well-being of the Church. In the joint dominion to which Christ has been exalted, both over the state and over the Church, and in the express and avowed object for which this dominion has been vouchsafed to Him, we recognise a foundation laid for those two Divine ordinances, originally separate and still essentially distinct, becoming serviceable and advantageous to each other. In the assertion that Christ is made Head over the kingdoms of men for the good of His Church, there is unquestionably implied the further assertion, that Christ can make the kingdoms of men, in one way or other, contribute to the well-being of His Church. Even were the state to be identified with the world as ungodly and alienated from Christ—as many Voluntaries are accustomed to identify it—still He could, by His power and grace, convert the state, as He does convert even wicked men, into the unwitting instruments for promoting the interests of His Church. But the state is not to be identified or confounded with a world that lieth in wickedness. It is an ordinance of God, both good in itself and appointed for good. The very end for which it has been placed under subjection to the Messiah is, that it may be instrumental, under Him, for securing the

spiritual interests and promoting the welfare of His kingdom of grace; and it approaches very nearly to the assertion that Christ has failed in the object for which He has been set over it as Head, to assert that the state, from its nature or constitution, cannot in any manner be converted into a willing and conscious instrument for promoting the prosperity of the Church, and advancing the cause of Christianity. In the common subordination to Christ which the body politic and body ecclesiastical alike underlie, and in the object which is to be promoted by that subordination, we see the foundation laid for a friendly alliance and co-operation between Church and state. Distinct and separate in their essential character, they are yet brought into one through their mutual subjection to the same Divine Head, and their mutual subserviency to the same gracious purpose. Fundamentally unlike in their character on earth, they are resolved into a higher unity through means of one Head in heaven. The Church and the state, because equally the servants of Christ, are helps made and meet for each other.

II. In the second place, there is a foundation laid for a friendly connection between the Church and state, in the fact that they have certain ends of an important kind in common.

No doubt there are certain ends of a temporal kind which it is the immediate and primary object of the state to attain, and which are not directly contemplated by the Church; and, on the other hand, there are certain ends of a spiritual kind which it is the immediate and primary duty of the Church to subserve, and which the state does not directly contemplate. In this we recognise and assert an element that goes to prove the fundamental distinction between the two. But it is perfectly consistent with this to assert that there are certain objects which the Church and state may contemplate and subserve in common, and which it is their duty to promote together; although these may not be the primary and immediate objects for which they both were instituted. This is a general position, which may be safely laid down, notwithstanding of the objections taken by Voluntaries against it. I do not now enter upon the question whether the civil

magistrate, as such, is equally bound with the Church to contemplate in his actions the glory of God, and to strive to promote the spiritual interests of the community. This is a question which will fall to be discussed afterwards, and which at the present stage of the argument we can afford to postpone. It is enough for our present purpose to assert—and it would be difficult directly to contradict the averment—that there is a large class of duties as between man and man, and not as between man and God, which it is the joint province and end both of the Church and the state to promote. The first Table of the moral law comprehends an order of duties which it is the main and direct object of the Church to inculcate and advance among men, and which Voluntaries will not admit to appertain in any sense to the civil magistrate. But setting aside these, there are the duties of the second Table of the moral law, which no one can pretend to deny are the concern of the state as much as of the Church. The life of man, as entrusted to the keeping of his fellow-men, or exposed to their violence; the ordinance of marriage, with its rights and privileges both civil and sacred; the property of man, with the laws that regulate its possession, and declare the guilt of encroachment upon it; the duty and solemnity of an oath, which forms the cement of civilised society, and without which it could not cohere as a society at all; the obligation of honesty and justice between man and man, and the peace and contentment of each with his lot and outward estate: these are matters which are equally the concernment of the civil magistrate and of the Christian Church, and fall equally in one shape or other within the province of both. Whatever peculiar and more immediate objects may fall directly under the contemplation of the Church and state respectively, there can be no doubt that there are certain ends—indirectly, it may be, as regards the one or the other—that are common to both, and after the attainment of which it is the duty of both alike to strive. There is common ground here where the Church and state may meet,—where, in fact, they must meet, unless they would abdicate their functions and deny their responsibility. There is such a community of duty and interest between the Church and state in regard to these matters, that they must act in concert, either more or less openly avowed, if they act at all; and we see the



foundation laid in the fact of their having such ends in common for a friendly alliance and co-operation between the two.

III. In the third place, there is a common ground laid for the possibility and lawfulness of a friendly alliance between the Church and the state, in the fact that they may or do consist of the same individuals.

From this fact, that the Church and state among a Christian people embrace very much the same membership, Hooker and others, in their schemes of connection between the two, were led to infer a substantial identity between the two societies, as being innately not two, but only one under two names. But although this conclusion has been drawn in defiance of the fundamental distinction which both Scripture and reason lead us to recognise between the body ecclesiastical and the body political, yet there can be no doubt that the fact on which it professes to be based does furnish a satisfactory foundation on which to rest an argument for the expediency and practicability of a friendly alliance between them. The twofold character which the members of the Church, being at the same moment the members of the state, in these two respects sustain, unavoidably leads to some sort of friendly understanding between the two societies. A member or office-bearer of the Church, when he becomes invested with civil influence or office, cannot denude himself of his previous character, or cease to recognise the duties and obligations which that character implies. Into his new position as a member of the civil society, he must carry his former and still subsisting obligations as a member of the Church; and unless it be alleged that the duties and offices of the state are unlawful to a Christian, there must be some way or other in which the two can be discharged in harmony and concert. In other words, the duty of the member of the Church and the duty of the member of the state cannot be contradictory to each other, but must be in harmony in such a sense that they may be binding on the same individual conscience, and may be discharged by the same individual man without opposition, or rather with perfect adaptation to each other.

And what takes place in the instance of the individual must also take place in the instance of the community, or the collection and combination of individuals. There is no new element of disturbance or hostility introduced when certain things come to be the duty, not of the individual, but of the whole body, whether of the Church or state, and when these two are called upon to act under their respective obligations together. Their duties are not in opposition, but in adaptation to each other. The entire membership of the state may also be the membership of the Church, and in their twofold capacity find nothing to put the duties of the one character in hostility to the duties of the other, but the reverse. In the fact that the body politic and the body ecclesiastical do or may consist of the same individuals, there is the foundation laid for the possibility and the lawfulness of a friendly co-operation between them.

IV. In the fourth place, there is a foundation laid for asserting the lawfulness of a friendly connection between the Church and state, in the fact that such a connection is actually exemplified in Scripture, with the direct sanction and approbation of God Himself.

Into the nature or peculiarities of the civil establishment of religion under the Jewish dispensation, it is not at all necessary that we should at present inquire. It is enough for us to know the fact, that under the Jewish economy there was a close and intimate union between the Church and the state—between religion on the one hand, and the civil magistrate on the other. The Church and state were not merged into each other under that system, but still remained separate and independent. They were different in regard to their laws, to their office-bearers, and to a certain extent in regard to their members; but nevertheless they were nearly connected, and that, too, for a lengthened period of time, and under the express sanction of the Almighty. In this fact we acknowledge and assert a warrant for the alliance of things civil and sacred, for the connection and co-operation together of the king and the priest, of the throne and the altar. It is altogether irrelevant to the argument to dwell, as the advocates of Voluntary principles are accustomed to do, on the

peculiarities of the Jewish dispensation, and more especially on the peculiarities of the Jewish Church and state, as if these were sufficient to set aside the fact that the lawfulness of a union between the two has already been sanctioned in the history of God's own people, and by the immediate command of God Himself. There were peculiarities in the Jewish dispensation, typical or ceremonial, and not universally applicable, or to be drawn into precedent for all time. There were peculiarities in the case both of the Church and state among the Jews, forming no pattern for our imitation. Nay, there may have been peculiarities in regard to the endowment and pecuniary support of the Church in Israel, suited to them, and not binding on us. But unless it can be proved that the Jewish Church was no Church at all, and that the Jewish state was no state, the fact of the union between them under the express appointment of God cannot be got rid of. There was no peculiarity about the Jewish Church such as to render it no Church at all; and there was no peculiarity about the Jewish state such that it forfeited its character as a civil government. Whatever other purposes, typical or temporary, the Church under the former dispensation might be intended to serve, it was unquestionably intended to accomplish the purposes of a Church in regard to the people of God,—differing, indeed, in outward form and accidental circumstances from the Christian Church, but really the same in its essential character and nature. In the same manner, whatever extraordinary features or peculiarities may have been superinduced upon it, there can be no dispute as to the fact that the civil state of the Jews was the ordinance of God to them in the same manner as the state is to us. And if the Church of God, as a Church, was intimately connected with the state as the state, under a former economy, the difference of that economy from our own in temporary or typical peculiarities will not overturn the fact of such a connection, or invalidate the warrant that it affords for an alliance of some kind or another between the spiritual society on the one hand and the civil magistrate on the other. We see the Church of the Jews standing in the relation of connection to the state of the Jews, and that under the express warrant of God; and there is no way to evade the force of the

argument drawn from the fact in favour of the lawfulness of such a connection, except by asserting—what few perhaps will venture to assert—that the Church under that dispensation was no Church, but the type of one, or that the state was not a civil government, but a typical or temporary peculiarity also.

Upon principles such as these, it is not difficult to establish the lawfulness of a friendly alliance and co-operation between the Church, in all the integrity of its spiritual powers and independence on the one hand, and the state in all the fulness of its civil supremacy on the other. This is arguing the question of the competency of civil establishments of religion on the lowest grounds. But there is a higher position that ought to be taken up,—the position, namely, of the duty and obligation resting on the Church and state respectively, as separate ordinances of God adapted to each other, to seek and occupy a common ground in advancing His glory and His work on earth. Before proceeding, however, to discuss this subject, it may be well to advert briefly to an attempt which has been made to evade the force of the very strong, and I believe irresistible, argument last brought forward in favour of the lawfulness of an alliance on sound and scriptural principles between Church and state.

## **SUBSEC. The Non-identity of Church and State among the Jews**

It has been maintained by some writers that the distinction between Church and state was unknown before the introduction of Christianity, and that among the Jews, in particular, they were really one and the same. This position has often been taken up by Erastians, and has sometimes been unwisely conceded to them. It was held by Erastus himself, who asserted that the civil and the ecclesiastical government among the ancient people of God were vested in the same hands, and formed only different functions of the same society, and argued that what was lawful then could not reasonably be regarded as in itself unlawful now. Beza, in reply,

denied the grounds on which Erastus founded his argument, and proved the essential distinctness of the Jewish Church and state with great ability and success.<sup>2</sup> The same point was discussed by various writers during the course of the Erastian controversy in Holland. It came into special prominence at the time of the Westminster Assembly, when the position of Erastus was taken up and defended with much display of Rabbinical learning by Selden, Lightfoot, and others. They were conclusively answered, however, by Gillespie and Rutherford; the masterly work of the former of whom is especially worthy of being consulted for a clear, full, and satisfactory discussion of this, as of every other favourite Erastian argument.

That the civil and the ecclesiastical society were essentially separate and independent, although allied, under the Jewish dispensation, may be proved by the following considerations, which we can merely indicate in the briefest way, without entering into details:—

I. The Church and the state among the Jews were distinct in respect of their origin. The Jewish state was, in the strict and literal sense of the word, a theocracy. God, who has revealed Himself to men as the Supreme Ruler and Governor of all the nations of the earth, revealed Himself of old as the Ruler of the Jewish nation in a special and peculiar sense. Civil government among the Hebrews had its origin from God as the King of Israel. "By Him their kings ruled, and their princes decreed justice." Not so in regard to the Jewish Church. There is a distinction clearly and repeatedly drawn in the Old Testament between Jehovah as the King of Israel, and Jehovah as the Angel of the Covenant, who led the people out of Egypt, who went before them through the wilderness, who was seen in the Shekinah, in the Tabernacle, and in the Temple. It was from the latter, not from the former, that the ecclesiastical government of the Hebrews had its origin. The Church of the Old Testament, like the Church of the New, had the Second Person of the Godhead for its Founder and its Head.

II. The Church and the state among the Jews were distinct in respect of the objects which they contemplated and the ends which they had

in view respectively.

In this respect we see precisely the same distinction between the two societies as is witnessed among ourselves. The state was established among the Jews for the protection of life and property, for the preservation of civil order, for the punishment of evil-doers, for the promotion of the temporal well-being and advantage of all classes of the community. The Church, again, was established for religious and spiritual ends; and in seeking to attain these, it dealt with such matters as the manner, place, times, and arrangements of the worship of God, the conditions of acceptance with Him, the method of atonement for breaches of His commands, and generally all matters directly bearing on personal and public morality and religion. On the ground of this difference rests the well-known distinction between the political and judicial laws of the Jews on the one hand, and the ceremonial and moral laws upon the other; the former class of precepts being those belonging to the state, the latter those connected with the Church.

III. The Church and the state among the Jews were distinct in respect of the nature of the power which they exercised respectively.

Here, again, the very same difference is to be observed between the two societies as exists under the present dispensation. It is true, indeed, that exceptional instances may be pointed out of individual men who, in virtue of an extraordinary commission from God, united civil and ecclesiastical functions in their own persons. Such an instance we have in the case of Moses, whose extraordinary mission, in the peculiar and transitional circumstances of the nation at the time, entitled him to the possession and exercise of power alike in Church and state. But setting aside this, and perhaps one or two similar instances, which are clearly of an exceptional kind, and easily to be explained from the peculiar and extraordinary circumstances of the case, the line of distinction between civil and ecclesiastical power among the Jews is broad and strongly marked. The power exercised by the Jewish state was purely civil and coercive in its nature. This is

evident from the kind of penalties inflicted, such as fines, scourging, death by stoning, or hanging on a tree. The power exercised by the Jewish Church, on the other hand, was not coercive, but spiritual in its nature. It did not affect the properties or the lives of men, but was exerted in the way of warning, rebuke, ecclesiastical censure, and finally excommunication, or "cutting off from the congregation." This power of excommunication, or of inflicting the last and highest of ecclesiastical penalties, we find still vested in and wielded by the Jewish Church in our Lord's time. The "casting out of the synagogue" (ἀποσυναγωγος γενεσθαι), repeatedly spoken of in the New Testament, is precisely identical with the "cutting off from the congregation of Israel" (הַפְּרִיט מֵעֵדֻת יִשְׂרָאֵל) so often mentioned in the Old. That this was a strictly ecclesiastical sentence inflicted for religious offences, and that it did not imply the punishment of death, is plain from various considerations. 1. It was awarded for sins of ignorance and infirmity, and accidental ceremonial defilements, which could not be punished with death. A man might be "cut off from the congregation," or as it is sometimes expressed, "cut off from the presence of the Lord," for accidentally touching a bone, or coming in contact with a dead body, or eating blood. These and similar offences against the ceremonial laws of Israel involved a temporary suspension from Church fellowship; they were not, and could not be, regarded as involving the death of the offender.<sup>2</sup> 2. The sentence of excommunication, or "cutting off from the congregation," was inflicted on account of offences for which certain sacrifices and purifications were appointed, in order to bring about the restoration of the excommunicated person to the full privileges of the Church. Such sacrifices and cleansings were never appointed or allowed in the case of criminal offences. 3. The same thing is proved by a comparison of the parallel passages in the New Testament. When the Apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthians, in respect of one of their number who had been guilty of an incestuous marriage, "to deliver such an one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh," to "put away (ἐξαρπειτε) from among themselves that wicked person;" or when he expressed his desire that the false teachers who had disturbed the peace of the Galatian Churches "should be even cut off" from among

them (ὄφελον και ἀποκοψονται οἱ ἀναστατούντες ὑμας), he was using language precisely similar both to that of the Evangelist John in recording the casting out of the synagogue of the blind man healed by Christ on the Sabbath-day,<sup>4</sup> and to that of the Old Testament with respect to "cutting off from the congregation." In all the cases just referred to, it is the same ecclesiastical sentence of excommunication that is spoken of; and surely the conclusion is obvious, that no more in the latter case than in the former did that sentence involve the infliction of death.

IV. The Church and the state among the Jews were distinct in respect of the administration of the power exercised by each respectively.

The rulers and judges who were appointed to hold office in the state for the transaction of civil affairs, were entirely distinct and separate from the priests and Levites, who held office in the Church for the transaction of spiritual affairs and the charge of the interests of religion. The elders who "sat in the gate of the city" are not to be confounded with the elders who formed the sanhedrim of the synagogue. Thus, for instance, to refer to only a few out of the many passages which might be adduced in this connection: in Deut. 18:8–12 a distinction is manifestly made between the sentences pronounced by "the priests the Levites," and those pronounced by "the judge;" and it is intimated (ver. 12) that both courts of appeal were supreme, and their decisions final in their own provinces. In 2 Chron. 19:5–11 an account is given of the measures taken by Jehoshaphat for restoring and promoting order and constitutional government both in the Church and state department. Holding the very first rank among those measures of reformation we find the establishment or renewed confirmation of a civil and an ecclesiastical sanhedrim. The distinction here taken between the duties of the two courts, and the office-bearers of whom they were composed, is clear and unmistakeable. The "matters of the Lord" over which "Amariah the chief priest" was to preside, are most undeniably separated from "all the king's matters" over which, in the civil sanhedrim, "Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah," was appointed.



V. The Church and the state among the Jews were distinct in respect of their members.

To a large extent, of course, the two societies in Israel were actually made up of the same persons; just as, under the present dispensation, in professedly Christian countries the nominal membership of the Church and state may at some periods nearly coincide. But the conditions of membership of the body ecclesiastical and the body politic were by no means identical among the Jews any more than they are so among ourselves. All born Israelites were ipso facto members or citizens of the Jewish state; but all born Israelites were not ipso facto members of the Jewish Church. They might be uncircumcised, or temporarily unclean, or under synagogue censure; and in each and all of those cases they were excluded from the membership of the Church. And, on the other hand, a man might be a member of the Church without on that account becoming a member of the commonwealth of Israel. Such, for example, was the case with the class known among the Jews as "proselytes of righteousness." They were members of the Jewish Church, but they were not members of the Jewish state.

On all these grounds, then, we conclude that the ecclesiastical and the civil societies among the ancient people of God were essentially distinct and independent; and that the argument, therefore, drawn from the facts of the Old Testament dispensation in favour of the lawfulness of an alliance between Church and state remains unimpaired.

## **SEC. III.**

### **THE DUTY OF THEIR CONNECTION**

In entering on the question of the duty resting upon the Church and state respectively to endeavour to establish and uphold a friendly connection, there is a preliminary distinction which it is of some

importance to keep in view. There is an important difference between the recognition of the Church by the state, and the maintenance of the Church by the state. For the state to recognise the Church as a Divine institution, to acknowledge its origin and claims to be from God, to confess that the doctrine which it teaches is the truth of God, and that the outward order and government of the Christian society are His appointment,—this is one thing; and it is, we believe, an incumbent duty on the part of a Christian state at all times. For the state to go beyond a public recognition and acknowledgment of the Church, and to lend its aid in the way of pecuniary support to its ministry and ordinances; to endow as well as to recognise the Christian society,—this is another thing, and a duty that may be incumbent on a Christian state or not, according to circumstances. To avow the truth of God, and to render the homage of a formal and public recognition to that Church which He has established on the earth, is a duty, as we believe, of universal obligation, to be discharged by a Christian state at all times and under all circumstances. The further step of supplying the pecuniary aid necessary to endow the Church and support the teachers of the truth, is one which the circumstances of the state and Church may render imperative or not at different times, according as those circumstances may differ. In determining the duty or expediency of state endowments in any particular case, many practical considerations must be taken into account. It may not be in the power of the civil magistrate to endow, through means of the money of the whole community, the Church of a fraction. The state of the nation or of the Church may render the attempt to endow the latter, although possible, inexpedient for the one or the other. But these considerations do not apply to the recognition of the Church by the state. To recognise the Church of Christ is a duty, not dependent on any local circumstances, but of universal obligation in the instance of a Christian nation or state. The duty of a Christian magistrate, like that of a Christian man, may be exhausted when he avows his religious profession, and lends his testimony to the truth of God, even although circumstances should make it impossible or inexpedient for the magistrate, as for the man, to follow it up by

giving pecuniary support in aid of the Church. In both cases the duty of pecuniary endowment or contribution is one to be judged of by circumstances; the duty of recognition is one independent of such circumstances.

Bearing this distinction along with us, let us consider the grounds on which it may be asserted that it is the duty of the state and the Church respectively to seek a friendly alliance or connection—at least to the extent of a public recognition of the Church by the state, and, if circumstances permit or require it, to the extent of the pecuniary endowment of the Church by the state. In dealing with a subject so wide, and with so many different bearings, it will be impossible to do more than merely indicate the principles on which it may be argued.

I. The first principle, then, which I lay down is, that both the state and the Church are to be accounted moral parties responsible to God.

Like the individuals of which they are composed, the body politic and the body ecclesiastical have each a distinct moral personality, capable of right and wrong, and therefore directly accountable to God. Were the state and the Church in their corporate capacity to be viewed as divested of all moral character, and strangers to moral responsibility, there could be no such thing as duty predicated in regard to them. In such a case they could not do either right or wrong. But the fundamental principle that lies at the basis of the whole argument on this subject is, that both the state and the Church, made up as they are of moral and responsible individuals, and speaking and acting as they do through the organs or office-bearers that represent them, have themselves, as corporate societies, a moral character and a distinct responsibility. Like the individuals of which they are composed, the political society on the one hand, and the ecclesiastical society on the other, have each a distinct personality, in such a sense that each acts and resolves; and that for the action and resolution it incurs a moral obligation, and is responsible to God.

There is a subtle misapprehension current on this subject, as if men individually and personally were responsible, but as if the responsibility were at an end when they entered into a society, whether political or ecclesiastical, and thereby assumed a corporate or collective character. The very reverse of this is the case. Whatever moral character or whatever moral responsibility attaches to a man considered simply as an individual, is added to, and not diminished, when, in addition to his character as a man, he is to be viewed as joined to a society whether political or ecclesiastical, and becomes a citizen or Church member. The moral responsibility which he owed and felt as an individual, still belongs to him as a member of the state or of the Church. Instead of being diminished or cancelled, that responsibility is augmented by the additional obligations appropriate to the character of a citizen or Church member; and the body or society to which he is joined, in its corporate and collective capacity, derives from its members a moral character, and becomes itself responsible for all its actions. Take the case of any voluntary society gathered together for some purpose of science or humanity. The members of such a society do not sink their individual responsibility when they become members; on the contrary, they impart that responsibility to the society itself. The actions of the society, done in the name of the society, and by the appointment of the whole members, partake as much of a moral character, and are to be as much accounted right or wrong, as if they had been the acts of the individuals separately of which it is composed. The society, even though a mere voluntary society, is to be accounted a moral person, with duties and obligations incumbent upon it, and in all of them responsible to God.

Does it, I ask, add to or take from the force of this argument, that the state and the Church are not, properly speaking, voluntary societies, but ordinances of God? It plainly adds to the force of the argument. If, in the case of a merely voluntary society, the society in its collective capacity is to be regarded as a moral person, having a will and a conscience subject to the law of God, and as much responsible in its corporate character as are the individuals who compose it;

much more must the state and the Church as such be accounted responsible to God for what they resolve and do. The very fact that they are God's ordinances, founded in His appointment and resting on His authority, tends to bind all the more strongly upon them as societies a moral and responsible character. If they have received certain additional rights from Him, they have come under certain additional duties and responsibilities also. There is an individual responsibility that attaches to every man as the very creature of God, which he can no more divest himself of than he can divest himself of the character of a creature. There is a collective responsibility that attaches to every society, as a society, which it can no more divest itself of than can the members that compose it. For a man to deny his responsibility, were an attempt to set himself up beyond the reach of God's moral government, and to make himself free from the eternal law of obligation to Him. For a society, whether political or ecclesiastical, to disown its responsibility, is an attempt equally vain and equally impious. In his will and in his conscience, in his resolutions and actions, man is under law to God, and cannot be free. In all that it resolves and does, every society of men in their collective capacity is no less under law, and responsible to God. So clear and incontrovertible are the grounds on which our first position may be maintained, that both the state and the Church are to be accounted parties morally responsible to God.

II. The second position that I lay down is, that both the Church and state, in consequence of this responsibility to God, are bound to own and recognise His revealed word.

This second position may be regarded as a corollary from the first. It follows very directly from the fact, that both the Church and state sustain a moral character, have a conscience to discriminate between right and wrong, and in what they resolve or do are directly responsible to God. There is, of course, a material difference in this respect between the Christian and the civil society,—the Christian society or Church being founded for the express and immediate purpose of being a witness to the truth of God in the face of the

world, and the profession of the true faith being of the very essence of a Church, in the absence of which it would cease to be a Church at all; whereas the civil society, or the state, has been founded and exists for other immediate objects. But the duty of a Christian Church to profess the true religion, although more immediate and direct, does ultimately rest on the very same footing as does the duty of a Christian state. In both cases it is because they are to be regarded as the moral creatures of God—responsible to Him for what they resolve and do—that we are to hold them bound to own His name, to recognise His will, and to confess and bear witness unto His truth. The truth of this position, in so far as it bears upon the Church, no one, of course, is disposed to deny. For this end was the Church instituted, that it might be a witness for the word of God on the earth. But the truth of this position is denied by the advocates of the Voluntary cause, in so far as it bears on the state. It is affirmed that the state, as the state, has nothing to do with religion; that it has no duty or obligation to discharge in reference to the revealed will of God; and that it is bound to maintain neutrality between the profession and the denial of Christianity.

Now, if this doctrine has any meaning whatever, it must mean that the state, as a corporate body, is not responsible to God at all. If the civil magistrate is not divested of the responsibility that attaches to every creature,—if he is not, alone of all others, free from a law that binds him, according to his nature and capacity as a creature, to own and honour God in all that he does,—then it cannot be denied, with any show of reason, that he lies under an obligation to receive and submit to God's revealed will. The civil magistrate, as the organ of the state, has the Word of God in his hands. Admit him to be a moral and responsible agent in his official character, and he necessarily incurs obligation in reference to that relation, in the same manner as any other moral and responsible man. He can acquit himself of that responsibility and discharge those obligations in no other way than by receiving that revelation as God's, submitting himself to it as such, and regulating his conduct by it in so far as its statements apply to his case. It cannot be alleged that the state, officially as the state, is

incompetent to own and recognise the revelation of God, in the same sense that the irrational and irresponsible creatures are incompetent. On the contrary, there is involved in the very idea of responsibility an understanding, a will, a conscience, that make the state both capable of discerning between the truth of God and a lie, and accountable for doing so; and unless you deny this responsibility altogether, and affirm that the state cannot do right or do wrong, you are forced to admit that the very first and chiefest act for which it is responsible, is the act of owning or rejecting the revelation which God has given of His will. I do not, at this stage of the argument, speak of the duty of the state to endow the true religion,—I speak merely of the duty of the state to recognise the true religion; and that duty, as attaching to a Christian state, it is impossible to deny, unless upon the ground of a denial of the responsibility of the state as a moral agent altogether. Voluntaries freely admit that the state has a responsibility in reference to other states and to its own individual members. The state sustains a moral character, and is capable of right or wrong in its transactions with other states, in its tactics of war and peace, in its covenants fiscal and commercial. The state sustains a moral character, and is capable of right and wrong in its dealings with its own subjects, in its internal laws and regulations, in its acts legislative and executive. In all these cases no one dreams of denying that the state is a moral and intelligent agent, having an understanding and a conscience to discern between right and wrong, and responsible for doing so. Is it, then, only in reference to God and the revelation of God that the state stands divested of its moral character and responsibility, having no duty to discharge, and no accountability to incur? Is the state alone, of all the creatures of His hands, not under law to God, and having warrant to disown Him? This cannot be. As the moral creature of God,—more especially as His express ordinance,—the civil magistrate or the state is responsible to Him; and because responsible, is bound in its place, and according to its nature, to own and recognise His revealed will.

III. The third position that I lay down is, that the state, by a regard to itself, and to the very objects for which it exists as a state, is bound to

recognise the true religion, and, so far as it is in its power, to promote its interests.

After what has been said, I take it for granted, as a fact not to be disputed, that the state, in all its acts, is to be accounted a moral and responsible agent, as much as any individual that is a subject of it; and that, although not under law to man, the supreme power, or organ of the state, is under law to God. I take it for granted, further, that in consequence of this responsibility to God, the state is bound, as the first and chief of its duties, to own His will, as embodied in the form of a supernatural revelation from Him, and in its national capacity, to recognise the authority and the Word of God as its law. And now, with an inspired revelation from God in its hands, what is it that the state learns as to its own interests and duties? It learns, in the first place, the intimate and indissoluble connection between the interests of civil society and the interests of true religion; and that to promote the wellbeing, or, rather, to insure the existence of the state, it is necessary to call in the aid of powers and influences which the state has not in itself. It finds, that what is wanting in civil society for accomplishing the very end of its own existence, the Gospel alone can supply; and that for the state to dismiss, as a matter foreign to it, the religious instruction and spiritual well-being of the people at large, is to forego the main instrumentality which God has put into its hands for securing the authority of law, for promoting the ends of civil government, for protecting the rights and furthering the peace of society. All this is too plain to need illustration. Without some religion, no society on earth, it is admitted by all parties, could exist at all; and without the true religion, no society can exist happily. Law would cease to be enforced, if it had to trust to punishment alone for its authority, without any higher motive to secure obedience to it; and justice between man and man could not be carried into effect, if it had no hold upon the conscience and the moral sense of a nation. And can it be alleged that religion is a matter with which states, as such, have no right to intermeddle, when it in reality forms the main and only secure foundation on which the authority of states rests,—the only sanction sufficient to enforce right and to deter from wrong



in a community,—the only force strong enough to insure obedience and respect for law,—the only bond that can bind together the discordant elements of human society, and give peace between man and man? To assert that it is no duty of the civil magistrate to care for the religion of the people, is nothing less than to assert that he is at liberty to forego the chief or only certain stay of his own authority, and to disregard what is essential to his own existence or wellbeing. If religion be the great and indispensable cement of human society, then the magistrate is bound, by a regard to his own interests, and for the sake of the grand objects for which a state exists at all, to make the care of religion one of the first duties he has to discharge towards his people.

IV. The fourth position that I lay down is, that the state is bound, by a regard to the Church, as God's ordinance for good, to countenance it, and, so far as it is in its power, to advance its interests.

The responsibility of the civil magistrate is not limited to what respects his own being or wellbeing. He finds, from the revealed will of God, that there is another society of Divine appointment, coordinate with the state, but different from it in its nature and in its powers. He learns that the great aim of this society is to advance the interests of the Gospel among men, and to promote the cause of truth and righteousness in the world. He recognises the visible Church of Christ as an institute appointed by Him for promoting His purposes of grace on earth, by means purely spiritual, and within a province altogether distinct from that of the state. In this separate character and province, assigned by God to the Church and the state respectively, the civil magistrate is able to see the ground laid for co-operation between the two, without the risk of interference and collision. In the common ends which in some respects they contemplate or promote together, he acknowledges their mutual adaptation the one to the other, as friends and allies. Further still, in the fact that they are both ordinances of God, equally appointed by Him, and equally responsible to Him, the civil magistrate is able to see that they have duties one to another in the way of promoting each

other's interests as fellow-workers in the same Master's service. More especially because Scripture assigns to the Church and state jurisdiction and provinces separate and apart, the civil magistrate will see that there is no danger of interference or conflict in entering into right and friendly alliance with the Church, and lending to it his countenance within its own sphere.

Such, unquestionably, will be the light in which the civil magistrate cannot but regard his obligation to God in reference to the Church as God's ordinance, when the Word of God is taken as the rule of duty in the matter. And what remains for him but to ask in what respects, consistently with the character and interests of the civil society on the one hand, and with the nature and welfare of the ecclesiastical society on the other, the state can be instrumental in promoting the cause of the Church? That there are ways in which the state may discharge its obligations to the Church, without sacrificing or encroaching upon the true character and essential rights of either, can hardly admit of a question. The state may give the protection of law to the Church in freely exercising its function as a teacher of Divine truth, and may embody its confession of doctrine in the national statute book. The state may recognise the Sabbath as a day set apart for worship and sacredness, and throw around the rest of the Sabbath the fence of a legal acknowledgment. The state may furnish out of the national resources pecuniary aid for upholding Gospel ordinances, and providing such an endowment for Gospel ministers, as may secure that they be set apart wholly to their office of ministering in sacred things. This last service the state can discharge, in so far as the resources of the nation may permit, and the true welfare of the Church itself allow. And in doing all this, the state would not overstep the limits of its office, but rather be acquitting itself of its duty to God, whose ordinance the Church is, and whose will it is that the interests of His Church should be furthered by every competent and available means. In no respect would there be here any encroachment on the liberties of the Church, or any prejudice done to its spiritual character and prerogatives. On the contrary, there is nothing in all this but what is imperatively

demanded from the state as a duty done to God on behalf of God's ordinance, the Church.

V. The fifth position that I lay down is, that the duty of the state thus to recognise, and, in so far as circumstances permit, to endow the Church, is undeniably countenanced by the whole tenor of Scripture.

It is a striking fact, in confirmation of the views already laid down, that the only form of civil polity ever framed and established by God Himself should stand markedly in connection with the Church of God; and that although many of the circumstances attending the alliance of Church and state among the Jews were peculiar to that people, yet the alliance itself cannot be regarded as ceremonial or peculiar, but must be held as intimating the Divine will as to the lawfulness of such a connection. Add to this fact that, beyond the case of the Jews, we have express examples in Scripture of the countenance given by pecuniary support, and otherwise, to the Church of God by heathen magistrates, and the deed so done sanctioned by the approbation of God. Still further, this evidence of the Divine sanction given to the support and recognition of the Church by the state might be very greatly augmented by a consideration of those predictions in regard to the future or millennial state of the Church, in which kings and kingdoms are especially represented as in the latter days bringing their gold and their honour unto it, and becoming the great instruments of promoting its spiritual interests. Nor is the doctrine of the duty of the state to recognise and aid the Church invalidated by the absence of an express command in the New Testament Scriptures, confirmatory of the duty as announced in the Old. On the contrary, the absence of an express prohibition repealing the law, and superseding the principles acted on in Old Testament times, is the strongest of all evidence that the doctrine and duty remain the same as before. The circumstances of the Christian Church before the canon of Scripture was closed, are sufficient to account for the absence of any express precept there, bearing on the duty of the civil magistrate to countenance and endow the Christian society. But the circumstances

of the primitive Church will not account for the absence of an express prohibition repealing the law of the Old Testament on the subject, had that law been really intended to be superseded or set aside as regards the Christian Church. The very fact of the total silence of the New Testament in regard to any such repeal is, in the circumstances, the strongest confirmation of the express countenance given in the Old to the right and duty of the state to enter into friendly alliance with the Church.

The testimony of Scripture, then, seems to be decisive of the question, and rightly to shut up the whole argument. If, as we have endeavoured to demonstrate, the state is a moral agent, responsible directly to God; if, in virtue of that responsibility, the state be bound, like every other agent in his own place, to receive and submit to the revealed will of God, when made known to it; if the state, by a regard to its own existence and welfare, is imperatively called upon to promote the religious interests of its subjects; if, by a regard to the Church, as the ordinance of God, the state lie under an obligation, in so far as is in its power, to advance its wellbeing,—the inference would seem unavoidable, that it is the duty of the state to seek a friendly alliance with the Church. It is not possible to avoid this conclusion, unless there can be produced, in contradiction to all such arguments, an express prohibition of God forbidding such an alliance as incompetent, and explicitly exempting the state from the duty that otherwise would lie upon it. But instead of any such exception being made in the case of the state, as alone of all the creatures of God exempted from allegiance to Him, and licensed to disown Him,—instead of any such prohibition laid upon the civil governments of the world, forbidding them to do what all else are commanded to do, —to bring their homage and help to the Church of Christ,—we find the very opposite to be the case. We find the whole tenor of Scripture bearing testimony to the duty and responsibility of the state in the matter, and lending not a contradiction but a confirmation to the dictates of nature and reason, which declare that nations and communities, like the individuals that compose them, are the

subjects of Christ, and as such bound to bring their honour and glory to His Church.

## **SEC. IV.**

### **THE NECESSITY OF THEIR CONNECTION**

We have already had occasion to advert to the important distinction to be taken between the duty of the state in acknowledging and recognising the true religion and the true Church, and the duty of the state in maintaining and endowing the Church. The one of these is a duty binding at all times on the civil magistrate, as the responsible servant of God; the other is a duty dependent on the social and political circumstances of the community at the time. And the true relation of the Church to the state is to be determined by a consideration of the question of the lawfulness and duty of the civil magistrate's owning and recognising the Christian Church, not by a consideration of the inferior and far subordinate question of the right or obligation of the civil magistrate to endow the Christian Church. This latter point,—or the right and office of the state as regards the pecuniary support and establishment of religion,—is not only in itself a secondary question to the office and duty of the state to recognise the true religion, but ought also in some respects to be determined by other and different considerations. A regard to the pecuniary interest of the nation,—to the state of religious parties,—to the political power of the state,—may make it lawful or unlawful, expedient or inexpedient, for the civil magistrate to alienate the public funds of the nation to the support of the Church. But although in many discussions this part of the subject has obtained an undue prominence in the argument, the turning point of the controversy between the friends and the enemies of civil establishments of religion must be the prior and far more important question of the right and duty of the state to acknowledge and profess the true religion, without reference to the matter of its pecuniary support at all. A friendly alliance between the state and the Church, between the

civil magistrate and the true religion, is entirely different from, and not to be confounded with, the endowment of the Church out of the national resources.

The argument to which we propose now to address ourselves is, that the ordinance of God for the temporal wellbeing of the community, and the ordinance of God for the spiritual wellbeing of the community, are, from their essential character, so related to each other, that there must unavoidably be a connection, either friendly, or otherwise, between them; that the civil element and the religious element are so interwoven in the very constitution of human society, that they must necessarily tend either to establish or destroy each other; and that unless the Church and state are to be regarded as enemies, hostile to each other's existence, they must be united as friends, aiding and promoting each other's welfare. There can be no such thing as neutrality between the two. The Church in its relation to the state can be accounted in no other light than as an ally leagued with the state for its good, or as an aggressor encroaching upon its rights, and dangerous to its supreme authority. The state in its relation to the Church must be regarded either as the Church's friend and protector, or else as an adversary, secret or avowed. There can, from the very nature of the case, be no alternative. The two societies stand so intimately and vitally related to each other, that the civil magistrate, if he does not ally himself to religion as a friend, will unavoidably be brought into conflict and collision with it as an enemy. He must account it the first and best of all the aids he has in securing the objects of his government; or, if he views it otherwise and treats it otherwise, he will be forced into the position of being its oppressor or its victim.

In making these statements, I of course assume that the question of the connection of the Church and state is not to be restricted to that of the endowment or non-endowment of the Christian society by a nation. The question is to be argued on the wider and more comprehensive footing of the duty of the state to recognise and acknowledge the true religion, or not to recognise and acknowledge

it; and, viewed in this larger and juster sense, my argument, I repeat, is, that from the very nature of the case there is a necessity laid upon the state to own and recognise the existence of religion, in such a sense that, if it refuse to do so, either the state itself or the Church, or, rather, both at once, must fatally suffer. The civil element and the religious element are so bound together in the very constitution of human society, that they may unite together within it as friends, but they cannot exist together within it as neutrals. If within the borders of the same community they are not allied together in friendship to a certain extent, they will be inevitably forced into the attitude of mutual antagonism. The fundamental maxim of the Voluntary theory, that "the state, as the state, has nothing to do with religion," is a principle which, from the very necessity of the case, can never be realized. The state must have to do with religion, and that in the way, if not of friendly co-operation and consent, then of hostility and opposition. If it were possible for the state in any country to disown all connection of a friendly kind with religion, natural and revealed, the inevitable tendency would be, either for the want of religion to destroy the state, or for the state to destroy religion.

Let me endeavour, by pointing out certain matters with which both the civil and the spiritual power are concerned, to demonstrate the necessity of a friendly and harmonious connection between religion and civil government,—the necessity, I mean, in such a sense, that the disowning of all such connection must inevitably lead to the injury or destruction of either the Church or the state.

I. In the first place, let me refer to the case of an oath, which is the bond and seal of human society.

An oath is more than a civil covenant or engagement; it is a religious one, superinduced upon the civil. In the use of an oath, the parties who employ it call in the aid of the solemnities and the sacredness of religion, to give strength to the obligation of a promise; they ratify the promise by an appeal to God to witness its terms, and to judge the breach or fulfilment of it. The central truth of all religion, in

which all professors of religion, whether natural or revealed, concur, —the truth, namely, of the existence of a God, the omniscient Witness and the Almighty Judge of men's conduct and words,—is summoned to the aid of man, when he would enter into any vital and important engagement with his fellow-man; and an appeal to that great and mysterious Being who is above, is interposed and added as the seal and confirmation of the engagement.

Now, how stands the fundamental principle of the Voluntary school in relation to the use of oaths in civil transactions? Is it true, or can it be true in any sense, that the state, as the state, has "nothing to do with religion," and is debarred from making use in any manner of the truths and obligations of religion? Does the civil magistrate overstep the limits of his office, and enter within a province forbidden to him, when he calls to himself the aid of religion, and makes an oath, sanctified and surrounded as it is by the solemnities of religion, to be the bond and the guard of civil society? Or is it the very duty of the magistrate to disown all connection with any form or profession of faith, and to discharge from every transaction of civil life with which he stands officially connected, the use and obligation of religious oaths? The very attempt to do so would itself be an act of national suicide,—a return from organized society to a state of nature,—the establishment of misrule and anarchy by law. Deny or disown the religious obligation of an oath, and you unloose the bond of civilised society, and resolve it once more into its original elements. The whole structure of human society, in so far as it differs from a state of nature, rests upon the foundation of an oath. Its every relation, from the highest to the lowest, is sealed with the seal of a religious vow. In civilised life, and in all its offices and transactions, the last appeal that can be made is an appeal to God; and, short of the dissolution of human society and a resort once more to the law of brute force, "an oath for confirmation is, with men, an end of all strife." The covenant between the monarch and the subject, because it can appeal to no higher law, appeals to an oath, and is ratified by the solemnity of a religious vow; and the duty of the prince and the allegiance of the people are both confirmed by a reference to God. Those who



administer and those who execute law, alike discharge the duties of their office under the obligation, not merely of a civil but of a religious engagement: the judge and the magistrate equally sit in judgment under the responsibility of an appeal to God. The appeal to justice in matters of wrong done or injury sustained between man and man, is made ultimately to rest on the same solemn foundation; the evidence in witness-bearing is only evidence in so far as it is confirmed by an appeal to God as the Witness and the Judge; and the life and death of man, his property, and his dearest civil rights, are adjudged away or ratified to him in virtue of an oath. In short, the relation between the throne and the subject, the office of judge and magistrate, the award of law and justice, the right of life and property, the privilege of peace and order in human society, directly or indirectly rest upon the obligation of an oath, and an appeal to God, as sanctioning and sealing every other obligation. Confirmed and riveted by an oath, the relations of human society stand fast and sure; without an oath, the bonds of life are unloosed, and the fabric of national existence is unsettled to its foundations.

And now, then, shall we say that "the civil magistrate has nothing to do with religion," and that within the province of its doctrines and its institutions he is forbidden to enter? or, rather, shall we not say, that for the state to disown all connection with religion, is a thing impossible, without once more returning to the state of savage nature, and dissolving by law the compact of civilised society? There can be no alternative in the matter. With the friendly alliance of religion, and more especially with the aid of an oath, as an appeal to God, binding together all its parts, the civil estate is strong; without such alliance, and disowning the use and obligation of an oath, the civil estate is resolved into its original elements. The perilous experiment of a civil compact without the ratification of an oath has never yet been exhibited in the experience of the world; and on the evidence both of history and reason, we are warranted to say that, without an appeal to God in some shape or other, the offices of civil society were impossible. It will not do to allege against our argument, that an oath is a matter not of revealed but of natural religion,—

common to nature, and not peculiar to Christianity. This is true. But the doctrines of natural religion, as much as the truths of revealed religion, are excluded from the office of the magistrate by the Voluntary theory; and there are atheists in the world as well as deists, who, on the Voluntary hypothesis, are as much entitled to object against the recognition by the magistrate of the truths of natural religion as of the doctrines of revelation. Neither will it do to allege that an oath is a merely civil transaction, and that, as civil, the magistrate has a right to employ it. In so far it may be true that there stands connected with an oath a civil engagement as well as a religious. But it is the solemn appeal to God, as the present Witness of the truth, and the future Avenger of falsehood or breach of engagement, that forms the essence of an oath; and it is in this character that it is employed in the transactions of human society. It is the seal of God attached to the words of man,—a religious obligation superinduced upon the weakness or insufficiency of a civil engagement. There is, in short, no possibility of evading the argument. The state may enter into friendly alliance with religion, and especially may call to its aid the solemnity of an oath, in order to give security and strength to the social fabric, and so save the commonwealth; or the state may disown all connection with religion, and especially may dispense with the solemnity of an oath, as the seal of civil engagements, and so entail upon society the penalty of an insecure existence and a speedy dissolution. But civil society and religion cannot exist together upon the principle of an absolute and total separation. The disavowal of all connection with religion by the civil magistrate, and the carrying out of such a disavowal in practice, would unloose the bonds of human society; and the penalty of religion denied and rejected by the state, would be the not distant destruction of the state that did so. Without the sanction of religion, natural or revealed, and more especially without the obligation of an oath to unite together the elements of civil life, the magistrate must abdicate his functions, and declare his duties to be impossible.

II. In the second place, let us refer to the right inherent in the Church of Christ to propagate the Gospel, and make disciples in every

country and nation under heaven.

This right, claimed by the Church, and belonging to her in consequence of the duty enjoined by her Head, is a right of such a nature, that it cannot properly consist with the neutrality of the civil magistrate, or be recognised by any state constituted on the principle that it has nothing to do with religion. The full and free and unrestricted power to take possession of this world in the name of Christ, to the exclusion of any other form of faith and worship, is what Christianity demands: with less than this it cannot be satisfied. And yet it may well be doubted whether it be consistent with the principle and practice of absolute neutrality on the part of the state to concede this demand, or whether a toleration for the truth, founded on the theory of entire impartiality and indifference as regards truth and falsehood, is sufficient to protect the Church of Christ in its exclusive claims. The Gospel of Christ is not, like the systems of polytheism among which it was introduced at first, compatible with every other system of falsehood. It is exclusive in its character and pretensions; and demands that it be received and owned and submitted to, to the abandonment and rejection of every other faith. Christ Himself tells us that He came to send on the earth, "not peace, but a sword," not ease, but "a burning fire;" and, like a sword, His Gospel divides asunder the outward and formal union of human society, and, like a fire, it kindles strife and division in the world. There is so much in the Gospel fitted to awaken the hostility of the human heart, and standing in direct opposition to the principles and practices of the world, that it cannot but act as a firebrand wherever it enters. To introduce and propagate it, therefore, in any community, tends not indirectly to excite the rage and outrage and violence of men. More than this: its first principle and first duty is that of aggression. The ministers of the Gospel claim it as a right to go into every nation, however fenced around and guarded from intrusion, and to demand an entrance in the name of Him who sent them, even although the magistrate should bid them depart from his coasts. Further still, the messengers of the Cross arrogate to themselves the title to enter into every human dwelling

where a sinner is to be found,—seeking admittance in the name of the Saviour of sinners, that they may negotiate with the inhabitant in behalf of their Master, however sternly the door may be closed against them by jealousy of their errand, or hatred to their cause.

It has been the eloquent boast of freedom in our country, that every man's house is his castle; and that, be it but a straw-built shed, open to every breath of heaven, yet fenced about by the protection and the sanction of law, there even "the king cannot and dare not enter." But where the king cannot enter, there the missionary of Christ claims to be admitted; and, with a higher warrant in his hand than that of human law, bids the gates be lifted up, that with the Gospel he may enter in. And can claims and pretensions so essentially exclusive and aggressive, which belong from its very nature to Christianity, be owned and conceded by a state constituted on the principle of entire and equal indifference to truth and falsehood? Is it, in the nature of things, possible, in regard to such demands, to profess or carry out the theory of neutrality in civil legislation,—granting a licence free and full to Christianity, intolerant as it is of every other religion? Ask the Roman magistrate within whose jurisdiction the Gospel was at first preached, or the magistrate of any country not Christian within whose rule Christianity is introduced at the present day. For the first three hundred years of its existence the religion of Christ was in almost perpetual collision with the state, just on the ground that it was essentially a missionary and an exclusive religion, that it would not, and could not, exist in peace alongside of any other faith, that its temples must stand alone, and its Deity find no place in the Pantheon. Nor has the essential character of Christianity altered since the days of Nero and Diocletian. Upon the principle of complete indifference to truth and to falsehood, it were difficult to argue or assert that any government could or ought to protect, or give place by civil permission to, a religion framed upon a principle so intolerant, and proceeding in a manner so aggressive. With no other right to toleration than the right which falsehood equally has, it were a matter of question whether the preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus, and the full claims of an exclusive kind which it makes,

ought to be granted by any state. At all events, waiving the question of right, we know that, in the history of the world, it has been found impossible in point of fact for any state not Christian to grant them; and that, in the person of a magistrate not a friend to the Gospel, we have, from the very necessity of the case, to deal with an enemy and a persecutor,—whether that magistrate be a philosopher, like Pliny, or "the father of his people," like Marcus Antoninus. Judging from the nature of the Gospel and of human society together, or judging from the actual history of the facts, we may lay it down, as a position not to be controverted, that when the civil magistrate does not own the truth and recognise it as a friend, then he will view it and treat it as an enemy. The state cannot be neutral; if it is not professedly Christian, it will, directly or indirectly, be the persecutor of Christianity.

It is not enough to allege in reply, that Christianity may claim, and rightfully claim, the same measure of protection as every other form of faith or unbelief; and that, in the toleration granted equally to truth and to falsehood by the civil magistrate,—who, upon the Voluntary theory, is equally indifferent to both,—the Gospel is secure. It may be fairly questioned whether this measure of protection or toleration would cover and include all that Christianity, as the one truth of God, has a right to demand, even were it fully and equally carried out. At least this much is certain, that our Lord never claimed toleration for His kingdom and truth upon the footing that it had an equal right, and no more than equal, with falsehood, to be owned and protected by Cæsar. Nay, our Lord never claimed toleration for His Gospel upon any other ground than that it was the truth, and not falsehood, and had a right, which falsehood had not, to be not only tolerated, but also owned and recognised and submitted to by Cæsar. But, apart from this argument altogether, history teaches the lesson but too plainly, from the record of the past, that where a civil magistrate does not recognise the Gospel, there he never can even protect the profession and demands of the Gospel. The theory of full toleration, on the principle of absolute and evenhanded indifference on the part of the state alike to truth and

falsehood, is a mere theory, and nothing more. It is impossible to carry it out fully and fairly into practice. The magistrate himself has a human heart within him, which, if it does not own and love the truth of God, will assuredly deny it and hate it; and if not decidedly the friend, he will be decidedly the enemy, of the Gospel.

III. In the third place, I would refer to the law of marriage as another of those cases which illustrate the general position, that the civil and religious elements are so connected together in human society, that where they do not meet and unite in friendship and mutual co-operation, they must inevitably tend to the serious or fatal injury of one or the other.

Marriage is one of those institutions which, although not of grace but of nature, is yet adopted into the system of Christianity, and regulated by the rules which Christianity has laid down. The law of marriage has its origin in nature, and not in revelation; and yet the duties and rights connected with it, together with their exact nature and limits, are matters with which revelation deals. In so far as these involve moral or religious duties, we are to seek in the Bible for the code of law by which they are prescribed and determined. But marriage is, in another sense, a civil matter, coming under the province of the ordinary magistrate, and necessarily requiring to be dealt with in the way of civil enactment. There are civil rights intimately connected with it, in such a manner that the state cannot avoid the duty of legislating in regard to it, and regulating them by positive statutes and rules. In short, the institution of marriage is to be viewed in two lights,—either as a moral observance, falling to be regulated by the law of Scripture, or as a civil observance, falling to be regulated by the law of the state. And with this twofold character which it sustains, and this twofold legislation to which in every civilised and constituted society professing Christianity it is subjected, how, it may be asked, is a collision between the spiritual and the civil enactments on the subject—fraught, as it inevitably would be, with deadly consequence to the peace, if not the existence, of human society—to be avoided or prevented? If the state recognise

the Bible as the Word of God, and the law of the Bible as the law of God, then it will take that law as the guiding principle for its own legislation, and make the enactments of the magistrate in regard to marriage coincident with the enactments of Scripture. But if the state do not recognise the Bible as the Word of God, there can be no security that its regulations shall not come into conflict with the regulations of Scripture as regards the institution of marriage, in such a manner as to put in peril not only the peace and purity of domestic life, but also through these the highest and holiest interests of human society. The ordinance of the family lies at the very foundation of civil society. It is the unit of combination around which the wider and more public relations of civil life associate themselves. Destroy or unhinge the domestic ordinances, unloose or unsettle the family bond, and no tie will be left holy enough or strong enough to bind up the broken and disjointed elements of human life. And yet, unless there be on the part of the state a distinct acknowledgment of the Word of God as the law to which its own laws must be conformed, there can be no security against the danger of the enactments of civil society on this vital point running counter to the appointment of God. The degrees of relationship or consanguinity within which marriage is valid or invalid,—the terms on which it is to be contracted or dissolved,—the rights which it confers on children, and the claims of succession,—all these are questions that fall to be determined both by the law of Scripture and the laws of the state, and any difference or conflict in regard to which must tend to unsettle the very foundation of human society. From the very nature and necessity of the case, if the state is not here at one with religion, it must be a difference deeply, if not fundamentally, injurious to the one or the other.

IV. In the fourth place, I would refer to the case of the Sabbath, as another instance illustrative of the general position, that when religion and the civil government do not meet and act in harmony, the difference must be to the fatal injury of the one or other.

Here, too, the civil and the spiritual element in society are so nearly and closely related, that, unless they unite, they cannot co-exist with full and unfettered action on either side. In the case of the weekly rest of the Sabbath, as God imposes on every man the obligation to observe and sanctify it, so by that very obligation He confers on every man the right to demand at the hands of his fellow-men the free and undisturbed use and enjoyment of the day, as a day to be exempted from the claims of human society, because already claimed by God. This is the warrant which every Christian has to ask that he shall have power and liberty given him to use the day for the service of God,—a power and liberty which, if they are not to be at the mercy of other men, must be guarded by the recognition and protection of law. The Sabbath, in this respect, differs from other duties appointed to the Christian. These are for the most part private, and peculiar to the individual; the Sabbath is a social and public ordinance. The former may be observed by individuals as such, without regard to the observance of them by their fellow-men; the Sabbath cannot be generally or completely observed without the concurrence and consent of others. It is well-nigh impossible, therefore, for an individual to keep the Sabbath as it ought to be kept, without the aid and advantage of the state making the at least outward observance of the Sabbath rest a national thing. No doubt it is possible, in one sense of the term, for every man not actually under physical restraint to cease from labour on the Sabbath, while others persist in it, and to sanctify the day, while others devote it to their ordinary occupations or pleasures. But a keeping of the Sabbath like this involves such sacrifices to be made, and such obstacles to be overcome, that it would virtually and practically amount to a prohibition of keeping it at all. The Christian slave in the early ages of the Gospel could not, generally speaking, have kept the Sabbath at all, unless in those rare cases where he was, like Onesimus with Philemon, not so much a slave as a brother beloved in the Gospel. And the Christian who, in modern days, is hardly less a slave, for the sake of his subsistence, to unremitting and constant toil from day to day, with an unprotected Sabbath, and the unprincipled competition of others willing to devote the Sabbath to labour and to gain, would feel himself scarcely



in better circumstances for observing its rest and its duties, than the Greek or the Roman bondsman in the days of Paul. Without the protection of law, enforcing the rest of one day in seven, the Sabbath in an irreligious society could hardly be kept even by Christians. Yet it is only because the civil government to that extent recognises the law of Scripture, and throws around the Sabbath the fence of its authority, that we have a day of weekly rest and sacredness secured to us at all. In itself it is no civil right, but a religious one. The warrant for the weekly Sabbath is no human authority or human convenience, but the express command of God. The state may recognise this authority, and, acting in concert with religion, may sanction the Sabbath by law, and in doing so be at one with religion. But a state acting on the principle of indifference alike to truth and error, to the religion of God and the falsehoods of man, must necessarily disown any such appointment; and divorced from Christianity, or disavowing it, must afford another illustration of the general position, that when religion and civil government do not co-operate and unite, the separation must be fatal to the highest interests of the one or the other.

What, now, is the conclusion of the whole argument? We reason at present with those who acknowledge the authority of God's Word,—who confess that religion on the one hand, and civil government on the other, are alike and equally His ordinance,—and that, as such, they cannot rightfully be hostile or destructive of one another. And our argument is, that neutrality between the two is impossible—declared and proved to be impossible both by reason and experience. There is but a single alternative presented to us in the matter of the relation of the Church and the state. They cannot be neutral, but they may be separated; and by the separation they inevitably become hostile, if not destructive, to each other; or they may be united, and by the union they become the allies and the friends of each other. And with this as the only possible alternative, the conclusion seems to be inevitable, that since they are both ordinances of God, and as such not intended to injure or destroy each other, they must have been designed to co-operate and unite.

## SEC. V.

### THE SPIRITUAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE CHURCH, AND THE PRINCIPLES OF TOLERATION

We have now briefly gone over the main grounds, both in reason and Scripture, on which the lawfulness, the duty, the necessity of some friendly understanding and concert between the Church and the state may be satisfactorily maintained. The principles laid down on this subject have been objected against from various quarters and for different reasons. But perhaps the chief objections that have been brought against the doctrine of the lawfulness and duty of civil establishments of religion may be resolved into these two,—namely, that any connection between the Church and the state is inconsistent with the spiritual independence of the Church, or inconsistent with the principles of toleration. It may be of some importance to consider the subject of the relation of the Church to the state in reference more particularly to these two objections. Is it true, on the one hand, that a connection between religion and civil government unavoidably leads to the sacrifice of the spiritual independence and power that belong to the Church of Christ as His free kingdom? Or is it true, on the other hand, that such a connection is inconsistent with the liberty of thought and belief and action that properly appertain to every man as a member of the state? In other words, can the balance between the claims of the spiritual and civil society be in any case so equally adjusted and maintained, as to avoid the sacrifice either of the freedom that belongs to the Church, or of the liberty that belongs to the state? The answer to that question will lead us to consider, in the first place, the bearing of civil establishments of religion on the spiritual independence of the Church; and in the second place, their bearing on the principles of toleration.

I. Are civil establishments of religion necessarily inconsistent with the spiritual independence of the Church of Christ?

That, in point of fact, the civil magistrate has often invaded the prerogatives of Christ, and encroached upon the liberties of His Church, cannot be denied. The mere politician, whose only aim has been the temporal aggrandizement of his office, has often succeeded in making the Church the tool of his ambition, and in using it as the engine to promote his political ends. And the mere Churchman, on the other hand, whose main desire has been civil honour or influence, has often consented to barter away the spiritual character and freedom of the Church in return for state endowment and support. But there is nothing in the nature of a friendly alliance between the Church and state incompatible with the independence of either, any more than there is anything in a friendly alliance between two states incompatible with the independence of each. There is nothing inconsistent with the spiritual freedom and independence of the Church in its connection with the state. The state may indeed demand the sacrifice, to a greater or less extent, of the spiritual powers and liberty of the Church, as the price of its countenance and protection; and in doing this the state trespasses into a province not lawfully or scripturally belonging to it. But, on the other hand, the state may make no such demand, but, leaving the Christian Church with its powers of a spiritual kind untouched, and its freedom unfettered, may add to these the benefit of civil recognition and endowment; and in doing so, both the Church and state would be acting within their respective provinces, and acting aright. Whatever historically may be the fact as to the frequent encroachment by the civil power on the spiritual independence of the Church when they have been connected, there is nothing in the connection itself that necessarily leads to it; and it is quite possible for a Church to enter into alliance with the state without sacrificing one article in its Confession of Faith, or one jot or tittle of its spiritual prerogatives. The unfettered action of a Christian Church, in all its matters of doctrine, and worship, and discipline, is perfectly consistent with its recognition by the state, where the state recognises not only the Church itself, but also the freedom of the Church in spiritual things.

But the objection urged by the disciples of the Voluntary principle is occasionally put in a somewhat different form. It is objected, not that an alliance between the Church and state necessarily implies the surrender by the Church of her spiritual powers and freedom in return for protection and endowment, but that, in setting up a Church at all, the civil magistrate makes the Church the mere creature of the state, dependent for its existence and for all its powers on his enactments. It is objected that, in sanctioning a Confession of Faith, or establishing a Church by law, the civil magistrate is making both the faith and the Church the mere product of civil law. Now such an objection obviously confounds together two authorities, the one of which is supreme, and the other of which is subordinate in the matter. When the subordinate authority lends its sanction to the appointments of the supreme, so far from superseding or denying the supreme authority, it expressly owns and does homage to it. It is for God to lay down the doctrines to be believed,—the form of government to be adopted,—the discipline to be maintained by the Christian Church; and when the state, in addition to this Divine appointment, lends to them the sanction of civil appointment also, it is because of their previous Divine authority, and in acknowledgment of it, that the state does so. The recognition of the Church by the civil magistrate is not the creation of the Church by the civil magistrate; on the contrary, his recognition of it proceeds upon the acknowledgment that it existed by Divine authority and institution before. The sanction lent by the state to the doctrine which the Church holds and professes, is not the same thing as the state dictating the doctrine which the Church must hold and profess; on the contrary, it proceeds upon the principle that the doctrine has been previously appointed and dictated by God, and is an express homage to it as such. In such a case the appointment by God, and the recognition of that appointment by man, are two things not inconsistent with each other, but perfectly compatible. The recognition by the state is itself an explicit confession of the strongest kind that the Church has been previously instituted and appointed by God, and that, in consequence of this Divine origin, it is independent of the state.

If, then, a friendly connection between the Church and state is not incompatible with the spiritual freedom and independence of the former, there can be no reason on this account for repudiating such a connection. But more than this. The question may well arise, whether the spiritual independence of the Church of Christ is not better secured upon the theory of an alliance between the Church and state than upon the Voluntary principle. It may, I think, be safely argued, that the state which recognises the Church as an ordinance of God, and enters into connection with it as such, is less likely to invade its freedom or independence, than the state which, acting on the Voluntary principle, refuses to recognise the Church's Divine appointment, and regards it with a favour neither more nor less than what it shows to any other system of religious error or delusion. I do not speak, of course, at present of any such connection between the Church and state as involves the sacrifice to the smallest extent of her principles or independence in the very terms of it. I speak of an alliance adjusted and formed upon principles that acknowledge the respective authority and essential independence of Church and state. And the question comes to be, whether the spiritual independence of the Church is not better provided for and secured at the hands of a state which owns its authority and claims to be from God, and therefore enters into friendly alliance with it, than it would be at the hands of a state which knows no difference between what is human and what is Divine in the matter, and therefore repudiates all such alliance. There is nothing in the mere fact of separation between the Church and state that can secure the spiritual independence of the former against the invasion of the latter. The state, whether allied to the Church or disowning such alliance, must deal with religion and with the institutions of religion, in so far as these bear on the interests of the commonwealth; and the civil magistrate is thus unavoidably forced into a position in which, in the use or abuse of his authority, he may be oftentimes tempted to interfere with the spiritual freedom and rights of the Church. History tells us that the separation of the Church from the state is no barrier whatsoever against such encroachments; and, on the contrary, that there have never been wanting reasons of state policy, or motives of political

expediency, for causing the civil magistrate to look with jealousy on the Church of Christ, and to impose upon its freedom the restraints or the severities of law. And on which of the two principles—that of the civil establishment of the true religion, or that of the indifference of the state to all religions—will the spiritual rights and independence of the Church of Christ be most likely to be practically acknowledged and secured? Will it be when the state owns the Church to be of God, and confesses its spiritual powers and prerogatives to be from Him? Or will it be when the state knows not whether the Church be from God or from man, and is equally indifferent to whether its claims are of Divine or human origin? The very acknowledgment by the state that the Church is the institute of God must itself prove, in so far as the acknowledgment is sincere, a security against the unjust invasion of its prerogatives; and the confession implied in a civil recognition of it, that it is more than a mere human or voluntary society, will protect it, to the extent that that confession is practically carried out, against wanton encroachment upon its independence. On the contrary, the denial by the state of the peculiar character of the Church as of Divine authority, or the entire indifference to its claims though it were,—the practical disavowal by the civil magistrate of all regard to the Church of Christ, any more or further than to any other society, voluntary and human, to be found within the commonwealth,—must leave it exposed to be invaded and trampled upon in its dearest rights at the dictate of state policy or the temptation of political expediency. Let the civil magistrate be brought to acknowledge that the Church is the very Church of God; and this acknowledgment, if honestly made and fairly acted on, will set bounds around its spiritual freedom, which he will feel it to be unlawful to break through. Let the civil magistrate, on the contrary, be brought to confess no difference between the Church of God and any human and voluntary society instituted for secular purposes, and all restraint will be taken away, whereby he might have been prevented from dealing with the Church of Christ as any other society, and making its independence subordinate to reasons of state. So far is it from being true that the spiritual independence of the Church is sacrificed, from the necessity of the

case, to a state alliance, and its freedom secured by separation from the state, that the very reverse is nearer to the truth. In so far as the Church, as a Divine ordinance, is owned and recognised by the civil magistrate, to that extent he has a reason, and a strong one, for respecting its spiritual independence. In so far as the Church is regarded by the civil magistrate as merely on a level with any voluntary society, and to be tolerated and protected as far as and no further than any such society, to that extent he is deprived of the strongest motive for respecting its rights, and is tempted on every national emergency or party crisis that may occur, to sacrifice those rights to considerations of state policy or interest.

II. Are civil establishments of religion necessarily inconsistent with the principles of toleration?

The doctrine involved in such establishments, according to the opinion of the disciples of the Voluntary system, implies or unavoidably leads to persecution for conscience sake. If magistrates, as such, have a power to interfere about religion, then, it is objected, they must have a right incompatible with the duty and the privilege of private judgment,—a right to impose a certain form of faith and worship by law on their subjects, and to enforce it under the sanction of civil pains and penalties. Now, it is not true that there is anything of this kind involved in the principle that the state may justly recognise, and establish, and endow by law, a particular profession of religion. There is a distinction, and a most important one, between the power of the civil magistrate "circa sacra," and his power "in sacris;" and this distinction is greatly overlooked by those who urge the objection, that the principle of the connection between Church and state necessarily involves what is inconsistent with toleration. It is readily granted, that the power of the civil magistrate is in its proper character compulsory. It is further granted, that this power is employed in connection with the civil establishment and endowment of religion by the state. But a compulsory power exercised about religion, is a widely different thing from a compulsory power exercised in religion. The one of these is incompatible with the

principles of toleration; the other of these is not. To compel a man to believe, or to profess his belief in, a certain form of religion, and to comply with a certain fashion of worship, under the threatening or infliction of civil penalties if he refuse,—this is the exercise of a compulsory power in religion, and is inconsistent with the principles of toleration. But to compel a man to contribute of his property to the public treasury of the state, and to apply a portion of the tax, not upon his responsibility, but upon the responsibility of the state, to the endowment of the Church, this is the exercise of a compulsory power, not in religion, but about religion, and is nowise inconsistent with the principles of toleration. To oblige a man under civil pains to conform to the Church by law established, or to punish him for dissenting from it, is without dispute a violation of the right that belongs to all to worship God according to their conscience. But to oblige a man under civil penalties to contribute his share of a general tax, part of which is appropriated by the state to the use of religion, is no violation of the rights of conscience, unless it can be held to be so for the state, in any given case, to tax an individual for an object of which his conscience does not approve. It is of no avail to plead that religion is a matter peculiar and separate from any other; and that for the state to make a man pay for the endowment of a religion of which he disapproves, is worse than to tax him for any other object of which he disapproves. It cannot be affirmed that the domain of conscience is limited to religion alone, or, in fact, that conscience has less to do with other matters. And it cannot be alleged, therefore, that conscience is violated in the case of a compulsory tax for the endowment of a religion which it cannot approve, and not violated in the case of a tax for any other purpose of which it cannot approve. The compulsory or coercive power of the state may, in short, be employed in a variety of ways about religion, while it is not employed in religion. The state may give the sanction of civil authority to a particular Confession of Faith, while it inflicts no disabilities on those who reject that faith. The state may endow a particular Church, and impose a public tax for that purpose; while it imposes no penalty on those who dissent from the Church thus endowed. In doing this, it is arrogating to itself no power but what is competent to it in its place



as the supreme civil authority; and above all, it is arrogating no power in any respect inconsistent with the right of private judgment or the principles of toleration.

But while it is thus plain and undeniable that the doctrine of civil establishments of religion does not involve anything inconsistent with the principles of toleration, or the right and duty of private judgment, the argument may be pushed a great deal further. It may fairly be argued, that the Voluntary principle, consistently carried out, subverts the very foundation on which alone the principles of toleration and the right of private judgment can be made properly and securely to rest; and that the opposite principle, which maintains the duty of the state to recognise religion, is the only one on which they can be fully and consistently defended. On what footing, let me ask, does the right and duty of private judgment rest? What is it that gives me the title, which no man can lawfully take from me, to think, and judge, and act, and above all, to serve and worship God, as my own conscience, and not the conscience of another, shall dictate? What is it that confers on me the right to examine, and try, and prove all things for myself, without being responsible to man for the opinion I may form or the belief I may adopt?

The reason why I am not responsible to man for my opinions and belief, is because I am previously responsible to God. The cause why I am not accountable to my fellow in my search after truth, and in the judgments that I form, is just because I am before accountable to my Creator. This is the only sure foundation on which to rest the right of private judgment in a matter of faith and duty, so as that it shall be secure from the interference or tyranny of man. In such matters I cannot be the servant of man, because I am already the servant of God. My responsibility to God is too complete and sacred to admit of my being responsible in the same way to my fellow-creature. For what I believe,—for the opinions I have formed,—for the conclusions to which I have come in my search and inquiry after truth,—for all these I am accountable to God; and for that very reason I cannot be called upon to adopt a belief or assume a conviction at the bidding of

man. In these matters I am the servant of another Master, and accountable only to Him. God claims the sole and supreme dominion over the conscience; and therefore it is that the conscience cannot be made the servant of man. My right of private judgment in matters of belief rests upon the footing that there I am responsible to God; and that therefore with a responsibility due to Him man cannot dare to interfere. The principle of universal toleration is founded on the principle of the universal responsibility of men to their Maker. Resting upon this footing, toleration is the right of every man, too holy and Divine for man to intermeddle with, and to attempt to rob him of which is to interfere with the prerogative of God. Resting upon any other footing, toleration is a right but of a secondary and insecure kind, to deprive a man of which is merely to abridge his social or political privileges.

And how does the Voluntary theory stand in regard to the only foundation on which the principle of toleration can securely and truly rest? According to that theory, the state has nothing to do with God, or man's relation to God, in the way of duty or privilege. The magistrate, in his official character, can know nothing of my responsibility to God, nor stand in awe of the right which that responsibility secures to me,—the right that, because accountable to Him, I cannot in the same way be accountable to man. The state, as the state, has nothing to do with my relation to God, and cannot therefore regard in the only true and proper light my freedom from responsibility to man, as the necessary result of my previous responsibility to God. The magistrate who, proceeding on the Voluntary theory, disowns all reference to God and man's relation to God, may look on toleration as a social good or a political advantage; but he cannot look upon it in its highest and truest aspect, as a right due, not so much to man, as to God. Let the state be brought to regard man in his relation to God, and as in matters of conscience responsible to Him; and it will regard the principle of toleration and the right of private judgment, in the case of the humblest of its subjects, as a privilege fenced round with the authority and sacredness of God. Let the state disown such a view of it, and the

principle of toleration will be deprived of very much both of its security and of its significance.

Any defence of the right of private judgment in matters of conscience, short of the argument that it is a right resulting directly from man's responsibility to God, will, I am persuaded, be a weak and insecure one. The right to toleration in the case of every man results very immediately from the principle, which is true in questions of conscience as in others, that a man cannot serve two masters in the same matter, and that if he is already the servant of God in matters of religious belief, he cannot in the same sense be the servant of his fellow. The principles of universal toleration have indeed been argued upon other grounds, but the effect has been to betray the cause of freedom and of truth. By one class of the defenders of the principle of free opinion and full toleration it has been argued, that the magistrate has no power to judge of truth or falsehood in religion, and that therefore he has no right to interfere with the opinions or convictions of his subjects. Such an argument as this is entirely fallacious, proceeding as it does upon the principle that the magistrate, because a magistrate, has ceased to be a man, and is himself absolved from his responsibility to God in matters of faith and religion. By a second class of the unwise defenders of the principles of toleration it has been argued, that truth and falsehood in matters of opinion are equally innocent when sincerely and conscientiously held, and that no man therefore ought to be punished for his opinions, whatever they may be. Such an argument as this is no less unsound and mischievous than the former, founded as it is on the principle of the equal merit or demerit of truth and falsehood. By a third class of the advocates of toleration it is argued, that man is not responsible for his belief at all, and that therefore he cannot be a subject for praise or blame for any of his opinions. Such an argument as this is still more flagrantly opposed to truth than any of the others, denying, as it virtually does, the essential characteristic of man as a moral and accountable being. By another class still of the advocates of toleration it is argued, that the magistrate has nothing to do with opinions in any sense, and that it is both incompetent and

impossible for him to deal with them, since they lie beyond the proper province of his authority altogether. And to a certain extent this argument is true, although not true in the wide and unlimited sense in which it is oftentimes urged.

But all these defences of the right of private judgment and public toleration, whether partially true or wholly false, agree in placing it on a footing directly calculated to lower its character and to weaken its claims. As a social good, calculated to promote the welfare of society, toleration is a privilege of no ordinary value. As a political good, one of the blessings of civil freedom, it is greatly to be prized. But there is a higher and holier aspect in which it is to be viewed. It is not as a social boon, or even as a political right, that it is principally to be regarded; nor is it on such a footing that its best defence is to be found. There is a higher character that it bears, and a more secure foundation on which it rests. The right of private judgment, as a right with which the magistrate in his public capacity, and my fellow-man in his private capacity, cannot and dare not intermeddle, is a privilege that belongs to me in virtue of my responsibility to God. Because by the very law of my being accountable to God, I must have freedom to obey Him; and man, whether in his official character as the magistrate or in his private character as my fellow-creature, cannot take from me that freedom. Within the domain of conscience God claims the sole and supreme authority; and with that claim man may not interfere. The principle of toleration ultimately rests on my right in matters of conscience "to obey God rather than man."

What, then, is the conclusion of the whole argument? Is the principle involved in a recognition by the state of God, and man's responsibility to God, hostile to the principles of toleration and incompatible with the right of private judgment? The very reverse is the case. The right of toleration can never be placed on a secure foundation, such as that it shall appear a right too solemn and sacred to be intermeddled with by a fellow-creature, until the state is brought to see that it is a right of God and not of man,—a right flowing directly from the relation in which man stands to his Maker.

Is the principle involved in the Voluntary theory—that the state has nothing to do with God, and man's duty to God—the only principle consistent with the rights of conscience and the claims of toleration? The very reverse is the case. By divorcing the principle of toleration from its direct relation to God, it robs it of half its authority, and more than half its sacredness, and degrades it from the level of a Divine appointment to that of a mere political privilege,—a civil claim to be owned or rejected according to considerations or notions of political expediency, and not a right as from God, never in any circumstances or on any pretence to be denied or resisted. The principle involved in the Voluntary theory is hostile equally to the true independence of the Church and the true claims of toleration. Let that principle be carried out to its legitimate issue, and let the state disown the Church as an ordinance of God, and regard it as a merely human and voluntary society, and almost the only security for its spiritual independence is removed; and its freedom, wherewith Christ made it free, is laid open to the encroachment and tyranny of Cæsar. Once more, let that principle be carried out to its legitimate issue, and let the state divorce the claim of toleration from the sanction and authority given to it by God, and the very foundations of religious freedom are undermined and shaken; and the right of private judgment loses a great part of its security, because it loses all its sacredness.

## **SEC. VI.**

### **LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE: ITS EXTENT AND LIMITS**

The true apology for liberty of conscience has been nobly argued in the Westminster Confession of Faith. "God alone," so runs the striking and beautiful language of the Confession, "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship." The conscience of man, the seat and dwelling-place of moral responsibility in his nature, is a

temple within which there can be no more than one Lord to be worshipped or obeyed. God is Himself the Lord of this temple; and because He is so, it must be free from the presence and power of any other master. Beneath the shelter of a responsibility previously due to God, the conscience is free from all responsibility to man; and, because already bound in allegiance to a higher Master, it cannot be the servant or the slave of any human lord. Viewed in this light, liberty of conscience is not a mere social or civil privilege; it is something far higher and holier. Man has been made free as to his conscience from the doctrine and commandments of his fellowmen, in order that he may be free to serve God; and liberty of conscience, as regards his fellow-creatures, is a right that belongs to him in virtue of his relation to his Creator. To deprive him of that right, to assume the title to dictate to the conscience and impose upon it the authority of man, is for man to trespass into a sanctuary where God alone may enter, and where none but God may rule. Another Lord is already Master there; another and higher authority already occupies the throne of the human conscience; and it is not for man to seat himself in the temple of God, or to "show himself there as though he were God." The right of conscience to be free from the commandments and authority of man is identical with the right of every man to obey God; and that Statute-book which tells of the responsibility of every creature to his Creator, is the charter of universal toleration.

It is of considerable importance that the question of liberty of conscience should be argued on true principles, and that the right of private judgment in matters of faith and worship should be placed on its just footing,—namely, man's previous responsibility to God, and his consequent exemption from responsibility to his fellow-man. It is not as a mere social or political right that liberty of conscience may be best and most successfully vindicated. The apology for religious freedom must be placed on religious grounds; and only then will the argument be both secure and successful. Liberty of conscience is man's right, because it is necessary in order that he may obey God. He must be free in matters of faith and worship from mere human authority, in order that he may be under law to God. And both the

freedom of the Church as a Church, and the freedom of conscience in individuals, can then be triumphantly argued and vindicated, and then only, when they are seen and acknowledged by the rulers of the world to be, not of man, but of God. Deprive the independence of the Church of Christ of the plea that it is of God, and other arguments will be of little avail in comparison. Deprive liberty of conscience in individuals of the plea that it is necessary in order to serve God, and other apologies for religious freedom, however eloquent, will be weak and unsuccessful. Make the claim of spiritual independence on the part of the Christian Church not a claim on behalf of God, but a mere demand for toleration on behalf of a society of men, and you rob it of much of its force, and all of its sanctity. Make the claim of liberty of conscience on the part of individuals to be a claim not dependent on their duty and responsibility to God, but dependent on their rights as citizens or members of the political community, and you incalculably weaken the strength of it. The independence of the Christian Church as a society, and the right of private judgment of the members as individuals, may be argued on other grounds, and perhaps vindicated; but never will the argument be so mighty and so resistless as when it is lifted up in the name of God. It is only when you can show the charter of religious freedom written as it were by the finger of the Almighty, that men feel the plea to be unanswerable. When, on behalf of the spiritual independence of the Church, you can demonstrate that it is a freedom which Christ purchased and conferred on it at the price of His blood, you feel that you are strong; and with such a plea you can go before the face of kings, and in His name demand that they shall do homage to Him by doing homage to His Church. Who does not see that the argument of Divine right, urged in behalf of the Church's freedom, is mightier far than any plea that could be urged in behalf of a mere human or voluntary society? When, again, on behalf of liberty of conscience in the case of individuals, you can demonstrate that it is a right necessary to their responsibility to God, you feel that here too you are unanswerable; and with such an argument upon your lips, you can go to the bar of your country's Legislature, and demand that if they will not hear you for the sake of civil freedom, they will hear you and grant your

request for the sake of God. Who does not see that the argument for religious freedom, drawn from Divine sanction, is more cogent far than any reasoning from considerations of mere social advantage or political right?

It is one grand charge to be brought against the principles of the Voluntary school, that they rob the cause of the Church's independence and of religious freedom of such an argument as this. They take from the Church its birthright as born of God, when at the bar of the civil magistrate, and would make it to plead with the world for its heavenly freedom upon the low ground of merely worldly considerations. They take from man the charter in which the finger, not of man, but of God, has written his right to liberty of conscience, and would make him a petitioner for religious freedom with the helpless argument upon his lips of mere political expediency or right. They make the Church of God a suitor to the world for the freedom which God Himself has given her; and worse than that, they make the Church to argue for her heaven-bestowed rights upon principles that imply that it is a question of mere political privilege or the want of it, whether the world shall give them or deny them. They make man to be a petitioner to his fellow-man for that liberty of conscience which is his as the gift of God; and, worse than that, they bid him plead for religious freedom upon grounds that make it a mere matter of civil right or expediency to give or to refuse it. There can be no true or trustworthy defence of the spiritual independence of the Church of Christ which does not proceed upon the principle that it is a right bestowed by God; which, because it is so, the rulers of this world, as responsible to Him, can neither give nor take away. There can be no true apology for liberty of conscience, except one that pleads its cause as of God, and not of man—the right of all from their common Creator, which it can never be in the power of their fellowmen to confer or deny. Placed on such a footing, and on such alone, the argument for the spiritual independence of the Church of Christ, and for liberty of conscience, is unanswerable and complete.



These views are remarkably illustrated and confirmed by the statements in regard to this matter of Scripture, and more especially of our Lord Himself. When our Saviour at the bar of Pilate was placed in circumstances in which He was called upon to answer for Himself and His cause, and more especially to explain the nature of His kingdom in its relations to the civil magistrate, He vindicated its claims to the protection and toleration of the state, not on the footing of merely political right, but on the high ground of Divine right. It was not as His civil privilege that Christ demanded for Himself and His doctrine the toleration of the Roman governor. He demanded toleration for His doctrine because it was the truth of God, and protection for Himself because He was the witness to the truth of God. When questioned by the civil magistrate as to the nature and claims of His kingdom, "Jesus answered, and said, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

There is nothing here of a mere claim to the interposition of the civil magistrate on the footing of political right, or as a toleration that the magistrate was bound to yield equally and alike to error as to truth—to the falsehood of man as much as to the faith of God. On the contrary, there is an express appeal to His doctrine as the truth of God, and to Himself as the witness sent by God to testify of it, as the ground or reason for the protection that He claims. In the first place, Christ seeks to disabuse the mind of Pilate, in regard to the nature of His Church, of the idea that it might be like any of the powers of this world, established or upheld by force; He tells him that it is spiritual in its nature and authority, and therefore not liable to become an object of jealousy to the state, as trenching upon its authority or jurisdiction. "My kingdom," says our Lord, "is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I

should not be delivered unto the Jews." And then, in the second place, having thus sought to remove the jealousy of the civil magistrate by explaining the spiritual nature of His kingdom, Christ goes on to claim protection for Himself and cause, because both are of God. His truth, He tells Pilate, was the truth of God; and Himself was the Divine Witness to that truth. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Our Lord does not stay to bandy arguments with the Roman governor regarding His right to protection as a civil privilege common to all, or His claim to toleration as a concession due to all doctrines and opinions whatsoever, whether true or false, whether from God or from man. He does not condescend to use such a plea. It may be true or may be false; it may be well founded or not. But His argument is of a higher order; His right to the protection of the civil arm is more sacred by far. He is Himself of God, and His doctrine is the truth of God; and because they are so, He calls upon the Roman magistrate to know and do homage to God in the person of His Messenger, and in the case of His revealed Word. This is the ground on which our Lord puts the right of His Church to toleration and protection at the hands of kings and rulers. It is on the broad and sacred foundation of Divine right that He lays the basis of the spiritual independence of His Church, and of the liberty of conscience of its individual members.

Such, then, is the scriptural argument for liberty of conscience, and for the right of toleration for the Church of Christ as a Church, and for its members as individuals. But while the foundation of the right is thus plain, there is another question of a far more delicate and difficult kind, that meets us in regard to liberty of conscience. To what extent does this right of every man to believe and act according to his own conscience, and not another's, go? Are there any bounds at all—and if so, what bounds—to this liberty of private judgment and free opinion? In other words, what is the extent and what are the limits of this universal right of liberty of conscience?

This is one of the most difficult questions of any within the bounds either of theology or of politics,—belonging as it does, under different aspects of it, to both sciences. That the conscience of man "has been left free from the doctrines and commandments of men," in order that it may be singly and entirely responsible to God, is a truth resting on the authority of the Divine Word, and which kings and rulers, in dealing with matters of conscience, ought never to forget. But it is no less true and undeniable, that absolute and unlimited liberty to believe and act in religious matters as his conscience may dictate, is not the right of any man, and from the very nature of the case cannot be. There are bounds beyond which freedom of conscience becomes not a right, but a wrong, and liberty degenerates into licentiousness. The inquiry therefore remains for us, as to the extent and limits of this right, as to how far it may go without sin, and as to where it must stop, if it is to be enjoyed or exercised with safety. That there are limits to the right to think and speak and act as conscience may dictate, no one can deny. At what point those limits are to be fixed, and where the line is to be drawn that divides liberty from licentiousness, is the question of all others the most difficult and delicate in the science of morals,—a problem which, although it may be and is solved every day in practice, is in theory one which it is well-nigh impossible accurately to state or fully to resolve. I do not pretend to give the solution of such a problem, or to attempt to lay down precisely the extent and limits of liberty of conscience in religious matters. But there are certain general principles applicable to the question, which may serve in some measure to indicate the direction in which the line is to be drawn, and will help us at least to approximate towards an answer. To these I would now briefly advert.

I. The right of liberty of conscience common to all is limited by the enactments of the Divine law.

This proposition is abundantly obvious, and will probably, when stated in general and express terms, be denied by none. If God has revealed a law to man at all, that law must, from the very nature of the case, be supreme. When God's law speaks, then man, and the

conscience in man, can have no alternative but submission. There can be no liberty, under whatsoever pretext or plea, to act, or think, or believe in opposition to that law. Conscience itself, although the supreme law to the individual man, is yet under law to God; and its rights must give way to His. It can put in no claim to be obeyed or regarded, when that claim runs counter to the express enactment of the Divine law. No man can have a right, even at the bidding of a mistaken conscience, to do that which is morally wrong. To affirm the opposite,—to assert that men are at liberty, under the plea of conscience, to think and believe and act as it may dictate, without respect to any other authority or control, is virtually to deny any other law of right and wrong, to rob God of His title to rule, to make conscience the only authority and lawgiver, and to render crimes and errors which it may sanction, no longer evil, but good. The liberty of conscience must be limited by the Divine law; and it can have no rights in opposition to that very God who has placed it in man's bosom, and who gave it all its powers. The law of God on the one hand, and the conscience of man on the other, are not to be regarded as authorities equal and co-ordinate, each supreme within its own province. On the contrary, the conscience is subordinate, because responsible to that law, and cannot therefore have authority or rights independently of God. The very reason why conscience is not responsible to man is, because it is the servant of God. That liberty of conscience, then, which each moral and responsible being claims for himself, is not an unlimited right; it gives a man no title to believe and think and act in religious matters as he pleases, even although conscience should sanction his doing so: there is a limit to this freedom, beyond which he cannot go without sin; and that limit is the supreme enactments of God's law. Beyond the boundary line thus drawn conscience has no right, and can give no freedom to man. There cannot be a greater abuse of the sacred right of liberty of conscience, than when it is employed, as it not unfrequently is, as a plea for setting aside the authority of the Divine law; and when, under the pretext of conscience, a man accounts his opinions and practice to be innocent, because conscientiously adopted and maintained. The first limit, then, set to the rights of conscience, is the

obligation of the law of God. There cannot be a more dangerous tenet than that which, under the plea of liberty of conscience, expressly or virtually denies this limitation.

II. The right of liberty of conscience common to all is limited by the ordinance of civil authority.

In speaking of the rights of conscience, in their relation to civil government, I speak of them as they are claimed on behalf, not of opinions and convictions held within the mind, but of opinions and convictions publicly uttered or acted upon. Not as though we were less really accountable in the former case than in the latter; on the contrary, we are just as truly responsible for our beliefs as for our actions, although it is a different authority that comes in to reward or punish, so long as the belief remains unexpressed. But let the latent conviction be once openly avowed, and the difference between a wrong opinion and a wrong action is at once felt to be not so great as to justify those who say, that in no case can a man be lawfully brought to account at the bar of a human tribunal for the former, although he may for the latter. With regard to a man's belief and thoughts, so long as they are hidden within his own bosom, it is true that no human authority has the right, any more than the power, to intermeddle with them, or to make them the subject of censure or restraint. But when that belief or those opinions are openly avowed and published to the world, or when they are developed in action and exhibited in a man's conduct, they rightly and legitimately come under the cognizance and control of the civil magistrate. For opinions entertained in a man's own heart, and unexpressed, he cannot properly be made responsible to human authority: the only limitation, in that case, to his freedom of thought and belief, is the authority of the Divine law, which takes cognizance not only of the outward, but also of the inward man: his only responsibility for these is a responsibility to God. But for opinions published to the world, and reduced to practice, he is in a certain measure responsible to civil authority; and though he may for these urge the plea of conscience, and urge it truly, yet his liberty of conscience in the

matter is put under a second restriction in addition to the first, in consequence of his becoming responsible for his avowed sentiments and public actions to the law of man. In other words, the liberty of conscience which a man may rightly claim, is limited by the lawful exercise on the part of the magistrate of civil authority.

It is not for me to define the extent and limits of the magistrate's authority in matters with respect to which conscience may be pleaded. It is one of the most delicate problems in political science, to determine how far civil authority may go in restraining or punishing the publication of opinions, or the exercise of practices, hostile to the safety or interests of civil society. But few or none perhaps will deny, that there are occasions on which the magistrate may be called upon to interpose to restrain by civil censure or punishment the expression of opinions or the indulgence of conduct plainly at variance with the wellbeing, if not the very being of society, even when these may be able to plead the argument of conscience in their favour, and to plead it not untruly. It matters not whether such opinions and practices be crimes in politics or religion,—whether they may be named treason, as hostile to the very existence of the state, or atheism or blasphemy, as inconsistent with the existence of religion in any form. It is quite possible to be conscientious in these things. A man may be perfectly honest in pleading conscience and the liberty of conscience for the venting of treason or blasphemy, and for the right to act it out in exertions for the subversion of all civil order, or for the destruction of all religious faith. A man may be an anarchist upon principle, or an atheist upon principle. He may urge his liberty of conscience as an argument to justify his efforts against the very existence of all that is dearest to man, both in religion and civil order; and few or none will deny, that there may be emergencies, arising out of such circumstances as these, when the civil magistrate may be called upon to interfere penally to repress or punish such religious or civil crimes, even although they may be sanctified by the plea of conscience in the minds of those who are guilty of them. In other words, liberty of conscience is no valid plea, when urged to justify wrong done against the peace and wellbeing of

society. There is a limit affixed to the rights of conscience by the rights of civil society. There is a boundary drawn around my liberty of conscience by the lawful exercise of the authority of the civil magistrate. It may be difficult or impossible, theoretically, to tell precisely where the point is to be fixed at which the magistrate is justified to interfere, and where conscience can no longer plead its right in opposition to the interference. But that there is such a point, few or none will pretend to deny.

The truth is, that those two ordinances of God—that of civil authority on the one side, and that of conscience on the other—cannot be inconsistent with or destructive of each other. They are designed for concert and co-operation, not for conflict or mutual destruction. Those disciples of toleration who would plead liberty of conscience as an argument to justify resistance to civil authority in its lawful exercise, are wrong. Those disciples of despotism who would plead the authority of civil government in order to set aside or overbear the rights of conscience, are equally wrong. Civil government on the one hand, and conscience on the other, are alike ordinances of God, and were appointed to act in harmony with each other; and that they may act in harmony, they must limit each other. Civil authority is not absolute or unlimited; for there is a point where in its exercise it meets with the rightful domain of conscience; and the sword ought to be sheathed, and to give way before the claims which conscience pleads. Conscience, on the other hand, is not absolute or unlimited either; for there is a point where its rights are met and bounded by the rights of civil authority.

III. The liberty of conscience belonging to all is limited by the ordinance of ecclesiastical authority.

There is a standing which God has given to the Christian Church in relation to conscience and the things of conscience, which cannot be overlooked. Like the state, the Church is an ordinance of God; and like the state, it is vested by God with a certain measure of authority of its own kind, which entitles it to claim and receive a certain

measure of obedience from its members. The Church, for example, has power in matters of faith, not indeed arbitrarily to dictate a new truth or new doctrine of its own, but to declare the doctrine and truth of Christ; and in doing so, to determine and decide for its own purposes upon the faith and profession of its members. Such decisions in regard to controversies of faith, and such declarations of the truth of Christ, if consonant with the Word of God, are to be received and submitted to by its members, not only or merely because they are consonant with His Word, but because of the authority by which they are made being an ordinance of God for that end. The Church has power also in matters of discipline; not indeed imperiously to wield the power of the keys, but to proceed by admonition, and censure, and spiritual reproof, and finally excommunication, in order to reclaim or cut off offenders, and to vindicate the honour of Christ and the purity of His house and kingdom. And such discipline, too, is to be revered and submitted to because of the authority of the Church, as divinely appointed to exercise it. Here too, then, we have the lawful exercise of a lawful authority that must oftentimes come into contact with the liberty of conscience in the case of individuals. And conscience may be pleaded, and pleaded honestly, on behalf of opinions and practice in the case of her members, which yet it may be right and indispensable for the Church to condemn or restrain by means of the spiritual authority committed to her. Shall we say that the spiritual sword is to be stayed, and the authority of the Church disarmed, in consequence of the argument of conscience on the part of the offender? Shall we say that the exercise of that authority is unlawful, and its censures null and void, because of the liberty of conscience that is pleaded in opposition to them? To do so would be to deny the right of Church authority altogether; it would be to set aside, in any case in which conscience might be alleged, all ecclesiastical judgment or restraint as regards the offender, and to make religion entirely a matter of personal and individual concern, in regard to which the Church had no right to interfere and no commission to act. Such an interpretation of the liberty of conscience on the part of her members must destroy Church authority altogether, and must leave the



kingdom of Christ without government or order, utterly helpless to redress wrong or restrain offences, and without power to guard its own communion from open profanation and dishonour. The plea of absolute and unlimited liberty of conscience is inconsistent with the authority and existence of a Church.

The doctrine of the rights of private judgment, in this unrestricted sense, and the plea of liberty of conscience without any limitation, have been employed at one time to invalidate and undermine the lawful authority of the state, and at another time to weaken and subvert the lawful authority of the Church. It was employed in both ways by the Sectaries in England during the period of the Commonwealth in the seventeenth century. There can hardly indeed be a more dangerous or mischievous perversion of a valuable and important truth. The right of liberty of conscience is a right than which none can be more precious. But there are limits set to that right, as we have seen, both by the ordinance of civil government on the one side, and the ordinance of Church government on the other. To use the most expressive and significant language of the Confession of Faith: "The powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve, one another."<sup>2</sup> The authority of the Church, on the one hand, is limited by the rights of conscience on the part of her members; and the rights of conscience, on the other, are limited by the authority of the Church. They are wrong who would stretch the authority of the Church so far as to destroy liberty of conscience; and they are equally wrong who would stretch the rights of conscience so far as to destroy the authority of the Church. There may be an ecclesiastical tyranny that overbears conscience and reason too; but there may be also the plea, not of liberty but of licentiousness, for conscience, that overthrows all ecclesiastical order. Those two—the Church of Christ and the right of conscience—are alike ordinances of God, and they are intended mutually to limit each other.

Such, then, are the limitations which it is necessary to attach to the doctrine of liberty of conscience. The right is limited by the law of God, by the authority of the civil magistrate, and by the authority of the Church. "They who, upon pretence of Christian liberty," says the Westminster Confession, "shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God."

## **SEC. VII.**

### **THE DOCTRINE OF THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH ON CHURCH AND STATE**

We have now discussed at some length the subject of the Church and its relations to the state. It has been our task to consider the possibility and lawfulness of a friendly connection between the two; to argue the duty, both as it respects the Church and as it respects the state, of such an alliance; to indicate the necessity of some kind of understanding and concert between them, unless both are fatally to suffer; to discuss the bearing of such a co-operation on the spiritual independence of the Church and the practice of toleration by the state; and lastly, to investigate, in connection with the general argument, the question of liberty of conscience both as regards its extent and its limitations. And now, in bringing to a close the discussion, it may not be unimportant or uninteresting to consider the authoritative declarations of our Church on this somewhat difficult subject, as these are found embodied in her public standards. It is all the more important to do so, as the statements of the Westminster Confession of Faith on the subject of the power and duty of the civil magistrate in regard to religion have been both misinterpreted and misunderstood. A twofold accusation has been brought against the statements of the Confession on this subject. They have been charged, in the first place, with giving countenance to the Erastian principle of ascribing to the civil magistrate a proper jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters, and of surrendering to his

power the inherent freedom and independence of the Church; and they have been charged, in the second place, with giving countenance to principles of persecution, and infringing seriously upon the rights of conscience in matters of faith. It may be well to consider the justice and the force of these two accusations, which, if true, are in no small measure fitted to damage the credit due to one of the noblest uninspired expositions of Divine truth anywhere to be found, and to subvert our confidence in it as an accurate and authoritative confession of our faith. Such charges are not lightly to be brought or believed against the authors of the Westminster Confession, who in an age of profound theological learning and great attainments in Divine truth were conspicuous among their contemporaries, and who especially were eminent in that very department of controversial Divinity which relates to the magistrate's power and office in reference to the Church. The question of the relations of the civil and ecclesiastical powers to each other was argued at the date of the Westminster Assembly as it never was argued either before or since; and it was the very men who had won the palm in the controversy, and gained the victory for the truth, who in that Assembly brought their vast learning and vaster powers to bear upon the point, and to lay down in the Confession of Faith the extent and limits of the magistrate's authority in regard to religion. The character of the men who drew up the Confession, and the circumstances of the time in which they were called upon to do so, afford no small presumption against the truth of such charges. Those who had fought the battle of the Church's independence against the Erastians of their day with their learned and ready pens, and who further still had to contend with the Parliament of England, under whose authority they were assembled, on the very same question, are not the men to be lightly, or without strong evidence, accused of justifying Erastianism or persecution. Let us endeavour to examine the grounds on which such a charge is made. Is it true that the Westminster Confession of Faith arms the civil magistrate with a power to destroy the liberty of Christ's Church, giving to the state a proper jurisdiction in spiritual things? Further still, is it true that the Westminster Confession of

Faith disavows the principles of toleration, and countenances the doctrine of persecution for conscience sake?

I. Let us inquire into the truth of the charge brought against the standards, of laying down principles that countenance Erastianism.

The ground on which this accusation is made, is to be found in the third section of the 23d chapter of the Confession of Faith, under the title, "Of the Civil Magistrate." It is there stated, "The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and Sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God." Such is the doctrine laid down in our standards respecting the duty and office of the civil magistrate in regard to the Church. It may be conceded that, taken out of its connection, and viewed apart without reference to other statements in the Confession, and without regard to the use and meaning in their day of the somewhat technical language employed by the authors of it, the words do sound at first as if they ascribed to the civil magistrate a larger share of power *circa sacra* than we should now concede to him. But a very slight attention to the context, and to the real meaning of the language made use of, will be enough to remove all difficulty from the passage.

There are two canons of criticism which, in order to guard against misinterpretation of this, as of many other passages, it is somewhat important to bear in mind. First, the language of two or more passages in any given composition, more especially a composition purporting to be an accurate and authoritative statement of doctrine or Divine truth, must be interpreted in the sense that makes them

consistent with each other; and it is not allowable to assume such an interpretation of them as would make the author plainly and directly to contradict himself. And second, the language of any passage must be understood in the sense commonly attached to it in the author's day, and not in the sense which subsequent changes in expression at any after time may have affixed to it. These two canons of interpretation are obviously just in themselves, and are indispensable to a right understanding of any author. And if we bear them in mind, there will be no great difficulty in reaching the true meaning of the passages already quoted from the Confession of Faith, and in ascertaining that, so interpreted, it ascribes to the civil magistrate no undue or Erastian jurisdiction in connection with spiritual things.

1. Other statements of the Confession of Faith, to be interpreted in connection with this passage found in the 23d chapter, expressly and undeniably exclude the proper jurisdiction of the civil magistrate in spiritual matters; and this passage must be understood in accordance with, and not in contradiction to, them.

That such is the case, the very slightest reference to the other chapters of the Confession, which treat of the Church and of the state, will abundantly manifest. To whom does the Confession ascribe supreme authority and jurisdiction within the bounds of the Christian Church, so that from Him all rule and power within it are derived? Is it to that party who is supreme over the state, and from whom all authority in the state proceeds? Or is the magistrate expressly and wholly excluded from such authority, by the entire ascription of it to another and not to him? Let the brief but most comprehensive statement in the 25th chapter of the Confession answer the question: "There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ." The right interpretation and legitimate application of this single truth would, without anything else, fairly lead to the exclusion of the civil magistrate from the province of the Church, and to the denial of any proper jurisdiction on his part in spiritual matters. But is it insinuated or objected, that although the

civil magistrate cannot, in consistency with the language of the Confession, be the head of the Church, he may be a subordinate ruler under the Head, and may still possess and exercise, in a certain sense, jurisdiction in the Church, although an inferior jurisdiction to that of Christ? Is it alleged that, without any great violence done to the language of the Confession, the civil magistrate may still be looked upon as a ruler in the Christian society, holding a real although a secondary place in the government of its affairs? Then let the explicit language of the 30th chapter of the Confession remove the possibility of such a construction being put on the doctrine of our standards: "The Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate." Neither as supreme nor as subordinate—neither as occupying the first seat of authority, nor yet an inferior office within the Church—has the civil magistrate, according to the doctrine of the Confession, any place or footing, in the sense of proper jurisdiction, in spiritual things. Or, if additional evidence were wanting on the question of the unequivocal and uniform doctrine of our standards, excluding the state from authority within the Church, that evidence would be found in the very section of the Confession quoted as the ground on which the charge of Erastianism against it is built: "The civil magistrate," says the first clause of that section, "may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and Sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven." It is plain that this first clause is intended to limit what follows in the section. This is obvious both from its position in the sentence at the beginning, and also from the conjunction "yet," which immediately follows: "yet he, the magistrate, has authority, and it is his duty," etc. Now there can be no difficulty in understanding the import of this first or limiting clause of the sentence.

"The power of the keys" has a twofold meaning: one more extensive, implying the whole power belonging to the Church, as contradistinguished from "the power of the sword," belonging to the civil magistrate; the other a more limited meaning, implying the

ordinary power of government and discipline exercised by the Church. It is in this latter or more restricted sense of the phrase that the expression must be understood in this passage, when it is distinguished from the power of the Church in the administration of Word and ordinances. And what, I ask, is the limitation thus put upon the office of the magistrate, at the very outset of the description of his power, and to be understood as restricting it in all ascribed to him of rule or authority afterward? Not only may he not assume to himself the power to dispense Word and Sacrament in the Church; but further, he may not assume to himself the power to exercise government or discipline within it. The exclusion of the civil magistrate from the whole province that can possibly belong to the Church is absolute and complete; for all that province is included within the twofold description of power implied in the two expressions, "the administration of the Word and Sacraments," and "the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Within this entire territory the civil magistrate cannot enter, and the Church claims jurisdiction over none other. The uniform and undeniable doctrine of the Confession of Faith, then, is a denial of the proper jurisdiction of the civil magistrate in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters. Nowhere is this denial more explicit and broad than in the opening clause of the very sentence which has been made the occasion of this charge of Erastianism against it, which clause must be held to limit and rule the interpretation of the rest. And unless the Confession of Faith is to be interpreted upon the principle of making it contradict itself, and that within the narrow limits of a single sentence, instead of being consistent with itself, it is impossible that the charge of Erastianism can be well founded.

2. The ascription of power to the civil magistrate about the Church, in the passage of the Confession of Faith under discussion, can be easily and fairly explained without conceding to the civil magistrate power within the Church, as on the Erastian scheme.

Almost the whole of the plausibility belonging to the objection, which from this sentence in our standards would impute Erastianism to

them, arises from the confounding of these two things, the power of proper jurisdiction within the Church, and the power of a certain authority about the Church. These two things are widely different: the one of them belonging, according to the doctrine of the Confession, to the civil magistrate; the other of them being expressly denied to him by the same doctrine. But where this difference is not seen or is denied, the ascription to the state of the one authority is readily enough mistaken for the concession to it of the other. The Confession distinctly and frequently announces the doctrine, that the civil magistrate has a certain power about religion,—a certain authority and duty to provide for, and promote by competent means the wellbeing and interests of, the Church. At the beginning of the chapter from which the sentence in dispute is quoted, the Confession lays down the general principle, that "God, the Supreme Lord and King of the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under Him, over the people, for His own glory and the public good;" and then, that in the managing of their office, they "ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace;"—a principle which fairly implies that the state has a certain office or authority about the Church, to promote and advance its interests. And the Confession does nothing more than carry out this principle, and point out more in detail what the magistrate may do for this end, when it goes on, in the passage under discussion, to ascribe to him his place and powers in the matter. Now, this is a widely different thing from attributing to the civil magistrate jurisdiction within the Church; neither can it be regarded as laying the Confession open to the charge of Erastianism. All that is fairly implied in it, is the ascription to the state of a certain authority about the Church, for the purpose of promoting its interests, not the ascription to it of an authority within the Church, for the purpose of exercising jurisdiction there. No doubt the disciples of the Voluntary school may confound these two things, or identify them; and having denied any distinction between them, may affirm that when the Confession ascribes a power about the Church to the magistrate, it in reality ascribes to him a power within the Church. But except upon the Voluntary principle, which we need not



now stop to refute, the two things are not identical; and the charge therefore of Erastianism, built on their identification, is unfounded.

3. More particularly, the special instrumentality described in the Confession of Faith as proper to be employed by the civil magistrate in the exercise of his authority about the Church, involves no Erastian usurpation over it.

What is the method or the instrumentality to be used by the magistrate in attaining the great end which the Confession declares that it is competent for him to seek and aim at about the Church? The passage under discussion distinctly declares this. "Yet he hath authority," says the Confession, after denying to the magistrate "the power of the keys,"—"yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God may be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof," continues the Confession, in describing the instrumentality to be employed, "for the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God." Now we have here first of all a statement of the object to be aimed at by the civil magistrate, and next a description of the means to be employed by him for that purpose. The object to be aimed at is described as "the preservation of unity and peace in the Church, the maintenance of the purity and completeness of its doctrine, the suppression of blasphemy and heresy, the reformation of corruptions and abuses in its worship and discipline, and the due observance and administration of ordinances." This is the object to be aimed at by the magistrate; and no one except those Voluntaries who hold that the state has nothing to do with religion, will deny that it is both competent and good for the magistrate to aim at such an end. Every man, indeed, whether in public office or private life, is bound to seek to attain such an object by his prayers, and by every other means

competent to him. The only question that can arise in connection with the doctrine thus laid down, is as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the means which it is said the magistrate may employ to accomplish the object. How or in what terms are those means described? The method by which the civil magistrate may, according to the Confession, seek to attain the end in view, is described by four different forms of expression in the passage under discussion.

1st. The magistrate is to "take order" for those objects or ends which he aims at. The expression is a technical one, common in the controversial theology of the times of the Westminster Assembly, and undoubtedly to be interpreted according to the *usus loquendi* of that day. It is a very general term, which may be easily proved to mean generally, to provide for, to attend to, to take care to accomplish,—language very far from involving the use of Erastian instrumentality or jurisdiction in the affairs of the Church.

2d. The magistrate, for the effecting of his object, is said to have power to "call synods." Neither does this second method to be used by him necessarily imply any authority or jurisdiction on his part to decide or rule in spiritual things. In the second section of the 31st chapter of the Confession of Faith, the same doctrine in regard to the power of the civil magistrate "to call synods of ministers, and other fit persons, to consult and advise with about matters of religion," is laid down. But the Act of Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647, which ratified the Westminster Confession as the Confession of our Church, expressly excepts this doctrine in regard to the magistrate's power of summoning synods, and limits it to the use of Churches not duly constituted or settled. "It is declared," says the Act of Assembly 1647, in reference to the Westminster Confession, "it is declared that the Assembly understands some parts of the second article of the 31st chapter only of Kirks not settled or constituted in point of government; and that although in such Kirks a synod of ministers and other fit persons may be called by the magistrate's authority and nomination, without any other call, to consult and advise with about

matters of religion; and although, likewise, the ministers of Christ, without delegation from their Churches, may of themselves and by virtue of their office meet together synodically in such Kirks not yet constituted, yet neither of these ought to be done in Kirks constituted and settled; it being always free to the magistrate to advise with synods of ministers and ruling elders meeting upon delegation from their Churches either ordinarily or, being indicted by his authority, occasionally, and pro re natâ; it being also free to assemble together synodically, as well pro re natâ as at the ordinary times, upon delegation from the Churches, by the intrinsical power received from Christ, as often as it is necessary for the good of the Church so to assemble, in case the magistrate, to the detriment of the Church, withhold or deny his consent; the necessity of occasional Assemblies being first remonstrated unto him by humble supplication." But independently of the limitation attached by our Church to the doctrine of the Confession on this point, and with which limitation its ministers subscribe it, the language of the Confession does not necessarily imply anything Erastian. If it is admitted that the Scriptures do give a certain authority to the civil magistrate to seek to promote the Church's welfare as well as that of the state, it were hardly possible, I think, to deny that upon Scripture grounds he has warrant also to summon together Assemblies of the Church on occasion, to give advice or to ask it, in regard to the duties whether of the Church or of the state.

3d. The civil magistrate, for the better effecting of his object, has, according to the doctrine of the Confession, power "to be present at synods" which he calls. This is the third kind of instrumentality which it is lawful for him to employ to gain his end. With regard to this, it may be fairly maintained that, independently of any other title, it is the civil right of the magistrate to be present at any assembly whatsoever, convened within his dominion. But apart from this, the presence of the magistrate in the synods of the Church can imply no Erastian jurisdiction over them so long as he does not ask to preside, or dictate, or interfere in their deliberations.

4th. The last method of seeking to attain his object mentioned by the Confession is described in these terms: the magistrate is to be present at synods, and "to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God." Here too, as in the case of "taking order," the expression is a somewhat technical one, and to be interpreted according to the use of such theological terms at the time when employed. Explained according to this principle, the term means simply to make it an object of care and attention generally, that what is done be done according to the word of God. So interpreted, it comes very far short indeed of anything implying Erastian control on the part of the magistrate in seeking his object, or any assertion of a right to review, or reverse, or in any way overbear, the decisions of Church Courts. These are all the means specified by the Confession of Faith as lying open to the civil magistrate to employ in seeking to promote the interests of religion and of the Church of Christ; and it is plain that none of them imply or necessitate on his part the assumption of any proper control or jurisdiction in spiritual matters.

II. Let us briefly inquire into the truth of the charge brought against the Confession of Faith, of laying down principles that countenance persecution for conscience sake.

In support of this second accusation, reference is made to the fourth section of the 20th chapter of the Confession. It runs as follows: "And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, on pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And for their publishing of such opinions or maintaining of such practices as are contrary to the light of nature or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation; or to the power of godliness; or such erroneous opinions or practices as either in their own nature, or in their manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the

external peace and order which Christ hath established in the Church; they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the Church, and by the power of the civil magistrate." Such is the passage in the Westminster Confession, on which the charge against it of avowing and abetting persecution is founded. Let us see whether, as in the case of the former charge, a more careful consideration of the language and principles of the standards, not as seen in this insulated statement, but viewed in connection with their whole doctrine on the question, may not serve to rebut the accusation.

Now, in the first place, the principles of the Confession of Faith undeniably exclude persecution for conscience sake, if its statements are to be made consistent with each other, and not self-contradictory.

In the very chapter from which the passage in question is extracted, and towards the commencement of it, as the leading and ruling proposition of the whole, the doctrine of liberty of conscience is broadly and unequivocally laid down: "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines or obey such commands out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also." The principles here laid down, if fairly carried out, involve in them all that is necessary to establish the doctrine of toleration in its present sense, and to exclude the possibility of persecution for conscience sake. The fondest devotee and most eloquent advocate of toleration never laid down a nobler or a surer foundation on which to rear the apology for universal liberty of conscience. And unless the leading proposition contained in the chapter is to be contradicted by that which follows, it is impossible to allege that the subsequent statement of the Confession can bear a

meaning which countenances or abets persecution for conscience sake.

But, in the second place, the object aimed at in the subsequent statements of the chapter is not at all to determine what or where the limits are, beyond which liberty of conscience ceases, but to assert that there are limits, where the authority which God has appointed comes in to restrict the right.

In the history and tenets of the Sectaries during the time of the Commonwealth, the authors of the Confession had had but too familiar and painful experience of the mischievous consequences resulting from what they call "the pretence of Christian liberty." There were not wanting men at that period who interpreted the right of conscience so as to be inconsistent with the lawful exercise of authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical,—accounting that the plea of conscience, when urged by any man, justified him in resisting both the commands of the civil magistrate and the authority of the Church. And it was necessary to assert the doctrine, that these two—conscience on the one hand, and lawful authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical, on the other—are not really inconsistent with each other, that they are equally ordinances of God, and that they are designed by Him not to contradict, but only to limit each other. On the one side, authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical, is not absolute and unrestricted; for it is limited by the rights of conscience on the part of the members both of the state and Church. On the other side, the rights of conscience are not absolute and unrestricted either; for they are met and limited by authority both civil and ecclesiastical. It is this doctrine—important at all times, but especially so at the time of the Westminster Assembly—which it is the main object of the authors of the Confession in the subsequent part of this chapter to inculcate. Accordingly they tell us: "They who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, do practise any sin or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian liberty; which is, that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life. And

because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God." The great object of the Confession in this part of the chapter is to lay down the doctrine that there are limits to the rights of conscience,—limits necessitated by the ordinance of civil magistracy on the one hand, and ecclesiastical authority on the other, in their lawful exercise. Where those limits are to be laid down, it is not at all the object of the Confession to say. At what point the plea of conscience ceases to avail against the interference of authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical, our Confession does not profess to determine. That there are such limits it asserts; that there is such a point it affirms; although the answer to the question where those limits are to be drawn, or where the point of lawful interference is to be fixed, it does not take upon it the hazardous office of announcing. That there are certain limits to the right of liberty of conscience, and that there are opinions and practices, hostile to religion and civil society, which, although they may plead the argument of conscience in their behalf, may nevertheless be proscribed by the civil magistrate,—this is the fair amount of the doctrine enunciated. It does not decide the difficult question of how far the right of conscience may go or may not go in the way of arresting the interference of authority within Church or state. It does not decide what particular opinions or practices ought to be dealt with penally by the state. The object of its authors was accomplished in announcing the general doctrine that there are such limits, and that there are such opinions and practices; thereby contradicting the mischievous tenet, that conscience is a plea sufficient against the lawful exercise of all authority whatsoever. It would be very difficult, I think, indeed, to lay down the negative of the doctrine thus inculcated by the Confession of Faith.

In the third place, examples may be readily adduced of opinions and practices such as those pointed at by the Confession, in regard to

which few, or perhaps none, will deny that, in certain circumstances or emergencies, the civil magistrate "may," to use the terms of the Confession, "proceed against them" by his proper coercive power. The opinions and practices referred to in the Confession may be ranked under these three heads or classes: those "against the light of nature;" those "against the principles of Christianity;" and those "against the peace and order of the Church." Without stopping to illustrate the argument, it is enough to say, that perhaps no man will deny that the civil magistrate may, in certain circumstances (for the doctrine of the Confession does not make it imperative upon him), may proceed, for example, against incest, as a sin of the first class, against nature; against blasphemy, as a sin of the second class, against Christianity; and against the violation of the Sabbath, as a sin of the third class, against the peace and order of the Church.

These remarks may be sufficient to indicate the nature of the argument by which the standards of the Church may be vindicated against the charge alike of Erastianism and persecution, and be fairly interpreted as, in fact, in direct opposition to both.

## **PART II.**

### **POWER OF THE CHURCH**



# CHAPTER I:

## THE SOURCE OF CHURCH POWER, OR THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

WE have already had occasion to advert to the fact, that Christianity is not merely a personal religion, but in its very nature a social one; and that on the basis of the doctrines which He taught, our Lord laid the foundations of a spiritual society, which He gave warrant and instructions to His immediate followers fully to settle and complete. There is implied in the very idea of such a society, call it by the name of a Church, or kingdom of Christ, or what you will,—something in the shape of a power of order, or government, or authority, or law, as connected with it. Admit the existence of a community of a separate and peculiar kind, owing its origin to Christ on this earth, and you also admit the existence of some kind of power or authority, as from the very nature of the case connected with the community. It may be a power limited to its own members, and restricted to the single object for which the society exists; but some sort of power, or order, or jurisdiction, must exist in every regularly constituted society, of whatever kind, from the very nature of it.

There seem to be at least two things implied in the simplest notion of an organized and regular society, which is in any degree independent and self-acting. First, it must have its office-bearers. Whatever may be the character and objects of the association, secular or sacred, and whatever be the manner in which its officers are appointed, whether by rotation, or succession, or election of the members, it is essential to every society of a regular and orderly kind, to have office-bearers to represent the mind of the community, to conduct its business, and to act on its behalf. It may be a society of a private kind, instituted for the advancement of science or art, or the transaction of ordinary affairs; or it may be a society of a public kind, like the state,

instituted for the promotion or protection of the civil rights and interests of the commonwealth; but whatever it be, this, from the very nature of the case, seems to be essential to it, that the members at large should have organs who represent them, and are invested with something of their power and rights, and act on behalf of the whole. In other words, every society, be it what it may, must have its office-bearers. Second, it must have its laws, to bind both members and office-bearers, to regulate their conduct in reference to each other and to foreign parties, and to determine the course and order of their transactions as a society. For internal regulation and external action it is necessary, unless the society is to fall into utter confusion and disorder, fatal to its very existence as a community, that the doings both of its members and office-bearers should proceed upon some settled principles or fixed rules. This necessity is equally unavoidable, whether the society be a private or a public one, and whatever be the manner in which its laws are enacted, or the authority by which they are imposed. Come from what quarter they may, whether from internal or external sources, some regulations or fixed principles of action are necessary for every community, if it would exist or act at all.

These two things, then, are essential to every society, whatever be its nature or objects—namely, office-bearers of some kind, and laws of some kind; in other words, a general power for government, and order, and action in the society of some sort, and coming from some quarter or another. And such a power we actually find to belong to the Church of Christ, in common with every other orderly society; and it is, in fact, equally as in the case of other societies, essential to its wellbeing, and even necessary to its existence. Without some such power the Christian Church must cease to exist as a society at all. Without determining anything at present about its nature, its extent, its limits, and its objects, we may safely lay it down as a principle not to be disputed, that a power of order and action must belong to the Church of Christ, if it can be called in any sense of the term a society or community of Christians. It is regarding this power, existing in connection with the Christian society, that we are now, under the

second general division of our subject, to proceed to inquire. That society must have its laws and office-bearers, like every other society. It must have something, in one form or other, that rightly bears the name of Church power. To this, considered generally, we are now to direct our attention. And in entering upon the examination of the grand subject of the power of the Church, the question that first meets us is, as to the source from which this power is derived. To this question, then, we now address ourselves.

There are examples, familiar to our minds, and exhibited to view every day, of two kinds of societies, each possessing within itself a power of government and action, but that power derived from different and opposite sources. In the first place, we have the familiar example of societies of a private and voluntary kind, associated together and instituted for the promotion of some object or interest not of a public nature in the large sense of the term, such as societies voluntarily established for advancing literature or science, or for transacting the secular and ordinary business of life. There is a certain power of self-government and self-action belonging to and exhibited by such societies. From what source is that power derived? The answer is obvious. The power of authority and action that they possess is derived from the voluntary consent and appointment of the members surrendering their own power, and committing it, under certain conditions or limitations, to a few selected from their number. There are office-bearers and laws in such private and voluntary societies, as there must be in all societies; but the office-bearers are appointed directly or indirectly by the consent of the members at large, and the laws are enacted and imposed by the society itself. The office-bearers act by a power delegated from the other members; and the laws are binding in consequence of an authority emanating from the whole body of the association. The society has its power within itself, self-regulated and self-acting; and the office-bearers act, and the laws are enforced, in virtue of an authority that emanates, more immediately or more remotely, from the society itself. Such is the nature of every private and voluntary association of an independent kind. In the second place, we have the

hardly less familiar examples, not of private, but of public societies instituted by and acting for the state, such as a bench of magistrates, or a court of justice, or an assembly of parliament or legislature. There is a certain power of action and authority exhibited by and belonging to such societies likewise. But in this case it is a power accruing to them, not from themselves, but from the state. Here, too, there are office-bearers and laws, as in the case of every other society. But the office-bearers are elected by the commonwealth, or appointed by the civil power; and the laws of their office and action are the regulations enacted and imposed by the state. Magistrates hold office and execute laws in virtue of the authority of the supreme magistrate. Judges preside in judgment, and interpret laws, in consequence of the same authority. And senators rule and frame laws, because of the authority given to them by the constitution of the state. Such is the nature of every public or state society. Its power of authority and action emanates from the state. These are the two kinds of societies with which we are most familiar, and which the experience of every day makes us acquainted with. They are examples of two different and widely separate sources from which the power of government and action, necessary to every society of whatever name or kind, may be derived. In the case of private and voluntary societies, that power emanates directly or indirectly from within itself. In the case of public societies not of a voluntary kind, that power emanates from the state from without.

Besides these two sources, from which the power of government and action essential to every organized society may be derived, is there, I ask, any other that can be named as giving the warrant for such power? Is there any other source, besides that of the consent and delegation of its members, and besides that of the commission and authority of the state, from which the power of government and action in a society may be derived? The Christian society has a power of government and action connected with it; but it disowns as the origin of its power both the one and the other of these sources. It draws its authority from a different and higher fountain than either. It claims a loftier origin for its jurisdiction.

I. The power of the Church is derived from a higher source than the consent or delegation of its members; it is of positive institution and Divine warrant, and not from the same origin as that of a voluntary and private society.

In one sense, doubtless, the power of authority and action belonging to the Church is derived from the consent and permission of its members; for it is by their own voluntary act and choice that they become and continue members of the Church, and so place themselves under the administration of that power. In this respect, and it is an important one, Church power exists by the permission or consent of the members; and the Church has all the rights and standing of a merely private and voluntary association. But in addition to this, the power of the Church is directly from God, being exercised and enforced, not only or chiefly because of the permission or consent of its members, but because it is a positive Divine institution, apart altogether from that consent. The direct Divine appointment of Church power, as an ordinance of God in the Christian society, is cumulative and not privative of the existence of that power by the permission or approbation of its members. There is a positive institution by God in addition to the voluntary submission to it of man.

Now here we run counter to the fundamental tenet of the Quakers, who deny the authority of all the positive institutions of Christianity, and among the rest, of the power of order and government in the Christian Church, and who make that power, in so far as they are forced by the necessities of union and association among the members of the Church to acknowledge it, to consist in nothing more than that of any private and voluntary society. And we no less run counter to the views of the Latitudinarians, who, without adopting the Quaker theory, and denying all positive appointments in the Church, deny the special appointment of Church government as a Divine institution, holding that we have no warrant for it in the Word of God, and that it is a matter of mere human arrangement. Such doctrines are clearly and undeniably opposed to the abundant and

varied evidence to be found in Scripture, that Church power is a positive Divine institution, having the direct warrant and commission of Christ. That it is so, the briefest reference to the statements of Scripture on the subject will suffice to show. First, We have the general fact of the Divine establishment of the Christian Church warranted in Scripture,—a society not instituted by the voluntary association of its members, but by the express command of Christ. Second, we find the account of the appointment by our Lord of office-bearers for that society, and of these office-bearers, under the guidance of inspiration, after His removal, providing for a succession of them in the Church, by appointing and setting them apart in every particular congregation. Third, we have the enactment of laws for the Church, in the application of the Word of God, by inspired authority, to office-bearers and members, for the regulation of their conduct. Fourth, we have names given in Scripture to the office-bearers of the Christian society, and precepts and promises addressed to them, expressive in the most unequivocal terms of the office of authority and rule in the Church to which they had been divinely appointed, and not merely of an office of teaching and advising. Fifth, we have the corresponding duties of submission to office-bearers, and respect for their authority distinctly inculcated, as the duties of the members of the Church towards "those set over them in the Lord." And sixth, we have undeniable examples in Scripture of the exercise of a power, not of advice merely, or even of authority, wielded by the permission or appointment of the members, but of rule and authority by warrant and positive institution of God; the power, in short, of "the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

On grounds such as these, which do not require to be illustrated in detail, because they must be familiar to every reader of Scripture, we are warranted to say, that there is a real power of authority and action belonging to the Christian Church, derived from a higher source than the consent or delegation of its members; and that, in addition to the rights it may have as a merely voluntary society, it has a power ordained by God for government among its members, and

for the attainment of its ends as a Church of Christ. So clear and abundant is the evidence that the Christian Church is something more and higher than a voluntary association of Christians, and that the power of the Church is not merely the surrender, under certain limitations, of the rights of all the members into the hands of a few for the good of the society, but is rather the positive institution of Christ, having its origin and warrant directly from Him. In other words, the source of Church power is not in the members, but in Christ.

II. The power of the Church is not derived from the commission and warrant of the state.

The Church of Christ, I have said, is not to be regarded simply as a Christian Union,—wielding any power that it does exercise at the will, and in consequence of the permission, of its members; neither is it to be regarded as a public or civil Union, administering no more than the power and commission of the state. It is of God, both in its origin and in its prerogatives,—His ordinance for administering His power among men. And because the power of the Church is from God, it cannot be from man viewed either as a member of the Church, or as a magistrate of the state. I have already indicated the grounds that we have in Scripture for believing that the power of the Church is not a power existing by the consent of its members, or in virtue of delegation from them, or at their discretion, as in the case of any private and voluntary society; but, on the contrary, that such power is an express and positive Divine appointment, having its source in Christ. And on exactly the same grounds in Scripture it may be demonstrated, that Church power is not derived from the delegation and commission of the state; and that the Church does not owe its authority to that civil warrant which, in the case of public or political societies, clothes their office-bearers with something of the state's prerogatives. The Divine origin and institution of Church authority exclude the possibility of a civil origin and institution of it. There may doubtless be the sanction and warrant of the state connected with the power of the Christian Church; and in every case

in which the state knows its duty, it will seek to enter into alliance with the Church, and lend to its claims of power a civil recognition and warrant. But this warrant of the state to the power of the Church is cumulative, and not privative of its sanction by God. It is the warrant of the state added to the warrant of Divine institution. It is the recognition of the civil magistrate subjoined to the previous appointment of Christ. That recognition does not imply that the origin of Church power is from the state, but the very reverse: it amounts, in fact, to an acknowledgment that the source from which it emanates is Divine. And if, in addition to the statements of Scripture in regard to the express institution by our Lord of a power of authority and action in His Church, anything further were needed as evidence that it is not from the civil magistrate, it would be found in the broad and clear line of distinction which is drawn in the word of God between the nature of the power vested in and exercised by the Church, and the nature of that other power vested in and exercised by the state. The deep and indelible distinction between "the things of God" and "the things of Cæsar" comes in to aid—if that were necessary—the evidence from the Divine institution of Church power; and both combine to demonstrate that the right of authority and action belonging to the Christian Church is not derived from the commission and warrant of the state, but is directly from Christ.

III. The statements now made in regard to the origin and source of Church power necessarily involve the general proposition, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church.

This form of expression is warranted by the explicit language of Scripture; and still more, the meaning of the expression is sanctioned by the whole tenor of Scripture declarations. The Church, as a society, owes its origin to Christ: it derives from Him its government and office-bearers; it receives from Him its laws and constitution; it draws from Him its spiritual influence and grace; it accepts at His hand its ordinances and institutions; it acts in His name, and is guided in its proceedings by His authority. In the expression that the Lord Jesus Christ is Head of the Church, and in the fact that He is



the only source of Church power, there is much more implied than that He is the founder of the Christian society. He is both its founder and its administrator,—being the ever present source of life and influence, of ordinance and blessing, of law and authority, of word and doctrine within the community. Through His Spirit, and His word, and His ordinances, alike of government and grace, Christ both originates and administers His Church upon earth. Is it the spiritual life of the Christian Church that is inquired of in regard to its source and supply? Christ is the Head of the Church as the source of life, breathing that spiritual breath into the body at the first, and holding it in being ever since. Is it the doctrine of the Church that is inquired after in regard to its origin and obligation? Christ is the Head of doctrine to His Church, having been Himself the unerring Teacher of wisdom and truth since the beginning, and still continuing to instruct His people savingly in all Divine knowledge by His word and Spirit. Is it the ordinances of the Church that you inquire about, in respect to their authority, and the blessing contained in them? Christ is the Head of the Church as to ordinances, having appointed them by His authority at first, and made them the channel of spiritual blessings to His people ever since. Is it the Divine grace connected with word and ordinance that you inquire after? Christ is the Head of His Church as to grace, immediately imparting it as He wills through His appointed ordinances, or by means of His Spirit, and thereby making the Church a living and gracious power in the souls of its true members. Is it the authority of the Church in its transactions and decisions that is inquired about; and is it asked whence has it this authority that it claims? Christ is the Head of His Church as to authority and government, speaking through its voice, and binding through its decisions, and making these His own, in so far as they are framed according to His mind and word. In all that regards its life and doctrine, and ordinances, and grace, and authority; in short, in all that belongs to the Church as a peculiar society on earth, we recognise its *Jus Divinum*—the presence and the power of its Divine Head. All is derived from Him; and all emanates from Him as its source. Within the province of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ is

the only Teacher, Lawgiver, and Judge. If doctrine is taught, it is taught because He has revealed it; if ordinances are administered, they are administered in His name, and because they are His; if government is established and exercised, it is through His appointment and authority; if saving grace is dispensed, it is dispensed through the virtue and power of His Spirit; if a blessing is communicated, it is because He blesses. In the language of the Confession of Faith, "there is no other Head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ."

IV. The grand doctrine that the Lord Jesus Christ is the sole Head of His Church, is to be differently understood according to the different senses in which the term Church is to be understood.

It will be remembered that, at an early stage in our discussions, we had occasion to advert to the various significations in which the word Church was used in Scripture, and the different aspects under which the Christian society which goes by that name might be regarded. Now it is of some importance, in order distinctly to understand the doctrine of Christ's Headship over the Church, to look at it from the standpoint of the different characters in which the one and undivided Church of Christ may be regarded. Whether you speak of it as visible or invisible, as local or representative, in all its aspects and characters it is true that Christ is the Head of the Church; but it is true under somewhat different senses; and it may be well, for the sake of greater distinctness, that we should mark the difference. There is, first of all, the invisible Church, constituted and made up of the whole body of the elect throughout the world, chosen by the grace and renewed by the Spirit of God. Christ is the Head of the Church invisible; and, according to the spiritual character in which the members of it are to be considered, He is more peculiarly and appropriately to be regarded as the source of invisible and inward grace to them, although not, of course, to the exclusion of other benefits. There is, secondly, the visible Church, consisting of all those throughout the world who profess the faith of Christ, and are joined to Him in a Church state, and who enjoy the provision of outward

ordinance, and government, and order, which belongs to the visible society, without regard necessarily to their inward and spiritual relation to Christ. Christ is the Head of this visible Church, but in a somewhat different sense from that in which He is the Head of the Church invisible,—more peculiarly and appropriately as the Author and Administrator of that outward provision of word and ordinance, of government and discipline, which characterizes it; and as the Source of its laws and office-bearers, and of the external benefits and immunities which are enjoyed by its members. There is, thirdly, the Church local, consisting of the visible congregation of professing Christians assembled into a church for the worship of God and the enjoyment of ordinances in any given place,—itself a true Church, and a section or branch of the Church catholic or universal. Christ is the Head of the Church local as well as of the Church universal, although under a somewhat different aspect. He is the Head of every particular congregation, more peculiarly in the sense that He is the Author of its privileges, both outward and spiritual, as a worshipping assembly,—giving to it pastors according to His mind, and the administration of ordinances in accordance with His Word, and making these a means of life and grace as well as external blessing to its members. There is, fourthly, the Church representative, made up of the delegated office-bearers or representatives of one or more congregations, and themselves associated together in a Church-court or Assembly, and acting for as well as representing the whole. Christ is the Head of the Church representative, as well as of the Church in every other character in which it is mentioned or regarded in Scripture; but He is so in a sense appropriate to itself. He is the Head of the Church representative more especially as regards the office which it is meant to sustain towards the members, as made up of the rulers and administrators of the affairs of the Christian society,—appointing the laws by which their conduct in the transaction of business is to be regulated,—giving them gifts and authority to rule,—authorizing and sanctioning their judicial decisions in His name,—and, as the Lawgiver in His Church, lending the stamp of His authority to their enactments, and ratifying them as His own. In whatsoever character, in fine, the Church is to be regarded, the Lord

Jesus Christ is appropriately and specially its Head, varying the administration of His power, and authority, and grace, according to its various aspects of capacity or need. There are varieties of administration, but there is the same Head.

Does the individual believer stand in need of the blessing peculiar to his case? It is enough: "The Head of every man is Christ." Does the Church representative stand in need of gifts for government and administration suitable to its character, as the acting and executive body in the Christian society? It is enough: "The Lord is its Judge; the Lord is its Lawgiver; the Lord is its King, He will bring salvation." Does the Church local or congregational stand in need of the blessing appropriate more especially to it, as a worshipping assembly of believers? It is enough: Christ is "the Minister of the Sanctuary," and "the Chief Bishop of Souls," and the great "Master of Assemblies." Does the Church visible stand in need of the gifts of the ministry, ordinances, and oracles of God—the outward provision of government and order necessary to its wellbeing as a visible society? It is enough: "When He ascended up on high, He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Does the Church invisible wait to be refreshed with invisible communications of grace when it is weary? It is enough: "Christ is the Head of the body, the Church, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." If there be any virtue or any blessing in the power given to the Christian Church, it is all summed up in these words of the Confession: "There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ."

There is a distinction, sufficiently familiar to us all, which may help us to a more thorough understanding of the great doctrine we are now discussing. I mean the distinction between the founder of a society and the administrator of a society. A man may be the founder of a society in the sense of giving to it its origin and existence, impressing upon it its original character and constitution, arranging its office-bearers, and framing its laws; so that the society shall stand

related to him as its author. And yet the founder may not be the administrator of the society. He may leave the society, once summoned into existence by his efforts, to act for itself in future; or he may hand over the entire power and administration of its affairs to another, who shall preside over it in his stead, and become its real ruler. Now, in asserting that Christ is the Head of the Christian society, we mean not that He is the founder of it only, or the administrator of it only, but that He is both at one time. Christ is the Founder of the Christian Church, in the sense that He gave it its origin at first, that He impressed upon it its character and arrangement,—that He laid down the framework of its government and order,—that He appointed to it its laws and office-bearers and ordinances,—that He invested it, in short, with the peculiar form and the peculiar constitution that distinguish it as a society; and He did all this in a far higher sense than any in which these acts can be attributed to the founder of any human society. But more than this. Having at first impressed a certain constitution and character upon the spiritual society, He did not thenceforward abandon it to proceed according to the law or nature thus imparted to it. He gave to the Church at first a form of order and government, but did not after that cease His connection with it, and leave it alone to exercise and wield that power in its own strength and according to the regulations He had prescribed. He did not deposit with the Church, or in the ordinances of the Church, or with its office-bearers, a store of grace, which should be dispensed in future apart from Himself. He is not only the Founder of the Christian Church; He is also the Ruler and Administrator of it, in such a way that He keeps in His own hand all the power and authority and grace that belong to the society, and is ever present directly and with His own hand to exercise that power, to administer that authority, and to dispense that grace. He is the Head of the Church in this sense, that the Church is not only indebted to Him for its existence at first, but for its life and well-being ever since; in this sense, that it is not the Church that governs and dispenses ordinances and spiritual graces in His name, and by reason of His original gift and endowment to her, but Christ who, personally present, governs and administers ordinances and blessing

through the Church. The Church has no store of life apart from Christ being in it; the ordinances of the Church have no deposit of grace apart from Christ present with them; the office-bearers of the Church have no gift of power, or authority, or action, apart from Christ ruling and acting by them. It is most important to remember that it is in this high and very peculiar sense that we are to understand the expression, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church.

Such, then, is the source of the power of the Church,—using the word power in its most comprehensive sense, to denote not merely a power to act in the way of authority and rule, but also, in addition to this, a power to act in every way in which it is competent for the Church as a Church to act; a power, namely, to act in the way of spiritual jurisdiction, in the way of administering word, and ordinance, and discipline, in the way of dispensing grace to its members. The source of all this power belonging to the Christian society is in the Lord Jesus Christ, as its ever present and ever living Head. This cardinal doctrine lies at the foundation of every other that concerns the Church of Christ, and ought to be guarded from those that would deny or derogate from it, with the utmost jealousy and care. It is so very explicitly and broadly laid down in Scripture, that few are found to controvert it in so many words, or expressly to deny that the Head of the Christian Church is Christ Himself. But without denying it in express terms, there are many systems of religious belief, and many societies bearing the name of Churches, that are found to trench upon this doctrine understood in its fulness and integrity, and practically to interfere with the rights and prerogatives that belong to Christ's Crown. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a consideration of some of those systems that detract from or deny the prerogatives of our Lord, as Head of the Church and the source of all Church power.

1st. The rights belonging to the Headship of Christ over His Church are interfered with or detracted from by the system of Erastianism,

which ascribes to the civil magistrate a power within the Christian Church, and a proper jurisdiction in spiritual things.

If, to borrow the well-known and striking language of Andrew Melville, "there be two kings and two kingdoms" within the bounds of every Christian country, then for the civil ruler to pass beyond the line that divides them, to trespass within the dominion of Christ, to assume jurisdiction there, and to interfere between Him and His subjects, is plainly to touch very nearly the honour of Christ's Crown. The civil magistrate denies or detracts from the right of Christ as Head of His Church, when he interferes with those matters in the Church in which Christ claims to act Himself, or usurps that authority which Christ claims to exercise Himself. For example, the doctrine professed and published by the Christian Church is binding upon the conscience of its members, and claims to be believed, not only because it is true in itself, but also because it is the truth revealed and imposed by its Divine Head; and the civil magistrate may interfere with the prerogatives of Christ as Head, when he presumes to dictate to the Church another doctrine than Christ has dictated, or to impose upon the conscience a creed which, although true in itself, is nevertheless imposed as an article of belief by his authority. Again, the ordinances and positive institutions of the Church demand the obedience and observance of its members, not merely because of their own virtue as conducive to the wellbeing of the Christian society, but because they are Christ's, and are prescribed by Him; and the civil magistrate may encroach upon the privileges of His Headship, when he assumes a power to dictate in regard to the rites and worship and order of the Church, imposing on the conscience, instead of Divine institutions, the ordinances and commandments of men. Once more, the government and jurisdiction of the Church are authoritative, only in so far as through them the Church enforces the laws of Christ, and He speaks through its decisions; and the civil magistrate may encroach upon His authority, when he assumes a jurisdiction in spiritual matters which belongs to Christ, and in controversies of faith and matters of government reviews or reverses decisions which are spoken or ratified by Christ's

command. In such ways as these, the civil magistrate may usurp to himself an authority within the Church of Christ, which is inconsistent with the authority which properly belongs to its Head alone.

This usurpation by the civil magistrate of proper jurisdiction within the Christian Church, is not less an encroachment upon the kingly rights of its Divine Head, that it may be perpetrated by a Christian magistrate. One great argument of Erastians, and a common apology for allowing some sort of power to the civil magistrate in spiritual things, is drawn from the consideration that in countries professedly Christian the chief ruler must have a power about the Christian Church, not proper or competent in countries and with rulers not professedly Christian, but rather opposed to Christianity. Now this apology is an extremely hazardous one, and derives no countenance either from the Word of God or from the standards of our Church. The right of the civil magistrate in connection with religion is not derived from the personal character of the magistrate, but from the nature of his office; and the extent and limits of that right cannot be determined by the accident of his Christianity or the reverse. The duty of the civil magistrate to aim at the glory of God and the advancement of the cause of religion, is founded on the office of magistracy as a Divine ordinance, and not on the faith or infidelity of the person who fills the office; and with this competency of the state to take some steps in behalf of the Church, and with the limits of this competency, the Christian profession of the state has, strictly speaking, nothing to do. In Scripture it is certain that "the powers that be" are spoken of as "ministers of God for good" to the Church as well as to the community; and that without reference to the fact of their being professedly Christian or not. Nay, they are so spoken of, when "the powers that be" were not Christian, but the persecutors of Christianity. And it is no less certain that, in the Confession of Faith, the right and duty of the civil magistrate to aim at the interests and advancement of the Church, are not restricted to the single case in which the magistrate and the state are Christian.<sup>2</sup> There can be no doubt, indeed, that when both the people and the civil magistrate



adopt a profession of Christianity, there will be many things which he can and will do on behalf of the Christian Church, not within his power in other and opposite circumstances. But it is important to remark that the duty of the magistrate *circa sacra* is a duty connected with the office, and not with the man; and that it is neither cancelled nor diminished by the circumstance that he has failed in the still more essential duty of embracing Christianity for himself. Nor, on the other hand, is the duty or the right of the civil magistrate in connection with the Christian Church created or increased by the fact that both himself personally, and the state that he represents, are professedly Christian. His opportunities and his means for promoting the interests of religion in general, and of the Christian Church in particular, may indeed be incalculably augmented, and his willingness or desire to do so may for the first time be called forth, when he himself, as well as the nation over which he rules, come under the influence of Christianity. But his obligation, as in the sight of God to seek to advance His cause, was not at that moment created; and his right to interfere on behalf of the Church was not even then enlarged or extended. As a Christian magistrate, he has not other or higher rights from his office than what he possessed when not Christian; nor does his faith personally give him a larger or stronger title to interfere in regard to the Church of Christ. The apology or argument so often resorted to by Erastians, both in former and more recent times, to justify the ascription of authority to the civil magistrate in spiritual things, that the state is a Christian state, is no real or valid justification of it. Because the state is professedly Christian, and the magistrate a Christian magistrate, we are not warranted to ascribe to him an authority which can belong only to Christ. The Christianity of the state does not in the least tend to abolish or even lessen the essential distinction, which in all circumstances must subsist, between the state and the Church; nor does the religious profession of the magistrate tend in the smallest measure to give him the place or the commission of an office-bearer within the Christian Church. The assumption by the state of proper jurisdiction within the Church of Christ, whether in the case of a

Christian nation or a nation not Christian, must ever be equally an encroachment upon the rights of its Divine Head.

2d. The doctrine of the Headship of Christ is denied or detracted from by the Popish system, which ascribes to the Bishop of Rome authority within the Church inconsistent with the sovereignty of Christ as its Head.

It is not on the ground of the claim made by the Pope to be regarded as universal bishop within the Christian Church, that this charge rests. If such an office as that of universal bishop had ever existed or been sanctioned by the Word of God, it might have been consistent with the Headship of Christ. But the prerogatives which are attributed to the office, and the powers which according to the system of Popery are vested in it, are such as to be wholly inconsistent with the Headship of Christ, and to constitute a daring usurpation of that Headship by a creature. I have had occasion before now, in the course of our discussions, to remark that, according to the system of Romanists, the very office and powers which Christ when on earth held as Mediator, have been transferred by Him since His departure to the visible Church; that He has devolved upon the Church His own incommunicable rights and prerogatives to exercise in His room on behalf of men; and that the Church, filled with His Divine fulness, discharging His functions towards the world, and standing in His stead, is in its office and character the living embodiment of the office and character of its absent Head. In other words, the Church now, and in reference to men, is as much the Prophet, Priest, and King, as was Christ Himself when He was upon earth. There is a difference indeed on this point between the opinions of that party in the Church of Rome who, strictly speaking, may be called Papists, and that other party who may more correctly be termed Roman Catholics. The former, or the Papists, hold that all these powers and prerogatives are vested in the Pope personally; while the latter, or the Roman Catholics, hold that they are vested not in the Pope individually, but in the Pope in conjunction with a General Council, as representing the Church at

large.<sup>2</sup> The difference, however, in regard to our present argument is immaterial. The ascription to the Pope individually, or to the Pope "cum Concilio," of such offices and powers as once confessedly were Christ's, is an impious assumption of His place, and a daring encroachment on His sovereignty. The Lord Jesus Christ still exercises in His own proper person, and by His own real presence amid His Church, the whole of those offices which He once as Mediator assumed. He has neither abdicated His functions, nor been dethroned from His place as Mediator; and this day He is in the midst of the Church as much the unerring Prophet, and the efficacious Priest, and the Supreme King personally, as when He once discharged those offices on earth. To assert otherwise were to assert that He had ceased to be the Head of His Church altogether, and was no longer to be accounted the Mediator. And to this impious doctrine the pretensions of the Church of Rome actually amount. It matters not whether, according to one party, the offices of Christ be transferred from Him to the Pope and the Church conjointly, or whether, according to another party, they be transferred from Him to the Pope alone. To pretend that Christ has devolved His incommunicable office on a creature,—to assert that the Lord Jesus has abdicated His functions in favour of a man,—to assume that the Head of the Church has divested Himself of His powers, and entrusted them to a mortal,—this is, in the most express and undisguised terms, to deny the prerogatives and rights of His Headship, and to take possession of them in the name of Antichrist. And such, in their full extent, are the claims and doctrines put forth on behalf of Rome. That Church, according to the tenets of its adherents, is the unerring Prophet, to declare infallibly the will of God, and interpret the doctrine of His word, and to judge between truth and falsehood. That Church is the effectual Priest, to make the sacrifice day by day that is necessary for the remission of sin, and to present the prevailing intercession for the sinner. That Church is the supreme and sovereign King over the consciences and the obedience of men, giving or withholding the gift of grace according to its pleasure, creating and dispensing with laws at its will, and seated upon the throne of universal supremacy. Who can deny that this is to

assume the very office of Christ upon earth, to refuse to Him His blood-bought crown, and to dethrone Him to whom alone the Headship of His Church belongs, that a usurper may become the Head in His place.

3d. The rights of the Headship of Christ, if not denied, are detracted from by the semi-Romanist doctrine, that Christ has given to the Church a deposit of power and grace, which the Church has authority to use and administer by itself.

This is a doctrine common to all classes of High Churchmen, and may be regarded as a sort of half-way house between Popery on the one hand and Protestantism on the other. It is the doctrine of Popery taken in its true extent, that Christ has devolved all His offices and powers on men, and that the Church has warrant and endowment for the exercise and discharge of them all. It is the doctrine of Protestantism taken in its true extent, on the other hand, that Christ has devolved none of His offices on men, and that the Church in no measure is warranted or endowed to exercise any of them; for this reason, that these offices are personal and incommunicable, and that Christ in person, and by His actual presence in the Church, still singly and completely discharges them Himself. But there is a doctrine intermediate between Popery and Protestantism, held by High Churchmen of all parties, that Christ has in some degree, although not wholly or altogether, devolved upon men His peculiar offices; and that, to some extent at least, the Church has been commissioned and qualified to exercise them. They hold that Christ has bestowed upon the Christian Church a certain measure of power and grace, as a gift to be enjoyed apart from Himself,—a deposit, as it were, in the Church's hands, to be used and dispensed at its own discretion, and independently of Christ. Now such a doctrine as this, although not so avowedly as the Popish dogma, yet not less really, derogates from the rights of Christ as Head. It denies that all power connected with the Church is kept in the hands of its Divine Head; and that in its actings and proceedings, its office-bearers are not so much acting themselves, as that Christ is acting by them. It denies

that all grace belonging to the Church, and enjoyed by its members, is communicated to the members by Christ Himself directly and personally; and that the blessing they receive is not the gift in any proper sense of the Church itself, but only of Christ blessing them through it. Such a doctrine of a deposit of blessing and power in the Church, to be used and dispensed by itself, virtually excludes Christ, to that extent, from His office of acting and blessing through the Church. In whatever form or with whatever modification it may be held, it is derogatory to the office and exclusive claims of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Head of His Church.

First, there is one party of semi-Romanists, or High Churchmen, who hold that there is a deposit of grace in the Church, which Christ has given and authorized His servants to dispense. In this form of the doctrine it is believed and maintained by the advocates of Sacramental grace and priestly virtue, those who declare that in the ordinances themselves, or in the ministers who dispense them, there resides a gracious influence apart from the communion of the soul in such ordinances with Christ. Such a principle as this is universal among Tractarians in the present day, and indeed is common to High Churchmen in every age. With regard to the Sacraments of the Church, they believe that Christ has deposited in them a certain grace apart from the relation of the soul to Christ when enjoying them, and that He has limited to the outward institutions of His Church, and the sensible signs in the Sacraments, a spiritual and efficacious influence, separate from the blessing of Christ conveyed through them as channels. With regard to the offices of the Church, in like manner, they hold that grace is tied to the office itself, apart from Christ by His own presence and in His own person giving the blessing, not to the office, but through it. Hence the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration and Sacramental Grace; hence the doctrine of a real priestly virtue in the office of the ministry; a blessing, in short, deposited in the sign, or the form, or the institution, separate from the communion of the soul with Christ through the channel of such ordinances. In this system, Christ is displaced from the position He occupies as the ever present Head of the Church, and so, in virtue

of His presence, not giving to the Church a certain store or deposit of grace to be used apart from Himself, but rather following out day by day His mediatorial work on its behalf, and as the present Head, by His own personal act, and from His own hands, dispensing every blessing enjoyed through ordinances. The doctrine of High Churchmen on this subject avowedly substitutes the sinner's union to the Church, or communion in the ordinances of the Church, for the sinner's union to Christ, and leads the soul to seek in fellowship with outward institutions for that grace which can be found by it only in fellowship with Christ. The deposit of grace is not in the Church, but in the Divine Head of the Church; and to the extent that the Church professes to have a treasury of blessing of its own, and to dispense the blessing itself, to that extent it is trenching upon the prerogatives of Christ as the Head.

Second, there are many semi-Romanists or High Churchmen who hold that there is a deposit of knowledge in the Church; and that Christ has authorized His servants to dispense it for the benefit of its members. Such virtually is the doctrine of those who, in addition to the teaching of Christ by His Word and Spirit, maintain that the Church is the authorized teacher, if not to supplement the instructions of Christ, at least to interpret them. This doctrine may be held under various forms and modifications. It may verge towards the Romish doctrine of the equal authority of ecclesiastical tradition with that of the inspired Word of God, and of the paramount necessity of an infallible Church to interpret infallibly the Scriptures. Or, without claiming infallibility, it may assign to the Church the office of exclusively, or at least authoritatively, interpreting the Word of God for its members, and of imposing its teaching on their consciences. In whatever form the doctrine is held, which assigns to the Church a deposit of knowledge apart from the ever present and ever active teaching of Christ Himself, it undoubtedly trenches on His office of Head.

It is no doubt true, that one of the great duties the Church has to discharge in the world, is the duty of a teacher, but not of a teacher

separated at any moment or in any way from the teaching of Christ. It is the duty of the Church to declare the doctrine and preach the Gospel of Christ; but her teaching is only in so far and no further saving and authoritative as it is Christ teaching through her. In no other way can the Church be said to teach at all. Anything beyond this, or anything besides this, is to assume an office not belonging to her,—the office, in fact, of the great Teacher Himself. Christ has never ceased in any sense, or at any time, to be the Prophet of His Church; but the work of instruction He keeps in His own hands. He has given neither to the Church, nor to the office of the ministry in the Church, a deposit of wisdom and knowledge apart from Himself. In all the teaching of the Church or of its ministers which is not unauthorized and presumptuous, it is Christ Himself that teaches by His Word and Spirit. And for the Church to claim to itself an authority or power to teach, apart from Christ present and speaking in it, is to that extent to derogate from His office as Head.

Third, there are many semi-Romanists and High Churchmen who hold that there is a deposit of authority committed to the Church; and that its office-bearers have the right to administer it. Such virtually is the principle involved in the tenets of those who maintain that the Church has a right in any respect to add its own laws to Christ's, or to go beyond, in matters of government, or worship, or discipline, or jurisdiction, the exact limits of what He has enacted. The Church can have authority only in so far as it speaks with the voice of its Head; and its decisions can be valid and its enactments binding, only in so far as they are given and enacted by Him. As King, and Ruler, and Judge, Christ is still in the midst of His Church. The power and jurisdiction which it claims must, in every case of its exercise by the office-bearers of the Church, come directly and immediately from Him. It were a mistake here, as elsewhere, to think that Christ, having settled the constitution and laws of His Church, and appointed its rulers, ceased any longer to interfere; and that, having given to them a supply or deposit of authority at first, He left them to rule and act for themselves under His name. His own authority in the Christian Church, Christ still keeps in His own

hands; and out of the fulness of power in Himself, He personally rules in every act of authority or jurisdiction validly and lawfully done by His servants on earth. Their authority as rulers in the Christian society is not theirs, but His; and their decisions or laws enacted in spiritual or ecclesiastical matters are only to that extent, and no further, valid and binding, that they embody His decisions and enactments. For men to attempt, then, to decree what Christ has not decreed,—to enact laws of their own, in addition to His,—to add to His appointments in the Church,—to dictate rites and ceremonies and obligations which He has not recognised,—this is to assume a power not theirs, and to trespass on the office of the Head.

Such are some of the ways in which the great doctrine of the Headship of Christ may be denied or derogated from. That doctrine may be practically denied or set aside by the state, when it takes to itself in any way or to any extent the office of Christ within the Church, and exercises jurisdiction in spiritual things. That doctrine is not less practically denied or set aside by the Church, when it takes to itself the office of Christ, and claims for its office-bearers or its ordinances a power that is incommunicable, and personally His own. The state and the Church on these occasions may both be acting in the name of Christ, when they thus usurp His prerogatives, and put themselves in His place. It may be a professedly Christian state, that in His name enters within a province and trespasses into an office that belong only to the Church's Head. Or it may be a professedly Christian Church acting in His name, which forgets that its own place is ministerial and Christ's supreme, and assumes to itself an office confined to its exalted Head. The sin of Erastianism, or at least the principle of evil involved in the sin, is not confined to civil magistrates not Christian, or confined to civil magistrates at all. It may be perpetrated by the Christian magistrate who brings the sword of Cæsar within the precincts of the sanctuary of God, even when he comes to worship there. It may be perpetrated by the Church itself, without Cæsar's sword, when within the sanctuary it takes the seat of Christ, and thrusts itself into His office. Whether it be a civil or ecclesiastical usurpation of His power, it is Erastianism in principle,



and equally trenches upon the great doctrine of Christ's Headship over His Church.

## **CHAPTER II:**

### **THE RULE OR LAW OF CHURCH POWER**

IT has been already remarked, that there are two things that belong to the Church of Christ, as they must, from the very nature of the case, belong to every organized society, whatever be its nature or objects,—namely, office-bearers of some kind, and laws of some kind. The first, or office-bearers, are necessary to represent the society, and act on its behalf; and the second, or laws, are necessary, in order that they may act upon some fixed principles, and according to some settled order or system. At this stage in the progress of our investigations, it might perhaps have been natural for us to have taken up, in the first instance, the subject of the office-bearers of the Christian society, before entering upon the question of the rule by which their proceedings are ordered and defined. But it would be impossible to discuss the former topic, without considering the whole subject of the form and constitution and government of the Christian Church,—a discussion that demands, and must receive, a separate and more lengthened treatment. I have preferred, therefore, to postpone the subject of the office-bearers of the Church for the present, and to set it apart, along with the general question of the government and framework of the Church, for a subsequent and separate department of our inquiries. In the meantime, and in connection with the general head of Church power, it is proper to

consider whether there is any rule by which that power is to be exercised and administered; and if so, what is the law binding upon the parties who have commission from Christ to act on behalf of Himself in His Church. The question of who those parties are, will be taken up at a subsequent period, and under a head of its own. But at present, our object is to ascertain if any fixed rule, and if so, what rule has been laid down for the purpose of regulating the use and administration of its power by the Church.

The first of these questions, or, Is there any fixed rule according to which the power of the Church is exercised? it is hardly necessary, after what has already been said, to stop to discuss. If the Church is a regular and organized society at all, it must have some kind of rule by which it acts and administers its functions. Without this, no society, much less the Christian Church, could long act, or even exist at all. And the only proper subject for discussion is the second of these questions, namely, What rule has been appointed or laid down for the regulation of the Church in the matter? It is not even necessary to delay, in order to inquire from what quarter, or by what party, such a rule for the guidance of the Church is enacted. The law for the regulation of the Church, in the exercise of its mysterious power, cannot come from the state; for we have already seen, that the state has no proper jurisdiction within the Church, or in spiritual things. It cannot come from the authority, or will, or appointment of the members of the Church itself; for we have already seen that the Church is not a mere voluntary society, deriving its origin and power from the consent and delegation of its members. The only quarter, therefore, to which we can look, in answer to the question, By whom has the law for the regulation of Church power been enacted? is to Him whom we have found to be both the Church's Founder and Ruler. The law for the use and exercise of Church power must necessarily come from the Divine source of it. And the only question that remains for our discussion, is the question, What is the law which Christ has ordained?

I. The rule for the use and administration of Church power is the Word of God.

The law of the state cannot be the law of the Church; because the authority of the civil magistrate is expressly excluded there. The will of its members or office-bearers cannot be the law of the Church; because it is not a private or voluntary society, subject to such authority. From the very nature of the Church, as subject to Christ its Head, His will must be the only rule for the guidance of the Church in matters in which it is called upon to act; and Christ's will is nowhere expressed or announced, except in the Bible. In common, indeed, with every moral and intelligent being, the Church, as a society, is placed under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and is responsible to Him; and whenever His mind is expressed, that expression must necessarily become the supreme law to the Christian society as much as to the individual. Upon the broad ground of Christ's authority over all as God, and the responsibility of all to Christ, whether they be individuals or societies, we are entitled to argue that the will of Christ, as made known in the Bible, in so far as it applies to ecclesiastical affairs, must be the law of the Church; and it would require a statute of limitation, an express warrant of exemption from Himself, to exclude the Church from its responsibility, in common with all its members, to His Word as its rule. When Christ speaks and commands through the Bible, it must, in so far as it is addressed to them, be the law of every creature and of every society. On this ground alone are we warranted to say, that the Word of God must, in so far as it bears on the Church, be the exclusive rule for its actings. But we have seen already, that the Lord Jesus Christ sustains a peculiar relation to the Church, which He does not sustain to individuals as such, or to other societies. He is the Head of the Christian society in a peculiar sense, and stands in the relation of Sovereign to the Church in a manner that He does not to any other party; and in this relation of Headship on the one hand, and subjection on the other, we see an additional ground laid for the general doctrine, that the will of Christ, as expressed in the Scriptures, must be to the Church its rule of action and duty. Over

and above the responsibility of the Church, in common with every creature, to Christ, as Lord of lords, there is superadded in this case the peculiar responsibility of the Church to Christ, as its King and Head. By this double sovereignty of nature and of grace, the Church is under subjection to the Lord Jesus, and to His revealed will; and because He is the Head of the Church, which He has purchased with His own blood, in addition to being the common Lord and Sovereign of all, He has a twofold claim on its obedience. The will of Christ, then, as revealed and expressed in the Bible, must, in a sense stronger and more constraining than that in which it applies to individuals as such, or to other societies, be the law of the Church.

There is no way of evading this conclusion, or setting aside the general proposition now laid down, that the Church is bound in all that it does to take the Bible as the law or rule of its proceedings, except upon the latitudinarian theory, that the Bible has enacted no law on Church matters, and can therefore be no guide in regard to them. The adherents of the latitudinarian theory in regard to the Church, affirm that the Scriptures have laid down nothing precisely or authoritatively on the subject of the constitution, the government, or administration of the Church,—that it is in vain to look into its pages for a directory to guide us in the conduct of her affairs,—and that she has been left at liberty by her Divine Head to use her own discretion in matters ecclesiastical, as considerations of time, and circumstances, and varying expediency may dictate. Now, in reference to this objection to the general doctrine already announced, there are two concessions which may be made, and which it is important to note; but which, when made, still leave untouched the general principle that the Bible is the rule, and the only rule, for the exercise and administration of Church power.

1st. It must at once be conceded, and has indeed already been indicated, that it is only in so far as the Word of God bears directly or indirectly on the subject of the use and administration of Church power, that it can be considered as a law or rule for the Church in its peculiar office or duties. Of course it is not to be denied that there is

much in the Scriptures which refers to the duty and responsibility in reference to God, not of the Church as a Church, but of individuals as such; and that there is a great deal there revealed, both as regards doctrine and practice, not applicable to the case of a Christian society in its collective character. Further still, it cannot be denied that there is no formal and separate directory drawn out in the Bible for the regulation of Church matters,—no code, as it were, of ecclesiastical law arranged and articulated for the use and instruction of the Church. But, nevertheless, it is true that there is enough in the Word of God bearing on the subject, and that, too, expressed with sufficient precision, to constitute it a rule for the Church, and to lay down for its direction the mind of Christ in regard to the order and administration of His own house. These three propositions may be laid down in regard to the expression or announcement of the will of Christ in Scripture for the use and exercise of Church power in the Church. First, There are many particular regulations laid down expressly in the Word of God in regard to the nature of Church government, and the exercise and administration of Church power in matters ecclesiastical. Second, There are many express examples given us under the authority and direction of inspiration, equally binding upon us as express precepts, in regard to the use and administration of Church power, and having this advantage over particular regulations, that they embody in instances and special cases the principles that are designed to regulate all similar cases, wherever or whensoever they may occur. Thirdly, When there are neither particular rules nor particular examples applicable in their general features to the cases that may occur in ecclesiastical matters, there are general principles, either expressly laid down in Scripture, or fairly and necessarily to be inferred from Scripture, bearing upon ecclesiastical power and administration, sufficient to constitute a rule for the Church in the use and application of the power which she has warrant to exercise. These three propositions are true in regard to the expression of the will of Christ in Scripture, as forming a law or directory for the Church. A very slight acquaintance with the Word of God will suffice to suggest the evidence which it affords in support of them. And they are sufficient to bear out the general proposition,

that there is enough in the Word of God to be, and which was intended to be, a distinct and complete guide for the Church in the exercise of its powers of action and administration. No doubt you will seek in vain in the Bible for a formal code of ecclesiastical law, such as a jurist might compile. But it is not true that a code for the regulation of the Church's affairs is utterly wanting in Scripture, or that it is not embodied there either in express rules, or relevant examples, or general principles applicable to every instance in which the Church may be called upon to act. There may be no formal and scientific directory of law, any more than there is a formal and scientific confession of faith revealed to us in Scripture. But after this concession is made, it is still true that the Word of God is the only and the all-sufficient rule of duty and direction for the Church.<sup>2</sup>

2d. The second concession to be made to those who deny that there is anything laid down in Scripture sufficient to be a rule to the Church in its government and discipline and administration generally, is this, that although there is not any discretion allowed to the Church itself in regard to its laws or its institutions, yet there is a discretion permitted to the Church in regard to matters simply of "decency and order." However difficult it may be to draw the line between them—and the difficulty probably has been not a little exaggerated—there is a distinction which, in one shape or other, must be recognised and admitted by all, between the fundamental laws and institutions revealed and appointed by Christ for His Church, and those matters of arrangement and circumstance and detail, which may be necessary for the carrying out those laws into execution day by day, or may be expedient for the proper observance of those institutions. There is a distinction, in short, which all must acknowledge at one point or other, wherever the line may be drawn, between principles essential to the existence and administration of the Church, and points accidental to the existence and administration of the Church. With regard to the former, or what is essential to the existence and use of Church power, the Scripture contains a rule complete and sufficient for all the purposes contemplated, and expressed either in direct precepts, or by

particular examples, or through the announcement of general principles, all bearing on the subject. With regard to the latter, or the points accidental and not essential to the existence and administration of the Church, there is nothing expressed in Scripture directly; and something is to be left to the discretion of the Church and its office-bearers. Where and how the line is to be drawn between these two kinds of things, marking on the one side what is fundamental and distinctive in the laws and administration of the Church, and therefore revealed, and what on the other side is accidental and not peculiar, and therefore not revealed, it may be sometimes difficult to determine. But that, after the laws and institutions of the Church had been directly or indirectly revealed and appointed by Christ, there was some power left to the Church itself to fill in the details of arrangement and order and propriety, not essential but expedient to the former, there can, I think, be no doubt both from the statements and the silence, the utterances and the reserve of Scripture on the subject. As to such matters of order or expediency as, for example, the hour of public worship on the Sabbath, the order of the service, the number of the diets each Lord's day, the length of time appropriated to each, and such like—all conducive more or less to the proper discharge of the duty connected with them, and all requiring to be fixed and arranged in one way or other—there can be no doubt that a discretionary power in determining them has been left open to the Church. To have fixed by positive law such details, would have been contrary to the whole analogy of Scripture, which deals far more largely in general principles than in special regulations or precepts.

It may indeed be thought to be a difficult or dangerous task to draw the line between what is fundamental and peculiar to the character and institution of the ecclesiastical body, and in regard to which no discretion has been left to it, and what is merely accidental, and not distinctive, though conducive to its convenience and order, in regard to which a discretion has been left to it. But the line of distinction, upon any theory of the Church, must be drawn. It is not for us, by the help of our own rules or principles, derived merely from human

ideas or conceptions of what is essential or accidental, to draw it. The only safe and scriptural method of drawing the line of distinction, is to ascertain what the word of God declares to be essential on the one hand, and therefore directly fixed and appointed, and what subordinate and not peculiar on the other, and therefore left open to the discretion of the Church. The Scripture standard can alone determine the distinction; and it is only by the application of Bible examples and rules that the line can be drawn which shall decide where the discretion of the Church in such matters as these begins, and where it ends. The rule of the apostle is the clearest and most applicable, which seems to intimate that the discretionary authority of the Church is limited expressly to the things of "decency and order." "Let all things," says he, in reference to the liberty allowed to the Church in making arrangements in ecclesiastical matters, "Let all things be done decently, or in good form, and according to order" (εὐσχημόνως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν).

These two concessions, if concessions they can be called, may and ought to be made to those who affirm that there is nothing explicitly laid down in the Word of God as to matters of ecclesiastical government, discipline, authority, and institution; that it cannot be a rule or directory in such things to the Church; and that consequently the Church must be left very much to its own discretion in the framing of its constitution and the enactment of its laws. There is nothing in these two concessions to shake or set aside the general position which we have laid down in the first place, that the Word of God is the only and the all-sufficient rule for the use and administration of Church power.

II. But admitting this doctrine to be incontrovertible, in what light, I ask, are we bound to regard the laws made by the Church itself, or by Church courts?

Reserving entire and untouched the general position, that the Bible, and the Bible only, is the rule for the use and exercise of Church power, the answer to this second question is, that the laws and



enactments framed by the Church have no authority by themselves, except in so far as they are the laws or enactments previously laid down and revealed by Christ. There is a distinction not unfrequently made use of in regard to human laws, which may not inaptly be applied to the laws or enactments framed by the Church or its courts, in their relation to Christ's commands on the same subject. There are laws declaratory and laws enactive,—the former, or declaratory laws, involving in them no other or new authority beyond what is previously binding by the established constitution of the state, and being merely explanatory of that constitution, as applied to fresh or particular cases,—the latter embodying new restrictions or regulations not previously implied in the constitution, and involving on the part of the legislator a fresh exercise of authority. Now the laws framed and announced by the Church, or by Church courts, as binding in matters ecclesiastical, are declaratory and not enactive, involving, if they be valid at all, no new exercise of authority on the part of the Church, but limited to the object of explaining and applying the law previously uttered by Christ in reference to such matters. The office of the Church in relation to the laws of her Divine Head, is to explain, to declare, and to apply them, in reference to every fresh case that may occur, warranting or requiring her interference. Beyond this the legislative function of the Church does not extend. She has no power of legislation for herself, according to her own wisdom or discretion, but must be contented to abide within the limits of that constitution and those laws appointed for her in the Word of God. To declare and apply these, to administer and enforce the authority of Christ within the bounds of His own appointment,—this is the office of the Church in the way of legislating for the guidance of her office-bearers and members. The keys of the kingdom of heaven are the Church's right, for the purpose of unlocking the sanctuary where the Book of the Divine law is laid up, but for nothing more. It is her right to take the Book, and read what Christ has written therein, and demand audience in His name for the laws which He has enacted. But to add to those laws is not her right, any more than to add to the Book itself. And when in any case, in her conduct and arrangement of ecclesiastical matters, it is necessary or

expedient for the Church to assume the functions of legislation, and by her courts to frame and publish laws for the obedience of her members, these laws can be no more than declaratory, and not enactive.

III. In what light are the office-bearers of the Church to be regarded, in accordance with the doctrine that the Bible, and the Bible only, is the rule of Church power?

The answer to this question is equally plain and obvious as in the former case. They are ministerial and subordinate, having no authority or discretion of their own, and being merely ministers or servants to carry out the will and execute the appointments of Christ. They are not masters to do their own will, or act at their own discretion, but servants, held bound to submit to the will and carry out the instructions of another. There is a magisterial and supreme authority in the Church; and there is a derived and subordinate authority, accountable to the former. The one belongs to Christ as Head of His Church, the only law or limit of His authority being His own will; the other belongs to the Church, or the office-bearers of the Church, the law or limit of their authority being the power intrusted to them by their Master, and the instructions given to them by Him. In reference to the office-bearers of the Church, of whatsoever place or authority in it, they, if they keep within their office, are but the instruments in the hands of Christ Himself, acting in His name, ruling by His authority, and carrying into effect no more than His instructions. It is true here, as in other respects, that "the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." Their office is wholly ministerial; their authority is wholly derived and subordinate. They are not "lords over God's heritage," licensed to act according to their discretion or caprice, and independently of any authority but their own. They are not free to administer word, or ordinance, or authority, as from themselves, and independently of the Head that is over them. In all their duties and functions they act only for Christ, and therefore must keep within the strict limits of His commission. The rights and privileges of Christ's Church are protected from the

caprice and arbitrary encroachment of the office-bearers, by the restraint of Christ's express authority over them; and underneath His crown, and sheltered by it, is found the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free. The functions of the office-bearers of the Church are ministerial, not lordly.

IV. In what light are the decisions of the Church or its Courts to be regarded, in consistency with the great principle that the Bible, and the Bible only, is the rule of Church power?

We have seen that the laws of the Church, in so far as they can be regarded as valid, are declaratory and not enactive. We have seen that the function of the office-bearers of the Church is ministerial, and not lordly. And now, when the office-bearers, in the lawful administration of their office, proceed to apply the laws of Christ to any particular case, as the circumstances or emergency may demand, and when, acting not for themselves, but for Christ, they pronounce a judicial decision,—in what light is that judgment to be regarded, and to what extent, and in what manner, is it binding upon the conscience? Here, too, the answer is not far to seek or difficult to find, determined as it must be by a reference to the great and fundamental principle that the mind of Christ, revealed and expressed in the Bible, is both the rule and the limit of Church power. If the judgment or decision pronounced in the lawful exercise of their authority by the Church or its office-bearers be in accordance with the principles of the Word of God, that decision was before pronounced in heaven; and it is both valid and binding upon the conscience, not only because it is consistent with God's Word, but also because it is a decision lawfully pronounced by a lawful tribunal appointed by Christ for the purpose. "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." But, on the contrary, if the judgment pronounced by the Church or its office-bearers, although in the lawful exercise of their office, be itself unlawful, if it be inconsistent with the mind of Christ as expressed in His Word, then the decision is itself invalid, and the authority by

which it was pronounced does not make it binding on the conscience. No judgment of any Church whatsoever can bind the conscience, except in so far as, and no further than, it is grounded upon the Word of God. And in the case of the last resort, when remonstrance and argument and persuasion have failed to induce the Church to reconsider or reverse its own decision, as incompetently or invalidly given, there is yet one remedy, and an ultimate one, reserved to the member against whom the decision is pronounced: he may transfer the case for judgment to a higher tribunal, and for relief and freedom to his own conscience may take appeal from the act of the Church of Christ on earth to the judgment of Christ Himself in heaven. Under the solemn protection of an appeal so taken, his conscience shall be free, and the sin shall not be on him, but on his judges. The acts of the Church are binding and valid only in so far as they are ratified by Christ, and in accordance with His Word.<sup>2</sup>

## CHAPTER III:

### THE NATURE OF CHURCH POWER

THERE are two kinds of power or authority of a public kind, and no more than two, known in this world; and there are two great organs by which they are respectively expressed or represented. There is that kind of authority, on the one hand, the proper and immediate province of which is the persons and properties, the temporal rights and privileges of men; and the great organ for expressing or representing this authority is the state, an ordinance appointed by God for dealing with such matters. There is another kind of authority that deals not with the outer, but with the inward man, and the proper sphere of which is the understanding and the conscience; and the great organ for expressing and representing this second authority is the Church of Christ, an express ordinance of God set apart and appropriated to such matters. In both cases it is an authority derived and subordinate, and wielded at second hand. The state is no more than the organ or instrument for expressing or exercising the righteous and inalienable authority of God, as supreme over the persons and possessions of all His creatures,—His delegate on earth for ruling over the secular affairs and outward condition of men, mainly for their temporal good. The Church, again, is no more than the organ or instrument for expressing or exercising the righteous authority of Christ as Lord of the conscience,—His steward on earth for administering His rights of dominion over the moral and intellectual nature of men, more especially for their spiritual good. In both cases the authority is of God. The obligation or duty owed, in either instance, is owed to Him. God has a supreme and inalienable right to rule over the outward estate of man, to dispose of his property, of his life, of his person, of his temporal possessions and privileges as He pleases. And He delegates a part of this rightful authority of His to the state, to be used and administered according to certain fixed principles for the good of the community; and makes

the civil magistrate His organ, as vested with some portion of His right to deal with the outward order and temporal estate of men. On no other principle than as being the steward of God's right to rule over the persons and properties of His creatures, can you explain the mysterious and awful power proper to every civil government, and necessary for its ends, which warrants it to deal absolutely and without appeal with the temporal rights, and possessions, and life of man. Parallel to this, Christ has a supreme and absolute right to rule over the moral and intellectual nature of man, to bind the conscience, to impose laws upon the understanding and the belief, to dictate what shall be received as truth and what rejected as falsehood. And He delegates a part of this authority to the Church, to be held and exercised under certain restrictions for the spiritual good of its members; and makes the Church His organ to express, and His minister to wield, something of this authority over the conscience and the heart. Upon no other principle, except as the representative of Him who is Lord of the conscience, and as ministerially administering His lordship, can you explain the singular and mysterious power claimed by the Church to exercise authority, in a certain sense, over the understanding and moral nature of man. There are, in short, two visible and separate departments in God's one universal government over His human creatures, marked out and divided from each other by deep and indelible lines. There is His visible government over the outward and temporal estate of man, and there is His visible government over the inward and spiritual estate of man. God has sovereign and absolute authority over both; but He expresses and administers that authority through separate channels and by different instruments. The state is the Divine and public organ for representing and expressing His authority over the first. The Church is the Divine and public organ for representing and administering His authority over the second. Beyond these two ordinances or organs of Divine authority, we know of no other power of a public and general kind among men.

Restricting our attention more especially to the case of the Church, as a Divine ordinance or organ for representing and exercising a

power not its own, but given to it by Christ,—what, I ask, is the nature or character of its authority? What is the kind of power which is administered and enforced within the Christian Church?

I. The power of the Church may be demonstrated to be spiritual, because the purposes for which it is instituted and administered can be attained through means of a spiritual power, and are inconsistent with every other.

The slightest attention given to the matters about which Church power is employed, and to the objects for which it is bestowed, will suffice to show this. Church power—to follow the old and well-established division of it—may be regarded as of three sorts, according to the three different and separate classes of things with which it is conversant.

1st. There is the "potestas δογματικη," or the authority which the Church possesses and administers in regard to dogmas, or articles of faith. There is a certain office and place which the Church is appointed to occupy in regard to Divine truth, as revealed in God's Word, both in reference to those within and those without her pale. The Church is a divinely appointed witness for God's truth to those that are without; she is both a witness and a teacher to those that are within. It is her office to attest and publish that truth to the world; ministerially to declare—under reservation of an appeal to the Word of God—what men are to believe and practise; to preach the Gospel to every creature; and to frame and exhibit a summary or confession of the faith of Christ in opposition to error, whensoever circumstances may call upon her to do so. Her right is not to bring her own authority to bear upon the conscience or the understanding, so as to enforce this confession or belief of the truth, as if it were her own; but it is her right, by explaining and enforcing and preaching God's Word, and by a direct appeal to it, to bring God's authority to bear on the souls of men, so as to secure both their faith and obedience to Him. Now, none but a spiritual power is involved in this: any other but a spiritual power is inconsistent with the very

object in view. To secure the belief and obedience of men to the Word of God, the Church may and ought to put forth her power to teach, to instruct, to persuade, to preach the Gospel, and enforce it by the authority of God, who has revealed it. Anything beyond this exercise of spiritual authority defeats the very end intended, and, so far from securing, prevents the belief of the truth by men that they may be saved. A compulsory power can never secure my belief: it may force my submission, or hypocritical pretence of submission, to certain truths, but not the conviction of the understanding or the assent of the heart. It is not sufficient to say that a power not spiritual, but compulsory, ought not to be employed to secure my belief in the truth of God. The true state of the case is, that a power compulsory, and not spiritual, cannot be so employed. The very nature of the object to be attained renders it not merely improper, but impossible. The "potestas δογματικη" is a spiritual authority on the part of the Church to be a witness and interpreter, ministerially, of the truth of God to the consciences and understandings of men; and it is essentially incompatible with any power addressed to aught but the conscience and the understanding.

2d. There is the "potestas διατακτικη," the power belonging to the Church in the way of administering ordinances and government in the Christian society. This power comprehends the right to carry into effect the institutions and laws which Christ has appointed within the Church: it does not involve the power to bind the conscience or obedience of its members to the observance of new or additional ordinances, enacted by itself. In regard to ordinances, the authority of the Church in the dispensation of them is purely administrative; the Church communicating to them no authority and no virtue from itself, but dispensing them solely as the appointed channels through which the Spirit of God conveys a spiritual influence to those who use them in faith, and not as charms to which the Church has imparted grace of its own. In regard to laws, the authority of the Church is no more than declaratory, and can neither enforce the obedience nor punish the transgression of them by any other than the authority wherewith Christ has made them binding, or the censures wherewith



Christ has given sanction to their hold on the conscience. The Church has no physical influence, *ex opere operato*, wherewith to make ordinances or Sacraments of virtue, apart from the spiritual grace communicated through them by Christ; nor has the Church any temporal or coercive power, wherewith to secure obedience to its laws, or to revenge the transgression of them, apart from Christ's spiritual authority. Let the Church pretend to exercise a physical and not a spiritual influence in the dispensation of ordinances, and Sacraments become a trick of magic, a fantastic charm, not a spiritual service or a channel of grace. Let the Church pretend to use a compulsory, not a spiritual authority, in enforcing laws; and obedience becomes a dead and mechanical and worthless form, not a living and spiritual obedience. It is not merely that power physical and outward, and not spiritual and inward, ought not to be employed to dispense the Sacraments, or carry into effect the laws of the Church. More than that. A power physical and not spiritual cannot be used in the administration of grace or authority through ordinances or through laws, without changing and destroying their very nature as spiritual things in the Church of Christ.

3d. The third branch of Church power is the "*potestas διακριτικη*," or that which concerns discipline, and the admission to or exclusion from the fellowship of the Church. It comprehends all the authority necessary in the way of dealing with the understanding and conscience of men for the purpose of confirming them in faith and obedience, or convincing them of their offences, and recovering them by the exercise of admonition, warning, censure, and rebuke; or, if these methods shall fail of accomplishing their object, finally, as a last step, by the imposition of the spiritual sentence of exclusion from the ordinances and communion of the Church. The discipline, for the due administration of which this power is conferred on the Church, is entirely of a spiritual kind, having for its one object and aim "the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." A mere compulsory authority affecting the persons of men, or one not purely spiritual, and not limited to instruction, admonition, reproof, and censure, cannot, from the very nature of

the case, secure the object in view. A discipline not spiritual, not addressed to the understanding and conscience, cannot be discipline in the proper sense of the term at all. To attain the ends of the "potestas διακριτικη" in the Christian Church, compulsion is not merely improper, but impossible.

In whatever light, then, the power of the Church is regarded, and whatever matters it may be conversant with, the object to be attained demonstrates that the power is spiritual, and spiritual only. A spiritual result must, from the very nature of things, be accomplished by a spiritual instrumentality.

II. That the administration of Church power implies a spiritual and not a civil or temporal authority, may be demonstrated from the unambiguous statements of Scripture, and more especially from the express declarations of our Lord Himself. It is not difficult to recognise the different positions or steps by which such a demonstration can be made out, as they were laid down at different times, and separately exhibited in the statements of the Saviour.

First of all, we have the broad principle laid down of the deep and essential distinction, never to be obliterated or overlooked, between spiritual authority on the one side, and temporal authority on the other; and of the separation not in degree only, but in kind and obligation, between the things that are ranked under the one, and the things that are ranked under the other. "Then sent the Pharisees out unto Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth; neither carest thou for any man. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And He said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Cæsar's. Then said He unto them, Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." In that brief but pregnant saying, our Lord recognised the broad and

ineffaceable distinction between spiritual and temporal authority, and sanctioned neither of the opposite extremes of opinion, the representatives of which stood before Him, tempting Him to deny the separate authority of the civil magistrate on the one side, or the separate authority of God upon the other. Our Lord would not countenance the doctrine of the Pharisees, which tended to deny the lawfulness of the power of the Roman governor over their countrymen; nor would He countenance the doctrine of the Herodians, which tended to subject the authority of God in religious matters to Herod. Our Lord recognised the separate authority of each, and the separate province of each, drawing broadly and deeply the line of demarcation between the two. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

Second, we find in our Lord's sayings another and an additional step in the argument which goes to separate the power of His Church from any approach to what is civil or compulsory. "There came unto Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him. And He said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom." After gently rebuking the folly and pretension of the two brethren in their expectation of temporal authority and aggrandizement, our Lord goes on in these emphatic words: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." We have here something additional to our Lord merely drawing the line, however deeply and broadly, between the things of God and the things of Cæsar. We hear Him expressly disclaiming for Himself, and the members or officers of His Church, the civil authority that kings claimed, and repudiating the idea that the power He came to wield or

bestow on His disciples was a temporal lordship like theirs. "It shall not be so among you."

Third, we find in our Lord's sayings another and a further position laid down, in order, as it were, to complete and crown the argument; showing not only that there was a broad and indelible distinction between things spiritual and things temporal—not only that the power He claimed for Himself and His Church was not the civil authority of kings; but also, and finally, that the power of the Church was one distinctively different, because entirely of a spiritual kind. When placed in circumstances that called upon Him more explicitly to define what was the authority He claimed, and what the power that belonged to His kingdom, our Lord plainly asserted that it was of a spiritual kind, and that only. "My kingdom," said He to the Roman magistrate, "my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." We have here all that was needed to complete the argument that the power peculiar to the Church of Christ is distinctively a spiritual power. There are three positions bearing on the question in the statement of our Lord to the Roman magistrate. First, His kingdom was not of this world, to be upheld or protected by the sword; second, and more than that, it was from heaven, and not of human authority: "My kingdom is not from hence;" and thirdly, and further still, it was a kingdom founded on the truth of God, and upheld only by the authority and force of truth: "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." These three positions, laid down by our Lord in His remarkable confession before Pilate, sufficiently indicate that His kingdom was to be one distinctively spiritual, reigning only by the power of truth over the understanding and conscience, and in this respect not identical, but contrasted with the dominion of the civil magistrate. In addition to

the other declarations of our Lord, made at other times in the history of His life, they bring before us very plainly the fact, that the power He established in His Church is entirely a spiritual power, and is limited in the sphere of its operation to an authority over the understanding and conscience of men.

Now this great and fundamental principle, that the nature of Church power is distinctively and exclusively spiritual, involves in it various inferences of a very important kind.

1. It manifests the unsoundness of the theory that would in any way identify the authority committed to the Church with the authority committed to the state. It is the leading error of the Erastian scheme, under all its various modifications, that in one way or other it virtually makes the power of the Church to be one with the power of the state, instead of their being two authorities fundamentally unlike and essentially separate. The older Erastians, including Erastus himself, made the power of discipline and government in the ecclesiastical body to be a trust committed to ecclesiastical office-bearers by the civil magistrate—a delegation to them of his temporal authority for the use of the Church. The more modern adherents of the scheme which identifies the civil with the ecclesiastical power, such as the late Dr. Arnold, restrict their theory to the case of a Christian state, and seem to make the power of the civil magistrate to be a spiritual power, accruing to him from his identification with the Church. In either shape of the theory, it is opposed directly to the very explicit separation made in Scripture between the nature of the two swords; and the no less explicit declaration following up this distinction, that the authority of the Church of Christ, in contradistinction to that of the state, is wholly spiritual. It is a very remarkable fact, indeed, that the harmony between the two powers or authorities of the Church on the one hand, and the state on the other, is to be established and maintained on the very opposite principle from that involved in the theories, whether of more ancient or more recent Erastians, and is to be upheld, not because these two authorities can be identified or brought into one, but because they

are so diametrically and fundamentally opposite in their nature that they never can be identified. A harmony between the spiritual and the temporal authorities is brought about just because they are totally opposite in character, and cannot be merged into each other; not because they are alike, and may be regarded as essentially one. Were the leading principle of the Erastian scheme true, that the ecclesiastical and civil powers are fundamentally one and the same, they could not exist together in the same community, without the sacrifice, on the one side or other, of their interest, power, and independence. Their claims would be inconsistent with each other's existence as independent bodies; and occupying the same field, and asserting the same kind of jurisdiction, and demanding, it might be, opposite obedience, they would inevitably run counter to one another. The irreconcilable distinction in nature between spiritual and temporal authority, is the very reason why they can exist together in perfect harmony. The things of God are not inconsistent with the things of Cæsar, just because they are fundamentally distinct. The authority committed to the Church is in perfect unison with that other authority committed to the state, seeing that the spiritual administration of the one is essentially different from, and cannot be identified with, the temporal dominion entrusted to the other.

2. The great truth which we have endeavoured to establish, of the essentially spiritual nature of the authority committed to the Church of Christ, exposes the fallacy of those claims to civil rights and powers which, in various shapes, have been made in virtue of such spiritual authority on the part of the Church.

The mischievous tendency of that error which confounds what is spiritual with what is temporal, has been established in the history of the Church of Christ in wholly opposite forms, leading to the most different yet equally pernicious results. We have a memorable example of the injurious consequences of such an error in the instructive history of the revolt of the Anabaptists in Germany, at the time of the Reformation, against all civil government, and their

assertion of a claim, on the part of those whom they called "the saints," to the dominion of the earth in the name of their Master. It was a fundamental principle in their creed, that the Church of Christ consisted of a society of saints, who, in virtue of their character as Christ's servants, and in consequence of His authority over all, were vested in a civil supremacy over the rest of mankind, and in a Divine right to the inheritance of the earth as theirs, with all its temporal privileges and possessions. The very same principle in substance was the tenet of the Fifth Monarchy men in this country, during the confusion caused by the numerous sectaries that prevailed during a part of the seventeenth century, affirming as they did, that the possession of grace by the Church or its members gave them also a title to the possession of civil rights and property. The history of fanaticism affords frequent and not uninteresting illustration of the mischievous consequences resulting from the confounding together of what is distinctively spiritual with what is temporal, and from attempting to engraft the one kind of authority upon the other.

But the most memorable example, without doubt, of all those given of the injurious effects of confounding and mingling together the spiritual and the temporal, is afforded us from a very opposite quarter. The enthusiasm of the fanatics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, presents to our view no such flagrant and monstrous violation of the fundamental doctrine, that the power of the Christian Church is distinctively spiritual, and exclusively so, as does the elaborate and systematic endeavour of the Romish Church to graft a temporal authority upon a spiritual one. As a direct demand, or as an indirect assumption arising out of the spiritual power of the Church, it has been the attempt of Popery in every age to bring in, along with the spiritual pretensions of the clergy, from the highest to the lowest of them, the claim of temporal privileges or authority. We see this in the exemptions claimed by the Popish clergy, in virtue of their spiritual character and office, wherever these claims were likely to be tolerated or to prove successful, from the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil tribunals, both in respect to their persons and property. We see it again in the effects of a temporal and

civil kind, ascribed to the sentence of excommunication pronounced by the Church, wherever circumstances and opportunity conspired to favour the ascription. We see it, above all, in the practical assumption by popes, and that grounded on the plea of their spiritual supremacy, of the right to exercise control in temporal matters, to dispose of kingdoms and crowns, to depose sovereigns from their thrones, and to absolve subjects from their oaths of allegiance. In regard to this latter point, the monstrous claim of the Pope to supremacy in temporal things, there is indeed a difference of opinion among the adherents of the Papacy. There is one party, with Gregory the Seventh at their head, who maintain the Pope's supremacy in temporal matters as directly involved in the spiritual office he holds, as the vicar of Christ on earth. There is a second party, with Bellarmine at their head, who deny to the Pope a direct, but ascribe to him an indirect, supremacy in temporal matters, in so far as it may be necessary for spiritual ends,—an ascription which practically amounts to the same thing as a direct authority. And there is a third party, made up mainly of the defenders of the Gallican Liberties, who deny to the Pope any proper jurisdiction, direct or indirect, in civil affairs. But this latter party have always formed but a small minority in the Church of Rome, compared with the adherents of the former two theories. The temporal supremacy of the Pope, direct or indirect, has been avowed by Popes declared to be infallible, and by the fourth Council of Lateran, accounted to be œcumenical and authoritative; and it never has been disowned as a doctrine by the Church. And unless history is to be regarded as an old almanack, and the witness of history is to be disowned, it will be found written there, that Popery has never failed, when circumstances permitted the assumption, to claim the temporal along with the spiritual authority, and to grasp the double sword of civil and priestly power; and among the merchandise wherewith she has trafficked with the merchants of the earth, and made herself rich, in addition to the treasures of gold, and silver, and precious stones, there have been found both "the bodies and the souls of men."<sup>2</sup>



## CHAPTER IV:

### THE EXTENT AND LIMITS OF CHURCH POWER

THERE are two extremes of opinion manifested on opposite sides of the question in regard to the extent of the power of the Church. There is one class of men who exaggerate and overrate the extent of Church power; there is a second class who unduly limit and underrate the extent of it. We have not far to seek for the representatives of both parties in the present day. There are, on the one hand, those who overrate the extent of Church power, and stretch the limits of Church authority beyond the warrant of Scripture,—High Churchmen in all communions, who advocate claims on behalf of the Christian society not justified by the purposes of its institution, or consistent with the will of its Founder,—in whose eyes Church power is an undefined and mysterious thing, having no very well marked limits at all,—a magic charm, a supernatural virtue, when it administers ordinances, or dispenses sacramental grace, or exercises priestly offices to the members,—an absolute and irresponsible spiritual authority, not to be profanely scanned or impiously restricted, when it imposes obligations, and dictates laws to bind the conscience and obedience in spiritual things. Such opinions in regard to the nature and extent of Church power, if fairly and consistently acted on, must inevitably lead to a priestly usurpation and an uncontrolled despotism both over the conscience and the civil rights of men,—a despotism the most insupportable of any, because in its nature spiritual, and in its pretensions of Divine authority. There are those, on the other hand, who unduly limit and under-estimate the extent of Church power, and the exercise of

Church authority,—Low Churchmen of all communions, who deny to that power its proper place and standing as a Divine ordinance,—in whose eyes it ceases to be a power of God at all, and its exercise is no longer stamped with a Divine warrant, or accompanied with a Divine and special blessing; a nullity when it administers laws in the Christian society, carrying with it no binding obligation except from the consent of the members; and an empty and unblessed form, divorced from any Divine or gracious influence, when it dispenses sacraments and ordinances in the Church. Such views, consistently carried out, go to the opposite extreme, and evacuate Church power of all that belongs to it by the institution of God in the way either of authority or grace, reducing it to the level of a mere human appointment, binding no Divine obligation on the conscience, and communicating no Divine blessing to the soul. Both of these views are unfounded, and both are to be guarded against, more especially in the present day, when the one extreme is so apt to generate the other, and when both may thus co-exist and prevail side by side. There can hardly be a more important inquiry connected with this subject, than that which seeks to ascertain the extent and the limits of Church power. It is necessary to mark the extent of Church power, as contradistinguished from a mere voluntary and human arrangement, and as connected with both a Divine authority and a Divine blessing. It is no less necessary to mark the limits of Church power, as contradistinguished from a spiritual and uncontrolled tyranny, or a supernatural and mysterious charm, and as restricted by the nature of its office and the appointment of its Divine author. To these two points, taken in their order, we shall now advert.

I. In regard to the extent of Church power, and the place occupied by it in the arrangements of God with His people, there is one sentence of the Westminster Confession of Faith which will help not a little to explicate the question. The proposition to which I refer is applied by the Confession to certain departments of Church power only—those, namely, which have respect to doctrine, government, and discipline; but it is equally applicable to the remaining department, or that which relates to the administration of ordinances and Sacraments in

the Christian society. "It belongeth to synods and councils," says the Confession of Faith, "ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God and government of His Church; to receive complaints in case of mal-administration, and authoritatively to determine the same; which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in His Word." The latter part of this sentence very distinctly marks out the place and extent of Church power. The exercises of that power in ministerially deciding in matters of faith, or ministerially carrying into effect the law of Christ in matters of government or discipline, "are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in His Word." In other words, there is a certain obligation which Church power carries with it, because its acts and decisions are agreeable to the Word of God; there is a second and additional obligation which Church power carries with it, because it is itself an ordinance of God, appointed expressly for such ends. When Church power is employed ministerially to declare the truth of God in a question of faith, or ministerially to judge in a question of government or discipline, the declaration of doctrine and the decision of law are to be received and submitted to on two grounds: first, and chiefly, because they are agreeable to the Word of God; but second, and in a subordinate sense, because they are emitted by the Church, as an ordinance of God instituted for that very purpose. And what is true, as intimated in the Confession, in regard to the exercise of Church power in matters of faith, or government, or discipline, is true also of Church power in any other of its exercises,—as, for example, in regard to the administration of the Sacraments in the Christian Church. There is a something that belongs to such administrations, because they are agreeable to the appointments of Christ in His Word; but there is also a something that belongs to the administration, because it is an

act of the Church, as an ordinance of God instituted expressly for that end.

In short, admit that Church power in its various branches is itself an appointment or ordinance of God, and it is impossible to deny that, because it is a Divine ordinance, there must be a Divine authority and a Divine blessing connected with its use, apart from and over and above what is connected with it, because what it does is agreeable to the Word of God. In the ordinance itself there will be a Divine virtue or Divine authority, just because it is an express ordinance of God. It will show itself to be from God by the power or blessing it carries along with it; and that altogether apart from what the doings or decisions may derive from the fact that they are agreeable to His revealed will. The exercise of Church power, when in accordance with the Word of God, will have a blessing more and better than the exercise of a merely human power when in accordance with that Word; just because the one is of God, and the other of man. The use of Church authority, when agreeable to the Scriptures, will have in it a power more and better than human authority when agreeable to the Scripture; just because the one is Divine and the other is not. In fine, the power of the Church is one of authority and not only of advice, when employed in the administration of government; because it is Christ's ordinance for rule. The power of the Church is a power of blessing, and not a power without a blessing, when employed in the dispensation of ordinance and Sacrament; because it is Christ's appointed channel to bless. The power of the Church is one judicial, and not extrajudicial, when employed in the execution of discipline; because it is Christ's ordinance on earth to bind or to loose. To this extent the power of the Church unquestionably goes, being "an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in His Word."

Now this fundamental position as to the extent of Church power is expressly denied, or practically set aside, more especially by two parties: the one of which affirm that Church power is of mere human

ordinance and institution; the other of which limit and restrict its exercise upon the principle of the Independents.

1st. The position now laid down is denied by those who make the power of the Church, like the Church itself, to be a matter of private and human arrangement or institution.

With this class, Church power is the mere delegation by the members of the power common to all into the hands of a few; and the extent of it is determined and limited by what they thus consent to give or to withhold. According to this theory, there can be no such thing in the government of the Church as authority in the proper sense of the term at all, that is to say, a power binding upon the members apart from their own appointment of it, and consent to its existence. There can be no such thing in the administration of Sacraments as a gracious power, in the proper sense of the words; for, over and above their meaning and influence as signs, there can be no Divine grace or blessing in them. There can be no such thing in the discipline of the Church as a judicial act sufficient to bind or loose; for discipline in its highest form, as excommunication, can be no more than is the exclusion of a member by any private or voluntary society. Under such a system there would be laws without authority, ordinances without grace, and discipline without judgment. It is not necessary to delay to deal with such a theory of the Church and of Church power as this. It is plainly founded on the doctrine, which has already been considered and found wanting, that the Church is no more than a private and voluntary society, and that its prerogatives and privileges are derived from the delegation and consent of its members. If the Church be of God, it has powers and prerogatives, not its own, but His. If the Church be His ordinance for administering doctrine, government, Sacrament, and discipline on earth, the power of the Church must be something more and higher than merely human power, or human permission.

2d. The fundamental position as to the extent of Church power already laid down is denied or set aside by those who hold the

principle of Independents.

The denial by the Independents of the doctrine we have stated in regard to the power of the Church is more especially directed against that particular department of its exercise which has reference to government and discipline. The authority of the Church or its office-bearers in these matters is so limited and curtailed by Independents, as to amount, properly speaking, to a power of advice, rather than a power of authority. The views of the Independents on this point naturally result from the place which their theory of ecclesiastical polity gives to every member of the Church in its rule, and from the right which every man in connection with the society has, upon their principles, to take part with the actual office-bearers in the government of it. The authority which the office-bearers, upon such a system, can wield over the members must be very limited indeed, being from the very nature of the system an authority exercised by the rulers in conjunction with, and by the permission and consent of, the ruled. An authority so conditioned and checked by the necessity of the consent of the parties over whom it is exercised, cannot, in the proper sense of the word, be authority at all. It is advice, or it is counsel, administered by one party to another; but it cannot be authoritative power, exercised by one party over another, when the concurrence of both is required before it can be exercised at all, and when either party may refuse that concurrence at their pleasure.

It is hard to gather from the statements of Independents on the point, what is the precise nature of the office they assign to the rulers, as distinct from the members of the Church; for that there are such office-bearers as rulers they cannot, in consistency with the express declarations of Scripture, deny; and, in point of fact, it is generally admitted by them. It is no less difficult to understand what is the extent or kind of power they allow such rulers to possess; for a distinct power, separate from that of other members, they must, in accordance with many explicit statements of the Scriptures, concede to them. In so far as it can be understood from their explanations, it is a power shared by the rulers and the ruled, to this extent, that it is

not binding upon the ruled, except with their own permission and consent, and that without that permission and consent it is invalid and not binding. Such power seems to be a power on the part of the rulers to give advice to, not to exercise authority over, the members,—advice which may be lawfully rejected by the members if not concurred in by them, and not authority which cannot lawfully be rejected, whether ultimately concurred in or not. In the work of Mr. Innes on Independency, he says: "In an Independent Church nothing is decided by representation. Whatever is done by those appointed to rule, is considered in presence of the general body, and with their consent." "There could be no room for authority if conviction were deemed necessary, because it is only by instruction and persuasion that it is produced. Like the sensitive plant, it shrinks at the gentlest touch of power, and the rude intruder must be completely withdrawn before it again exerts its energy. On these principles, I consider the authority of Presbytery as standing on a most unscriptural basis." To the same effect, in speaking of the kind and extent of power confided to pastors or rulers, Dr. Wardlaw, in his work on Congregational Independency, says: "They (the pastors) have no wish for more power,—no wish for either the power to make laws, or the power to execute the laws that exist, independently of the concurrence of the brethren." In like manner, Dr. Davidson, in his work on the Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament—although he somewhat inconsistently disavows the notion that the power of the Church in matters of government is no more than a power of advice—gives the following explanation of the extent of authority vested in its rulers: "Having explained and authoritatively declared the will of Christ concerning matters brought before the brethren, the minister pronounces sentence with their consent. He has no authority to enact regulations for the guidance or discomfort of the brethren without their approval. On the contrary, he must proceed all along with their knowledge and sanction. It is expedient and necessary that they admit the propriety of all his measures." Now it is plain, that whatever name may be given to the power belonging to the rulers apart from the ruled, all these eminent Independent writers now quoted agree in this, that it is a power valid with the concurrence,

consent, and sanction of the ruled, but not valid without their consent, concurrence, and sanction. Whatever name such a power may be expressed by, it is not authority, in the proper sense of the term, which, when lawfully exercised by the rulers, cannot lawfully be rejected by the ruled, whether they concur or not.

In dealing with the principles held by Independents, when they deny or practically set aside the exercise of power and authority, properly so called, in the Church of Christ, there are certain concessions which justice requires us to make in their favour.

First, the power claimed by the governors of the Christian Church is not an arbitrary or capricious authority, to be wielded at will by them, in disregard of the rights or consciences of the members. There are certain limitations of a most important nature affixed to that power, and certain principles of a definite kind laid down for the use and administration of it, which set bounds round about it, and bring it into harmony with the liberty of conscience, rightfully belonging to every private individual of the Christian society.

Second, there are means of a most indispensable kind to be employed in the way of explanation and instruction, counsel and persuasion, to secure the convictions and concurrence of the private members of the Church, in whatever act or declaration the rulers, in the exercise of their judicial, or legislative, or administrative functions, may find it necessary for them to perform or to adopt. Without the use of such means to carry the conscience and understanding of the members of the Church along with them in all that they do and declare, the office-bearers are not at liberty to use or enforce their peculiar power at all. And it is only when all such means have been employed and exhausted without effect, and when the members of the Church, so dealt with in the way of Christian persuasion and instruction, still refuse their concurrence, that it may be necessary and is lawful to use authority to strengthen the appeal, and to fall back upon the ultimate resource of all societies,—namely,



the inherent right of the rulers to rule, and the no less inherent duty of the ruled to obey.

Third, it may be yet further conceded, that the members and office-bearers of the Church are mutually entitled to give as well as to receive advice and counsel; and that those in office are bound to give all due weight to the opinions of the membership, so as, if possible, to bring about a mutual understanding and agreement.

Fourth, there is yet another concession which it is necessary to make in regard to this matter, and which it is of some importance to note; and it is this, that the mere resistance to authority as authority alone, ought not to be made a ground for Church censure or punishment, when there is no moral or spiritual offence connected with the resistance. Of course resistance to authority, even when that authority is put forth, as it sometimes may and must be, in enforcing a thing indifferent, may yet be associated with moral guilt on the part of those who indulge in it. Such resistance may arise out of feelings of hatred to all restraint, or opposition of a malignant kind to all authority; it may become contumacy, and as such involve moral blame. But until resistance to authority becomes in one way or other morally wrong, when the consent of the members to the act or deed of the rulers is withheld from no cause in itself sinful, such want of consent or concurrence ought to be dealt with on the principle of forbearance in things indifferent, and not be visited with censure or penalty of an ecclesiastical kind.

But after making these concessions to the advocate of Independent views, it is still true that these views come very far short of the right and Scriptural doctrine on the subject of the extent of Church power.

In the first place, such views, if fairly carried out, are inconsistent with the nature of every orderly and well-regulated society.

A joint authority shared by the rulers and the ruled, or an authority vested in the rulers, but only to take effect when the ruled add their

consent and concurrence, and not otherwise, is, from the very nature of the case, a power which it is impossible consistently or practically to carry out. A right of government dependent for its validity and binding obligation upon the giving or withholding sanction to it by those who are governed—which there is no duty in yielding submission to, and no blame in refusing to obey—considered simply as authority, can, it is plain, be no government at all, in the proper meaning of the word, and was never yet practically realized in any community under heaven. In the purest democracy, whether civil or ecclesiastical, where the consent and concurrence of the largest number of the members of the society is needed to the act of government, the consent and concurrence of all was never yet obtained. Both in civil and ecclesiastical matters, in such cases, a majority must have the right to rule, and a minority must be under obligation to obey. And such, in point of fact, must be the case in the instance of Independent Churches, where all the members have a joint right to rule, by giving or withholding their concurrence to the act of authority done. There is no exemption in such instances from the necessity laid upon every society, however purely democratic, to be ruled, when a difference of opinion shall arise, by the decision of the majority. Whenever differences cannot be accommodated by explanation or concession on either side, and when both parties still retain their opinions, it may be conscientiously and from conviction, there is and can be no resource except for the will and decision of the majority to become the law both of the majority and minority. In such a case, even in an Independent congregation, the judgment of the majority is invested with all the right to rule, and to command obedience from the others, which the judgment of the office-bearers alone, according to the principles of Presbyterianism, would possess. The unanimity to which some Independent writers refer as prevailing in their congregational meetings is only a nominal one, the dissenting minority, if they do not leave the Church, being compelled to give in by what is really a species of coercion. In point of fact, government on the principle of a right to give or withhold consent and concurrence to the act of the governors by all, and so to make them binding or the reverse, is practically an impossibility. It is

inconsistent with the very idea of authority, and with the nature of an orderly and well-regulated society.

In the second place, such views are incompatible with the many and explicit statements of Scripture in regard to the nature and extent of Church power.

These statements may be conveniently classified under four heads. 1. The names or designations given to the parties ruling in the Church, in the strongest manner demonstrate that their office and power were in the strict sense of the term authoritative, and are incompatible with the limitation implied in the Independent theory. They are entitled bishops, ἐπίσκοποι, in many passages of Scripture, —a word which in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament is repeatedly employed to denote the civil or military power of the Jewish officers over those committed to them, and which is not consistent with the idea of authority dependent on the consent or concurrence of the ruled. Again they are frequently spoken of under the title of presbyters, πρεσβυτεροι,—a term likewise in common use among the Jews, as is shown by the Septuagint, to signify the civil magistrates or elders who judged and sat in the gate of a city; and which, when applied to ecclesiastical magistrates, is incompatible with the limitations put upon their office by the Independents. They are further called rulers, ἡγουμενοι,—a word generally employed both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament to express the power and authority of civil rulers, and which, used ecclesiastically, can admit of no such restriction as that of a dependence on the concurrence of the ruled. Finally they are spoken of as pastors, ποιμενες, which both by sacred and profane writers is made use of for the office of kingly power, as in the well-known Homeric phrase, "the shepherd of the people." The common use and application of such terms in reference to the governors of the Christian Church, necessarily implies authority in its proper sense and extent, and not in the limited meaning assigned to it by the Independents. 2. The precepts or instructions given to the rulers of the Church, in regard to the discharge of the duties of their office, are at variance with the

Independent view of Church power. They are instructed not merely to "teach," to "exhort," to "beseech"—which might all be compatible with a power of advice, such as Independents restrict them to—but also in discharge of the proper functions of their office to "reprove" and "rebuke"—ἐλεγχειν, ἐπιτιμαειν. 3. The terms of the exhortations and commands, addressed to the members of the Church in regard to the measure of obedience to be rendered by them to the authority over them, forbids the interpretation put upon that authority by the Independents, as in every respect waiting upon the consent of the governed for its validity. The precepts laid upon them are such as these: "Obey them that have the rule over you;" πειθεσθε, a word which, although it may denote the obedience yielded to persuasion, also signifies the obedience owing to authority. "Submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account;" ὑπεικετε, a military word, implying subjection of the most absolute kind. "I beseech you, that ye submit yourselves to such; and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth;" ὑποτασσησθε, a term commonly employed to express the most entire and simple obedience. It is the same word which is used, for example, by the evangelist in speaking of our Lord's subjection to His human parents at Nazareth, and by the apostle in describing the obedience due to the civil magistrate. 4. We have instances and descriptions of the power—ἐξουσια—so to be administered by the rulers and so to be obeyed by the members of the Church, such as to leave no doubt that it was judicial and authoritative. "I verily, as absent in the body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

Such names given to the rulers of the Church,—such exhortations in regard to their office addressed to them,—such precepts given to the members touching the obedience due to the office,—and such

examples of the actual authority exercised as we find in Scripture, furnish a strong proof that Church power is a real power in the governors of the Christian society, and not a nominal one, dependent on the consent or concurrence of the governed. Both the nature of a regular society in general, and the statements of Scripture in regard to the Christian Church in particular, go to repudiate the Independent views as to the measure and extent of Church power or authority.

II. So much, then, for the extent of Church power. The second subject to which our consideration was to be directed was the limits of it. After the repeated opportunities we have already had of indicating the restrictions that are put from various quarters on the use and administration of Church power, the very briefest reference will be sufficient to point out the limits of it. There are four different ways in which distinct and well-marked limits are set to the power of the Church.

1st. Church power is limited by the nature of it as distinctively and exclusively a spiritual power.

This first limitation excludes the possibility of the power of the Church being made use of in the way of Romish usurpation arrogating a right to a temporal or civil supremacy—following up ecclesiastical sentences with civil or semi-civil pains and penalties, such as bodily penances, pecuniary fines, or legal disabilities—and trampling under foot the political liberties and social rights of men. It still further excludes the Popish and semi-Popish doctrine of anything beyond a spiritual influence in ministers and ordinances, and a spiritual grace in the right use and observance of them; thus shutting out the *opus operatum* of the Church of Rome, the physical virtue which it attributes to ordinances, and no less shutting out the theory of a priestly charm in the "successors of the apostles," and sacramental grace in the ordinances dispensed by them, as held by High Churchmen of whatever communion.

2d. Church power is limited by the source of it, or by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, from whom it is derived.

This second limitation very clearly points to the character of the power vested in the office-bearers of the Church as entirely subordinate and ministerial, and bounded, as respects its authority and obligation, by the institution and rule of Him who has appointed it. It excludes the possibility of that power becoming an independent despotism or lordship in the hands of the rulers, and of their regarding it as if it were given for their own aggrandizement and exaltation, or to be used for the subjugation, by a spiritual tyranny, of the consciences and understandings of the other members of the Church. Because limited by the authority of Christ, that power can never become independent itself, or make the administrators of it independent. They are, in the strictest sense of the terms, the ministers or servants of Christ.

3d. Church power is limited by the rule prescribed for its exercise, or by the Word of God.

This third limitation ties down the administration of Church power to certain fixed principles and a certain definite law, and excludes the possibility of its becoming a wayward and arbitrary authority, to be wielded at the will or caprice of man. It forbids the unauthorized addition or subtraction of anything in the constitution, doctrine, worship, or discipline of the Church, such as Christ has not sanctioned in His Word.

4th. Church power is limited by the subjects of it, or by the rights, privileges, and liberty of the Christian people.

This fourth limitation more especially prevents Church power from becoming the instrument of spiritual oppression and tyranny as directed against the members of the Church, and shields from violence and wrong the liberty wherewith Christ has made His

people free. Beneath the shelter of such a limitation, the conscience has a sanctuary which is blessed and sanctified by Christian freedom within, and over the threshold of which authority, even the authority of the Church, cannot pass. Within that sanctuary none but the Lord of the conscience may enter; and because it is His dwelling-place and home, His presence protects the conscience from the intrusion of the Church. The right of Church power is limited by the rights of conscience.

Such, then, are the limits, and such the extent, of the power of the Church. There is a double error to be avoided in regard to it. It is an error to make Church power not a reality, but a name, such as that it shall carry with it no Divine authority, and convey no Divine blessing. It is no less an error to make it not a name, but such a reality as that it shall become a power inconsistent with its own essentially spiritual character, independent of Christ, at variance with His Word, and incompatible with the liberties of His people. We shall then only apprehend it aright, when we are taught to recognise both the extent and the limits of Church power and authority.

## **CHAPTER V:**

### **THE END AND DESIGN OF CHURCH POWER**

WE have now brought to a close our discussion of the extent and limits of Church power: its extent, as maintained against the views of those who deny its reality, either ascribing to it a human origin, or unduly restricting it, like the Independents; its limits, as maintained

against the system of the Popish and semi-Popish worshippers of Church authority. There is a reality in Church power, and there is a certain extent assigned to it in its administration and exercise of authority: it is not a mere name or a nullity. But, on the other hand, while its authority and its exercise are real, and not merely nominal, there are definite limits prescribed to it, beyond which it cannot pass: it is checked and restrained by fixed and definite principles. Church power is a real and effective element in the ecclesiastical system; but it is an element like some of those forces, both in the moral and material world, which are balanced and modified in their working by other and counteracting forces. The harmony of the system is maintained, not by ignoring the existence of Church authority, or denying its extent, but by the operation of those opposite and counterbalancing principles in the ecclesiastical body, which modify its direction and limit its force.

But, after having assigned to Church power both its proper extent and its proper limits, the question that next meets us is, What are the ends and purposes for which it has been appointed? Christ, as Divine Head of the Church, has conferred on it certain prerogatives and a certain authority, and given it commission to exercise them in His name; and when challenged as to its right or title in the use of them, has permitted the Church to appeal to that commission as its warrant. With such a warrant in its hand, and with such Divine power to exercise, the Church has a mission on the earth of a most important kind; and by a higher authority than that of the mere sufferance or permission of men, its power is to be used and administered among them. That power is a reality; it is given and it is exercised by warrant of God; it is a living force of ceaseless activity and vast energy, continually operating in the world; it is an element of Divine might ever at work in the midst of the earthly and lower forces by which human society is moved. And it is of no small importance that we understand the ends for which this power has been given, and to which it ought to be directed,—the design of its Divine Author in vesting the Church with an authority and prerogatives so unlike any to be found elsewhere on earth,—and the



result intended to be wrought out by a mysterious and spiritual power so little akin to those of the world, and the operations and effects of which are so little to be calculated upon by mere worldly sagacity. The Church of Christ, and the power Christ has conferred on it, are elements introduced into the system of human affairs strangely alien to all others of an earthly kind, both in their origin and their character; and it is of moment to all parties distinctly to understand the aim and intention of such a force. What, then, is the purpose for which Church power has been instituted by God, and for which it ought to be employed among men? What are the end and design of it as regards the world, and as regards the Church itself?

I. As regards the world at large, the aim of Church power, and the end to be accomplished by it, are not direct, but indirect.

The power conferred on the Church by its Divine Head was bestowed, in the first instance, for the use and benefit of the Church itself, and can have only an indirect bearing on the world at large. It is limited in its object—at least primarily—to certain ends to be accomplished in regard to the Christian society; and does not, except as a secondary object, contemplate results to be attained beyond the limits of the society. This seems to be fairly implied in the general principle laid down by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Church at Corinth, when instructing that Church to exercise its power of discipline in excluding from its membership the incestuous person found within its pale. "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth." There is a general principle here laid down by the apostle in regard to Church power, drawing a line of marked distinction between those within the Church and the world without. In regard to those within the Church, the power of the Church was intended to take effect; so that with an offender who is called a brother, the Corinthians were not to keep company, nor so

much as to eat. In regard to those without the Church, or the world at large, Church power was not intended to take effect; so that in regard to an offender, not a brother, but belonging to the world at large, no such restrictions were to be imposed or observed, and the Corinthians were not called to separate themselves in the same manner from him. In short, because a brother, and within the Church, it was necessary to deal with an offender by the authority of the Church; while it was not necessary so to deal with one equally an offender, but belonging to the world at large. And what is true, as intimated by the apostle, in the case of the exercise of Church power in the way of discipline, is true also generally of the exercise of Church power in any of its departments. The power of the Church of Christ is intended primarily for those that are within, not for those that are without: it bears only indirectly upon the world at large.

No doubt the Church has a most important mission in regard even to the world without. It is God's witness on earth, sent to testify with ceaseless voice for Him, and to be a visible and perpetual testimony for His cause, whether men will receive the testimony or reject it. The Christian Church, as regards the world without, is God's standing protest against its sin and in favour of Himself. But the grand and primary office of the Church is one bearing on the people of God; and its office towards the world at large is secondary and subordinate to that. Church power, in the first instance, and as its direct object, contemplates the end of the Church's benefit and edification; and only in a secondary sense has it any bearing on the world. In government and discipline, in framing and enforcing laws, in administering Sacraments, the power of the Church is confined to the Church, or to those that are within; and it is only in so far as is necessarily implied in discharging its office of a witness, or a protest, that Church power has any bearing upon the world, or those that are without. As a witness, the Church declares the truth of God to the world; as a protest, it frames and exhibits a confession of its faith in opposition to the errors and unbelief of the world; but beyond that it does not go. "What have I to do to judge them that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?" In direct opposition to the

Romish doctrine on the subject, it must be maintained that the power of the Church has no authority over, and no office to discharge towards, those beyond her communion, except the office of a witness for God. Popery, indeed, lays down a different scheme of Church power. The canons of the Council of Trent under the head of Baptism maintain the doctrine that all baptized persons, whether within the Church of Rome or without it, are properly subject to her power, in virtue of their being baptized, even although the baptism has not been administered by her hands. Such a claim is plainly repugnant to the great Scripture principle that the office of the Church in relation to the world is that of a witness alone; and that it is only in so far as is necessary for the discharge of that duty that the power of the Church has any bearing upon those beyond her pale. As regards the world at large, the aim of Church power, and the end to be accomplished by it, are not direct, but indirect. It is for those within, not for those without, the Christian society.

II. The power of the Church has for its aim and end directly the general benefit and spiritual good of the Church as a body.

That this is the case is very explicitly announced by the Apostle Paul, when speaking of the authority vested in himself as an apostle and an extraordinary office-bearer in the Church: "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord has given me to edification, and not to destruction." And what is true of the extraordinary and temporary office of the apostleship which Paul held, and of the power belonging to it, is also true of the permanent and standing office-bearers of the Christian society, and of the ordinary power which they are commissioned to wield. Such power is instituted for the interests and spiritual edification of the whole Church, and not for the advantage of the few who administer it. It is not to create a separate class, or to aggrandize a privileged order in the Christian society, that Church power is given and limited to a few, any more than it is to create a caste, or to benefit a particular order in the civil society, that political power is given and restricted to a few. In the

case of the state, the ordinance of power established by God is an ordinance for good not to a small body, but to all within it. The distinction of ranks, the privileges of civil rule, the authority of government, the rights of power, exist not because of the ambitious desires or interests of those invested with office, but because of the necessity of such things to secure the blessings of order, and justice, and peace in the community at large. And so, in the case of the Church, the power which belongs to it exists for the moral and spiritual good of the whole body, and not for the creation of a priestly caste, or for the aggrandizement of a few at the expense of the many. Government exists in the Christian society for the interest as much of the governed as the governors. Office exists for the benefit no less of those who have it not, than of those who have. Power belongs to the state ecclesiastical, not for the ambition or aggrandizement of a Church order, but for the edification and well-being of those who have no place in the Church but as members. Authority is exercised and enforced within the Christian Church, not for the gain of a few, but for the spiritual good of the many. The Church of Christ knows of no spiritual order distinct from the order of Christians,—no priestly caste separated from all others by internal rights and prerogatives peculiar to itself,—no separate interest for the members of which alone power and privilege and authority exist,—no lordly rank, to whom belong mysterious authority and transcendental privileges unknown to the rest.

The Church of Christ confesses to the existence within it of no clergy, as in the Church of Rome, distinguished by indelible "character" and internal powers from the laity or the Christian people. The true clergy of the Church of Christ are, according to the original import of the word, the κληρος, the "lot," or "possession," or "heritage" of Christ,—the whole body of His called and chosen people. And in nothing is the spirit of Rome more apparent than in that distinction which she has set up between the clergy and the laity,—between a sacerdotal and profane caste,—between those to whom, according to her Church principles, the power of the Christian society inherently belongs, and those who are appointed to be its slaves or its victims.

The very last thing intended by its Divine Head in the institution of office, and authority, and power in His Church, was the creation or aggrandizement of a separate interest or privileged class, who should inherently possess a right to place, and power, and honour, at the expense of the rest. And although, for the sake of order, and for the sake of order alone, some were set apart in the Christian society to office and for the purpose of administering the authority of its government, yet it must never be forgotten that such an arrangement was made not for their sakes, but for the sake of the whole; and that in virtue of being so appointed to administer the power and manage the affairs of the body of Christians, they become all the more the "ministers" or servants of the rest. The spiritual edification of the whole body of believers is the one end and aim of Church power. It knows of no object apart from this. It confesses to no aim of a private and exclusive kind, distinct from the universal good. It is not the gain of a few at the expense of the many. It is not the peculiar prerogative or the peculiar interest of a privileged and separate order, who claim to be the heirs of apostolic power by "apostolic succession." "Not for that we have dominion," said an apostle not by succession, "not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

The direct design and end of Church power is the spiritual edification of the Church,—meaning by the word not a privileged class, but the whole body of the faithful, whatever place or name they may have in the Christian society. For this one object Church power in all its forms and exercises was instituted, and ought to be administered within the Christian society. We can see, indeed, in regard to every department of Church power, whether it regards doctrine, ordinance, or discipline, that it is subservient to this great end, and that it is fitted as well as intended to advance the spiritual interests of the society.

Take the case of the exercise of Church power in regard to doctrine, or the office of the Church authoritatively to deal with Divine truth,

and it is not difficult to see how it is fitted and designed to promote the spiritual edification of the whole body. Under reservation of an appeal to the Word of God itself, it is the office of the Church ministerially, but yet authoritatively, to declare the truth there revealed; publicly to preach the doctrine of Christ and His Gospel, according to her understanding of them; and in addition to this, when circumstances call upon her to perform the duty, to frame and exhibit to the world, and in opposition to its unbelief and error, a summary or confession of the articles of faith held by believers. This is, speaking generally, the office of Church power in regard to doctrine. In regard to the world without, the Church is a witness for God, and against its unbelief; in regard to her own members within the Church, she is a teacher ministerially to declare the truth of Christ, and publicly to explain His Gospel. And it is not difficult, I think, to see that these uses or acts of Church power are for the spiritual edification of the whole body of the Church, and are directly and greatly calculated to promote its spiritual good. An individual man, with the Bible in his hand, and interpreting the Bible for himself, will, under the blessing of God, find in the private perusal of the inspired volume what will build up his own soul in spiritual wisdom and understanding. But the private perusal of the Word is not to be compared, as an instrument of influence and spiritual power, to the public preaching of the Word by the Church, as the ordinance of God appointed for that end. "The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation." The Church, in the exercise of this power, lifting up a witness for the truth, and emitting an authoritative protest against error,—the appointed teacher, appealing not to its own authority, but to that of its Master, for its words, and demanding audience and belief in the name of Christ for Christ's own Gospel,—has been found in the experience of every age a spiritual power of mighty effect for the good and edification of the Christian society. Second to the Spirit, that witness of higher authority and more powerful efficacy still in declaring and testifying to the truth of God, the Church, in the exercise of its

legitimate power as the public and visible teacher of doctrine, has been mighty through God both for the pulling down of the strongholds of spiritual error, and for the building up the body of believers in spiritual wisdom and edification.

Or take the case of the exercise of the Church's power in regard to ordinances and Sacraments; and it is not difficult to discern here, too, that it is designed and calculated to subserve in a very striking manner the edification of the Church. The power of ministering by Sacrament and ordinance to the spiritual advantage of the whole body of believers, is a most efficacious one. No doubt a man may be a Christian, alone and apart from the aids and advantages of social worship, and fellowship, and ordinances. It is a possible thing for a man to cherish and hide a solitary faith—a faith that is saving—within his own bosom, apart from those Divine helps and confirmations to faith which Church communion and Sacraments supply. But it is not less certain on that account, that a Christian doubles his Christianity by fellowship with other Christians; and that there is a blessing which cannot be enjoyed alone, nor unless shared at the same time with fellow-believers. In fellowship with the Church, and in the use of its ordinances, there is a spiritual influence experienced, which the Christian cannot enjoy by himself apart; and by the ministry of Sacrament and ordinance, the power of the Church is made subservient in a very marked and striking manner to the confirmation of the faith, the increase of the grace, the furtherance of the holiness, and the establishment of the obedience of believers. By its ministry of this spiritual provision, made by ordinance and Sacrament, for the help and advancement of its members, the Church becomes a living power to their souls of the strongest and most effectual kind; and day after day, as it administers Sacraments, and through them, as channels, communicates a grace and influence not its own, it works as an instrument of the most powerful description for the edification of the body of Christ.

Or once more, take the case of the exercise of Church power in regard to government and discipline; and it is not difficult to see that here,

too, it tends directly and powerfully to advance the spiritual edification of the Church. The use and intent of the power of discipline intrusted to the Church are briefly and precisely expressed by the Apostle Paul, in speaking about the exclusion of the incestuous person from the fellowship of the Corinthian Church. He tells that Church "to deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." If discipline, as administered and enforced by the Church, in the use of the power committed to it, is intended "for the destruction of the flesh," and so must in one sense be painful, it is intended, by the help of that very severity, to accomplish the gracious and good purpose of "saving the spirit in the day of the Lord Jesus." Its aim is a merciful one; and not the less so, that it is accomplished by means of a wholesome severity. Its end is salvation; and not less certainly so, or rather all the more certainly so, that it is attained through the destruction of the flesh. Like all the other exercises of that power which Christ has committed to the hands of His Church, to be administered on behalf of His people, discipline is designed and calculated to promote its good. And when that power, severe but wholesome, is exercised in a right spirit, and by suitable means,—when the spiritual sword is wielded for protection and establishment of the Church against sin and spiritual offence, in the way not of tyranny but of tenderness,—it will carry healing and not death upon its edge. It is impossible to tell to what extent the spiritual power of discipline given to the Church may have contributed, as it unquestionably is intended, to repress transgression and to save transgressors—to bear back the inroad of offence and offenders—to guard the unstable and restore the fallen—to stir up Christians to diligence, and caution, and spiritual exertion—to confirm, and strengthen, and establish believers.<sup>2</sup> Whatever department or exercise of Church power may be considered, it will be found to be given and intended for the edification of the Church.

III. The power of the Church has for its aim and object not the destruction of the Church.



The emphatic and twice repeated expression of the Apostle Paul, when referring, on two separate occasions, to the use of his apostolical authority, has a twofold meaning. He tells the Corinthians that it was given to him by Christ "for edification." But he tells them also, and in the same breath, that it was given to him by Christ, "not for destruction." And the addition of this second expression was not a needless tautology, but, on the contrary, a most emphatic indication of how Church power may be employed, and a no less emphatic protest against its abuse. When abused, indeed, or turned away from its legitimate purpose, it must necessarily tend, not to the edification, but to the destruction of the body of Christ. Such abuses of Church power, to the injury and not the advantage of the Church, may be met with in different communions. But they are most markedly and flagrantly seen in the Church of Rome, the history of which is little else but the history of Church power, turned to the purposes not of spiritual edification, but of deadly wrong, and destruction to the dearest and most sacred rights and interests of its members. I do not allude so much at present to that civil supremacy over the persons, and properties, and temporal rights of men, which the Church of Rome has sought to engraft upon her spiritual authority. In this way, doubtless, her Church power has been used "for destruction" indirectly, through the aid of the civil. But I refer more especially to the direct spiritual injury and wrong done to the souls of men, by the use, or rather abuse, of the spiritual power, which, more than any done to the temporal rights and privileges of men—to their persons and properties—has made that apostate Church to be the fitting illustration of the apostle's warning against a Church power, used not for edification, but for destruction. There are rights not less inherent in man, and far more sacred, than the right of property or life. There is the right of liberty of thought and of private judgment,—the right which every man has on his own responsibility, and not another's, to ascertain and know for himself what God is, what God has said, and what duty God requires of him, His accountable creature. There are his rights of conscience, and more especially the right of judging for himself what is his duty and what his sin in reference to God, and of determining for himself what he

shall believe as God's truth, and what reject as man's doctrine and commandment. There are the rights of his soul, and more especially the right to that salvation which his soul requires, and which is freely given him of God. These are rights intimately and inherently belonging to man's intellectual and moral and spiritual nature, which are dearer and better to him than property or life; and these rights the Church of Rome, in the exercise of its ecclesiastical power, has rudely trampled on, or violently taken away. And the history of that Church tells on its every page, and in characters never to be effaced, that the spiritual power committed to it "for edification" has been turned "to the destruction" of the body of Christ.

First, Popery has turned the power of the Church to the purposes of destruction, by violently taking away or rudely disregarding the rights of man, viewed as a rational and intellectual being. The right of every man to think and to judge for himself, and on his own responsibility, as a rational creature, Popery has taken away from its victims; and above all, the right to know God directly and immediately, by what God has made known of Himself, the Church of Rome has denied, and by its ecclesiastical power interdicted to its slaves. Itself blind, and the leader of the blind, who have trusted it, the Church of Rome has "taken away the key of knowledge," lest men should exercise their right to know God, and see for themselves His revealed will. It has sealed up the Bible as a perilous book, and forbidden men to receive it, except through the interpretation and teaching of the Church; thus standing between men and the knowledge of God in the way that God has given that knowledge in His own word. It is the first right of every human being, as a rational and intellectual creature, to understand God; because this was the very end for which he was made, and for which he lives. It was the distinctive purpose of his creation; and it is not only to degrade him from his place in creation, but to destroy his very character as a rational creature, to take from him by violence and wrong the right he has to know God in the way in which God has made Himself to be known. A power so employed as to rob man by force or fraud of this right, and to substitute the teaching of a fellow-creature for the Word

of God addressed to his understanding, is a power exercised not for edification, but destruction.

Second, Popery has turned the power of the Church to the purposes of destruction, by forcibly taking away or insidiously destroying the rights of man, viewed as a moral and responsible being. The moral nature of man, as the seat of responsibility, can have no other master in the things of God than God Himself. He alone is Lord of the human conscience, and in its responsibility to Him it claims to be free from the lordship and tyranny of a fellow-creature. The most solemn responsibility which conscience underlies is in judging for itself what is right and wrong, what is truth and error in reference to God, so that it may determine what it is to believe as His doctrine and commandment, and what disbelieve as the doctrine and commandment of men. It is the highest and most sacred action of conscience, and of man as a moral and responsible being, when he is thus brought immediately into contact with God, and into converse directly with God's Word, for the purpose of ascertaining for himself, upon the peril of his soul, what is truth that he may believe it, and what is duty that he may do it. And this right of conscience—this right of man as a moral and responsible creature—the Church of Rome has violently taken away, when in virtue of its spiritual power it pretends to dictate by an infallible authority what its victims are to believe, and demands at their hands in return an implicit faith in what it dictates. This is to destroy or to debauch the conscience, and to rob man by violence and injustice of the dearest right that is inherent in him as a moral and responsible being. To compel a man, by the exercise of an infallible authority, to believe what the Church believes, according to his conscience or against his conscience, is to destroy by force the moral nature of man in the highest form and exercise of it, as a judge within every man of truth and falsehood. The Church which claims such a right, and exercises such an authority, makes use of its spiritual power, not for edification, but for destruction.

Third, Popery has turned the power of the Church to the purposes of destruction, by violently taking away the rights of man as a spiritual being. The rights of his soul are to man the highest and dearest of all,—the right to embrace the Gospel which God has plainly revealed, and to share in the salvation which God has freely given. And most of all the Church of Rome has taken away this right from its victims, and violently robbed them of that which God has bestowed. Instead of the Gospel of God's love and power, it puts into men's hands "another gospel, which is yet not another" (ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον, ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο); and instead of the free and complete salvation to which every man that lives has received from God a right, Popery has substituted the lying cheats of its sacramental grace and priestly absolution, and has palmed upon its deceived and ruined victims the impostures and tricks of indulgences and masses, of penances and the confessional. In its unhallowed claims to retain and remit sin,—to bind and loose the sinner,—to give or withhold grace,—to absolve or condemn at its will, the Church of Rome, in so far as it has been able to force its pretensions on its members, has to that extent succeeded in depriving them of their rights as sinners, given and guaranteed to them by God, to the enjoyment of His free grace and His great salvation: their right to embrace that Gospel, each man for his own soul, and to share in that salvation, each man for his own need; their right, without the intervention of church, or priest, or sacrament, to deal with a Saviour for His mercy upon His own terms, and in obedience to His own invitation. And shall not the blood of those souls slain by her violence and treachery be one day found in her skirts, and required at her hand, when God shall arise to vindicate against that apostate Church the rights of men taken away by force or by fraud,—those very rights which a Saviour died to purchase for them, and lives to bestow? Surely a Church power so exercised has been employed, not for edification, but for destruction.

## CHAPTER VI:

### THE PRIMARY SUBJECT OF CHURCH POWER

BEFORE bringing to a close our discussions under the second great division of our subject,—that, namely, of the power of the Church, viewed generally,—there is one question of more than ordinary importance, and much more than ordinary difficulty, that demands consideration. I refer to the delicate and difficult question of the parties to whom Christ, as Head of the Church, has committed, in the first instance, the gift of ecclesiastical power, and in whom the right to such power primarily resides. In the old systems of divinity, this question was discussed under the head of "the proper or primary subject of Church power," or "the first receptacle of it from Christ." There is a distinction to be drawn, in connection with this matter, between the parties who in ordinary circumstances have a right to the exercise or administration of Church power, and who are set in the Christian society for that end, and the parties to whom Church power may primarily belong, and in whom it has its proper residence. These two are not necessarily the same. In the human system, the power of perception, as regards the outward world, may primarily reside in the mind that perceives; but yet it may be the eye through which such perception is carried on, although it is not the eye to which the power in the first instance belongs. It is the mind that perceives through the eye, as its organ or instrument for that special purpose. And so in the ecclesiastical system. We know that it is the office-bearers of the Church, without settling at present the question of who or what these may be, who hold the place and perform the function of the administrators of Church power; and in all ordinary circumstances, to these alone belongs the right to exercise authority within the Christian society. But it does not necessarily follow from this that Church power is a gift given by Christ primarily and distinctively to them; or that they are the parties in whom the right of Church power properly and in the first instance resides. The Church, viewed collectively, may, in contradistinction to

its office-bearers, be the proper subject or receptacle of this right, although it may rule and administer power in ordinary circumstances only through the office-bearers, as its organ or instrument for that end. In short, in dealing with this question, there is a distinction to be drawn between the parties in whom Church power primarily resides, or in whom the right to it inheres, and the parties in whom the exercise or administration of it commonly resides, or to whom, in ordinary circumstances, this exercise or administration is committed. And this distinction it is important to bear along with us, if we would discuss the question of the proper subject of Church power, without confounding together things that differ.

Perhaps, in the whole range of ecclesiastical theology, there is no question in regard to which a greater diversity of judgment among competent divines has prevailed; and none, probably, in regard to which it is more necessary to speak with caution and diffidence. When there are such strong and plausible grounds for different, and even opposite opinions, and when opposite opinions have been entertained and defended by theologians of the highest name with forcible arguments, it were the reverse of wisdom to dogmatize. I would willingly indeed have refrained from pronouncing a judgment at all on a question at once so delicate and so arduous, had it not been that it is impossible to avoid the discussion in connection with our argument on the power of the Church, involving, as it does, such important consequences in the argument. Who, then, are the parties to whom primarily belongs the right of Church power, as their distinctive gift, from the Divine Head of the Church? Or, in the language of the old divines, Who are the first and proper subject of Church power? To the consideration of this topic we now address ourselves.

Very different answers have been given to this question by different parties. It lies at the foundation, indeed, more or less nearly, of all the different systems of Church power and ecclesiastical polity best known among us. A difference of opinion regarding the proper

answer to the question now put, to a greater or smaller extent, involves principles immediately bearing upon the controversies which have divided Presbyterians from Independents on the one hand, and both of these from High Churchmen, whether Popish or Prelatic, on the other. The determination of the question, Who are the first and proper subject of Church power? in the one way, may go very nearly to decide the merits of the controversy between Independents and the advocates of other schemes of ecclesiastical polity; and the determination of it in another way may decide altogether against the peculiar pretensions to Church power and jurisdiction maintained by High Churchmen, whether Romanist or semi-Romanist. The consequences involved in the decision as to the first and proper subject of Church power are of a very wide and weighty kind, and the principles it carries along with it have a most important bearing on the future conduct of our whole argument.

I. The first theory in regard to the proper and primary subject of Church power that I shall mention, is that which affirms, that it was given and belongs to the office-bearers, in contradistinction to the members of the Church.

The advocates of this opinion hold that Christ, as Head of the Church, has given the gift of Church power, in the first instance, and properly, to the office-bearers of the society distinctively, as exclusive of the *coetus fidelium*, or the community of believers; and that the right to such power primarily inheres in the rulers, as distinguished from the ruled. There is very much in the principles and statements contained in Scripture, as bearing upon the nature and constitution of the Christian Church, that may be quoted in favour of this view. It has been maintained and defended by its advocates mainly on these three general grounds: First, there seems to be in Scripture no mention of any express or formal commission or grant of Church power by Christ in favour of the Church at large, or the whole body of believers; while there does seem to be evidence in Scripture, on the other hand, that Christ intrusted to the office-bearers of the Christian society the government and administration of its affairs.

The absence of any such grant to the Church at large may be argued from the silence of Scripture on the subject; while the explicit evidence of the trust actually committed to the rulers, in contradistinction to the ruled, by the Head of the Church, may be argued from the distinctive warnings given, and precepts addressed, and ordinances enjoined, to the governors of the Christian society. Second, there seems to be in the Word of God warrant for saying, that the right of Church power carries with it the right to the exercise of Church power,—a principle which seems to involve the conclusion, that the rulers of the Christian society, who by the confession of all parties administer power within it, are the proper subjects, and that the members who do not administer power are not the proper subjects, in whom the right to it resides. The assertion, that the *cœtus fidelium* is the primary subject or receptacle of Church power, would seem to lead to the inference, that every private member of the Church has a right to exercise power in the dispensation of ordinances, in the administration of government, and in the execution of discipline, as much as the office-bearers of the society themselves. Third, from the proposition that the Church at large is the subject or receptacle of Church power, it apparently follows, that the office-bearers who commonly administer and dispense it, are not so much the servants or ministers of Christ in carrying out His authority, as the servants or delegates of the Church for that purpose; and that they hold not immediately of Christ as the Head, but of the Christian society, whose organs or instruments they are. Upon such grounds as these, aided by other arguments, it has been maintained that the office-bearers of the Christian Church, and not the Church at large, are the proper and primary depositaries of Church power; that they are separated from the other members of the Christian society, not only for the purpose of exercising the government of the Church within it, but also as the parties to whom exclusively spiritual power has been committed by Christ; and that the only right in any circumstances belonging to the *cœtus fidelium*, as contradistinguished from the office-bearers, is the right of Christian liberty, in obeying those set over them, and divinely constituted their rulers in the Lord. It cannot, I think, be denied, that



there is much laid down in Scripture as to the nature and constitution of the Church which seems to give force to such arguments, and to bear out the conclusion that the office-bearers of the Church, as such, and to the exclusion of the membership, are the proper and primary depositaries of that spiritual power which Christ has committed to His Church.

This first scheme or theory in regard to the subject of Church power is held by all those parties, of whatever communion, whose principles lead them to draw a line of very broad and essential distinction between the office-bearers and the members in the Christian society, making them to be two fundamentally separate classes, with standing and powers essentially different. Of course, the principles involved in this view of the primary and proper subject of Church power are diametrically opposed to the system of Church polity held by Independents; and if consistent with Scripture, must unavoidably lead to the inference that that system is incompatible with the Word of God. It has been held by very many Presbyterians of eminence and name as theologians. It is held under one form or another by all High Churchmen, whether they belong to the Episcopalian or Popish communion, as tending to put on a clear and distinct footing the rights of the clergy, as distinct from the members of the Church, and as necessary, under one shape or other, to bear out the doctrine which they hold of apostolical succession and priestly authority. But the theory itself is embraced by many who do not entertain the opinions that distinguish High Churchmen, and who adopt generally those principles in regard to the extent and limits of Church power by which Presbyterians are characterized. A very able defence of this first scheme of the proper subject of Church power will be found in Principal Baillie's *Dissuasive from the Errors of the Times*, written against the Independents of his day; and more especially in the *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici*, or the *Divine Right of Church Government*, by the London ministers.

II. The second theory in regard to the proper and primary subject in which Church power resides, is the very opposite of the first: it

ascribes to the Church at large those peculiar and distinctive rights which the first view restricts to the office-bearers of the Church. According to this second theory on the point, the *cœtus fidelium*, or the universal body of believers, is the proper and necessary depository of Church power, having received the gift, along with every other needful to its existence or well-being, from its Divine Head; and the office-bearers of the society are no more than the organs or instruments of the whole body, for administering its power and discharging, its functions.

These two views stand at the opposite extremes of opinion from each other, and lead to consequences very widely and directly opposed. This second theory is supported and defended, among other arguments, by these two general considerations: First, There seems to be some warrant in Scripture for arguing, that the foundation of all right to Church power is to be traced originally to the right of individual believers, as such, to the possession and enjoyment of all the privileges, whether spiritual or outward, which Christ has purchased for them as believers. It may be maintained—and not, as it would seem, without some ground for it in Scripture—that Church power is one of those privileges, and that it, in common with every other gift or possession necessary to their present or everlasting well-being, is secured and given to believers by Christ in consequence of their union to Himself; and that therefore the first and normal idea of Church privilege and Church power is to be traced back to the power given to every believer to become a son of God, and is, in fact, virtually included in the notion of his adoption. According to this view, then, the first or primary grant of Church power is virtually, if not formally and expressly, made over to believers, as such, in the grant given to them of all present and future blessing necessary or conducive to their complete salvation; and it is nothing more than a mere matter of convenience, and detail, and order, if this Church power is exercised or administered, not by the members personally, but by certain office-bearers, as an arrangement more calculated to promote, upon the whole, the good of the society. In the charter of his many privileges as a son of God, there is likewise written down

the right of every believer to Church power along with his other rights; and no man can take from him his warrant, in consequence of his primary possession of such power, to dispense ordinances, to administer rule, and to execute discipline in his proper person, if circumstances demanded it. Second, There seems to be warrant in Scripture for arguing that the Church of Christ, viewed as the collective body of believers, and apart from any particular section or class of its members, must have within itself, and as its own, all that is necessary at all times, and under every conjuncture of circumstances, to perform its functions as a Church, and to secure the end contemplated by it in that character. Now, although there is a promise of perpetuity to the visible Church of Christ in the world, there is no such promise in regard to the ordinances of the ministry in particular, or of office-bearers in general. And it would seem unavoidably to follow, that there must be a power—latent it may be, but yet real—in the body of believers at large, to revive the ordinance of rulers or pastors, and by their own act to constitute or ordain them, in the event of such a conjunction of circumstances as should see the Church deprived of ministers and office-bearers for a time. In such circumstances—and we are not entitled to argue that it is impossible they can occur—there must be in the members of the Christian society at large a right to exercise Church power in such a way as may be necessary to restore the lost office of pastor or ruler. Upon such general grounds as these this second theory of the proper subject or depositary of Church power has been argued. And it cannot, I think, be denied that apparently there is some foundation in Scripture for such reasonings, whether or not they bear out the general conclusion which they are employed to support, that the primary seat of Church power is the *cœtus fidelium*, as contradistinguished from the office-bearers of the Christian society.

This second scheme of Church power, so opposite apparently to the first, is held under one or other modification by those whose Church principles lead them to deny or extenuate the distinction, laid down broadly and fundamentally by others, between the two orders of the rulers and the ruled in the Christian society. It is embraced

universally by the Independents; and when carried out to extremes, as it usually is by them, it is irreconcilable with the Church principles held both by Presbyterians, and by all those who cherish yet higher doctrines in regard to Church authority than Presbyterians. This second theory, as generally stated and pushed to an extreme point by Independents, annihilates the distinction between the governors and the governed in the Christian society; and in regard to this matter is almost equally opposed to the principles entertained by all parties but themselves, to the views of Presbyterians nearly as much as to those of Prelatists and Romanists. A full exposition and defence of this theory will be found in the works of most Independent controversialists. It is very ably stated, but with some important modifications, by Dr. Owen in his True Nature of a Gospel Church.

III. There is a third theory in regard to the proper and primary subject or depository of Church power, which, in so far as I have been able to judge, comes much more close to the truth than either of the views now explained. It is intermediate between the first and the second, and combines in itself what seems to be true in both. According to this third view of the matter, Church power belongs of right, and in consequence of the institution of Christ, not to the office-bearers alone, as contradistinguished from the whole body of believers; nor to the whole body of believers alone, as contradistinguished from the office-bearers. It is not, as according to the first theory, the peculiar and distinctive gift of Christ to the office-bearers, and from them and through them enjoyed by the Church at large. Nor is it, as according to the second theory, the peculiar and distinctive gift of Christ to the whole body of believers exclusively, and by them delegated and permitted to the office-bearers. This third theory ascribes the right of Church power not to the one or the other exclusively, but to both; and to both in accordance with their respective characters and places in the Christian society. According to this third scheme of Church power, it resides by gift and warrant from Christ in both the *coetus fidelium*, or body of believers at large, and in the office-bearers more particularly; and each participates in the Divine right according to the especial

character each bears, as administrators of the power or as administered unto.

Does the whole body of believers, as believers, possess every privilege or blessing which is necessary to their present and future salvation? Then the outward provision which Christ has established of power and authority in His Church is theirs, as much as any other blessing which Christ has purchased and bestows; and it is theirs, in the first instance, as His spiritual body; and they enjoy and participate in it in so far as their special character and place in the Church as private members demands or permits. Church power belongs properly to them as regards its possession, its benefits, and the right of obeying it. Do the office-bearers hold another character and place in the Christian society, over and above what belongs to them as members; and are they set in the Church for administration and service to the rest? Then Church power belongs of right to themselves, in the first instance, and in connection with the other members of the society, as members; but, in the second instance, in their further and additional character as administrators or office-bearers; and they enjoy and participate in it in so far as their peculiar character as office-bearers demands or permits. Church power belongs properly to them as regards its exercise and administration. According to this third opinion, the right of Church power inheres equally and by Divine appointment in the members and the office-bearers of the Church as its proper subject; but it inheres in the members who are not office-bearers, and in the members who are under a different character and aspect. To the members, as members, Church power belongs, to use a distinction of the old divines, "in actu primo seu in esse;" to the members who are office-bearers it belongs, in their character as office-bearers, "in actu secundo seu in operari." The possession of the right of Church power can properly be denied to neither; although it belongs to the one, under ordinary circumstances, for different purposes and objects than those for which it belongs to the other. Church power belongs essentially to the Church at large, or the whole body of believers, whether office-bearers or not, that they may enjoy its benefits, and use the right to submit to its wholesome

authority,—and this in the first instance. Church power belongs essentially to the Church at large, and more particularly to the believers within it who are office-bearers, that they may administer and exercise it for the good of the rest,—and this in the second instance. It belongs equally and by Divine warrant to both; but under different characters, suited to the different places each party occupies in the Christian Church.

This third scheme of Church power seems to combine in it all the truth which is to be found connected with the two theories before mentioned; while it is not liable to the objections that might be fairly urged from opposite directions against both the one and the other. That there is a foundation of truth in the arguments brought in support both of the first and second scheme respectively, it were hardly possible to deny; and what grounds in Scripture there may be fairly alleged for the one or the other, seem to combine in recommending the third or intermediate theory to our adoption. 1st, It is true, as is alleged in support of the first theory, that there is in Scripture a very express and formal grant of Church authority to the office-bearers of the society; and perhaps it is also true that there is no equally formal or express grant to the whole body of believers. But it may be doubted whether, on the one hand, the express grant of power to the office-bearers includes more than a gift of this power for the purpose of administering or exercising it; and whether, on the other hand, the want of an equally formal grant to the whole body of believers is not compensated for by what is implied in the right and privilege of a believer, to whom with Christ, and because Christ's, all things belong. And if so, the undoubted truth that there is in the argument to a certain extent, only goes to corroborate and strengthen the third hypothesis. 2d, It is true also, as urged in confirmation of the first theory, that the right of Church power carries with it the right to exercise the power as well as to possess it, and that those who do legitimately possess the power may also legitimately exercise it. But this general proposition, although true, does not necessarily lead to the inference that every private member of the Church, in ordinary circumstances, may himself administer

ordinances and government; if it is also true that there is in the office-bearers of the Christian society equally by Divine institution and grant, a right to Church power "in actu secundo," and for the ordinary exercise and administration of it. On the contrary, the undoubted truth of the general proposition leads to this inference, and no further, that, in extraordinary emergencies, and in the absence of such office-bearers in the Church, the private members have a right of power that enables them to replace the office when lost. In so far, the general proposition only goes in this way to support the third scheme. 3d, It is true once more, as is alleged on behalf of the first theory, that the office-bearers of the Church are ministers of Christ, and not of the Christian society, in the sense that they hold their office and draw their authority immediately and directly from Him, and not from the delegation of the Church simply and only as its organs. But it may be doubted whether it follows from this truth that the whole body of believers cannot hold the right of power directly and immediately from Christ also, side by side with a right, in the second instance and for a different purpose, to the office-bearers from Christ to administer and exercise it. The right to the office-bearers for the exercise of Church power, and the right to the body of believers for the possession of Church power for a different purpose, and both equally and directly from Christ, are quite consistent with each other; and they seem not unequivocally to point in favour of the third hypothesis in regard to the proper subject of Church power, which excludes neither, but embraces both.

But if we turn to the general considerations urged in behalf of the second theory of Church power, we shall find no less that there is a foundation of truth in them also; and that, in so far as they are true, they serve to countenance the third hypothesis; and in so far as they are not true, but exaggerated, they tend to invalidate the argument in favour of the theory they are brought to support. 4th, It is true, as argued in behalf of the second scheme, that the foundation to all right to Church power, as well as to every other Christian privilege, must ultimately be traced back to the right which every believer is invested with, in consequence of his union to Christ and adoption

into the family of God; and that the primary grant from Christ of Church power is virtually, if not expressly and formally, made to believers in that grant which makes all things, whether pertaining to the present or the future, to be theirs in Christ Jesus. But it does not follow from this general truth that Church power was given by Christ to the body of believers to the exclusion of the office-bearers as having equally, and no less directly from Christ, the grant of administration of the same power. On the contrary, both of these grants are true, and equally true; and because it is so, we seem unavoidably shut up to the third hypothesis, which ascribes Church power not to one of the parties exclusively as the proper depository of it, but to both. 5th, It is true also, as urged in support of the second opinion, that the whole body of believers as such must have within themselves all power competent to carry on the necessary functions and offices of a Church; and that therefore they must have the right in extraordinary emergencies, as when the office of pastor or ruler becomes extinct, to put forth their power to restore the office by their own authority, and at their own hands. But it does not follow from this that the office of ruler is not of Divine warrant and indispensable in the Church, or that he is no more than the organ or delegate of the Church itself, having no power but what is common to all. It is true that Church power belongs "in actu primo" to the whole collective body of believers; but it is no less true that it belongs "in actu secundo" to the office-bearers for the purpose of exercise and administration. And if it is, it points not indistinctly to the third hypothesis as the true one. In short, it is by the combination of the first with the second hypothesis so as to make up the third, that the true view of the subject of Church power is to be obtained,—the first and second being modified and shorn of their extreme peculiarities so as to admit of the combination. The proper and primary depository or subject of Church power is not the office-bearers exclusively, nor the whole body of believers exclusively, but both equally, although in different ways and for different purposes.

The views which I have now endeavoured to explain are those maintained in substance by many of the most eminent Presbyterian



divines. They are set forth, for example, and defended with great ability and learning, in Voetius. The Confession of Faith appears to me to state the same doctrine, although it does so in very general terms, and although I am aware that by some it is held not authoritatively to decide the question, but rather to leave it an open one. I cannot help, however, regarding the doctrine laid down in the third section of the 25th chapter, when taken in its natural sense, and in connection with the context, as substantially the view which I have now sought to advocate,—namely that, in the first instance, the power of the Church has been committed by Christ to the whole body of believers; while in other passages the Confession no less lays down the doctrine that, in the second instance, Christ has appointed a government peculiarly in the hands of Church officers. In the 25th chapter, after defining the visible Church to be "all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children," it announces the following brief but pregnant proposition: "Unto this catholic visible Church Christ has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world; and doth, by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto."

The doctrine now advocated in regard to the proper subject of Church power has most wide and important bearings both on the principles of Independency and on the principles of High Churchmen, whether belonging to the communion of Prelacy or Romanism. It denies the fundamental dogma upon which, on the one side and on the other, the views of those parties are founded. It denies the fundamental dogma of Independency, which ascribes all Church power in the first instance to the members of the Church, to the exclusion of the office-bearers. And it denies the fundamental dogma of the fond idolaters of Church power, whether Episcopalian or Romish, who ascribe a priestly power and virtue to a peculiar and separate order of men in the office of the ministry, to the exclusion of the whole body of believers, and independent of the Church at large. Upon these applications of our doctrine I have not now time to enter;

but I postpone them with less regret, as I shall have occasion to take them up at subsequent stages in our discussions.

## **PART III.**

### **MATTERS IN REGARD TO WHICH CHURCH POWER IS EXERCISED**

#### **DIVISION I:**

#### **CHURCH POWER EXERCISED IN REGARD TO DOCTRINE**

#### **CHAPTER I:**

##### **POWER OF THE CHURCH IN MATTERS OF FAITH**

WE have now brought to a close our discussions under the second great division of our subject. Under it we have considered generally the power of the Church as regards its source, its rule, its nature, its extent and limits, its end or design, and lastly, the proper and primary subject in which it inheres or resides. In the department of argument upon which we now enter, it must be our aim to consider the exercise of Church power somewhat more in detail, and to discuss its various aspects when directed to the different objects

about which it is employed. In entering on this field, it were open to us to follow the ordinary and well-established division of Church power into three branches: the "potestas δογματικη," the "potestas διατακτικη," and the "potestas διακριτικη." But I have preferred, as the more convenient course, to adopt an arrangement of the discussion founded upon the different matters about which Church power is employed, and following the natural connection among them. The order to be adopted, according to this method, will be almost the same as that dictated by the ordinary and ancient division; but it will be marked out somewhat more in detail in connection with the various matters in regard to which Church power is exercised. These matters naturally fall to be distributed into four divisions: first, the exercise of Church power with respect to matters of faith or doctrine; second, the exercise of Church power in regard to ordinances; third, the exercise of Church power in connection with discipline; and fourth, the exercise of Church power in reference to government. This last division, or the exercise of Church power in connection with government, embraces so wide a field of argument, and so many important topics, that it may more conveniently be considered apart from the rest, and it will therefore be elevated into the position of a distinct and leading department of our subject, to be discussed after the present, and to be treated of under the general head of the "Parties in whom the administration of Church power is vested." Under this fourth general department of the course will come to be discussed the constitution, government, and office-bearers of the Christian Church.

In the meantime, in entering, as we now do, on the third general department of the course, we have before us the consideration of those topics which fall to be argued under the threefold division of the exercise of Church power, as it regards, first, doctrine; second, ordinances; third, discipline. It is to the first of these that we now proceed to direct our attention. What is the office assigned to the Church of Christ in regard to that revelation of Word and doctrine which Christ has given? What is the authority with which the Church has been invested, and what the lawful exercise of that authority in

connection with the faith once delivered unto the saints? The answer to this question will lead us to consider some highly important duties assigned to the Christian Church in the exercise of ecclesiastical power.

There are two general aspects under which we have already been taught to recognise the Church of Christ; between which it may not perhaps be always possible to draw a well-defined line, but which are sufficiently marked to serve the purpose of giving a more distinct and detailed exhibition of her office in regard to matters of doctrine. The Church may be viewed more especially in reference to those within her pale; or the Church may be viewed more especially in reference to those without.

I. In regard to those within, the Church is the official holder and teacher of the Word of God.

This is plainly implied in such designations given to the Church as these, "the pillar and ground of the truth;" in such instructions given to its office-bearers as this, "The things which thou hast heard of me, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also;" and in the general commission addressed to the ministers of the Gospel, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The very existence on the earth of a supernatural communication of His own wisdom from God for the instruction and salvation of men, imposes upon the Church the duty both to keep it, that it may be guarded from injury or destruction, and to teach it, that it may accomplish the very ends for which it has been given. The Church is the institute of God on earth to preserve His truth, that it may not perish from the hostility directed against it by an unbelieving world, and that the inspired Book which contains the record of it may be kept pure and unmutilated as it came from the hands of its Author. In this respect the Church is the keeper of a precious deposit, made over to it in this world for the highest ends

connected both with the glory of God and the good of man. But more than this. Over and above the preservation and defence of the truth, there is laid upon the Church the additional duty of the teaching of the truth. The Book which contains the inspired record of that truth is written in a language known now only to the learned, and spoken nowhere among the nations; and what the gift of tongues was designed to effect in regard to the primitive disciples, to whom the Gospel was first addressed, is now to be accomplished by means of a body of instructors, specially set apart and educated for the purpose of their becoming the interpreters and expounders on behalf of others of the Divine oracles. Instead of perpetuating or renewing in every successive age the miracle of Pentecost, there has been instituted a perpetual and standing ordinance of interpreters and teachers, who may both translate and explain the original Scriptures for the benefit of the members of the Church at large; thus supplying the want of knowledge and of learning in the great body of the Christian society, and superseding the necessity of a private translation by every individual reader of the Bible for himself. The succession of teachers in the Christian Church have it for their office to afford to the disciples at large that assistance in the interpretation and elucidation of the books of Scripture which the nature of the language in which they are written, the customs of the times in which they were penned, and the peculiarities of the persons first addressed, along with the want of knowledge or learning on the part of the great majority of the members of the Church in every age, render so indispensable. But further still: they are in a peculiar manner the ambassadors of Christ on behalf of men, commissioned to preach His Gospel in His name; and speaking with authority, not their own, but His, to unfold and expound and proclaim the message of His mercy to His people. In such an office there is implied the right, not by permission or sufferance of man, but by direct authority from Christ as Head of His Church, to deal with Divine truth on the one hand, and with the human understanding and conscience to which it is addressed on the other, in the way of teaching and expounding and instructing; in short, to preach, to exhort, to warn, to beseech in the name and by the authoritative warrant of Him who

has sent them. The office of the Church through its office-bearers, in so far as it bears on those within, and in reference to matters of doctrine, is to be both the authorized guardian and the teacher of the Word of God.

II. With respect to those without, the office of the Christian Church is to be the authoritative witness and protest for the truth of God.

Doubtless the first and primary duty of the Church has respect to those that are the members of the Christian society. But its duty does not terminate with them. It has an office of a somewhat different character to discharge in regard to the world without, as being an authoritative witness to the world on behalf of God's truth, and a no less authoritative protest against its unbelief and its errors. The duty of a teacher to its own members the Church discharges through means of a standing ministry, commissioned to expound the Word of God, and to proclaim its truths. The duty of a witness or a protest against an unbelieving world the Church may perform through means of the same instrumentality of ministers or missionaries bearing testimony against its unbelief. But it is not only, or perhaps chiefly, in this way that a Church discharges this office towards the world. There must ever be a large amount of error, speculative as well as practical, found in that portion of the world professedly and openly avowing its rejection of the Bible. There must always be a large amount of speculative error or doctrinal heresy even in that other portion of the world that professes to receive the Bible, but in reality denies its essential truths. Our Lord Himself warns His disciples of "false prophets, who should come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves." The apostles lived to see the fulfilment of the prediction; and they tell us in many parts of their writings of men who had "corrupted the Word of God," even while they professed to hold it; who "erred concerning the truth," even with the truth in their hands; who "brought in damnable heresies," even while pretending to retain the Scriptures. The statements of the inspired writers plainly indicate that a professed acknowledgment of Scripture is no effectual barrier against falsehood and deadly error;

and they seem very expressly to indicate that it is necessary for the Church to adopt some additional precaution against error and unbelief, beyond the mere keeping entire and pure the Word of God intrusted to its keeping. Against that portion of the world that rejects the truth professedly and wholly, and against that other portion of the world that, under the pretence of acknowledging it, brings in deadly heresy, it is necessary that the Church should not merely bear witness for the truth, but more especially and directly bear its protest against error. "It is impossible but that offences must come," both from the world without, and from those even professedly within the Church, but who have afterwards joined the world in its unbelief or in its heresy; and necessity is laid upon the Church to erect some specific barrier against the evil. And this office of a protest the Church has usually discharged by framing and exhibiting a summary of truth, or confession of faith, directed particularly against the particular heresy or unbelief which may have arisen; so that, in addition to defending and preaching the truth, it may bear specific testimony against the corresponding falsehood. Such human exhibitions of truth and summaries of doctrine serve the twofold purpose of being, first, a witness for the truth, and second, a protest against the relative error. Generally indeed it has been the felt necessity for the latter, or for protesting against the heresies or falsehoods that were endangering the doctrine of Christ and abounding in the world without, that has called forth from the Church the publication of these "forms of sound words;" and this their frequent origin will explain the form they usually have, of rather negatively testifying against error than positively witnessing to the truth. But confessions of faith, or human compilations of doctrine, emitted by the Church in addition to the Scriptures, have properly both characters,—that of a testimony for the doctrine of Christ, and a testimony against the unbelief that would deny or the heresy that would pervert it. In addition to defending and teaching the Word of God, it is the duty of the Church, in discharging her office in regard to matters of doctrine, to be a witness and protest for the truth in the face of the world.

In both these ways, then, the Church exercises her proper power and authority in regard to matters of doctrine. The Church is the guardian and teacher of truth more especially in reference to her own members. The Church is the witness and protest in behalf of truth and against error more especially in reference to the world without. The power of the Church in regard to doctrine is a real power, and not merely a nominal one. The authority of the Church in matters of faith is a true, although a restricted authority. When the Church through its appointed organs declares the truth, it is to be heard not only because it is truth, and because it is in accordance with the Word of God as revealed in the Bible, but also because the Church is an ordinance of God appointed to declare it. When the Church gives a decision in controversies of faith or in matters of doctrine, it is to be listened to not simply because the decision is right and justified by Scripture, but also because the Church has authority to give such decisions. First and chiefly indeed, the proclamations of the truth by the Church, or its judgment in any controversy of faith, are to be heard and obeyed because they are in harmony with the revealed mind of God; and they have authority over the conscience and understanding of men, because virtually they are the utterance and decision of God through the Church. But second, and in subordination to this, the preaching of the Gospel, and the testimony against error and in favour of the truth by the Church, are authoritative and binding also because the Church is the ordinance of God, warranted and commissioned so to preach and so to testify. In short, there is an authority binding upon the conscience in the truth itself, when preached and declared, because it is the truth; and this in the first instance, and principally. There is an authority also in the Church itself, when so preaching and declaring, to bring the obligation on the conscience, because it is the Church; and this in the second instance, and subordinately.

But in coming to a right understanding on the subject, it is no less important to bear in mind the limits set to this authority of the Church in regard to matters of faith and doctrine. The particular exercise of Church power in this matter is limited and restricted by



all those general principles which we had occasion already to acknowledge, as setting bounds to the general administration of Church power. First, It is a spiritual authority; and therefore, although it may preach and declare the truth of God so as really to bind the conscience, it cannot enforce the obligation by outward compulsion, or by any except spiritual means. Second, It is an authority derived and exercised from Christ; and therefore, although in His name and exercising His right, it may proclaim His word and decide on His behalf in matters of faith, yet this power is purely ministerial and subordinate to Him, and has no binding force except as His authority. Third, It is an authority to be exercised according to the rule of the Word of God; and therefore the Church cannot add to or alter the doctrines there revealed, or preach any other Gospel than what is there put into its mouth. Finally, It is an authority to be administered in conformity with the purchased liberties of Christ's people; and therefore, although the Church may, as a delegate of Christ and steward of His mysteries, unfold and declare His doctrine, yet it must ever be under reservation of the rights of conscience in the individual, and in subordination, as regards the claims on his belief and submission, to the liberty of private judgment.

There are two systems of religious opinion, very opposite to each other, that equally sin, although in opposite directions, against the general principles now laid down in reference to the power of the Church in matters of faith. The one of these denies the limitation now ascribed to Church authority in connection with doctrine; the other of these denies the extent now attributed to it. The first is the Popish theory of Church power in matters of faith; the second is the Socinian or Rationalistic theory.

1st. The Romish theory of Church power in matters of faith is a striking and most instructive example of the ruinous consequences resulting from a flagrant disregard of all those limitations which have been divinely set to the possession and exercise of Church authority by the ecclesiastical body. There are views—semi-Romish—entertained by High Churchmen of other communions, which in a

lesser degree afford a similar example and warning. But it is only necessary to deal specifically with the Romish system, which includes and embraces all the rest. There are three separate stages or assumptions in the argument by which the Church of Rome develops its theory of Church authority in matters of faith.

First, The Church of Rome pretends that it is only from her that men can learn what is and what is not the written revelation of God, and that the authority of Scripture and its right to the faith and obedience of men depend exclusively upon the word of the Church. "For now"—I quote the language of Cardinal Wiseman, in his Lectures on the Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church—"Now the Church stands forth with that authority wherewith she is invested by Christ, and proclaims: Under that guarantee of Divine assistance which the words of Christ in whom you believe have given me, I pronounce that this book contains the revealed Word of God, and is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that it contains all that has a right to enter into the sacred collection. And thus," continues he, "the Catholic at length arrives, on the authority of the Church, at these two important doctrines of the canon and the inspiration of Scripture, which I endeavoured to show it was almost, if not quite, impossible to reach by any course of ordinary human investigation." The fundamental question, then, of what is and what is not inspired and canonical Scripture, depends for its settlement entirely upon the authority of the Church; and no man can have a satisfactory assurance upon this vital question except from the word and judgment of the Church. To fix the canon of Scripture,—to determine what is and what is not the infallible written Word of God,—to decide what is entitled to be believed as God's, and what deserves to be rejected as man's,—is a work for the Church alone by its authority to accomplish; and that not as an historical witness to an historical fact, but as a judge by its absolute and infallible authority in a matter of faith.

Second, Besides the written Word which men are obliged to receive upon the authoritative determination of the Church, there is also an unwritten word, as tradition, of equal authority and no less Divine,

which is intrusted to the keeping of the Romish Church, and when revealed in her teaching and declaration, is to be received with the same implicit faith and entire submission. In its fourth session, the Council of Trent, speaking in name of the Popish Church, declared that "every saving truth and discipline of morals is contained in written books and unwritten traditions, which, being received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the Holy Spirit dictating to the apostles, have, as it were, transmitted by hand, reached even to us;" and that the Council "receives and venerates with the same pious affection and reverence all the books of the Old and New Testaments, since one God is the author of both; and also the traditions themselves relating both to faith and morals, which have been, as it were, orally declared either by Christ or by the Holy Spirit, and preserved by continual succession in the Catholic Church." The two sources, then, of infallible and Divine truth, the written and the unwritten Word, are, according to the Popish system, both equally in the official custody of the Church; and both are alike dependent for their acceptance with men on the authoritative declaration of that Church. The truth of God, whether communicated through His written Word or through the channel of tradition, is truth to man only in so far as, and no further than, it is declared so to be by the authority of the Church.

But, third, the development of Church authority in the Papacy did not terminate here. The Church of Rome, to complete the fabric of spiritual despotism established by her in matters of doctrine and faith, not only asserted her right to be the unchallenged and irresponsible keeper of the Word of God, whether written or unwritten: she claimed also to be the sole and the infallible interpreter of its meaning. In the same session of the Council of Trent, it is decreed that "no one, trusting to his own judgment, shall dare, in matters of faith and morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, to interpret the sacred Scripture itself, twisting it to his own meaning, against the sense which has been and is held by holy Mother Church, to whom it belongs to judge concerning the true sense and interpretation of the sacred Scriptures, nor against the

unanimous consent of the Fathers, even although such interpretations should never be published. Let those who shall act contrary to these decrees be denounced by the ordinaries, and punished with the penalties by law established." But the Creed of Pope Pius IV. went even a step further than the bishops in synod assembled at Trent. The decree of the Tridentine Council merely forbids any man to judge of the meaning of Scripture for himself, and against the unanimous consent of the Fathers. The Creed of Pius IV., sworn to by every Romish priest at ordination, limits the right of interpretation still further, and makes it a crime for any man to interpret the written Word of God, "except according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers." By these three separate and distinct steps or stages, the ecclesiastical power of the Church of Rome in matters of doctrine was developed, until it became a spiritual despotism, ruling both over the truth of God and the understandings and consciences of men, with authority absolute, irresponsible, unrestricted, and infallible. The doctrines of Christ and the reason of men were equally and alike made subject to its power.

This is not the place for entering into the argument respecting the authority of the written Word of God as the rule of faith and practice, in opposition to the flagrant pretensions of the Church of Rome to dictate by its sole and irresponsible power as to the canon, the doctrines, and the meaning of the Scriptures. I have adduced the example of the Papacy as the most striking and instructive instance in the history of the Church of ecclesiastical power trespassing beyond the limits assigned to it by God, when exercised about matters of doctrine and faith; and breaking through all the restrictions appointed to it by the authority of Christ as its Head, by the plainest declarations of the Word of Christ as its rule, by its own character as a spiritual authority, and by a regard to the blood-bought liberties of Christ's people as its proper bound.

2d. But there is another system of religious opinion, very different from the Popish, that equally sins, although in an opposite direction,

against the general principles already laid down in relation to the power of the Church in matters of doctrine and faith. The Popish theory proceeds upon the denial of the proper limits that are set to Church power in regard to the doctrines of religion. The Socinian or Rationalistic theory proceeds upon the denial of the proper extent assigned to Church authority in such matters. The system of the Rationalists, under all its various modifications, in reference to the office of reason in religion, does not leave any room for the possibility of the exercise of authority in any shape or to any effect within the province of doctrine. More than this. It goes further than to the effect of annihilating all Church authority in regard to doctrine; it annihilates the authority of doctrine and Divine truth itself, in so far as it is not the dictate or offspring of reason. By making reason the sole or supreme judge of what is and is not true in the statements of Scripture,—by giving to each man's own natural understanding the place of arbiter between what, in the revelation of God, is to be believed, and what in it is to be rejected,—by constituting the private opinion of each individual the test of Divine truth, the theory of the Rationalist goes to destroy all authority whatever, whether it be the authority of God speaking in His word, and claiming a right absolutely to bind the conscience, or whether it be the authority of the Church, speaking in His name, and so ministerially claiming a certain limited right to be heard and regarded also. According to this system, the doctrine of Church power in relation to matters of faith is not a reality, but a name. There is no room left for the authority of the servant when that of the Master is previously denied. There can be nothing in the power of the Church in reference to doctrines of religion, when the power of Christ Himself in reference to them, in so far as He claims to dictate to the reason, or impose obligation on the understanding and conscience, is altogether disowned. Upon the theory of Socinians and other Rationalists respecting ecclesiastical authority in regard to the truths and doctrines of religion, the office of the Church is not authoritatively to teach and declare the truth, but only to exhort, and to recommend the truth. It is an office, not of instruction, but of persuasion; and the Church, both in its collective councils and in the

individual ministrations of its pastors, has no authority beyond that of exhortation or advice. In short, the Church and the ministrations of the Church have no higher place or standing than that of a mere human adviser or counsellor in religious matters; it is not an ordinance of God clothed with authority in these things, and because of its Divine origin and commission claiming a right to be heard in a manner that no other party has a right to be heard.

The Popish system, under whatever modification it is held, essentially sins against Scriptural principles on the subject of ecclesiastical authority in religious truth, by denying its proper and legitimate limits. The Rationalistic system, under whatever modifications it is held, no less sins against Scriptural principles on the subject of ecclesiastical authority in religious truth, by denying its proper and legitimate extent. The harmony of Church authority and private judgment, of ecclesiastical right and individual liberty, is to be maintained only by a due regard both to the extent and limits of Church power in matters of religious truth. "It belongeth to Synods and Councils," says the Confession of Faith, "ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience; which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in His Word."

## **CHAPTER II:**

## CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS; OR SUBORDINATE STANDARDS: THEIR LAWFULNESS AND USE

VIEWED generally in reference to those within its pale, the Church is the authorized custodier and teacher of Divine truth; viewed generally in reference to those beyond its pale, the Church is the authorized witness and protest for that truth against unbelief and error. In discharging such offices, it is competent for the Church authoritatively to declare the truth of God, and to testify against falsehood; always under reservation of an appeal by those to whom she ministers to the Word of God as the supreme rule, and to Christ Himself as the Judge of last resort in the matter. Within the boundary of such a limitation the authority of the Church is real and valid in controversies of faith and cases of conscience; and it has, in consequence of its place and character as a servant of Christ, and bearing His commission for that end, a right to be heard both where it declares the truth and where it protests against the falsehood, not only because its judgment is justified by the Word of God, but also because it has received Divine gifts for judging, and Divine warrant so to judge. Ecclesiastical authority in matters of faith as it is given to the Church to administer, and the right of conscience in matters of faith, such as each man must exercise for himself, are opposite, but not irreconcilable forces in the Church system. To me, as an individual member of the Christian society, the authority of my own conscience under God is absolute and supreme to the effect of determining my own belief. But this does not destroy, although it may limit, the authority of the Church in the matter. In virtue of its character as a Divine appointment, set in the Christian society for that very end, the Church has a right to declare the truth; and that not in the shape only of counsel or advice, but in the shape of authoritative declaration as an official teacher; and I am bound to pay a measure of deference to its decisions, and to hear it when it speaks.

No doubt, my own convictions may remain unchanged. I may be unable to acquiesce in the ecclesiastical decision, or to believe as the

Church has declared; and asserting the superior right of my own conscience to be obeyed and listened to, I may be constrained to reject its determination in a matter of doctrine, and to abide by my own. I may appeal from the tribunal of the Church without, to the tribunal of conscience within; or I may carry the appeal higher still, and transfer the cause from the bar of the Church on earth, to the bar of its Divine Head in heaven. And in doing so on just and competent grounds, I shall be free from the binding obligation of the authority of the Church, which it would seek to lay upon the conscience. But that authority is not less a real authority, although it be thus inferior and subordinate both to my own conscience and to Christ. The Church has a certain authority in matters of faith, although it is itself under authority also. It is the inferior tribunal; and over it, with the right of appeal open to every man on competent grounds, there is the tribunal of conscience; and over both, with the same right of appeal open, there is the tribunal of Christ. But the authority of conscience is a real authority, although limited by and inferior to the authority of Christ. And the authority of the Church is a real authority also, although limited by and inferior to the authority both of individual conscience and of Christ. These three as ordinances of God, having right to lay an obligation on men's understanding and belief in matters of faith, although different, are not inconsistent with each other. First, as absolute and supreme stands the authority of Christ, as both Head of every man, and also Head of the Church. Second, and next to that, stands the authority of conscience, inferior to Christ's, and yet superior as regards the individual to every other law save Christ's. And third, and inferior to both as respects the understanding and belief of the individual, stands the authority of the Church,—a real authority, but strictly limited, and having an appeal open to the higher tribunals.

There is one form, however, in which the power of the Church is exercised in the province of religious truth, which I had occasion to refer to previously, but to which I would now wish somewhat more in detail to direct attention. I allude to the power of the Church to frame and exhibit a human summary of doctrine in the shape of Creeds, or



Confessions of Faith, or Catechisms, or subordinate standards of orthodoxy. The right of the Church through the instrumentality of her ministers and pastors authoritatively to publish the truth and preach the Gospel of Christ, few will be found to deny absolutely, although there may be some who may desire unduly to limit the power. Further still, the right of the Church authoritatively to decide between truth and falsehood in the case of religious opinion, to the effect of determining her own profession and the teaching of her ministers, is one conceded by many also within certain restrictions. But the power of the Church to frame and publish a human exhibition of Divine truth in the form of a Confession of Faith, and to make it a standard of orthodoxy, or a term of communion for office-bearers or members, is regarded by not a few as an exercise of power beyond the limits assigned to the authority of the Church, and lying open to very serious difficulties and objections. To the subject, then, of the exercise of Church power in forming, publishing, and enforcing subordinate standards of faith, we shall now advert at some length. What are the grounds on which the lawfulness and use of subordinate standards in the Christian Church may be maintained? Is it competent, or for edification, for the Church to embody in human language its creed or profession, over and above its creed or profession as exhibited in the Scriptures themselves? Is it right, or is it expedient, to add to the Word of God the words of man, as an exhibition or summary of the Church's belief, and as a directory for the Church's practice?

I. It is to be remarked at the outset, that both in the inspired and uninspired history of the Church, in connection with its holding of Divine truth, we see examples of the necessity arising for a re-statement in a new form of words of the faith professed by the Church, in opposition to new forms of unbelief.

In the history of the Christian Church before the canon of Scripture was closed, such a necessity had arisen; and in the history of the Church subsequently to the apostolic age similar emergencies have occurred, necessitating the re-statement in a new form and in new

language of the truth formerly held. Within the age of inspiration, and before the last page of the Bible was written, there are at least three remarkable instances that may be quoted, in which the Church was compelled to re-cast and exhibit in new forms of language the truth formerly held; and compelled to do this because of the perversion to error and heresy of the terms formerly employed to set forth the truth.

1st. We find the Apostle John re-casting and re-stating the doctrine of Christ's manifestation in this world; and adapting the form of words in which he re-announces the doctrine to the purpose of meeting the errors which, under the previous terms in which it had been announced, and in spite of them, had crept into the Church. That "Jesus Christ is the Son of God," and that "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many," was a doctrine revealed before, and held by the Church as the fundamental article of its faith. But under the shelter of the language in which it had been revealed and professed, there had, even in the apostle's day, "many deceivers entered into the world, who confessed not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."<sup>2</sup> The Docetists did not deny what the entire Scriptures averred: they did not deny that, in one sense of the terms, Christ had been manifested in the world as the Saviour; but in accordance with their own speculative theories, they held that His manifestation was spiritual, and not real—that His coming was not in a real body, but as a spiritual phantasm, thus subverting the essential doctrine of the Incarnation. And John felt and acted on the necessity of re-casting in other language that fundamental article of the Church, and exhibiting it in a new form of words fitted to meet the novel heresy. Both in his Gospel and his Epistles he owned the necessity of re-stating the doctrine in fresh language; and he accordingly declares in the one, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" and in the other, "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God;" "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God."

2d. We find the Apostle Paul giving another illustration in his writings of the necessity that may arise within the Church of recasting revealed truth, and repeating it in new forms of language, to meet and counteract new error. In his second Epistle to Timothy, he speaks of a sect or party "who concerning the truth had erred," while yet holding the words in which the truth had been previously revealed. He mentions the case of Hymenæus and Philetus, who maintained that there was a resurrection according to the terms of Scripture, but that it was an allegorical or figurative resurrection, meaning no more than the elevation of the soul above this life, and its rising into holiness; and that in the case of Christians the resurrection spoken of in Scripture "was past already." And accordingly, in the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, we find the Apostle re-stating the important article of belief held by the Church as to the resurrection of the body, and laying it down afresh in such terms, and with such elaborate explanations, as directly to meet and repel the error which had arisen regarding it.

3d. We find the whole body of the apostles, in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, exhibiting another illustration of the necessity that will oftentimes arise in the history of the Church for re-moulding, not the doctrines of Divine truth, but the form in which those doctrines are expressed; and guarding them from misapprehension or error by additional explanations or new statements in regard to them. The doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the works of the law, was one of those doctrines revealed and professed by the Church from the beginning, as "the article of a standing or falling Church." And yet one of the earliest and most widespread divisions in the Church itself was as to the necessity of circumcision, in addition to faith, in the case of its members. It was in opposition to this error that "the apostles and elders came together to consider of the matter" at Jerusalem, and found it necessary to re-assert the ancient doctrine with such additional explanations, and with such a sentence on the controverted point, as were adapted to the new circumstances which had arisen. In respect to this additional explanation of the Church's doctrine and practice, necessitated by the inroad of error, we are told

regarding Paul and his companions, that, "as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem; and so were the Churches established in the faith."

Such, within the age of inspiration itself, are the remarkable examples we have of the necessity, growing out of the circumstances of the Church and its members, that arose at different times for recasting the doctrines of Scripture in a new mould, and exhibiting or explaining it afresh under forms of language and expression more precisely fitted to meet and counteract the error of the times. No doubt it may be said, in answer to this argument, that it was competent for inspired expounders of the truth to re-state the doctrine of the Church, when the terms in which it was revealed at first were perverted or used for the purposes of error, and to re-state it in language equally authoritative and inspired as the original; but that it is not competent for ordinary or uninspired men to do so in language merely human and fallible. I am not at all sure that this answer to the argument is a sufficient one. The need of the Church, after the days of inspiration ceased, to be guarded against the likelihood and danger of heresy and unbelief, was not less, but greater. Perversions of the language of Scripture, in the way of covering error and concealing it, were not likely to diminish, but rather to increase in number, after the apostles were gathered to their rest. There is nothing in the mere fact of the office-bearers of the Church being inspired in those days, sufficient to account for their adoption of this practice of meeting and counteracting the heresies that assailed the Church by distinct and additional explanations or exhibitions of its doctrines suited to the heresies, had that practice in the case of ordinary and uninspired office-bearers of the Church been unlawful or sinful. On the contrary, the presumption seems rather to be, that the example given and the practice begun by the infallible guides of the Church during the apostolic age, was intended both as a suggestion and warrant for their successors, although not infallible, to follow their example and to adopt their practice. The instances recorded in the Word of God of

the re-statement and re-exhibition of the doctrines of Scripture in such a form as to meet and counteract new error, seem to be intended to be to future times patterns for imitation, rather than beacons to be avoided. Did we find these re-statements or re-castings of the doctrine formerly held by the Church to go beyond what was formerly revealed on the point, then indeed the new revelation might have been justified or accounted for by the fact of the inspiration of its authors, but would have been no example for uninspired men. But when we find that the reverse of this is the case, and that such re-statements of the doctrine in new forms suited to the times were strictly declaratory—in the way of explanation, and not in the way of addition to the former revelation—we seem to be justified in saying that this office of the Church in regard to truth was not extraordinary, and peculiar to the age of inspiration, but rather ordinary, and competent to the Church in every age.

That such was the interpretation put upon these examples of the re-statement or re-exhibition of doctrine in new forms of language during apostolic times by the almost unanimous consent of the Church, is made plain by its subsequent history. At almost every crisis in that history, when spreading or predominant error was to be met and counteracted, when unbelief prevailed without, or heresy within, the Church has had recourse to the very expedient adopted by the apostles singly and collectively; and has re-stated its doctrine and re-cast its form of profession, in such language as was suited to meet the evil. When the Arian heresy prevailed so widely towards the beginning of the fourth century, the Council of Nice met and re-asserted those articles of faith respecting the true Godhead of the Son which had been endangered. When, towards the close of the same century, a similar danger threatened the faith of the Church in connection with the Personality and true Godhead of the Spirit, the Council of Constantinople was assembled to renew the testimony of the Church to those vital truths. At the time of the Reformation, when the leading Reformers in Germany found it necessary to separate from the corruptions of Popery, they found it to be no less necessary to embody in a new form, and re-state in fresh terms, the

doctrine of the Apostolic Church; and the Confession of Augsburg became the testimony of the Protestant Church of Germany. And to the same feeling of the lawfulness and necessity of re-asserting in fresh terms and a new shape the whole doctrine and testimony of the Church, so as to meet the demands of the times, do we owe the admirable Confession of Christian doctrine which forms the authoritative standard of our own Church.

But passing from those examples furnished, both within and beyond the age of inspiration, of a necessity arising in the Church for re-asserting and verbally re-shaping the ancient doctrines of the Church, the lawfulness and necessity of such Creeds and Confessions may be very distinctly proved from the nature and offices of the Church itself. Both in its office towards those within its pale, and in its office to the world without, it is not difficult to recognise the foundation on which the right and duty of the Church may be argued to frame a declaration of its faith, and exhibit a confession of the truth which it believes to be contained in Scripture. For,

II. I remark that, in its office to those within its pale, it is the duty of the Church, as holding the truth of Scripture as the basis of its union, by some formal and public declaration of its own faith, to give assurance to its members of the soundness of its profession, and to receive assurance of theirs.

What is the principle of union in any Christian Church which holds the truth of God as the very foundation on which it exists? Plainly and undeniably the mutual and common understanding as to the doctrine of God's Word of those associated together to constitute the Church—their union together in one common profession of the truth. To the very existence of such a union, it is necessary that the mind of the Church be brought out and exhibited to the understanding of all, by a declaration from herself of what she believes, so as to exhibit to the view of her members a profession of the truth which she holds, not merely as the truth which God has revealed, but more especially as the truth which she has made her own by embracing and believing

it. Without this, there can be no common understanding between the Church and its members of one another's faith, and consequently no mutual agreement or union as to the holding or profession of it. Now for this end it is not sufficient for the Church to hold up the Bible in its hand as the confession of the truth it believes; or even in language carefully and accurately extracted from the Bible to frame its confession of belief. The Bible was framed to be the declaration of God's mind, and the phraseology employed is exactly and perfectly suited to accomplish the object. The language of Scripture is the best language to express God's mind. But it does not follow from this that it is the best language to express my mind, even although I may mean to express to another man, so that there shall be no misunderstanding between us, the very same truths which God has expressed. With the change in the meaning of language which takes place from age to age,—with the different interpretations actually put upon the terms of Scripture by multitudes,—with the various and even opposite senses which reason, or prejudice, or error has made to be associated with its phraseology; the very words of the Bible may not be the best words to declare my mind and belief to another man, so that betwixt him and me there shall be no equivocation, or reservation, or guile.

Take the case of an individual believer, desiring to join himself to a second believer on the basis of what they jointly believe and confess as Christians. It is not on the basis of the objective truth revealed in the Bible, but on the basis of the subjective belief of that truth, that the union of two such Christians is formed. The communion of two saints is a communion on the footing of the faith they equally have in their heart, and which out of the heart they confess with their mouths. It is not the outward letter revealed in the Scripture, but the inward belief, personal and intelligent and spiritual, of the outward letter that forms the foundation of their union; not the truth understood or not understood, as it stands in the page of the Bible, but that truth translated first into the faith of the heart, and again into the confession of the lips, by both jointly and equally. In the case of the union of two Christians, they come to unite truly and without

misunderstanding on either side, not when they repeat by rote, and without caring to know whether they understand each other's meaning or not, the same confession copied from the Bible, and embodied in some oft-repeated textual formula; but when they translate their own subjective belief of God's truths into a personal confession from the lips, and embody their own faith and feelings in their own language. And so it is with the collective society of Christians. The unity of the Church as a society of believers requires and justifies human compilations of Divine truth, if it is to be really a unity of faith, and not merely a unity of form or formal words. The true principle of Church union, upon which the Christian society is associated, demands that the Church shall take not the Bible, nor any extracts from the Bible, to declare its confession of faith, but that it shall take the confession first from its own heart, and then translate it into its own language. In no other way can the Church give a right assurance of its own belief to its own members, or receive a right assurance of theirs. The Church may take the Bible into its hand, and hold it up to the view of the world as the one profession of its faith; but in doing so it is merely exhibiting the mind of God, not declaring its own. In order to declare its own faith, for the purpose of being a basis for union among its members, it must take its own understanding and belief of the truths of God as made known in His Word, and translate them into its own meaning, and into its own language. The Creed or Confession of the Church, if it is to be a right foundation for Church fellowship and association, must be expressed in human terms, as the expression of its own belief, and not merely a formal repetition or echo of the belief of God.

There is a not unimportant lesson to be learned from the history and the principles of Popery, in reference to the bearing of human Creeds and Confessions on the right basis of Church union. The principle of union in the Popish Church is not a voluntary and intelligent and personal conviction on the part of its members of the truth which, as a Church, it holds and professes, but rather an implicit faith, with or without understanding, and a formal submission and passive obedience to a system of outward authority. It is not necessary for



the Church of Rome, upon its theory of Church union, either to give or receive assurance of an intelligent belief and an active and understanding faith in any system of doctrine. It is enough if its members yield an implicit faith or blind submission to the authority of an infallible Church, and render an outward conformity to its rites and requirements. And hence it is an instructive fact in the history of Popery, that it took no care to exhibit publicly to its members a confession of its faith or summary of its doctrine, until the Reformation compelled it to do so, and very much against its will extorted from it the standards of the Council of Trent. Any system of Church union except the Popish, or any system which proceeds upon the basis of a mutual faith held by the Church and its members, must, in some shape or other, frame and exhibit a confession of faith as the terms of union. The Bible can be no standard of union, because the Bible can be and has been interpreted in many different ways. Human explanations of the Bible, or human confessions of how the Bible is understood by the Church, seem to be necessary to Church union in some shape or other, even where the principle of the lawfulness of such confessions is theoretically denied. In the case of Independent Churches, which disown the lawfulness of human confessions of faith, the declaration of the pastor from the pulpit, and the profession generally or always required from the member on his admission to membership, really form a confession under a different name.

III. In its office to those within its pale, it is the duty of the Church, as the authoritative teacher of Divine truth, by some formal and public summary of the doctrines it holds, to give assurance that it teaches what is in accordance with the Word of God.

The principles involved in the union of the Church upon the basis of its belief, as holding the Word of God, seem unavoidably to demand that it shall, by a confession, or creed, or summary of Divine truth, declare what it believes, and what it does not. But the principle involved in the office of the Church as an official teacher, having its teaching based upon the Word of God, seems no less unavoidably to

demand that it shall, by a public declaration of what it believes, give a pledge that its teaching shall be in accordance with that Word. The same argument, indeed, that infers the lawfulness and necessity of confessions from the principles implied in the office of the Church as holding the truth, and united upon it, will also evince the lawfulness and expediency of confessions from the principles implied in the office of the Church as teaching the truth. Regarded even on the same footing as a voluntary society or a private individual, responsible to none for what it teaches, and with a right to publish what doctrine it pleases, it could not be denied that the Church would have the right, and it might be expedient, to embody for its own use, and for the information of others, in a formal and authentic shape, a declaration of what it professes to teach. But the Church is not only a voluntary or private society; it is a Divine institute: as a teacher of truth it is the servant of another, and His steward to dispense mysteries not its own to His people, and in that character responsible both to Him and to them for what it teaches. And now, seeing that it is not a mere voluntary association or private individual, responsible to none for the doctrine it holds and declares, but rather the delegate of Christ, accountable for that doctrine to Him in the first instance, and to His people in the second,—does that fact, I ask, take away the right which the Church has to frame and exhibit a confession of the truth it teaches, or diminish the expediency of so doing? The answer to that question plainly is, that the circumstance that the Church is of Christ, and responsible both to Him and to its own members as His people, goes incalculably to confirm the right and to augment the expediency. The members of the Church have a right, and that founded on the most sacred grounds, to know how the Church, as the teacher of their souls, is to handle the Word of God, and interpret its truths, and preach its Gospel. No mere general appeal to the Word of God, as the confession of its faith, will satisfy this claim. The question is not whether the Church believes the Bible, but how the Church is to interpret the Bible to its people; in what sense it receives the doctrines of Scripture, and in what sense it is prepared to teach them. It is bound to tell in its own language how, as an interpreter of

the Scriptures, it understands their truths; and how, as a preacher of the Gospel, it believes it. Nothing short of this will suffice to satisfy the rights and claims of its own members. And the very same thing may be argued from the responsibility of the Church, as the teacher of His Word, to Christ Himself. From the individual Christian Christ demands not only that "the heart shall believe unto righteousness," but also that "confession shall be made by the lips unto salvation." Upon the private believer Christ lays the duty of confessing Him with his mouth in the presence of men. And nothing less will Christ receive from the Church. The confession of its belief embodied in its own language, is, on the part of the Church, the answer of the lips vowing unto the Lord.

IV. In its office to those that are without its pale, it is the duty of the Church, as the witness and protest for truth against the error or unbelief of the world, to frame and exhibit a public confession of its faith.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon this, as I have already had occasion to remark on the necessity that has arisen for the Church, at various periods in her history, to re-assert the doctrine once delivered to the saints in fresh terms and with new explanations, as the perversions of the truth or the inroads of heresy might demand. And what has so often been a necessity laid upon the Church, is also its duty. It has an office to discharge even to the unbelieving world without, and to those enemies who have separated themselves from her, because they were not of her. She has the office to discharge of being a witness and a protest for the truth against both. And in no other way can this duty be performed, except by adapting her public profession of the truth to the form and fashion of the error, and closing the bulwarks of the Church with an armed defence at every point where the enemy may threaten to enter. Had the adoption of confessions and creeds not been a duty laid upon the Church by a regard to her own members, it would have been a necessity laid upon the Church by a regard to those not her members, but her enemies. Human standards would have been needed, even if for no other reason than

to repel the assaults and inroads of heresy and unbelief; when the very language of Scripture is misused to the utterance of falsehood, and the terms of God's own Word perverted so as to assail therewith God's truth. Had there been no other ground for the adoption of human language in expressing the faith of the Church, or for the introduction of human formularies of faith, there would have been ground sufficient in the fact of the existence and prevalence of unscriptural error and heresy couched in Scriptural language. And the very same reason is sufficient to account both for the multiplication of articles not fundamental in human standards, and for the negative and hostile aspect under which truth itself, both fundamental and otherwise, is exhibited. In no other way could the Church discharge her office as a witness and protest against the world, as well as in behalf of Christ, except by making her articles and formulas of belief counterparts to the heresies around her, and drawing out her confession of faith less upon the form and mould of truth, than upon the form and mould of falsehood. As a protest against spiritual evil, they must be fashioned upon the principle of a contradiction of error, rather than the independent assertion of truth. In this way only could the Church discharge her duty towards the world without, confronting the plague, while standing between the living and the dead.

## **CHAPTER III:**

### **OBJECTIONS TO THE LAWFULNESS AND USE OF SUBORDINATE STANDARDS**

THE subject of the exercise of Church power in this particular department is so very important, that it may be well to consider apart, and somewhat in detail, the objections that have been commonly urged against the lawfulness or use of subordinate standards. These objections may be readily reduced to one or other of the two following heads:—First, subordinate standards have been objected against, as setting aside the sole and supreme authority of Scripture as the rule of faith, and as militating against the absolute sufficiency and perfection of the sacred volume. Second, subordinate standards have been objected against, as an assumption of an authority on the part of the Church not belonging to her, and the imposition of an unlawful restriction on the Christian liberty of her members. Most if not all the arguments usually urged against the lawfulness and use of subordinate standards may be classed under one or other of these heads. To the examination of these, therefore, we shall now proceed to direct our attention.

I. The first objection brought against the use and lawfulness of subordinate and human standards of faith is, that they interfere with the sole authority of the Word of God, and proceed upon the principle that that Word is not in itself perfect or sufficient for all the purposes and objects of a Christian Church.

There would be force and justice in this objection, if one or other of these three things were true in regard to subordinate standards of faith: if, in the first place, they denied or superseded the sole supremacy of Scripture as the Church's law both for doctrine and practice; or if, in the second place, they were inconsistent with the sufficiency of Scripture, as complete for all the purposes designed by it; or if, in the third place, they expressly or by implication added to the Word of God. If any or all of these things were true in regard to subordinate standards of faith, then the objection would be unanswerable; but if it can be satisfactorily shown that none of them is true, the lawfulness and expediency of the Church adopting and employing such standards will remain untouched by such an objection.

1st. Do the use and imposition upon its office-bearers or members by the Church of human creeds and confessions deny or set aside the sole supremacy of Scripture as the Church's law both for doctrine and practice?

Now it cannot be denied that it is a possible thing that human articles of faith, and human constitutions for the regulation of the Church's conduct, may be invested with an authority and elevated to a place inconsistent with the sole supremacy of the Word of God. When such articles or constitution are imposed by the authority of the Church as itself irresponsible and supreme in these matters, and when they are enforced as binding apart from the authority of Scripture, and to the exclusion of any appeal to Scripture, then unquestionably they are open to the objection urged, and cannot but be regarded as derogatory to the Scriptures as the ultimate standard of appeal in matters of doctrine and practice. In this light the standards of the Papal Church must be regarded, when they are imposed on the implicit faith and the passive obedience of its members by the authority, supreme and infallible, of that Church, apart from the Word of God; and when in no circumstances is there left open to its members an appeal to the Scriptures as lawful or competent. The Canons and Catechism of the Council of Trent, because of the authority which they claim, and the manner in which they are imposed, are open to the objection now under consideration. But it is not so in regard to the creeds and confessions adopted by Protestant Churches. Such human exhibitions of Scripture doctrine are not put in the place of the Scriptures, as supreme in their authority or infallible in their statements. The very name by which they are known indicates the position that they occupy, and the right to submission which they assert. They are the subordinate standards of the Church, not the supreme. Their authority is inferior, not primary; secondary to the Word of God, and only binding in so far as, and no further than, they are a declaration or exhibition of the meaning of the Word of God. There is an appeal ever open from the subordinate standards to the supreme standard, which is the Word of God; and the authority of creeds and

confessions is liable at any time to be tried and judged by their conformity or non-conformity with the Scriptures. With such a reservation of the sole supremacy of the Word of God as the law of the Church's belief and practice, they cannot be justly chargeable with the offence of arrogating that place which is due to Scripture. The Church may fairly and reasonably be entitled to make such human articles of faith the term of communion and the test of orthodoxy, because they embody her own belief of what the Word of God contains, the declaration of its meaning and import according to her understanding of it, and no more. Nor can the members and office-bearers justly complain that they are tried by such a subordinate standard, and acquitted or condemned accordingly, and not rather tried by the Word of God; unless they are prepared to put the Church itself on its trial because of the unsoundness of these standards themselves. Proceeding on the joint and equal assent of the Church itself, and of the members of the Church, to its confession or creed, there can be no injustice, but may be obvious convenience, in testing the opinions of one or other by such a standard; nor, while an appeal in the case of difference of opinion as to the orthodoxy of the confession lies to the Scripture in the last resort, can the adoption of such a procedure fairly involve the charge of denying that the Scriptures are the supreme law of the Church's belief and practice.

Upon such principles as these, there is, I think, good ground for asserting that the adoption of subordinate standards by the Church either as a term of communion or a test of orthodoxy, is not liable to the objection of superseding or denying the sole and supreme authority of the Word of God. The Church, as a society necessarily called upon and required to adopt some terms or other of communion, and some test or other of profession, may adopt, in all cases where a member or office-bearer is put on trial as to his right to communion or to office in the society, one or other of two ways of proceeding. The Church may in all such cases take directly the Word of God itself as the standard to rule its decision, or may take a human confession drawn up in explanation of the Word of God as the

standard to rule its decision. In both instances it is ultimately the Church's judgment of what the Word of God says in the matter that guides and determines the decision,—that judgment in the one case being formed directly by an examination of the Word at the moment, and in the other case being formed by the help of its own previous examination of the same Word embodied in its confession. In the one way the Church, for the purpose of deciding each particular case, examines the Scriptures afresh, and according to the examination pronounces judgment; in the other way, the Church has recourse for aid to the result of its former examination of the Scriptures, and according to the record of that examination pronounces judgment. In both instances the judgment rests on the same foundation,—on the footing of what, in the opinion of the Church, is the meaning of the Word of God as bearing on the matter submitted to its decision. The principle involved is the same in the one instance as in the other; the only difference being that, according to the first method, an examination is instituted at the time as to the bearing of Scripture on the point in dispute; whereas, according to the second method, an examination instituted long before as to the bearing of Scripture on the point is held to be conclusive, and to supersede the necessity of repeating it on each recurrence of the dispute again. That the appeal to the Word of God was made before and not at the moment, and embodied in the articles of a confession for future reference and use, can make no fundamental difference in the matter one way or other. And unless, therefore, the Church is to be denied the right to fix its terms of communion, and to decide in accordance with its own judgment as to these, with respect to the title of a member to Church fellowship, or of a minister of Church office, it must have a right to apply its own examination of Scripture, made at the instant, or made no less conscientiously and deliberately long before, and registered in a confession for daily use, to such matters; and neither in the one case nor in the other is the exercise of its right an encroachment upon the authority of Scripture as the supreme law of its faith and practice.



Nor on these principles can it, I think, be denied that the Church may be bound to take into consideration, with a view to their alteration or amendment, the subordinate standards she may have framed or adopted, when an appeal to that effect is made to her from a competent quarter and on sufficient grounds. The man charged with doctrinal error, and brought to the bar to answer for it, whether a private member or a public teacher in the Christian society, is not the competent party to take action in this way, nor does his case afford sufficient occasion for the Church being called upon by him to revise its standards of faith; for his demand in such a case to be tried by Scripture instead of the acknowledged formula of the Church may be, and most frequently is, nothing more than a subterfuge to protect his own error of which he stands accused. A panel answering at the bar to the charge of heresy is not in a position to be entitled to put the Church itself to the bar to answer for its creed. But unquestionably, if the standards of a Church are subordinate and not supreme, they are not to be reckoned infallible, and not to be accounted unalterably fixed or stereotyped for all generations. "All Synods or Councils," says the Confession of Faith, "since the apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as an help in both." And if the Church shall come to be convinced that its decisions or standards are in any respect in error, it is bound to amend them according to its better understanding of the Word of God.<sup>2</sup> Or if necessity should arise in the history of the Church of adding to its protest against error in consequence of the inroad of new danger to the spiritual interests of its members, it is not only at liberty, but bound, to enlarge its testimony, not in the way of adding to the truth of God, but of adding to the Church explanations of that truth against unbelief. Or even, if there shall be competent reason for such a step, it may become the duty of the Church to alter its standards by simplifying and curtailing them in regard to points not fundamental, when errors formerly prevalent and denounced by the Church shall be prevalent no longer, or circumstances shall have made them less prominent or mischievous. It cannot be denied that nothing but grave and important cause shown is sufficient to warrant

a Church to take up her acknowledged or authorized standards with a view to revision or correction; but it were, I think, to give a place and authority to subordinate standards not belonging to them, to deny that such a review is competent, and may in certain circumstances become a duty.

2d. Are the adoption and use of subordinate standards to be regarded as inconsistent with the sufficiency and perfection of Scripture for the ends designed by it?

Now, in answer to this question, it must be remembered that the Scriptures were not designed for the same limited purpose as creeds or confessions of faith are designed for; nor are their sufficiency and perfection to be tried by the same restricted criterion by which we would test a human and subordinate standard of Divine truth. The Bible as a revelation from God was intended, among other objects, to serve as a complete and perfect standard of truth in doctrine and practice to men; and for the attainment of this one end, a language of such clearness, and fulness, and definiteness of announcement, as should exclude the possibility of mistake, if that were possible, might perhaps have been the best. But we know that the Bible had other ends to serve. It was revealed at first step by step; and it was not intended to be any other than a gradual and partial development of truth to the successive ages that received the revelation. To them it was not intended to convey in the clearest and most unmistakeable language the truths made known; but, on the contrary, these truths were purposely darkened by figure, and type, and prophecy, and only partially revealed. And even now, after the canon of Scripture has been completed, it is still intended to serve other purposes beyond that of a complete communication of doctrine and truth to men. It is sufficient for this end; and it is perfect for all its objects, including this among the rest. But there can be no doubt that, in the manner in which the revelation is made to us, and in the revelation itself, there are other objects contemplated; and among these, that the Bible is intended to be a discipline and trial to faith, and for that purpose is intentionally less clear, and full, and explicit than it might have been.

There is enough of light in the Bible for those who love the light; but there is enough of darkness for those that love the darkness better. It is a full, sufficient, and perfect rule of faith and conduct for those who will use it aright; but there are "many things in it hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest unto their own destruction." It is no disparagement to the Scriptures, as perfect for all the ends designed by them, or as complete and sufficient for the one end of a rule of faith and manners, to assert that human summaries or exhibitions of truth may define the truth in a manner less liable to misinterpretation or perversion than the Scriptures themselves have done. The language of Scripture, and the manner in which it makes known the truth, the degree of light given, and the degree of light withheld, are determined at least partly upon the principle, that to the earnest, honest, and anxious inquirer, "it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God," but to the unbelieving only "in dark sayings and parables." It is not just or reasonable to test the Scriptures by the same test as might be applied to a human explanation or summary of Divine truth. The Scriptures had other ends in view, and other objects were to be attained by them. Had the Bible been intended to answer the one purpose for which confessions, and creeds, and articles of faith are intended, it would have been unlawful and sinful to have added the latter to the former. But human interpretations of Scripture and subordinate standards of faith have not the same end in view as the Bible; and it is no disparagement or dishonour done to the Bible to employ them to serve a purpose, which the Bible was never intended, or at the best only partially intended, to serve.

Upon the general ground, then, that the Scriptures were not limited in their aim to the end which creeds and confessions were intended to accomplish, but had other and more general purposes in view, we argue that it is no disparagement done to the Bible to employ, in addition to it, subordinate standards as a term of communion and a test of orthodoxy. But although we should restrict our argument to the one purpose—which doubtless, along with others, the Scriptures were intended to serve—of supplying a perpetual and infallible rule

of faith and practice, we should be led to adopt the very same conclusion. Granting that the Bible was designed to serve as a perfect and infallible rule of belief and conduct, and limiting our attention for the present to this single object, it must still be borne in mind that it was meant to be a rule not local but universal, not temporary but perpetual, accommodated not to one nation or one age, but to all nations and all ages. The very opposite is the end contemplated in human creeds and confessions. They are designed not to serve a universal purpose, but mainly to meet the exigencies of a particular Church. They are constructed not for perpetual use throughout the whole world, but chiefly for the local and temporary benefit of the special Christian society that avails itself of them to be its witness for the present truth, or its protest against the present error. A very different form and phraseology, then, were needed for truth embodied in Scripture, and for truth embodied in creeds and articles of faith employed as the confession of a particular Church. Such creeds and articles, to serve the special and limited purpose designed by them, must vary as to form and expression with the variation of language from age to age,—with the difference of period, and country, and people,—with the state of opinion, more especially with the forms of unbelief and error prevalent,—with the perversions and disguises put upon the phraseology of Scripture by those who turn it unto error,—with the subterfuges in interpretation and misinterpretation of those who would seek to make the Bible speak not the words of truth, but a lie. Ends such as these the Scripture was not intended to accomplish, viewing it even in its limited office of a rule of faith and practice; and it is no dishonour to the Scriptures, nor is it a denial of their sufficiency and perfection for the ends they were meant to serve, to say that what they were not intended they were not fitted to secure. The change in the meaning of language from age to age, were there no other cause, would itself unfit the Bible to act the office or sustain the place of a confession of faith, calculated to witness against error and heresy as they arise in the Church. There are numberless words employed in Scripture which, when used now, convey a very different meaning from what they bore in the first century of our era; and phrases which in the mouth

of an apostle or an apostolic father of the primitive Church asserted truth, but in the mouth of one employing them in the present day to declare his faith, would assert or imply error. The word ἐπισκοπος or πρεσβυτερος on the lips of the Apostle Paul, or of the Fathers of the first two centuries, had a very different sense from what it has in the mouth of some fond disciple of the hierarchy at the present day; or again, the term ἱερευς or θυσια in the Epistle to the Hebrews means something very different from what it means now in the creed of some "sacrificing priest" of Rome. The Bible could not, from the very nature of the case, be intended to be a protest against the changes and perversions superinduced upon its own language ages after it was written; and it is not inconsistent with the exclusive deference due to the Bible, as sufficient and perfect for all its own purposes, that we employ human confessions of faith to do what it was never intended and is not calculated to do.

3d. Are human creeds and confessions chargeable with expressly or by implication adding to the words of Scripture?

Could this charge be substantiated, then indeed subordinate standards must be accounted inconsistent with the sufficiency and supreme authority of Scripture. But that this is not the case, the very slightest consideration will suffice to show. That human creeds and confessions may be framed upon the principle of including articles of faith and rules of conduct not contained directly or indirectly in the Bible, it is impossible to deny; for the Church of Rome in her standards has afforded but too plain an exemplification of this. But the creeds of Protestant Churches being simply declaratory of the law of Christ, and nothing more, cannot, in principle at least, lie open to such a charge. In this respect, creeds and subordinate standards must be accounted as standing nearly on the same footing with the ordinance of exposition or interpretation, or preaching the Word of God, exercised by any pastor. The one is no more guilty of adding to the Word of God than the other. They both profess to be a human interpretation by the Church of the mind of God as revealed in His Word. They both claim to be believed because they declare the truth

of God, and no further than they declare it. The authoritative declaration of Divine truth delivered from the pulpit is the Church's oral confession of faith. The authoritative declaration of Divine truth embodied in subordinate standards is the Church's written confession of faith. To affirm that the one is inconsistent with the authority of Scripture, because it is virtually the Church adding its own articles of faith to those revealed in Scripture, is an argument that must upon the very same ground apply with equal force to the other. In relation to the Word of God, the ordinance of exposition or preaching on the one hand, and the adoption of human interpretations in the shape of written confessions or creeds on the other, are both declaratory, and no more than declaratory, of the truth revealed in Scripture; and any objection on this score must, in principle, militate as strongly against the one as against the other.

II. So much, then, for the first general objection taken against subordinate standards of faith, as inconsistent with the authority and sole supremacy of the Word of God. The second grand head under which the arguments against subordinate standards may be ranked is, that in one shape or other they are an unlawful imposition upon or restriction of the Christian liberty of the members of the Church. With respect to this objection, taken in its general form, there are two remarks which may be made.

In the first place, if, by the adoption and imposition by its authority of subordinate standards on office-bearers or members, the Church were imposing a new creed and a new rule of conduct not previously obligatory, then indeed the charge of restricting Christian liberty would be well founded. But if the principles already laid down in regard to this matter be correct,—if subordinate standards, in so far as they embody doctrine, are no more than declaratory of the truths of Scripture, and in so far as they contain a directory for practice, are no more than declaratory of the law of Christ,—then it cannot be alleged that they restrict the liberty of Christians any further than the Word of God has already restricted it. So long as subordinate standards keep strictly within the limits of the Word of God, the

liberty of the members of the Church cannot be said to be sacrificed to them. It may be a question indeed, and a question not very easily resolved, how far short of the limits of the Word of God it is expedient for subordinate standards to stop in laying down articles of faith, and prescribing regulations as terms of admission to membership or office in the Church, even although these articles and regulations be justified by Scripture. To multiply the number of articles of faith, or of regulations for Church order, and to lay these down minutely and in detail in the creeds and constitutions of the Church, even although all sanctioned by the Word of God, may be an error, as tending not to abridge Christian freedom, but to injure the cause of union among Churches and Church members. The multiplication of Church articles and rules, not fundamental, may on this account be a serious and hurtful error, hostile to the unity of the body of Christ. But if they are acknowledged to be within the limits of the Word of God, they cannot, by any one who so acknowledges them, be accounted without manifest inconsistency as infringements upon his Christian freedom. By his own acknowledgment, an exemption from submission to such doctrines and duties is not part of the freedom which is reserved to him in the Word of God. If indeed the articles of the Church's standards are not justified by Scripture, then on that account, and on that alone, they ought to be expunged from her confession, and are not binding so long as they are retained in it. But if they are sanctioned by the Scriptures, they must be also consistent with Scripture freedom.

But, in the second place, so far from subordinate standards being in the very nature of them inconsistent with Christian liberty, the doctrine that condemns and would forbid them is itself inconsistent with the true liberty of the Church and its members. View the Christian Church in no other or higher light than as a voluntary society, and as a voluntary society it must have the right to fix its own terms of admission whether to membership or to office within it. This right, belonging to the Church in common with any merely voluntary association, is confirmed by the additional consideration, that it is a right guaranteed to it by Christ, in virtue of its being not

only or chiefly a voluntary society, but one instituted and governed by Himself. And yet it is this right which is denied to the Christian Church by those who declare that subordinate standards are unlawful and ought to be done away with, whether as a term of communion or a test of orthodoxy. Such a theory virtually denies to the Church of Christ the liberty that is enjoyed by every voluntary society to fix its own terms of fellowship, and to admit to or exclude from membership or office, according as individuals do or do not come up to these terms. Reduce to practice such a theory, and the Church must submit, against its own will and without objection, to receive into its fellowship and among its office-bearers all who claim admission, pretending to hold the Bible as the profession of their faith, but denying, it may be, every one of its fundamental doctrines. Declare subordinate standards to be unlawful, and abolish them in so far as regards their use in defining the Church's membership and testing the character of her office-bearers, and you impose upon the Church the degradation of being compelled to admit all indiscriminately to office and fellowship whose heresies can be contained within a profession of regard to the Scriptures: you rob her of the liberty won for her by Christ, and not denied to the humblest private society, of saying who shall and who shall not have the privilege of enjoying her fellowship and holding her offices. So far from its being true that the use of subordinate standards deprives the Church of her Christian liberty, they are, on the contrary, the shield of her freedom. The theory that proscribes their use and their lawfulness would, if carried fairly out, subject her liberty and rights to the inroad of all who might have it in their hearts to make her their tool or their slave. Such a theory has never been carried out in practice even by Churches which assert theoretically the unlawfulness of confessions. In one shape or other, and under one name or other, such confessions have always been employed as terms of admission for members and ministers. Without them, indeed, either embodied in a written creed or in an oral statement,—either imposed and enforced by office-bearers or by congregations,—there could be no purity of communion, and no freedom of action for the Church. The rights that belong to the humblest voluntary society



would be rights of which the Church of Christ could not boast; and its Christian freedom would be put under the foot of every passer-by. The doctrine that forbids the use of subordinate standards in the Church, carried out to its legitimate result, must throw down all the barriers that protect its Christian fellowship, and leave its territory a defenceless prey to the alien and the foe.

The objections taken to creeds and confessions on the ground we are now considering, when viewed more in detail, and with reference more especially to their bearing against the use of such subordinate standards as tests of membership and office in the Church, resolve themselves generally into the following shapes:

1. There are some men who object to all authorized creeds and articles of faith whatsoever, on the ground that they make the name of Christian and the advantages of Christian fellowship dependent on assent to certain positive truths or dogmas, whether more or fewer. There are some writers in the present day who hold the extreme position, that a man may be fully entitled to call himself a Christian, although he does not believe a single fact or doctrine of Christianity, although he denies the historical existence of the Christ of the Gospels, and the Divine origin of the system which He founded. "To declare any one unworthy of the name of Christian," says Blanco White, "because he does not agree with your belief, is to fall into the intolerance of the articulated Churches. The moment that the name Christian is made necessarily to contain in its signification belief in certain historical or metaphysical propositions, that moment the name itself becomes a creed: the length of that creed is of little consequence.... No man has a right to reject another from the Christian union on account of any abstract opinion whatever." "A total disbelief of miracles and prophecy," observes Mr. Hennel in his Christian Theism, "no more disqualifies a man for bearing with propriety and consistency the Christian name, than any other deduction from the exuberant belief which places Christ in the Triune Godhead." Upon views such as these it is not needful to dwell.<sup>3</sup>

2. There are other writers who are very far from going to the extremes now referred to, or from denying that the belief of any truth is necessary to salvation, or is implied in the Christian name; but who maintain that we are not at liberty to embody truth in a creed, and to use this as a test of membership or office in the Church, and that when we do this we sin, or at all events act in a way highly inexpedient and injurious to the best interests of Christianity.

Mr. Isaac Taylor, in an article in the North British Review upon the works of Dr. Chalmers, announces that it is of the greatest importance to "separate between the truth and the creed," and "to present the truth to the mind of the people apart from the creed," in which it is "entombed." If Dr. Chalmers had rightly understood this, Mr. Taylor considers that, "thenceforward leaving 'rampant infidelity' to run out its own reckless course, he would have given his giant energy to the more hopeful task of ridding his country and its Church of the thraldoms imposed on them in a dark and evil age."

Christianity, we are told in other quarters, "is a life, not a dogma;" and we may and ought to have religion without theology, and Churches without creeds. Such opinions and expressions, in the case of some, undoubtedly spring from an underlying feeling of dislike to all positive Divine truth, more especially when pressed upon them in the shape of distinct and definite statements claiming the submission of the understanding and conscience on the ground of the authority of God. But in the case of very many who use the sort of language referred to, it arises, I believe, from sheer confusion of ideas. The fact that I can say "Credo," I believe this or that truth, does not make the truth the worse, but rather the better, as regards myself; nor does it put me in a worse, but in a better, position with respect to other and new truths to which I may yet hope to attain. And the essential nature of the case is not altered in the least when I put my belief into accurate words, and exhibit it to other men, whether orally or in writing.<sup>3</sup> And what is lawful and expedient for me as a private member of the ecclesiastical society, is at least equally legitimate and

fitting for the Church, or the office-bearers of the Church, to do in their collective capacity.

If, indeed, the statement of belief which I make to my friend, in order to ascertain whether we "two can walk together as those that are agreed" on the essential truths of Christianity,—or the statement of belief which the Church makes and asks her office-bearers to subscribe, in order that she may ascertain their soundness in the faith which she has pledged herself to her members and the world to maintain and expound through them,—be an inaccurate exposition or embodiment of the truth, let that be distinctly alleged and proved. An objection on the ground of discrepancy between the Divine truth and this or that human expression of it, is a competent and, if established, an unanswerable objection. An objection founded on a vague allegation of discrepancy between Divine truth and all positive human expressions of it, is neither a competent nor a sound objection.

3. There is another class of the objectors to confessions of faith as tests of membership and office in the Christian society, whose opposition to them arises not so much from dislike to positive Divine truth, or to distinct and definite statements of it by the Church in general, as from dislike to some particular set of doctrines embodied in the standards of some particular Church. The Arians of the fourth century often opposed the definitions of the Trinity put forth by the Church at Nice and Constantinople, on the general ground of the unlawfulness of imposing any such test of orthodoxy in other than Scriptural words. But the real source of their objection to the term *ὁμοουσιος* was dislike to the doctrine it so unequivocally conveyed. And in like manner, in our own day, much of the opposition to confessions of faith which takes the form of general objections to all human summaries of Divine truth when employed as terms of private or ministerial communion, really has its root in a distaste for the theology of the Reformation, which is embodied in the authorized standards of all the Reformed Churches of Christendom.

Upon objections which ultimately resolve themselves into a feeling of this nature, it is, of course, needless to dwell here. When manifested in their true shape, they must be dealt with on a different field of discussion, and removed by other arguments than those which are relevant and sufficient to establish the lawfulness and expediency of using confessions of faith as tests of membership and office in the Church.

4. Creeds and confessions are objected to by not a few as hindrances to the progress and development of theological science, and as based upon the assumption that all revealed truth can be fully comprehended by any body of uninspired men, and stereotyped for all time in a merely human summary. Now, such objections as these proceed upon a total misapprehension of the true state of the case. We do not say that the statements of the Westminster Confession, for example, comprise the whole truth of God: what we do say is that we believe them to be true—to be a true expression of the revealed mind and will of God, so far as they go. Let any part of them be proved from Scripture to be false, and we give it up; for we hold them only because, and in so far as, they are true. We invite every man to go beyond them if he can. We encourage and call upon every student of God's holy Word to press forward to fresh discoveries of truth, and to open up new views of the meaning of Scripture. "There remaineth yet much land to be possessed." Those who have studied their Bibles longest and most prayerfully are most convinced of that. But here, we believe, in this form of ancient and sound words, is so much of the good land and large already so far explored and taken possession of. Here is so much of truth made good, and rescued from the tumult of error and ignorance, and fenced round with enduring bulwarks which have many a time already turned the battle from our gates. As well might you ask the men of Holland to throw down the dykes that guard their shores from the assault and inroad of the sea, and that were reared at such cost and pains by those that went before them, as call upon us, unless with far more weighty arguments than have ever yet been offered, to yield up the territory won for us by the sanctified learning, the insight, and the prayers of our forefathers.

In bringing to a close our discussion of this important subject, there is one point of considerable practical importance to which I would very briefly advert. The distinction, to which I have already referred, between a confession of faith regarded as a declaration of or testimony to Divine truth, and a confession of faith regarded as a test of membership and office, has not always been sufficiently kept in view in the Reformed Churches. Owing to this especially, the multiplication of articles, true in themselves, but non-fundamental, and of comparatively subordinate importance, has been in some cases unquestionably a practical evil.

It is perfectly clear, for example, that the Westminster Confession is not fitted to be a test of Church membership. Accordingly we do not use it as such, and our Church has never appointed it to be so used. Even as regards some of the office-bearers of the Church, it may fairly be questioned whether it is altogether adapted to be employed as a test of their fitness for office. The general principle to be laid down with respect to this matter seems to be this: Whatever truths it is necessary for a man to believe in order that he may rightly discharge his duty in the Church, these it is lawful for the Church to embody in a confession and require his subscription to as a condition of office; and vice versâ, Whatever truths it is not necessary for a man to hold in order to the right discharge of the duties of his office, these it is not lawful to demand his subscription to as a term of office. What those precise truths may be to which we are warranted in requiring an express personal adhesion in the case of the different ranks of office-bearers, is another, and, it may be, a more difficult question; but of the soundness of the general principle now enunciated, there can, I think, be little doubt. Take the case of deacons, for example. They have not, generally speaking, the theological training necessary to enable them fully to understand the Confession of Faith in all its parts; and if they had, they do not need to understand it all in order to perform efficiently the work of their office in the Church. And so even in the higher office of ruling elder. The amount of truth which an elder requires intelligently to hold in order rightly to do the duty of ruling in the Church, to which he is

especially set apart at his ordination, is much less than that which is needed by the minister, who is publicly to teach as well as to exercise government and discipline in the Christian society.

## **DIVISION II:**

# **CHURCH POWER EXERCISED IN REGARD TO ORDINANCES**

## **SUBDIVISION I.**

### **PROVISION FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP**

#### **CHAPTER I:**

##### **THE DIVINE ORIGIN, PERMANENT OBLIGATION, AND LEGITIMATE PARTS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP**

HAVING brought to a close our discussion of the exercise of Church power in reference to doctrine, we pass on to the next department of our subject,—namely, the exercise of Church power with respect to ordinances. The province of the Church in the use and administration of ordinances is an extensive one, and embraces topics of no ordinary interest and importance. The outward provision which God has made for the maintenance of His own worship, the dispensation of ordinances, and the celebration of religious observances in the Christian society—the external apparatus which He has established for the ordinary conveyance of grace to the body of believers from His Spirit, and which is fitted for their spiritual edification and growth in grace—is a most remarkable feature in the character of the Church of Christ. A certain trust has been committed to the Church, and a certain duty is expected from her, in reference to these matters; and it is of much importance to ascertain precisely the nature and extent of her office with respect to them. It has been given to the Church to keep up the public worship of God in the Christian society, according to the method which He

Himself has prescribed, to administer those outward means of grace which He makes effectual by His Spirit to the edification of the body of believers, to order and dispense that external provision for gathering and perfecting the visible society of His people in this world which He has appointed for their present good. A certain measure of power and authority belongs to the Church in its office in connection with these matters. And in entering upon the discussion of the function and authority of the Church in reference to outward ordinances, we shall meet with some of the most interesting as well as difficult questions in this department of theology.

The subject of the administration of Church power with respect to ordinances, may be conveniently distributed into four divisions.

First of all, we have the provision made within the Church, and to be maintained from generation to generation, for keeping up the public worship of God according to the form and method which God Himself has prescribed. Next we have the Divine appointment of a special time for the observance of worship, regulating as it does the question of when and how often Divine service ought to be celebrated as the public act of the Church. After that we have the instrumentality by which, on such occasions, the public services of the Church in its acts of worship are to be carried on, requiring as they do a special order of men to be set apart and qualified for the work. And lastly, we have the positive institutions established in the Christian society in addition to the ordinary weekly public worship of God, and which are designed as special means of grace, in the way of outwardly signifying and inwardly sealing it to the people of God. The Church of Christ has to sustain a certain office in regard to these four different things; and the subject of Church power in connection with ordinances may be conveniently discussed according to the division thus suggested. In other words, the question of the power of the Church in reference to ordinances, upon which we are about to enter, may be argued under these four heads: in reference, first, to the ordinance of public worship in general; second, to the ordinance of the Sabbath; third, to the ordinance of the ministry; and fourth, to



the ordinance of the Sacraments. These four heads or subdivisions of our subject we shall consider in their order.

Now, in entering upon the consideration of the public worship of God viewed in its general aspect, the first question that meets us is in regard to the standing authority and binding obligation of such an ordinance. From what source is the duty of public religious worship derived; and is it intended to be a standing and permanent ordinance in the Church of Christ? It is not difficult to find an answer to such a question, or to evince the nature and obligation of the ordinance as part of the public homage of the Church to God.

I. The foundation of the duty of social worship lies in the law of nature itself.

View man individually and apart from other men, and it is the very law of his being, as a creature of God, to love, and honour, and serve his Creator. Praise and outward homage and adoration are the very expression by a dependent creature of the relation in which as a creature he stands to God—the very end for which he was created and exists. Add to the idea of the individual man, taken and regarded as separate and apart from others, the further idea of man as a social being, or man made for and placed in the society of others, and you are at once shut up to the notion of social worship as a duty no less binding upon men collectively, than was the duty of private worship upon men individually. Into whatever relation he enters, man carries with him the same paramount and unchanging law which binds him to honour, and love, and worship his Creator; and every relation of life, capable of being turned to such an end, underlies according to its character the same obligation of doing homage to God. Man in the closet, man in the family, man in the Church, is equally bound to the duties of the personal, the domestic, the public worship of God. Without this, there are many of the powers and faculties of man's nature as a social being, formed as they were for the glory of God, which he cannot bring to do their proper work of glorifying Him. The worship of God, publicly and in society with others, is the proper

expression towards God of man's social nature. The very law and light of nature tell us that the public worship of God is a standing and permanent ordinance for the whole human race.

II. The institution of the ordinance of public worship as a standing and permanent ordinance for man, is demonstrated by the Divine appointment in regard to it.

In what manner man as the creature of God is to hold intercourse with Him for the purpose of worship; in what form or by what methods he is to express his natural duty of honouring and adoring his Maker; by what positive institutions, or in what appointed way, he is to draw near in religious service to God,—all this has not been left to the wisdom or invention of men to regulate, but has been determined and ruled by God Himself. The public worship of one God and Father of all, forms indeed one of the duties of natural religion; but in addition to this, it has been made one of the positive appointments of revealed religion, and the manner of it has been expressly enjoined. From the very beginning there has been a visible society of men united together upon the principle of "calling upon the name of the Lord" in social union, and separated from other men by the profession which characterizes them as His people. In other words, there has been a Church on earth under every dispensation since the first; the members of which have been distinguished from the rest of the world by the faith which they held in common, and by uniting together in public acts of worship as expressive of that faith. The avowal of their belief in the face of men, and their association in a Church state for the purposes of public religious worship, were not matters of mere opinion on their part, nor matters resulting solely from the obligations of natural religion. They associated themselves together in this way by the express institution of God, in accordance with the promise that Christ should have a seed to serve Him, and a Church throughout all ages.<sup>2</sup> It was a Church union constituted upon the authority of God, and regulated by His positive institutions; and Church worship as a revealed ordinance was grafted upon the duty as previously recognised in the character of an ordinance of nature.

There is a duty of nature, which lays upon man the obligation of social worship; there is a duty of grace to the same effect, over and above the duty of nature. And not only so. But the manner of social worship, in addition to the duty, has been expressly appointed by God. There has never been wanting in any age since the first a Divine directory for the form and method of worship, suited to man's circumstances as a sinner, and regulating the manner of his approach in religious acts to God. There have been at all times positive observances and institutions of worship added to what was enjoined or required by the law of nature. This addition of positive institutions of worship, and the express regulation of the manner of it, were more especially necessitated by man's fall. After the fatal separation between man and God occasioned by that event, it remained for God, and for Him alone, to say whether He would ever again permit the approach of man to Him in the way of worship; and if so, it remained for God, and for Him alone, to prescribe the terms and to regulate the manner of the approach. In regard to such a matter as either the conditions or the way of a sinner's approach to God in accepted worship, it was for the sinner not to devise his own method, but to receive submissively God's method. And hence not only the duty of Church worship, but the express manner of it, have been dictated by God in every age; and the way in which a sinner might worship Him acceptably, has been prescribed and regulated by positive Divine institution. There are the arbitrary rules and observances of a Church state enjoined according to a Divine directory for worship, in addition to what the religion of nature might dictate.

These institutions of public worship of a positive kind have varied from age to age under the different dispensations of God. There were the rite of sacrifice and the original promise, that formed the public worship and the Bible of men immediately after the fall. There were, in addition to these, the rite of circumcision and the covenant with his special seed, that formed the directory for worship and the revelation given to Abraham and his successors in the patriarchal time. There were the passover and the giving of the law, the

institutions of Moses, the temple service, and the prophecies, that formed the appointed worship and oracles of the Jewish Church. And under the New Testament dispensation, although, compared with what went before, it is a spiritual one, God still regulates the manner as well as enjoins the duty of Church worship. In short, in no one age since the first have sinners been left to their own devices or option in regard either to the duty or to the manner of social worship. Nor could it be so. The sinner may not dare to approach to God, even for the purpose of worshipping Him, except according to the express manner which God has laid down. Public worship is one of the acts of the Church; and every part of the tabernacle is to be made according to the model given on the mount. It is a standing and perpetual ordinance of God, originating in and regulated by express and positive appointment by God.

III. What are the essential parts of public worship as a perpetual and standing ordinance of God in the Church?

Let the Confession of Faith, in the propositions it lays down in regard to religious worship, furnish an answer to that question. "Prayer with thanksgiving," says the Westminster Confession, "being one special part of religious worship, is by God required of all men." And again: "The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the Word in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence; singing of psalms with grace in the heart; as also the due administration and worthy receiving of the Sacraments instituted by Christ, are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God." These four things, then—prayer, the reading and preaching of the Word, singing of psalms, and the dispensation of Sacraments—make up the ordinary public worship of God, as designed to be a standing ordinance in the Church, and to be kept up uninterruptedly from one generation to another. All of these are revealed institutions appointed by God in His Word; and some of them are also duties of natural religion. First, there is prayer, forming part of the ordinary duty of the Church in its acts of public worship. The essential idea of prayer is the necessary and natural

expression of the wants of a dependent creature to God,—the utterance of its need with a voice lifted up to Him who alone can satisfy and supply it. In this aspect of it, prayer is the dictate of natural religion. But as part of the public worship of the Church, it is more than this. Prayer, as offered to God through the special channel of a Mediator, and in the name of Christ, is one of those positive institutions added to the duties of natural religion in that worship. The essence of it is common to natural and revealed religion; but the particular manner of it, as presented only through a Saviour, is a positive addition in Church worship to the necessary dictates of the law of nature. Second, there is the reading and preaching of the Word, as constituting part of the ordinary public worship of God. Here, too, there is something that is natural, and something also that is added as of positive appointment. In so far as this part of worship can be regarded simply as the communication to the worshippers of the knowledge of God's character, it may perhaps be reckoned a dictate of natural religion. But there is far more than this in it. It is a positive institution of worship, added expressly by God in revelation, in so far as it must be regarded as the communication, by the reading or preaching of the Gospel, of the knowledge of God in that special character in which He has revealed Himself to sinners as reconciled in Christ. In this respect the public reading or preaching of the Word is an addition of an arbitrary or positive institution of worship, over and above what was dictated by the law of nature. Third, there is the praise of God by "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," forming also a part of the ordinary public worship in the Church. In this also there is something which is the dictate of nature, and something which is the result of institution. Praise is the natural and necessary utterance towards God of the gratitude or adoration of a creature for blessings enjoyed, or because of Divine glory exhibited and seen. But in so far as it is the expression of wonder, admiration, and thanksgiving, for the grace of redemption, and because of the glory of God as the Redeemer, it is a positive institution superinduced upon the dictate of natural religion. This is the chief and principal character under which it enters as an essential element into the worship of the Church; and it is therefore principally to be regarded

as a positive institution of Church worship. Fourth and last, there is the celebration of the Sacraments—those outward institutions which signify and seal Divine grace to the souls of Christ's people. In their entire character and under all their aspects they are positive institutions, expressly appointed for the Church by its Divine Head, and as such, altogether distinct from the worship of natural religion. In all those parts or elements which enter into the duty of public worship there is more or less of positive and arbitrary appointment, originating in the express injunction of God, and dictated by Him as the way and manner for the approach of sinners to Himself. The duty, and the form in which the duty is to be discharged, are both enjoined by Divine command; and as the standing and perpetual ordinance of Christ in His house, the Church is only safe and in the right discharge of its office when it administers the ordinance in His name, and in strict conformity with His regulations.

IV. All the parts of the public worship of the Church are characterized by this peculiarity, that as means of grace they either cannot be enjoyed and used at all by Christians individually, or not enjoyed and used to the same gracious effect.

All the elements of worship to which we have referred are parts of a public ordinance, and not of a private one. They belong to the body of believers collectively, and not individually. They are to be enjoyed as means of grace, not by Christians separately, but by Christians in their Church state, and in communion with one another. No doubt, with respect to some of them, they may be used by individuals apart and alone, and without respect to their being participated in by others. There is private prayer as well as public prayer. There may be solitary praise addressed to God from the closet, as well as jointly from the great congregation in the sanctuary. There are such things as private Communion and private Baptism, distinct from the public celebration of those ordinances. But even in respect to those parts of public and social worship which may be used—or misused—in private, and by individuals apart from the society of believers, it is still true that they do not carry with them the same blessing in

private as in their public use. They belong, in their character as parts of public worship, to the Church as a body, and not to the individual members of the Church as apart from the rest; and even where the individual use of these ordinances is not impossible or unlawful, but the reverse, they are not used to the same gracious effect, nor have they the same gracious influence, as in the case of the social and joint employment of them.

Prayer is an ordinance of a private kind, as well as of a public; but there is a promise of a more abundant answer and a more effectual blessing when "two or three shall agree together to ask anything of God," than when they ask apart. The reading of the Word, too, is an ordinance meant for the closet as well as for the sanctuary; but in the former case there is no such special and effectual promise as that which declares in regard to the latter, that "where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, there He will be in the midst of them." The ordinance of Communion, as its very name imports, is a social and public ordinance, and not the reverse; and the disciple of Christ has a peculiar right to look for grace in company with the other disciples, when they meet together at their Master's Table, which those have not who unlawfully and presumptuously change the public into a private ordinance, and partake of private Communions. In short, the blessing upon ordinances is but half a blessing when enjoyed alone, even in those cases when the ordinance may be used by the Christian apart from others; while there is no blessing at all promised to the unlawful use of public ordinances in a private manner, in the case where they admit of no such private appropriation. Either they cannot be enjoyed at all in their character of means of grace, except socially, or else they cannot be enjoyed to the same gracious effect. All the parts of Church worship belong in a peculiar and emphatic sense to the Church, and they are made effectual by the presence and Spirit of Christ, as His instruments for building up and strengthening the collective body of believers in a manner and to an extent unknown in the case of private and solitary worship. The outward provision which Christ has made for social Christianity, as embodied and realized in the communion of the

Church, is richer in grace and more abundant in blessing by far than the provision made for individual Christianity, as embodied and realized in separate believers. The positive institutions of Church worship, designed for Christians associated in a Church state, carry with them a virtue unknown in the case of Christians individually.

Such are the grounds on which it may be satisfactorily shown that the ordinance of public worship—embracing as it does the positive institutions of prayer and praise, the ministry of the Word, and Sacraments—is an ordinance of Divine appointment, designed and fitted to be perpetual in the Church. I speak of it at present in its most general character, postponing in the meantime the more detailed consideration of the various institutions included under it, and the more specific proof that they are of standing and permanent obligation in the Christian society. Without entering on the question at present either of the nature or the continued authority of the positive rites connected with the public worship of the Church, it is sufficient to say that the ordinance of public worship in general, and in one form or other, is one belonging of necessity to a Church state, and is part of that outward provision which Christ has established for the edification of His members, and which He designed to be a standing and perpetual appointment in His Church.

Now these principles—which, as thus generally laid down, seem to be fairly warranted by Scripture—are diametrically opposed to the Church system, or rather the no-Church system, of those who, like the Quakers, set aside all the positive institutions of Christianity, and deny that Christ has appointed any outward provision of ordinances in His Church. The fundamental principle of all such theories is, that the inward light or provision of grace bestowed upon the individual, supersedes the use or necessity of any outward provision of ordinances in the Church; that the Spirit of God given to each personally supplies the want of external institutions and positive rites; and that the latter have been done away with under the present economy as the last and highest of the dispensations of God, and have become unnecessary, since the ministration of the Spirit has



supplanted every other, and especially every outward ministry in the Christian society. Hence outward and positive ordinances—a form of public worship and religious service; stated times for social prayer or preaching; a standing ministry, and an official teaching of the Word of God; Sacraments and external institutions of whatever kind—are thought inconsistent with the true character of a Christian Church, an intrusion upon the office and work of the Spirit, and in opposition to the nature and design of His dispensation. Such are the principles, more or less modified, held by those who, under the plea of a certain spirituality and a superior attainment as to religious standing, seek to do away with Gospel ordinances and an outward provision for the edification of the Church in general, and more especially with the institution of public worship as a standing and permanent institution in the Christian society. These principles, in their application to the permanence and standing obligation of particular ordinances, may fall to be dealt with again, and in detail, when the subsequent course of our argument brings us to consider these ordinances separately. In the meantime, it is only necessary briefly and in general terms to announce those Scriptural positions which may serve to exhibit the fallacy of such a system.

1st. The absence of any declaration in the Word of God, express or implied, that it was the intention of Christ to abolish the positive institutions and outward provision established in connection with the New Testament Church, is itself an evidence that they were designed to be standing and perpetual ordinances in the Christian society. It cannot be denied—indeed, it is granted on all hands, as well by those who disown as by those who assert the permanence of positive rites and an outward provision of ordinances in the Church—that there were such institutions established by Christ, and observed in obedience to His appointment by His disciples at the first. And it cannot be shown, from any statements of Scripture, or any reasonable inference from its statements, that it was Christ's intention that such outward ordinances, once appointed, should afterwards cease; or that there was a time coming when they were to be abolished as no longer of authority or for edification in the

Church. It cannot be shown that their efficacy and power for the edification of the Church was to diminish, and at last to vanish away. It cannot be shown that the promise of Christ to communicate of His Spirit through ordinances, was at any time to cease to be fulfilled. It cannot be shown that any higher and more gracious dispensation than that of the Gospel Church was foretold as about to come and supersede the present Church state. It cannot be shown that the Church, as constituted by Christ at His resurrection, with its outward provision of ordinances, is not the last and the best dispensation this world is to enjoy. In short, the absence of any intimation in the Word of God, either expressed or implied, that the present Church state was to be abolished and to give place to another, sufficiently demonstrates that its primitive provision of outward ordinances was designed to be a permanent and standing institution in the world.

2d. The outward provision of ordinance in the Church forms part of the administration of Christ's visible kingdom in this world, and as such is destined to be permanent and perpetual. The statements of Scripture abundantly prove that Christ possesses not only an invisible, but also a visible, kingdom of His own; and that the promise of perpetuity for His crown includes under it the permanence of both. The visible Church is Christ's kingdom; and the administration of government, ordinance, and discipline within it, is but part of that administration by which He rules over His people. That kingdom may at different times be more or less manifest to the outward eye, and more or less conspicuous in the view of men. But He has left us a promise that the powers of evil shall never finally prevail against it or sweep it entirely away; and as belonging essentially to the due administration of that kingdom, and forming a part of it, the outward dispensation of ordinances and worship in the Church shall never fail.

3d. The use and design of ordinances in the Church seem sufficiently to indicate that they are destined to be permanent. There is no promise of any future age when their office would be unnecessary, and might cease. The ordinances of the former economy were done

away with when a higher was introduced, because their end was served, and their object accomplished. They gave place to others when their work was done. But the end for which the ordinances of the Christian Church have been established will not be completely accomplished until the hour of the consummation of all things. The apostle in the Epistle to the Ephesians expressly declares, that the gifts of outward administration given to the Church are designed to be subservient to the final advancement of the saints "to the unity of the faith, and the full knowledge of the Son of God." And until that final perfecting of the Church state be completed at the last day, we have his warrant to believe that its ordinances shall remain and be administered.

4th. There are express announcements in Scripture, warranting us to assert that the various institutions and rites that make up the outward provision of government, worship, ordinance, and discipline in the Church of Christ, shall be continued to the end of the world. There are promises, or precepts, or statements in Scripture connected with each of them, in such a manner as to demonstrate that they are permanent appointments, and not intended to pass away. I do not enter into detail in illustration of this proposition at present, when handling the subject of public worship in general, because I may have occasion to do so when I come to treat of the particular ordinances of the Church separately. It is enough meanwhile to assert the general proposition, that there are express testimonies in the Word of God to the fact that the positive institutions and outward ordinances of the Christian society were each and all designed to be permanent, and not to be superseded or done away.

So much, then, for the permanent authority and standing character of Church ordinances in general, and Church worship in particular, in opposition to those whose principles would supersede or deny their perpetual obligation. The present Church state of the Christian society is not to be modified into something more spiritual, or to give place to any other, until the Church itself is transplanted into glory.

Dwelling on the earth, and conversant with the creatures of the earth, the Church has its outward ordinances and visible signs as well as its inward and spiritual ministrations. Through the channel of these outward and positive ordinances the Spirit of God is poured, in the full tide of His Divine and gracious influences, upon the hearts of His people,—a double power, as it were, embracing both the spiritual and the sensible, so as to work mightily for the renewal and sanctification both of body and spirit in man. The Spirit of God conveyed through the outward ordinances of the Church is the fitting counterpart adapted to the soul enshrined, as it at present is, in the flesh. It is both a spiritual and an outward influence, appropriate and fitted to the combination of the spiritual and the outward in man. And the twofold and joint influence of the Spirit and the fleshly ordinance shall continue to work for the perfecting of the Church, until that hour when outward ordinances shall be done away because they are no longer needed,—when the soul, through the marvellous process of the resurrection, shall come to be joined, not to a natural or fleshly body, but to a spiritual one.

## **CHAPTER II:**

### **RITES AND CEREMONIES IN PUBLIC WORSHIP**

WE have already considered the grounds on which we are prepared to argue that Public Worship—including as the proper and essential elements of it, prayer, preaching, praise, and Sacraments—is an ordinance of God fitted and intended to be permanent and perpetual in the Church. It is our duty now, in prosecution of the subject, to

consider the office or function of the Church in connection with this ordinance, and the authority or power which it is given to her to administer in the matter. There is one question more especially opened up by such a consideration, which is of more than ordinary interest and importance in the department of ecclesiastical theology. I mean the precise office or power of the Church in reference to ritual and ceremonial observance in connection with the public worship of God. The public religious worship of God is the dictate, as we have already seen, of natural religion—an ordinance for man binding and permanent even according to the law of nature. But viewed simply in this light, there is a considerably wide and unfettered choice allowed as to the manner in which men shall worship; natural religion not limiting or restricting to any great extent the liberty of men to worship God after the fashion they judge best, and not indicating very distinctly the precise form in which they shall do so. The social worship of God demanded by nature has not been very strictly regulated as to the manner of it by nature; and were there no other authority than the light of reason in this matter, it could not be said that men were strictly shut up to any precise or unvarying method of it, or forbidden to adopt their own. But viewing the ordinance of public worship in another and higher light, regarding it as an appointment not of nature, but of revelation, looking at it as an institute founded upon the express command of God in His Word, the question arises: Is the same latitude as to the form and manner of it permitted as natural religion allowed, or are the worshippers tied up from exercising their own discretion and liberty of choice in the matter? In other words, taking public worship as a positive appointment of God in Scripture, enjoined on the Church as one of its standing and perpetual ordinances, has the manner in which the duty is to be performed been enjoined in the Bible, as well as the duty itself? or has it been left open to the Church to use its own discretion in selecting, and its own authority in enforcing, a form and method of its own?

Of course there may be very different views adopted with respect to this power of the Church in regulating and determining for itself the

form and service of public worship. It may be held that there are in Scripture express precepts, or particular binding examples, or general principles no less binding, sufficient to make up a proper directory for the manner of conducting public worship, leaving to the Church no liberty or office in the matter but to carry into effect the provisions so enjoined upon it. Or it may be held that there is nothing in Scripture so definite and precise as to form a rule at all, and that the manner of public worship is a matter wholly and exclusively within the proper jurisdiction of the Church. Or it may be held, that while some specific institutions are appointed in Scripture in connection with public worship, yet very much of what is positive in regard to it is left for the Church by its own authority to regulate and enforce. And it comes to be a question of no small interest and moment to ascertain the true Scriptural principles which ought to rule in this matter, and to bring these fairly to bear upon the theories now referred to. What, then, is the office of the Church in the way of authoritatively regulating or prescribing the manner or services of public worship? We take it for granted that it is an ordinance designed to be permanent and of perpetual obligation in the Church. What is the extent and what are the limits of Church power in regard to it?

There can be no mistake as to the doctrine held and inculcated by the authorized standards of our Church with respect to the exercise of Church power about the public worship of God. In the twentieth chapter of the Westminster Confession, under the head of "Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience," the power of the Church not only in regard to matters of faith, but also in regard to matters of worship, is expressly excluded as not binding on the conscience, in anything beyond the limits of what is laid down in Scripture. "God alone," says the Confession of Faith, "is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His Word, or beside it, in matters of faith and worship: so that to believe such doctrines or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute

and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also." The direct object of the Confession in this passage is no doubt to assert the right and extent of liberty of conscience; but along with that, it very distinctly enunciates the doctrine, that neither in regard to faith nor in regard to worship has the Church any authority beside or beyond what is laid down in the Bible; and that it has no right to decree and enforce new observances or institutions in the department of Scriptural worship, any more than to teach and inculcate new truths in the department of Scriptural faith. In entire accordance with this statement of the Confession, is the doctrine announced in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. In the Larger Catechism, the answer to the question, "What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?" tells us that "the sins forbidden in the second commandment are all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and in anywise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God Himself;" ... "all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever."<sup>2</sup> In answer to a similar question, the Shorter Catechism declares that "the second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in His Word." The doctrine, then, in regard to the exercise of Church power in the worship of God held by our standards is sufficiently distinct. The Church has no authority in regulating the manner, appointing the form, or dictating the observances of worship, beside or beyond what the Scripture declares on these points,—the Bible containing the only directory for determining these matters, and the Church having no discretion to add to or alter what is there fixed.

The Church of Rome holds a doctrine in regard to the extent and limits of Church power in connection with the worship of God the very opposite of this. It assigns to ecclesiastical authority a right to regulate and enjoin to an unlimited extent the manner and the ordinances of Church worship,—making what additions it deems fit to the institutions, the observances, the rules enjoined upon the

worshippers, without regard to the intimations of Scripture on the subject. Pretending as it does to be in possession of an unwritten word to supply the deficiencies of the written, and of an infallible authority to bind the conscience, it is in perfect harmony with its other claims that the Church of Rome arrogates a right upon its own authority to add to, and alter, and take from the ordinances and manner of worship appointed in Scripture. In virtue of this claim to dictate in religious worship, it has enjoined under pain of mortal sin numberless institutions and observances, not only unknown to the Word of God, but expressly forbidden there, adding to the service of the true God the worship of images; multiplying by means of alien inventions the number of Sacraments; super-inducing upon the time of Divine worship appointed by God a host of fasts and holidays, pretending to equal authority; supplementing the discipline of the Church of Christ by penances, confession, pilgrimages; and corrupting the simplicity of Gospel ordinances by numberless frivolous or superstitious observances enforced as equally binding on the conscience. According to the theory of the Papacy, instead of the Church having no authority in public worship except to administer what the Scripture has already enacted, it has unlimited authority to multiply, alter, and repeal the regulations of Scripture on the subject.

There is a third theory upon this point, intermediate between the doctrine laid down in the Westminster Confession, and the doctrine embodied in the pretensions of the Church of Rome. This third theory is held by the Church of England. It differs from the views of the Westminster standards, inasmuch as it ascribes to the Church the power to enact rites and observances in the public worship of God. But it differs also from the practice of the Church of Rome, inasmuch as it professedly limits and restricts the power of ordaining ceremonies to those matters which are not forbidden in the Word of God. There is a curious and somewhat obscure question in regard to the authenticity of the twentieth Article of the Church of England, which declares the power of the Church to decree rites and ceremonies in the worship of God. Bishop Burnet tells us, that the words asserting such a right are not found in the original of the



Articles signed by both Houses of Convocation now extant. And from this circumstance as well as some others, a suspicion is entertained by some that they were surreptitiously introduced, and were not agreed to by the Convocation of the Church.<sup>2</sup> But whatever truth there may be in this suspicion, the twentieth Article as it now reads must be held to be the authoritative declaration of the mind of the Church of England regarding the point before us. It is to this effect: "The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith. And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's word written." There is a marked and obvious difference between this statement and the declaration of our Church's standards on the same subject. The doctrine of the Church of England is, that whatsoever is not forbidden expressly by the Word of God, it is lawful for the Church to enact by her own authority; the only restriction upon that authority being, that what it declares or enjoins in the worship of God shall not be contradictory to Scripture. Within the limitation thus laid upon the exercise of Church power in matters of worship, there remains a very wide field indeed open to the Church, in which it is competent to add to the ordinances and institutions of religious service. The doctrine of the Westminster standards and of our Church is, that whatsoever is not expressly appointed in the Word, or appointed by necessary inference from the Word, it is not lawful for the Church in the exercise of its own authority to enjoin; the restriction upon that authority being, that it shall announce and enforce nothing in the public worship of God, except what God Himself has in explicit terms or by implication instituted. Under the limitation thus laid upon the exercise of Church power in matters of worship, there is no discretion or latitude left to the Church, except to administer and carry into effect the appointments of Scripture. In the case of the Church of England, its doctrine in regard to Church power in the worship of God is, that it has a right to decree everything, except what is forbidden in the Word of God. In the case of our own Church, its doctrine in reference to Church power in the worship of God is, that it has a right to decree nothing, except what expressly or by implication is enjoined by the Word of God.

Now, keeping in view the various doctrines entertained by different Churches in reference to this matter, let us proceed to inquire into the important principles that determine the place and function of Church power in principles connection with the public worship of God. The further question of the limits of Church power in this department, as excluding the right to add to or alter the positive institutions of Divine worship, and making it incompetent for the Church to decree rites and ceremonies, will be discussed afterwards.

## **SECTION I.**

### **EXTENT OF CHURCH POWER WITH RESPECT TO THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD**

I. The fundamental principle that lies at the basis of the whole argument is this, that in regard to the ordinance of public worship it is the province of God, and not the province of man, to determine both the terms and the manner of such worship.

The sinner has no right to dictate, but must submissively learn from God both the conditions and the manner in which God will permit his approach for the purpose even of worshipping Him. The path of approach to God was shut and barred in consequence of man's sin: it was impossible for man himself to renew the intercourse which had been so solemnly closed by the judicial sentence which excluded him from the presence and favour of his God. Could that path ever again be opened up, and the communion of God with man and of man with God ever again be renewed? This was a question for God alone to determine. If it could, on what terms was the renewal of intercourse to take place, and in what manner was the fellowship of the creature with his Creator again to be maintained? This, too, was a question no less than the former for God alone to resolve. The sinner could not, from the very nature of the case, presume to dictate to God either the conditions on which his intercourse with God ought to be once more allowed, or the manner in which it might rightly and properly be

continued. These were questions which could only be determined by a regard to the principles of God's moral government, and which none but God was competent to decide. Public worship is no other than the manner and the way in which sinners, associated together in a Church state, are permitted in their collective capacity to hold intercourse with God, to maintain in a right and befitting way their fellowship with Him, and to approach Him day by day in acceptable communion. The manner of such intercourse, as well as the conditions on which it was possible to renew it at all, is a matter in regard to which it was the province of God, and not of man, to dictate.

Perhaps a more free and unfettered intercourse with God, without need of positive regulations to define the terms of it, and positive appointments to prescribe the manner of it, might have been competent to man, had man continued unfallen, and remained in the enjoyment of his first privilege of sinless fellowship with his Maker. Had the worship of God by men continued on the footing of their unfallen privilege, and been a duty and ordinance of natural religion, and no more, it might not have been necessary to tie down the manner of it by positive regulations, or to fetter the intercourse between men and their Maker by express enactments and arbitrary institutions. But it was necessary for Christ, first, to open up the way to the sinner for a renewal of intercourse between him and God after it had been once closed by sin; and second, to prescribe and direct by positive regulation the manner in which such an approach might be kept up. In regard to both the possibility of a renewal of fellowship, and the terms on which ever after it was to be maintained, it was necessary to consult for the honour of God's injured government, and the authority of His broken but unchangeable law. And both of these points were determined and regulated by principles arising out of God's unalterable and sovereign justice and grace. The terms were laid down on which sinners might return to God, and the way of approach be opened to them again; and these terms, we know, must have been regulated by a regard to the principles of everlasting righteousness and mercy. The manner also in which the intercourse

of sinners with God, once renewed, might be kept up was also prescribed; and that manner, we know, must likewise have been regulated by a regard to the principles of God's character as well as of ours. In other words, it was necessary, out of a regard to the principles of God's character as well as man's, that after the fall the manner of man's public intercourse with God should be regulated and prescribed by positive enactment, or that the ordinance of Church worship should be made a matter of express institution. Limiting our view to public worship as a mere ordinance of nature, no such necessity might have existed, or at least existed to the same extent. But regarding it as an ordinance of revelation and grace, destined to be the public and daily method of the intercourse of sinners with God, once lost and interrupted by sin, but now reopened and restored to them through a Saviour, it was necessary that the manner of worship as well as the possibility of worship at all, should be announced and fixed by Divine appointment.

II. In the exercise of the power intrusted to the Church in reference to public worship, it is its office to administer and carry out the appointments of Christ.

That there are positive institutions of worship appointed in connection with the Church, few will be disposed to deny. That there are ordinances of an arbitrary kind, framed and designed to express the homage of the collective body of believers in their act of worship to God, admits of no dispute. And it cannot be doubted that, since these ordinances cannot administer themselves, it is the office of the Church, in virtue of her authority, to dispense and carry them out for the benefit of the members. The office and authority of the Church in reference to the institutions of public worship, enacted by Christ for His people, are precisely parallel to the office and authority of the Church in reference to the doctrines He has revealed. It is simply and exclusively ministerial in both cases. There is no more warrant in Scripture for the Church to add to the institutions, than there is for the Church to add to the doctrines of Christ. The very same principles that limit the authority of the Church in matters of faith,

making its office declaratory of the truths before revealed and not creative of new truths not revealed, in like manner limit the authority of the Church in matters of public worship, making its office executive of ordinances and institutions previously established, and not invested with power to decree new observances not previously established. It is as steward and administrator of the mysteries instituted by Christ, and not as the inventor or framer of new mysteries of its own, that the Church is uniformly exhibited to us in Scripture. These mysteries can derive no authority from their appointment by human power; the ordinances which the Church administers are authoritative only in so far as, and no further than, they are ordinances of Christ. Their virtue as means of grace depends upon their being institutions not of men, but of Christ; and public worship, whereby sinners in their Church state approach to God, and hold intercourse with Him, is only lawful and only blessed when it can claim its origin not from ecclesiastical persons or authority, but from express Divine appointment. When the Church goes beyond the warrant of Scripture in devising ordinances or appointing worship, it trespasses into a province not its own, and into which it can carry with it neither the stamp of authority from on high, nor the virtue of a blessing from on high. Any worship beyond the limits of Scripture direction is an approach to God unwarranted and unblessed; any attempt at intercourse with God, except through the regulated channel and authorized manner of such intercourse, is presumptuous and unsanctioned. The worship of the Church's own invention or appointment is "will-worship" (ἑθελοθρησκεία); the addition to God's words or God's ordinances being as impious and unlawful as any alteration or diminution. The command, "Thou shalt not add unto them," when applied either to the truths or the ordinances of Christ, is as valid and binding as the precept, "Thou shalt not take from them."<sup>2</sup> The proper walk of the Church in both cases is within the boundaries of what is expressly revealed in Scripture, and up to those boundaries. The sin of addition errs as decidedly as the sin of omission. Beyond the limits of what is expressly appointed for sinners in the way of institutions of worship, the Church can have no authority for its doings, and can expect no

blessing from its Lord. Worship in a way not appointed and explicitly warranted by God can carry with it no authority as a Church appointment, and convey no blessing as a means of grace.

III. In restricting Church authority in reference to the worship of God to the administration and application of those institutions and rules of worship expressly revealed in His Word, there is an explanation of the general principle—I do not call it an addition to it—which it is necessary to make. The one grand office of the Church in reference to this matter is to administer and carry into effect the directory for worship found in the Bible. But there is this explanation to be taken along with the general and fundamental principle now announced. It is competent and necessary for the Church, in carrying out that principle, not to devise or appoint new institutions of worship of its own, but to apply the directory for worship contained in Scripture to new cases or emergencies as they occur.

This is not the exercise of new authority on the part of the Church acting in its own name; it is no more than the application of the old authority, as Christ has regulated and declared it, to a new case. It was not to be expected, nor was it possible, that every new conjuncture of circumstances in public worship, demanding regulation and arrangement by the authority of the Church, could be specified and adjudicated on in Scripture, any more than it could be expected as a thing possible that every new controversy in doctrine that might occur would be specified and adjudicated upon in Scripture. But there is a sufficient directory in doctrine laid down in the Bible to furnish the Church with those principles of truth which enable it to determine controversies of faith; and it does so on the occurrence of every fresh controversy, not by adding new doctrines to the Word of God, but by ministerially declaring and making application of the old in reference to the particular tenet in dispute. And so with regard to matters of worship. There is a sufficient directory for worship laid down in the Bible to furnish the Church with those principles of order which enable it to regulate every new case occurring in regard to the outward worship of the Church which

requires to be regulated; and it does so in this instance also, not by adding new rules or institutions to the service of the Church, but by ministerially declaring and making application of the old to the particular matter of order to be settled or determined. It is a new application of the Scripture directory for Church worship, not a new directory, nor even a new addition to the old. A Scripture example will sufficiently illustrate and give distinctness to the argument; and I adduce it the more willingly, that I may rescue the case from the misapplication to which it has not unfrequently been subjected, when it has been alleged as countenancing the very opposite doctrine. A dispute, or at least a doubt, had arisen in the Corinthian Church in regard to the lawfulness of eating meat, part of which had been offered in sacrifice to idols, lest the doing so should imply, or be understood to imply, an acknowledgment of the idol. The question of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of eating such meat had been referred to Paul; and what is his decision in regard to it? He declares that an idol is in itself nothing; that meat offered unto idols was neither the better nor the worse on that account; and that every man, in point of conscience, was to be free to eat, notwithstanding that it had been so offered. But because every man's conscience might not see the matter in this light; because weak consciences might feel it to be a sin, and yet, because of the example of others who freely partook of the meat, might be emboldened to do the same, while yet they felt it to be a sin,—the apostle lays down the express injunction to refrain from it. Here we have the authority of Paul interposed to restrain a man in that which Paul himself declared to be indifferent and innocent; and upon this principle, that no member of the Church had a right to be a stumbling-block or occasion of sin to another. "For," says he, "when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." And this Church regulation, laid down by the Apostle Paul individually, we find embodied in the decree of the apostles and elders met in synod at Jerusalem. It was authoritatively enacted as a rule of order for the Churches by that Council, that they were to

"abstain from meats offered unto idols;"<sup>2</sup> and so it became a standing regulation for the whole Church in those days.

Upon what principle, I ask, did this exercise of Church power proceed in a matter of order appertaining to the Church? Was it an example of the power of the Church, to add new laws to the laws of Christ, or to make regulations of order for its members, which He had not made? To this effect the instance is frequently quoted. It is alleged to countenance the claim of the Church to the power of decreeing rites and ceremonies in cases indifferent. The very opposite is the true application of it. It is not an instance of the Church adding new regulations of its own to the laws of Christ; it is no more than an example of the Church ministerially declaring the law of Christ, previously revealed, and previously binding, to a new emergency, and making application of it to a fresh case that had occurred requiring to be regulated. The old law, binding before and enacted before, Paul distinctly enough announces when he tells the Corinthians in reference to the man, himself free in conscience to eat, who by eating became the occasion of offence to his brother: "When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound so their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." This was the law or the regulation which Paul individually, and the Council of Jerusalem collectively, did but apply to the fresh emergency that occurred, in order to determine the new case in the Church needing to be determined. Neither Paul nor the Council made a new law; they only made a new application of the old law. They ministerially applied and carried out the former and standing law of Christ's Church, to regulate a new point of order that had started up requiring their interposition. It was a standing appointment, known and binding long before in the Christian Church, that no member of it had a right, by doing what to himself might be lawful or innocent, to cause his brother to sin. The application of this permanent principle in the government of Christ's Church to the point of order, raised by the question of eating meat sacrificed to idols, was direct and simple enough: "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth." And the embodiment of this general principle in the canon or regulation



for order enacted by the Council of Jerusalem was not the decreeing by authority of the Church of a new regulation for its members, as has been often asserted, but rather the application to a present case of an old one.

It is not an addition, then, to the great fundamental principle formerly laid down in regard to the Church having authority only to administer and carry into effect the appointments of Christ, and not to make appointments of her own, when I say that the Church has power to apply the appointments of Christ to new cases of order and arrangement as they occur. The office of the Church is ministerial, to administer and execute the appointments of Christ in the department of the worship and service of God: but there is included in that office, from the very nature of it, the power to apply these appointments to every new case, as it arises, which demands to be regulated by them. The canon of the Synod at Jerusalem, held by the apostles and elders, with respect to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of eating meat offered to idols, is not an instance of the Church making decrees for the order and obedience of its members by its own authority, and beyond what had been decreed by Christ. On the contrary, it is an instance of the Church applying the decrees of Christ, previously binding on His people, to a fresh question of order that had arisen in the Christian society; and in so doing, acting strictly within the limits of what Christ had decreed.

There is one further explanation which should be made, in order that the office of Church power in connection with the public service of God in the Church may be distinctly understood. This further explanation is founded on a distinction which it is of great importance, in the argument as to the power of the Church to decree rites and ceremonies in religion, clearly to keep in view. There is a distinction between what is proper to Church worship as of Divine institution, and what belongs to it as of nature. There are certain things that belong to the practice of worship as being of Divine appointment and regulation; there are certain other things that belong to the practice of worship as being dictated and regulated by

natural reason. The proper idea of public worship is the positive institution prescribed for the approach of sinners in their Church state to and their fellowship with God. In addition to this, there are circumstances of public worship, not properly or distinctively belonging to it as worship, but common to it with the proceedings of every civil or merely human society. What belongs to the public service of the Church as Divine worship, distinctively so called, is of Divine appointment, and is regulated by the positive command of Christ. What belongs to the public service of the Church, not as Divine worship properly and strictly so called, but as the circumstances common to it with any service or solemn transaction of human society, is not of express appointment by God, but is the dictate of nature, and left to be regulated by the law of nature. In other words, the distinction which it is necessary to keep in view, and which we have had occasion repeatedly to refer to in connection with the power of the civil magistrate about religion, must also be attended to here in connection with the office of the Church about the public service of God,—I mean the distinction between matters in *sacris* and matters *circa sacra*. There are matters not in religion, but about religion, over which the civil magistrate has proper jurisdiction. And so, likewise, there are matters not in the public worship of God, but about the public worship of God, in regard to which the law of nature comes in. The ceremonies and institutions of Church worship are properly and distinctively matters in *sacris*; the circumstances of Church worship, or those that belong to it in common with the ordinary proceedings or peculiar solemnities of men, are properly and distinctively matters *circa sacra*. The ceremonies and institutions of worship are matters in the public worship of God; the circumstances of worship common to it with civil solemnities are matters about the public worship of God. Upon the ground of this distinction, which is a most important one, there is a further proposition, additional to the three already enunciated, which it is necessary to the argument to lay down, when considering the question of the office and power of the Church in connection with the public worship of God.

IV. Although the Church has no power in regard to the ceremonies and institutions of Divine service, except to administer and apply them, yet the Church has a certain power in reference to the circumstances connected with Divine service, and common to it with civil solemnities, to order and regulate them.

It is most important to remark, that, by the help of the distinction now adverted to, between the ceremonies or institutions of worship peculiar to it as a Divine ordinance, and the circumstances of worship common to it with other or civil solemnities, we entirely shut the door against the entrance of the Church, in its own discretion or authority, into the province of public worship properly so called. Within that province the authority of Christ alone is known or valid; and the institutions and regulations which He has prescribed are alone binding. In regard to what belongs to the worship of the Church properly so called, Christ claims the right to dictate alone, without rival and without partner in His office. But beyond that territory, and in the province of what is *circa sacra*, or not in the worship of God, but about it,—in the circumstances pertaining to it in common with the practice of any civil and well-ordered society among men,—the Church, by the aid of the light and law of nature, has authority to interfere.

This office of the Church, not in the worship of God, but about it,—this power to regulate, not the ceremonies of Divine service, but the circumstances necessarily pertaining to it as well as to the services of any civil solemnity,—is defined by the Apostle Paul in the fourteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. The canon of Church order, which is there announced both in its extent and limitations, will be best understood by looking at it in the light of the circumstances that called forth the announcement. Indecencies and disorders of a peculiar kind had arisen in the Church of Corinth in connection with the administration and details of public worship. In the first place, in the abuse of the extraordinary gift of tongues with which the members of that Church had been endowed, the custom had become common, when the congregation met for public worship,

for those so gifted to speak in languages unknown to the rest, and even to speak, as it would appear, two or three together, to the introduction of utter confusion and disorder in the worshipping assembly. In the second place, females, forgetting the restraints appointed by their sex, had been accustomed publicly to mingle in the deliberations of the Church, and sought to speak, if not to take part in ruling, in their assemblies. These were the public scandals to which Paul sought to apply correction and restraint, by announcing those principles of Church order which were applicable to such cases, and bringing them to bear upon the Corinthian offenders. And in what manner does the apostle proceed to do so? The offences to be put down, although connected with the conduct and observances of public worship in the Church, were yet offences against nature; and accordingly it is by an appeal to the principles of nature that Paul seeks to correct and restrain them. He lays down the general rule, applicable not only to all Christian assemblies or Churches, but also to all civil assemblies, and equally binding upon both: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (παντα ευσχημονως και κατα ταξιν γινεσθω). Indecencies were forbidden by the light of nature, by reason itself, in all societies, whether Christian or not; disorder was to be put down even upon principles that applied to civil assemblies, not less than to assemblies of the Church. And there was enough in the dictates of nature and reason itself to condemn what was contrary to decency and order, apart altogether from any positive regulations established in the Church, or peculiar to it. And accordingly the Church, as a society, having all the rights which any civil or voluntary society has to maintain order and decency in its assemblies, was entitled and bound to exercise that power to the restraint and correction of such improprieties. Had it been, not in the assembly of the Christian Church at Corinth, but in the civil assembly of the people at Corinth, or in the council presided over by the proconsul of Achaia, that such scandals had occurred, they would have been repressed and punished upon the same principles. Had it been in a public meeting of the citizens or senators at Corinth that two or three had spoken together, or spoken in unknown tongues, or that females had sought to address the assembly, or to rule in it,

nature itself would have supplied both the warrant and the law to restrain such disorders. And when these disorders and indecencies occurred in the Christian Church, the very same principles were applicable to their correction. But in applying such principles, it was the Church legislating or administering power not in public worship, but about public worship. In carrying out the general rule, "Let all things be done decently and in order," the Church received no authority from the apostle to exercise jurisdiction within the territory belonging to the worship of God, but only authority to exercise jurisdiction in a territory connected indeed with the circumstances of worship, but really belonging to reason and nature. The offences of the Corinthian Christians were offered against the dictates of nature, and would have been no less offences if connected with the solemnities not of a Church, but of a civil assembly; and the course of action prescribed to the Church for the purpose of correcting them, gave no power within the province of Divine worship, but only power about the circumstances connected with it. "Let all things be done decently and in order," was a rule giving power to the Church in common with every civil society to guard itself against abuses that might be common to both and fatal to both, but nothing further.

It is plain, then, both from the nature of the rule itself, and from the circumstances in which it was given, that the general canon for Church worship, "Let all things be done decently and in order," while it gives no authority to the Church in the matter of the rites and ceremonies and institutions of Divine service, except to administer them, does give authority to the Church in the matter of the circumstances of Divine service common to it with civil solemnities, in so far as is necessary for decency and to avoid disorder. There is a broad line of demarcation between these two things. In what belongs strictly to the institutions and ceremonies of worship the Church has no authority, except to dispense them as Christ has prescribed. In what belongs to the circumstances of worship necessary to its being dispensed with propriety, and so as to avoid confusion, the Church has authority to regulate them as nature and reason prescribe. On the one side of the line that separates these two provinces, are what

belong to Church worship properly so called,—the positive rites and ceremonies and institutions that enter as essential elements into it; and here the Church is merely Christ's servant to administer and to carry them into effect. On the other side of that line are what belong to the circumstances of worship as necessary to its decent and orderly administration,—circumstances not peculiar to the solemnities of the Church, nor laid down in detail by Christ, but common to them with other civil solemnities, and left to be regulated by the dictates of reason and nature; and here the Church is the minister of nature and reason, and her actions must be determined by their declarations. In regard to, not the circumstances of worship, but its ceremonies, the Church has no discretion, but must take the law from the positive directory of Scripture. In regard again to, not the ceremonies, but the circumstances of worship, the Church has the discretion which nature and reason allow, and must be guided by the principles which they furnish as applicable to the particular case.

That these circumstances of order and decency are left to be regulated by the dictates of reason and nature applicable to each case, is apparent from the statements of the apostle in writing to the Corinthians on this matter. In reference to the peculiar scandals that prevailed among them, he appeals to the principles of reason, and nature, and common sense to put them down: "Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the Churches of the saints." "It is a shame for women to speak in the Church." And because the rule was previously binding by the dictates of reason and of nature, he lays it down as a standing and perpetual law in the Church, that all things within it were to be done "decently and in order,"—a law left open for the discretion of the Church to apply, as particular cases should require it, to the circumstances of public worship. But this rule, dictated by reason and nature in regard to the circumstances about worship, did not give to the Church any authority in regard to the ceremonies in worship. It did not permit the Church to carry its discretion or authority within the province already occupied by the positive

institutions and express appointments of Christ. There the Church was already fettered by an express and positive directory for worship enacted by its Divine Head; and there the Church had no discretion, except to administer and apply it. In the circumstances of worship, the Church is the minister or servant of nature to carry into effect, according to the peculiarities of each particular case, the dictates of nature or reason, so that its solemnities, as well as those of any civil society, may be conducted according to order and decency. In the ceremonies of worship, the Church is the minister or servant of Christ, to carry into effect, according to His express directory, the rules for Divine service; in order that His rites, and ceremonies, and institutions, peculiar to the Church, and not common to it with any other society, may be administered in obedience to His authority, and in the way He has prescribed.

Such, then, is the office of the Church in regard to the circumstances of Divine worship, as contradistinguished from the ceremonies or institutions of Divine worship. In regard to the circumstances, as contradistinguished from the ceremonies, there is a discretionary power allowed the Church, such as belongs to any civil society, to be used, as other societies use it, at the dictate of reason and nature, and to be directed to secure in the solemnities of the Church, as in any civil solemnities, the blessing of decency and order. Beyond this it does not go; nor can it give any claim to interfere with, to add to, or alter the institutions of Church worship which Christ has ordained in the Christian society. The assumption of such a power by the Church amounts to no more than this: that it has a right to exercise its own reason, like every other society, to guard itself against what is contrary to the dictates of reason in observing the positive institutions of Divine worship. It implies no authority to interfere by addition or alteration, or in any other way, with those institutions of worship. And yet I believe that it is from this quarter that the greatest danger is found to arise in the way of the Church arrogating to itself the power to decree rites and ceremonies in the worship of God. The acknowledged right that belongs to the Church, as it belongs to every voluntary society, to take order according to the dictates of reason

and nature that its solemnities shall be conducted with propriety and without confusion, is interpreted as a right to add to or take from the positive institutions of worship according to the judgment or discretion of the Church. The rule of the apostle, as laid down to the Corinthian Church, plainly and undeniably included in it no power more than reason or nature would confer on any civil society in order to guard itself against those scandals or offences in the transaction of its business that are contrary to decency or order. This right, under the guidance of its own judgment and discretion, the Church has; but no more than this. Of course the difficulty is to draw the line between matters of decency and order, which it is competent to the Church to regulate in the circumstances of its worship, and matters of express appointment and command in the ceremonies of its worship, which it is not competent for the Church to regulate or interfere with. And yet I believe the difficulty of separating between these two things has been very greatly exaggerated. In the very acute and masterly treatise of George Gillespie, entitled *A Dispute against the English-Popish Ceremonies*, he lays down three marks by which to distinguish those matters of decency and order, which it is necessary and lawful for the Church at the dictate of reason and nature to regulate, from those parts or elements of public worship in regard to which she has no authority but to administer them.

"Three conditions," he says, "I find necessarily requisite in such a thing as the Church hath power to prescribe by her laws: First, It must be only a circumstance of Divine worship, and no substantial part of it—no sacred, significant, and efficacious ceremony." There is plainly a wide and real difference between those matters that may be necessary or proper about Church worship, and those other matters that may be necessary and proper in worship; or, to adopt the old distinction, between matters *circa sacra* and matters *in sacris*. Church worship is itself an express and positive appointment of God; and the various parts or elements of worship, including the rites and ceremonies that enter into it, are no less positive Divine appointments. But there are circumstances connected with a Divine solemnity no less than with human solemnities, that do not belong to



its essence, and form no necessary part of it. There are circumstances of time and place and form, necessary for the order and decency of the service of the Church, as much as for the service or actions of any civil or voluntary society; and these, though connected with, are no portion of, Divine worship. When worship is to be performed on the Sabbath, for example,—where it is to be dispensed,—how long the service is to continue,—are points necessary to be regulated in regard to the action of the Church as much as in regard to the action of a mere private and human society; and yet they constitute no part of the worship of God. And they are to be regulated by the Church in the same way and upon the same principles as any other society would regulate these matters; namely, by a regard to the dictates of natural reason, which have not been superseded, but rather expressly called into exercise in the Christian society for such purposes.

Second, The circumstances left to the Church to determine by the dictate of natural reason, and according to the rule of decency and order, "must be such as are not determinable by Scripture." Of course, whatever in the worship of God is either appointed expressly by Scripture, or may be justly inferred from Scripture, cannot be left open to the jurisdiction of the Church, or to the determination of men's reason. It is only beyond the express and positive institutions or regulations of Scripture that there is any field for the exercise of the Church's authority and judgment. Within the limits of what strictly and properly belongs to public worship, the directory of Scripture is both sufficient and of exclusive authority; and the service of the Church is a matter of positive enactment, suited for and binding upon all times and all nations. But beyond the limits of what strictly and properly belongs to Divine worship, there are circumstances that must vary with times and nations; and for that very reason they are circumstances not regulated in Scripture, but left to be ordered by the dictates of natural reason, such as would be sufficient to determine them in the case of any other society than the Church. In addition to the test of their being merely circumstances and not substantials of worship, they are also to be distinguished by

the mark that from their very nature they are "not determinable from Scripture."

Third, The circumstances left open to the judgment of the Church to regulate according to the rule of decency and order, must be those for the appointment of which she is "able to give a sufficient reason and warrant." This third mark is necessary, in order that the canon of Church order under consideration may not be interpreted so widely as to admit of the indefinite multiplication of rules and rubrics, even in matters that stand the two other tests already mentioned,—that is to say, in matters merely circumstantial, and not determinable from Scripture. Even in the instance of such, there must be a sufficient reason, either in the necessity of the act, or in the manifest Christian expediency of it, to justify the Church in adding to her canons of order, and limiting by these the Christian liberty of her members. There must be a sufficient reason, in the way of securing decency or preventing disorder, to warrant the Church in enacting regulations even in the circumstances of worship as contradistinguished from its ceremonies. Without some necessity laid upon it, and a sufficient reason to state for its procedure, the Church has no warrant to encroach upon the liberty of its members. And without this, moreover, there could be no satisfaction to give to the consciences of those members who might scruple as to the lawfulness of complying with its regulations. Even in matters lawful and indifferent, not belonging to Divine worship itself, but to the circumstances of it, the Church is bound to show a necessity or a sufficient reason for its enactments.

All these three tests of George Gillespie's are combined in the singularly judicious and well-balanced statement of the Confession of Faith on this point. After laying down the fundamental position, that "the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men,"

the Confession proceeds: "Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word; and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed." Every word in this brief but pregnant sentence has been well weighed by its authors, and deserves careful consideration from us. The things in connection with public worship which it is lawful for the Church to regulate must be "circumstances," not parts of Divine service; they must be "concerning the worship of God," not elements in it; they must be "common to human actions and societies," not peculiar to a Divine institution; they must be things with which reason or "the light of nature" is competent to deal; they are "to be ordered by Christian prudence," which will beware of laying needless restraints upon the liberty of brethren in the faith; and they are to be regulated in accordance with "the general rules of the Word," such as the apostolic canons referred to in the proofs to the Confession: "Let all things be done unto edification;" and, "Let all things be done decently and in order."

By such tests or marks as these, it is not a matter of much difficulty practically to determine what matters connected with the worship of God are, and what are not, within the apostolic canon, "Let all things be done decently and in order." They are the very things which reason is competent to regulate, which cannot be determined for all times and places by Scripture; which belong not to Church worship itself, but to the circumstances or accompaniments common to it with civil solemnities, and which must be ordered in the Church, as in any other society, so as to secure decency and to prevent confusion. The power which the apostle gives to regulate such matters is no power to enter within the proper field of Divine worship, and to add to, or alter, or regulate its rites and ceremonies and institutions. It has often indeed been argued as if the apostolic canon gave such authority. It has been maintained that the authority

ascribed to the Church to regulate all things according to the law of decency and order, is an authority to deal with matters in sacris, and not merely circa sacra. But it is clear, both from the nature of the apostolic rule, and also from the application made of it in respect of the scandals in the Church at Corinth, that no such peculiar authority to intermeddle with the provisions of worship set up by Christ in His Church was ever intended. It needed no supereminent power within the sanctuary of God, no priestly or infallible jurisdiction over sacred rites and institutions, no authority similar or equal to Christ's own over the order of His house, to tell the Corinthian believers that the circumstances connected with their worship of God must be regulated decently, and regulated without disorder. There is implied no power to add to or alter Christ's appointments for His Church, in the right to tell its members that they must not speak in the meetings of the Christian society in a way that would not be tolerated in any civil society; and that women were not to violate the restraints appointed to women, and respected and obeyed in every other public assembly. Ἐν ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς κρινατε. Οὐδε αὐτὴ ἡ φύσις διδάσκει ὑμᾶς; "Let them use their own sense and judgment. Did not even reason and nature say the same?" And in assuming such an authority in pursuance of the apostolic rule, the Church was claiming and exercising no more than the right which reason and nature give to every lawful society, whether civil or sacred, to guard itself against those offences or disorders in the conduct of its affairs which even reason and nature condemn; nor in the right to exercise such an authority belonging to the Church is there the slightest ground for alleging that there is included a power to rule over the house of God in the solemn matter of worship, or to interfere to the smallest extent with the rites, and observances, and ceremonies which have been positively prescribed and regulated by the express directory found in Scripture for worship. In so far as regards the circumstances connected with the worship of God, in contradistinction to the worship itself, the Church is the minister of natural reason; and the rule for regulating such circumstances is the rule prescribed by natural reason, as interpreted by the canon of the apostle to the Corinthian Church. In so far as regards the ceremonies and

institutions of worship, in contradistinction to the circumstances of their administration, the Church is the minister of Christ; and the rule to guide the Church in her administration is the express directory contained in the Scriptures. There is in the one case such a latitude of discretion allowed to the Church as nature and reason, interpreted by the apostolic rule, and applied to the changing circumstances of different times, and places, and nations, may permit. There is in the other case no latitude of discretion at all; the office of the Church being limited to the duty of administering the institutions of Christ, and carrying into effect the directory for worship which He has given in His Word.

The four propositions which have now been announced and illustrated seem fully and fairly to indicate the extent of Church power in connection with the public worship of God. At the basis of the whole argument, and as the governing principle that rules every subsequent step in it, lies the grand principle that, as regards the manner of the approach to God of sinners in their Church state, it is for God alone, and not for man, to dictate or prescribe. Next, it is the primary office of the Church, as the servant of Christ, to administer and carry into effect the express institutions of worship and directory for Church service which He has enacted. Still further, as included in that office, it is the duty and right of the Church to make application of the directory for worship prescribed in Scripture to every new case connected with the public service of the Church which comes fairly under its application, and requires to be so regulated; and lastly, beyond the fair application of any positive directory for worship enacted in Scripture, there are circumstances of worship, as contradistinguished from worship itself, necessary to the orderly and decent administration of it, which fall to be regulated by the Church according to the dictates of nature and reason, interpreted more especially by the apostolic canon. All these general principles appear to be borne out by Scripture; and they serve pretty distinctly to indicate the office of the Church in connection with the public worship of God, and the extent of its authority in that department.

Such being seen to be the extent of Church power in this matter, it is natural to inquire, in the next place, what are the precise limits assigned to it? To this subject—although it has been partially discussed in the preceding remarks—I shall now endeavour more specifically to address myself.

## **SECTION II.**

### **LIMITS OF CHURCH POWER WITH RESPECT TO THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD**

We have already dwelt at some length on the nature and extent of the power of the Church, in connection with the public services of the sanctuary. But there are certain limits to that power in this department of its exercise which it is most important to note, more especially considering the strong tendency of Churches to abuse their authority in the matter of the rites and ceremonies of worship. There can be no doubt that one of the earliest as well as most prevailing errors that found its way into the primitive Church, was the adoption of the unscriptural principle, that the Church was at liberty, under the plea of edification, to add to and regulate for itself the institutions of worship. The Jewish converts to Christianity in the early Church were permitted to bring along with them into its worship not a few of their own ceremonial and traditionary observances; and the Gentile converts in like manner, when they abjured heathenism, did not altogether lay aside the superstitious practices of their ancient faith. The Christian Church, in its worship, was early accommodated and corrupted, to suit in some measure the tastes of both; so that within the period of the first four or five centuries, there were introduced into the field of religious worship the germs of most, if not all, of the mass of superstitious observances by which the Church of Rome is at present distinguished. Even the Reformation did not apply a full and effectual correction to this superstitious and sensuous tendency on the part of the Churches that were in doctrine and faith reformed. In our own country, both in the

northern and southern divisions of it, the history of the sore contentings between the advocates and opponents of Church rites and ceremonies, of human invention and authority, forms no unimportant or uninteresting part of its ecclesiastical history. In England, the prelates who took a leading part in the reformation of the Church, succeeded in retaining in its worship not a few of those ceremonies which had been used in the Church of Rome, partly with the mistaken notion of conciliating the adherents of the old superstition, and accommodating for a time the religious service of the reformed Church to their prejudices and habits.<sup>2</sup> And it is one of the darkest pages in the history of the Church of England, which tells of the struggles of the Puritans against the imposition by ecclesiastical authority of its rites and ceremonies in worship, and of the final ejection from its pale of two thousand of the most godly of its ministers, in consequence mainly of the rigorous enforcement of such human inventions in Divine service. In Scotland, the advocates of the principle, that within the province of the worship of God no human authority, whether ecclesiastical or civil, may enter, for the purpose of imposing its own arrangements, happily prevailed. And the Church of Scotland stands contrasted with the Church of England as well as with the Church of Rome, upon the ground of her assertion of the great truth, that the exercise of Church power in the worship of God is lawful to this extent, and no further, that it has a right to administer and carry into effect the express appointments of Christ, and no more.

The limits set to the exercise of Church power in the province of Divine worship, are precisely the limits appointed to it in any other department of its exercise. The general Scriptural principles which, in respect to Church power viewed generally, we have seen to limit it, are the very principles which mark off the boundaries of its lawful exercise in connection with the worship of God. The power of the Church in reference to worship is limited in four ways: by a regard to its source, or the authority of Christ; by a regard to its rule, or the Word of God; by a regard to its objects, or the liberties and edification of the members of the Church; and by a regard to its own

nature, as exclusively spiritual. We shall find that in each of these ways the power of the Church in regard to the worship of God is restricted; and that the exercise of it in imposing human rites and ceremonies, as part of that worship, is condemned.

I. The exercise of Church power in reference to the worship of God is limited by a regard to the source of that power, or the authority of Christ.

If the Lord Jesus Christ be the only source of authority within His own Church, then it is abundantly obvious that it is an unlawful interference with that authority for any party, civil or ecclesiastical, to intermeddle with His arrangements, to claim right to regulate His institutions, or to pretend to the power of adding to, or of taking away from, or altering His appointments. The positive provisions of Divine worship, including all its parts, are as much under His authority, and owe their form and character and binding obligation as much to that authority, as the articles of faith which the Church holds. In neither case has He delegated His authority to any ecclesiastical substitute to exercise in His absence. In the province of Divine worship as much as in the province of Divine truth, He claims the sole right to dictate and impose His appointments on men. And if it is a matter militating very directly against His authority as Head of the Church, for the Church itself to dictate articles of faith to the consciences of men in the department of Divine truth, it is no less so for the Church itself to usurp the power to impose rites and ceremonies on the consciences of men in Divine worship. Of course, when I say this, I mean rites and ceremonies imposed as parts of Church worship, and not merely circumstances about Church worship, necessary to its administration according to decency and order, but forming no part of it. But that the rites and ceremonies imposed by the Church of Rome, and also the rites and ceremonies appointed by the Church of England, are used as parts of worship, cannot be denied. It cannot be pleaded or pretended that they are necessary to the outward administration of it in a decent and orderly way. They are observed and imposed as ordinary parts of worship as



much as any other of its institutions,—not perhaps as essential to its validity, but certainly as adding to the edification it imparts. It is on this very ground indeed—namely, that such rites and ceremonies are fraught with spiritual benefit and advantage in the ordinary practice of worship—that they are defended by their advocates. They are not accessories to worship, necessary on the ground of decency and order to its administration; but ordinary parts of worship, introduced into it for the purpose of contributing to its spiritual effect. In the words of the Prayer-book of the Church of England, they are held to be "such as be apt to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God by some notable and special signification whereby he might be edified." And in this character, and pretending to be parts of Divine worship—if not necessary to its validity, at least necessary for its full effect—they cannot but be regarded as an encroachment on the province of Christ as Head of the Church, and are an unlawful interference with His authority. He claims as His exclusive right, authority to dictate what observances and institutions of worship He sees best for the approach of sinners to God in a Church state; and it is a usurpation of His power for the Church itself to assume a right to regulate His institutions, to add to His appointments, and superinduce its own provision for worship upon His.

Such plainly is the limitation set to the exercise of Church power in worship by the authority of Christ. In the department of the rites and institutions of Divine service, His authority is supreme and exclusive; and if it is to be kept entire and untouched, there is no room for the entrance into the same province of the Church's power at all. This principle plainly excludes and condemns every ecclesiastical addition to the worship of God, and every human invention in its observances. It shuts up the Church to the simplicity of the Scriptural model; and forbids every arrangement within the sanctuary, and every appointment in holy things, of whatever nature it be, which does not find its precedent and warrant there. It condemns the impious and superstitious observances which the Church of Rome has unlawfully introduced into the worship of God: its spurious sacraments; its

worship of the Virgin, and the saints, and the host; its fasts, and penances, and pilgrimages; and all the rest of its unwarranted and unscriptural impositions upon its members, unknown to the Word of God, and opposed to it.

But the principle now laid down does more than condemn the ceremonies in worship which Popery has imposed, and which are often as revolting to all right Christian taste and feeling as they are superstitious and unscriptural. It condemns no less those rites and ceremonies introduced into worship by the Church of England, and considered by her to be not only innocent, but subservient to its spiritual effect. Whether such rites and ceremonies may or may not conduce to the spiritual edification of those who make use of them in worship, is not the question to be determined,—although a right answer to this question would not be difficult to find, and it would militate strongly against the expediency of their introduction. But the only proper question is, Have these rites and ceremonies been appointed or not by the authority of Christ ruling alone and exclusively in His house? If not, then they are all unlawful encroachments upon that authority. It cannot be pretended that they are made no part of the ordinary worship of the Church, but rather belong to those outward circumstances of administration which fall under the apostolic canon, and are necessary to the order and decency of its celebration. It cannot be pretended that the sign of the cross is necessary to avoid indecency or prevent confusion in the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism. It cannot be pretended that turning of the face towards the east is essential to the orderly and decent performance of any part of public prayer. It cannot be pretended that the use of a white surplice in some parts of Divine service, and not in others, is necessary to the right discharge of the one or the other. It cannot be pretended that the consecration of buildings in which public worship is conducted, or of ground in which the burial of the dead is to take place, is a ceremony dictated by natural reason, and absolutely necessary to give effect to the apostolic canon. It cannot be pretended that the bowing of the head at the repetition of the name of Jesus, and not at the repetition of the

name of God, is decent and orderly in the one instance and not in the other. These ceremonies and rites cannot be, and are not alleged to form, any part of the circumstances of decency and order necessary to the due discharge of Divine worship, as they would be necessary to the due discharge of any civil solemnity in like circumstances. And if not, if they are not introduced into Church worship as essential to preserve decency or prevent disorder, then they must be introduced into Church worship as parts of it, considered to be necessary or at least conducive to its full or better effect. Viewed in this light, we are warranted to say in regard to them, without at all requiring to enter on the question of whether they contribute to the edification of the worshipper and the better effect of the worship or not, that they are unwarranted by the authority of Christ as revealed in His Word, and are therefore unlawful interferences with His power and rights as the only Head of ordinances in His Church.

II. The exercise of Church power in the matter of worship is limited by a regard to its rule, or the revealed Word of God.

Were a regard to the authority of Christ as the Head of the Church, and therefore the Head of ordinances in the Church, to be put out of view altogether, the rule which is appointed for the exercise of Church power, and to which it is bound to adhere, would itself condemn the invention of rites and ceremonies by ecclesiastical authority, and the imposition of human ordinances in the worship of the Church. There can be no law for the regulation of Divine service, any more than for any other department of the Church's duty, except the law of Scripture, to the exclusion of the arbitrary will or capricious discretion of all parties, civil or ecclesiastical. And if the matters of worship as well as matters of faith which the Church has to deal with are to be regarded according to that law, there can be no room for the exercise of human judgment in the case, and no door left open for the use of ecclesiastical discretion. In the department of worship as well as in the department of doctrine, the Church has no latitude beyond the express warrant of Scripture, and is forbidden as much to administer a worship not there revealed, as to preach a

Gospel not there revealed. The single fact that the rule of Church power in the worship of God is the rule of Scripture, is decisive of the whole controversy in regard to rites and ceremonies, and ties up the Church to the ministerial office of administering a directory made for it, instead of presumptuously attempting to make a new directory for itself. The worship not enjoined in the Word of God is "will-worship" (ἔθελοθρησκεία), and as such neither lawful nor blessed.

There is no possibility of evading this argument, except by denying that the Scriptures are the only rule for worship, or by denying that they are a sufficient one. Neither of these denials can be reasonably made. The Scriptures are the only rule for worship, as truly as they are the only rule for the Church in any other department of her duties. And the Scriptures are sufficient for that purpose; for they contain a directory for worship, either expressly inculcated, or justly to be inferred from its statements, sufficient for the guidance of the Church in every necessary part of worship. There are, first, express precepts contained in Scripture, and designed to regulate the practice of Divine worship in the Church as to ordinances and services; second, There are particular examples of worship in its various parts recorded in Scripture, and both fitted and intended to be binding and guiding models for subsequent ages. And, third, When neither express precepts nor express examples are to be met with, there are general Scripture principles applicable to public worship, enough to constitute a sufficient directory in the matter. Anything beyond that directory in the celebration of worship is unwarranted and superstitious. And the danger of tampering with uncommanded rites and observances is not small. Let the evil of "teaching for doctrines or duties the commandments and ordinances of men" be once introduced into the Church, and a departure from the simplicity of Scripture worship once begun, and superstitions will strengthen and grow apace. In point of safety as well as in point of principle, it is the duty of the Church to adhere with undeviating strictness to the model of Scripture, and to shun the exercise of any power in Church worship beyond the limits of that directory expressly laid down in the Word of God.

The limitation affixed to the use of Church power in public worship, by a regard to the authority of Scripture as its rule, is exactly to the same effect as the limitation set to it by a regard to the authority of Christ as its source. Scripture, because the revealed expression of Christ's will in the matter, affixes the same boundaries to the exercise of ecclesiastical power in the worship of the Church, as does the authority of Christ as the Head of the Church. By both there is a field left for the use and discretion of natural reason, in ordering the necessary circumstances connected with the administration of it. The Bible was never intended either to bestow or to supersede common sense, whether employed about the outward and non-essential circumstances of Divine worship, or the outward and non-essential circumstances of any civil and human solemnity. The Bible was never intended to supplant natural reason in the department of matters essential to order and decency in the Church, as much as to order and decency anywhere else. But within the province of what is essential and proper to public worship as an ordinance of God, the Scriptures are the only rule; and the appointment of rites and ceremonies, as part of the ordinary public worship of God, is a sin against the authority of His Word as the sole and the sufficient rule in the matter. Perhaps one of the most flagrant and offensive examples of such an offence in connection with Divine worship, is the conduct of the Church of Rome, in arbitrarily declaring the Apocryphal writings to be canonical and inspired of God, and introducing them into the service of the Church in public worship, as of the same authority with the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Worse by far than the introduction into the worship of God of a mere ecclesiastical ceremony, unknown or opposed to Scripture in some particular instance,—this is an attack on the authority of Scripture generally, by introducing into public worship the writings of man, as entitled to the same place and the same sway as the Word of God. And in the catalogue of human inventions introduced into the worship of the sanctuary in the Church of England, certainly not the least offensive, is the appointment of Apocryphal books to be read occasionally as part of the ordinary service, "for example of life and instruction of manners." Although

she does not ascribe to these spurious writings the character of inspired Scripture, as Popery does, the Church of England cannot be considered without serious blame in introducing them into the public worship of God as an occasional part of her services. It is an exercise of power, in regard to public worship, that very greatly offends against the authority of the Word of God as the sole rule of worship, to the exclusion of anything not expressly warranted by itself, and more especially to the exclusion from the service of the sanctuary of writings that pretend to the same authority with itself.

III. The exercise of Church power in the worship of God is limited by a regard to its objects, or to the liberties and edification of the members of the Church.

The introduction of human rites and ceremonies into the worship of the Church, by ecclesiastical authority, very directly goes to oppress the consciences and abridge the spiritual freedom of Christ's people. In so far as the provisions of public worship are appointed by Christ, and expressly regulated in His Word, the plea of conscience cannot lawfully come in to resist their observance, or object against the enforcement of them. Conscience has no right, and can possess no liberties, in opposition to the ordinances of Him who is the Lord of the conscience. But the rights of conscience furnish a plea that may lawfully be urged in opposition to ordinances and ceremonies imposed by mere human authority, and enforced by ecclesiastical power. In so far as the provisions of worship in the Church are merely human, and not of Christ, the conscience of the members who are called upon to comply with such provisions, when grieved and offended, has a right to be heard and respected. Even when the ceremonies enjoined are in themselves indifferent and not offensive, the fact that they are imposed by man as part of a service which Christ alone has a right to impose,—that as portions of a Divine ordinance they are introduced by human authority, and not by the authority of Christ,—is itself sufficient, whatever be their character as in themselves, and apart from this introduction blameless or not, to evince that they are unlawful. Every part of Church worship, because

an ordinance of God, is binding upon the conscience by His authority: it imposes a kind of obligation which no other solemnity can impose. And when, as part of that ordinance, there is introduced some rite or ceremony or appointment of man, claiming to have an equal authority, and to lay upon the conscience the same obligation, however harmless it may be in itself, it is an offence against the liberty and rights of the Christian people of the Church. It is of no avail to allege, that the members of the Church which imposes ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies as part of a Divine ordinance, have the alternative open to them of withdrawing from the communion of the Church if their consciences are aggrieved, and so preserving their Christian liberty by secession. The Church has no right to offer to its members the alternative of submission to her commanded ceremonies or the forfeiture of Church communion, and by an exercise of its authority to shut them up to the adoption of the one or the other of these two things. The Church has no right to impose on the conscience or obedience of its members its own ecclesiastical inventions, by the force or terror of excommunication from its fellowship. To do so, is to forget that she has no title to make terms of communion for herself, or to enforce any but what Christ has laid down. It is to forget that she has no right to make still narrower the narrow gate of entrance into the Church, by restrictions of her own devising. To lay down a formula of Church worship of her own, to appoint rites and ceremonies of her own, and to enforce these under the alternative of forfeiture of Church fellowship, is a violent and unlawful encroachment upon the conscience and the liberties of Christ's people.

The restriction thus put upon the exercise of Church power in public worship, by a due regard to the liberties of Christ's people, effectually excludes the introduction into it of human arrangements or ecclesiastical ordinances. We have already had occasion to remark, in the case of the Corinthian Church, how, with regard to a practice declared to be indifferent and innocent by Paul himself, he nevertheless refused to adopt it in his own conduct,—and much more would he have refused to impose it on others who deemed it not

innocent,—when he saw it to "wound their weak consciences." In the case of meat offered to idols, although in his own estimation it was neither the better nor the worse for being so offered, yet he laid down the principle, "I will not eat meat so long as the world standeth, if it give occasion of stumbling to my brother." And the Council at Jerusalem embodied the same general principle in one of its canons for Church order.<sup>2</sup> It was enough to justify an express prohibition of a practice in itself harmless, if that practice offended even the mistaken consciences of any of Christ's people. Respect, then, to the liberties of its members, as that liberty is interpreted by the apostle and the council at Jerusalem, must *à fortiori* prevent the imposition, by ecclesiastical authority, upon them of practices or ordinances in regard to which their consciences have reason to be offended, because they are not blameless. In such a light must many of the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England be regarded; and on this ground the Puritans resisted the imposition of them, although in vain. These ceremonies, whatever might be their own character when viewed apart by themselves, were not blameless, because they were accounted part and parcel of the corruptions of the Papal apostasy,—"relics of the Amorites," as Bishop Jewel called them,—and in consequence, directly fitted to ensnare consciences neither weak nor mistaken, and to involve the abettors and practisers of them in the sin of partaking in its superstitions. Kneeling at the communion, for example, whether blameless or not in itself, formed part of the Popish system of transubstantiation, and of the idolatrous worship paid to the host. Stated fasts and holidays appointed and observed by the Church—whatever might be said in favour of them considered apart and by themselves—were part and parcel of the Romish claim to impart holiness to times and seasons by ecclesiastical authority alone. The surplice, appropriated as the dress of the minister in certain parts of worship and not in others, was an element in the Popish theory of priestly virtue and sacramental grace. The sign of the cross in baptism could not be separated from the Romish doctrine of the *opus operatum* in the ordinance. And it was not weak consciences alone, but enlightened consciences, that felt aggrieved and oppressed, when these and like ceremonies were imposed by



ecclesiastical authority upon them, under the pain, if they refused to conform to such superstitions, of forfeiting the communion and privileges of the Church. A due regard to the liberty of conscience belonging to Christ's people forbids the exercise of Church power in the introduction of such ecclesiastical ordinances in the worship of God.

IV. The exercise of Church power in the worship of God is limited by the proper nature of that power, as exclusively spiritual.

There are no more than two ways in which a properly spiritual power can be brought to bear upon the souls of the worshippers in public worship. There may be, in the first place, a spiritual power or virtue connected with the truth which the Church publishes, by which it produces a spiritual effect on the soul. Or there may be, in the second place, a sacramental grace or virtue connected with the outward and sensible ordinances which the Church administers, by which they produce a spiritual effect on the soul. In the one case, it is the Spirit of God employing the teaching of truth by the Church as the channel through which He communicates a spiritual virtue. In the other case, it is the Spirit of God employing the dispensation of ordinances by the Church as the channel through which He communicates a spiritual virtue. Through both the one and the other of these instrumentalities does the Spirit of God usually operate upon the souls of men in the ordinances of public worship, so as to become a spiritual power within their understandings and their hearts. But beyond these means of spiritual grace, the Spirit of God does not usually go. He does not employ the inventions and ordinances of men as His instruments in either of these two ways. He does not make them by His presence and power to be means of grace, either by employing them to teach truth, or by using them, instead of or in addition to the divinely appointed ordinances and Sacraments of the Church, to communicate grace.

1. The Spirit of God does not employ the rites and ceremonies of men to be teaching signs in the Church, and to communicate truth; nor

does He make these rites and ceremonies, as mystical or significant types declaring the truth, to be a spiritual power in the hearts of men. Upon this very ground the rites and ceremonies appointed by the Church of its own authority are sometimes defended. They are pleaded for as significant signs, capable of teaching spiritual truths, and actually employed as instruments by the Spirit of God for that end. The Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England speaks of them under that character. It declares them to be "neither dark nor dumb, but such as be apt to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God by some notable and special signification." Such unquestionably was the character of the rites and ceremonies once appointed by God Himself in the Old Testament Church. They formed, in addition to other characters that belonged to them, a great system of types, or teaching signs, the shadows and pictures of spiritual truths; and employed in that capacity by the Spirit of God to produce the spiritual effect of truth upon the understandings and hearts of the worshippers. That great system of typology in the ancient Church was an instrument for communicating spiritual truth in part before the truth itself was fully revealed. But these significant and teaching ceremonies ordained by God Himself until a better and more spiritual system was introduced, have now been done away. They are unsuited to the spiritual nature of the Gospel economy. They have given place to a higher and better dispensation, in which doctrines are not taught by types or significant actions, but by the truth itself impressed by the Spirit of God on the soul. And if the typology of a former Church, divinely appointed, is forbidden to be used, as inconsistent with the spiritual nature of worship now, shall we say that a human typology of ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies, mystical and significant, is to be accounted as lawfully standing in their place? An intelligent and proper regard to the nature of Church power in the New Testament Church, as distinctively and properly spiritual, itself forbids the use of human rites and ceremonies in Divine worship as typical or significant signs.

2. The Spirit of God does not employ human rites and ceremonies in the second way I have mentioned, or as ordinances linked with spiritual grace, instead of or in addition to those of Divine appointment. Under this second aspect of them, the use of ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies is sometimes defended. They have been pleaded for as if they were ordinances like the Sacraments of the New Testament,—outward acts linked to inward grace,—sensible signs connected in some mysterious manner with a spiritual power. Such a theory can consistently be maintained only on the principle of the *opus operatum* of the Church of Rome, or of the power of the priest to communicate a priestly virtue and sacramental grace to the outward institutions that he administers. Here, too, an intelligent and due regard to the nature of Church power, as exclusively spiritual, would declare the fallacy of such a theory. As human and not Divine ordinances, the Spirit of God does not employ them as means of grace; nor does He pour through the channel of their administration by the Church the tide of His spiritual influence. They are of man, and not of God; and therefore they carry with them no spiritual blessing from the Spirit. And if they have any virtue or power at all, it must be supposed to be derived from the Church in appointing or dispensing them,—from the priestly grace or sacramental charm which the Church, according to the Popish principle, has ability to impart. A right understanding of the exclusively spiritual nature of the power of the Church would forbid such a notion. The only power which the Church is the instrument of dispensing through ordinances is the power of the Spirit, given not to human inventions, nor in connection with ecclesiastical and uncommanded ceremonies, but only to the ordinances and Sacraments appointed by God. The power of the Church is exclusively spiritual, and linked exclusively to the outward ordinances which have been enacted by Christ. She has no power to communicate grace *ex opere operato*, through rites and ceremonies of her own. The very nature of that power forbids the use of ecclesiastical ordinances imposed by its own authority in the Church.

## CHAPTER III:

### PRESCRIBED FORMS OF PRAYER

WE have now considered, as minutely as our restricted time will permit, those general principles in Scripture and reason which determine the extent and limits of Church power in matters of Divine worship, and more especially in reference to rites and ceremonies. In the course of the discussion, opportunity has occurred to apply these principles to not a few of those appointments, devised by men, and imposed by ecclesiastical authority, which we hold to be corruptions in the public worship both of the Church of Rome and the Church of England. Were it necessary or expedient at present to advance further in the same direction, the principles of Church authority in worship already announced might easily be applied in detail, and successively, to every human rite or ceremony which is used as a part of Divine service in any existing communion of Christians, and would avail to show the unlawfulness of their introduction into the public worship of the Church. But what has already been done in that department of the argument may suffice. The general principle already established, and which is so broadly announced by the standards of our Church—the principle that forbids "the worship of God in any way not appointed in His word"—is decisive of the whole controversy, and shuts out by one clear and conclusive sentence whatever rite or ceremony is of human appointment in Divine worship. The manifold applications of this principle it is wholly needless to follow out in detail. The assertion of the opposite principle, or the assertion of a right to introduce human inventions into the worship of God, even although limited, as it is in the Church of England, by the proviso that they shall not contradict Scripture, is one that carries with it the most ruinous results. In the solemn

matter of the approach of sinners to God in worship, it necessarily infers the lawfulness of worshipping Him with our own, and not with what is His; as if it were competent or right for men to worship God at a venture, and by such means as, appointed by them in their ignorance, cannot be known to be acceptable to Him. In so far as Church worship is made up of human elements, introduced by man, and not expressly appointed by Christ, to that extent we venture to approach the High and Holy One by rites and ordinances in regard to which we have no ground to say or know that they please God, and are not, on the contrary, displeasing in His eyes: we are worshipping Him at the peril of being told that our worship is our own and not God's,—a service not required at our hands, and not accepted at His. The principle involved in such a procedure is a dangerous one. It plainly implies that a sinner may, at least within certain limits, approach God through means of his own inventions, and seek acceptance in worship through his own provisions of worship. It implies that to a certain extent it is for man and not for God to dictate the way and manner of fellowship between them; and that, if it do not contradict expressly the appointments of Scripture, it is free to man to take his own way in seeking audience with God, and maintaining communion with Him. And who can wonder if such will-worship of man's should be unblest; and that in so far as the service of God is turned from a Divine ordinance into a human one, it should be open to the solemn rebuke, "Who hath required this at your hands, when ye come to appear before me?" "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

But although it is not necessary to pursue the argument further in its minuter applications to rites and ceremonies of ecclesiastical appointment, I am desirous, before leaving the subject altogether, to consider more particularly one imposition by Church authority in matters of worship which may be deserving of separate consideration. I refer to the subject of prescribed forms of prayer. The prominence given to prayer as part of the ordinary worship of God, and the practical importance attaching to the question as to the manner of prayer in the public service of the Church, seem to mark it

out as entitled to more detailed discussion. That prayer is an essential and ought to form a large part of Church worship, and that it is of permanent obligation as an ordinance of God, no one pretends to deny; and the only question comes to be, What power is it lawful or expedient for the Church to use in laying down regulations as to the manner in which it is to be offered to God, and more especially in enacting precomposed forms of prayer for ministers and people in Divine worship? Is it the duty of the Church, in the exercise of the power committed to her in connection with matters of worship, to leave open to the determination of circumstances, or the discretion of the officiating minister, the manner of prayer? Or is it the right and duty of the Church to fetter that liberty for the sake of order, to prescribe forms of public prayer for the use of the Church, and to exclude every other manner of it?

Now it is of very great importance in this discussion, to bear in mind what is the point at issue between the advocates and opponents of liturgies or prescribed forms of prayer in Church worship. If the status quæstionis is distinctly apprehended and fairly laid down, there is not much difficulty in arriving at a right determination in regard to the matter. If, on the contrary, the status quæstionis is not properly settled and clearly kept in view, the argument may be involved in no small perplexity. Let us endeavour, in the first place, to limit the discussion to the real point in dispute.

I. The controversy between the abettors and opponents of liturgies does not turn upon the lawfulness or the reverse of some form of prayer of one kind or other in Church worship.

So far from denying that a form of prayer may lawfully be used by the members of the Church in public worship, every one must admit that some form or other is both lawful and necessary in all joint or social prayer. It is not possible, from the very nature of the case, that in social prayer or in Church prayer every one should be able to use the words which his own thoughts or feelings prompt as the individual expression of his own desires towards God. Whether it be in the

family, or in the social circle, or in the public congregation of the Church, one as the organ of the rest must offer up prayer for all, in language which the others adopt from him as the utterance of their hearts, and not in language which each one's own heart suggests. There must be a form of words employed wherever there is prayer at all in which more than one concur; and a form of words which each man does not choose for himself, but adopts from him who is the organ to lead the devotions of all. A form of words in which prayer, is embodied is absolutely necessary for Church worship, whether that form be framed at the moment by the officiating minister, or arranged by himself beforehand, or previously dictated to him by ecclesiastical authority.

II. The point in controversy between the advocates and adversaries of liturgies is not the question of the lawfulness of such forms of public prayer being premeditated or precomposed by the minister who is appointed to conduct the devotions of the congregation.

Under the felt weight of the responsibility of his office, and with the special character and circumstances and spiritual wants of the congregation over which he presides full in view, it is perfectly lawful, and may sometimes be highly expedient, for the minister to meditate beforehand in what method he ought to address God, for what special blessings he ought to plead, what sins or backslidings he ought to confess on their behalf, and to arrange all this in a form of words suitable to the occasion. It was never alleged, except by very unwise defenders of the privilege of free or extempore prayer, that it was essentially necessary to its right character as prayer that it should, as to substance and manner and words, be entirely unpremeditated, and framed at the instant of its utterance. There is nothing in premeditated or precomposed prayer, viewed in itself, to hinder the fervency or mar the effect of devotion, provided that it is premeditated or precomposed with special reference to the desire of grace, or confessions of sin, or subjects of supplication, appropriate to the case and circumstances of the congregation. Under this limitation, it is lawful for a minister to compose the prayers

beforehand by which he is to lead the devotions of a congregation, if from special circumstances he may find it to be for edification; in the same manner as it is lawful for him to compose the sermons beforehand by which he is to lead the thoughts of the congregation in their meditation on Divine truth. The debate respecting liturgies does not turn on the lawfulness or expediency of the minister who officiates in worship arranging beforehand or premeditating the form of words in which he is to officiate.

III. The dispute between the friends and opponents of liturgies does not turn on the lawfulness of using inspired forms in the devotional services of the Church, whether these be in the shape of forms of prayer or forms of praise.

It is not denied by either party that it is lawful to employ in the public service of the Church that form of prayer which Christ taught His disciples, commonly known by the name of the Lord's Prayer, in the very language in which it was taught eighteen hundred years ago to them. The lawfulness is not questioned by either party, of employing one or other of the forms of apostolical benediction in the language in which apostles used them, for the purpose of imploring a blessing on the people now. Nor, on the other hand, in the department of praise, is the lawfulness questioned by either party, of making use of the Psalms of David as set forms by which we may now rightly express to God our thanksgiving and our praise. Such set forms as we find in Scripture, adapted to either prayer or praise, no one denies the lawfulness of adopting and using as circumstances may require. If there were an inspired prayer-book as there is an inspired psalm-book, it might be not only lawful to employ the former in the conducting the supplications of the congregation, but unlawful to employ any other form.<sup>2</sup>

IV. The debate between the advocates and opponents of liturgies does not turn upon the lawfulness of employing set forms of public prayer upon special occasions or emergencies in the Church, which



may demand or justify such special provision for the public worship of God.

There is a wide distinction between the constant and perpetual duty of the Church in regard to public forms of prayer, and the occasional or temporary duty of the Church on special occasions or emergencies. The Church may be, in the providence of God, reduced to such a state of depression, or be placed in circumstances so unfavourable, as to be compelled, for carrying on the work of the ministry, and for maintaining the worship of God in congregations, to employ ministers who are unable properly to conduct the devotions of the sanctuary without the help of forms of prayer, and who may be unfitted to compose them for themselves. Such emergencies have occurred in the history of the Church in particular countries, both in early and in later times. A Church so imperfectly organized or reformed, a Church sunk so low as to need such special provisions, may lawfully employ them; and in such circumstances ministers may be rightly and properly recommended to use forms of prayer in public worship, rather than that the work of the ministry should itself be left undone. Historically, I believe, it can be established that the introduction of liturgies in the primitive Church at the first was very much necessitated by such a state of things, when the Church, through the inroad of a sore and rapid declension, had been brought so low that even bishops were found who could not sign their names, and priests who did not know their letters. In such an emergency, the lesser obligation must give place to the greater; and forms of prayer, whatever their evils be in other circumstances, may be lawfully introduced, lest the greater evil should befall the Church, of the work of the ministry being neglected altogether. In the same way, at the dawn of the Reformation in Europe, the Church in most countries was reduced to such a state of weakness and helplessness amidst the universal darkness of the people, and the very general ignorance of the clergy, that liturgies or set forms of prayer were not only lawful, but the introduction of them was expedient, if not absolutely necessary. This state of matters in the case of Churches emerging from the corruption and darkness of

Popery is sufficient to account for and to warrant the partial countenance given in the emergency to set compositions and forms of prayer by some of the Reformers, both in this country and on the Continent. There cannot be a doubt that, in the deplorable state in which the Church of England was at the date of the Reformation, the introduction of forms both of prayer and preaching among the ministry was a thing not to be condemned, but approved of at the time; and that the Book of Common Prayer and the Book of Homilies prescribed by authority to its ministers were a benefit, and not the reverse. Neither the gifts necessary for prayer, nor the endowments necessary for preaching, were in the circumstances very common things among the clergy; and the introduction of set forms for both was a necessity which carried its own warrant with it. The Church's "poverty, if not her will, consented." In the general debate, then, on the subject of liturgies, it cannot be maintained that they are unlawful for the Church in all circumstances and on all occasions.

These four concessions or explanations it is important and necessary to make, in order that we may clear the way to a right understanding of the point in dispute between the friends and opponents of liturgies. In denying the right of the Church, in the exercise of its powers in connection with public worship, to impose liturgies, or fixed forms of prayer, by its authority over congregations and ministers, we do not deny that a form of words is not only lawful, but necessary, in social or public prayer. We do not deny that it is lawful, and, if circumstances should make it advantageous for one party or other, that it may be expedient, for ministers, in conducting the devotions of public assemblies, to premeditate or precompose their prayers. We do not deny that it is lawful for ministers, in officiating in public worship, to employ inspired forms, whether for praise or prayer, following in whole or in part the language of Scripture. Finally, we do not deny, in respect even to human compositions of prayer or formal liturgies, that in certain emergencies of the Church, and to satisfy a temporary demand, it may become necessary to make use of forms of prayer as helps to ministers and people, and that the necessity for the practice carries with it its own justification. But

having made these explanations, the real question in controversy still remains, as to the lawfulness of liturgies in the strict sense of the word, or of fixed forms of prayer, imposed by ecclesiastical authority in the stated and ordinary worship of God. There are three elements included in the notion of such human impositions in the ordinary worship of God. First, we have a scheme of precomposed and fixed forms of prayer for the ordinary worship of the Church at all times. Second, we have these used alone, and to the exclusion of the possibility of free and extempore prayer. And third, we have the stated use of liturgies, to the exclusion of other forms of prayer, imposed as binding by ecclesiastical authority, under the penalty of forfeiting, by declinature of them, the privilege of Church fellowship. These three things are included in the notion of a prescribed liturgy as statedly used in the Church. The stated and universal use of such forms of prayer, the exclusion as unlawful of any other, and the imposition of them by ecclesiastical authority, are properly implied in the principle of liturgies prescribed by the Church.

Now it is not difficult to bring the question, as now stated and explained, to the test of reason and Scripture. Liturgies as so enforced and employed can be defended only on one or other of two grounds: either on the ground that they belong to the circumstances of worship, as essential to the administration of it according to decency and order,—in which case they fall within the province of natural reason to impose them; or that they belong to worship itself, as essential to its completeness and spiritual effect,—in which case they must be appointments of Christ, warranted and authorized in His Word. It is not very easy, I think, to defend the principle of liturgies, or fixed forms of prayer imposed by the authority of the Church, on either ground.

1st. Are liturgies enforced by authority of the Church essential to the decency and order of Divine worship, in such a sense that without them the service of God must be chargeable with indecency and confusion?

It is hardly necessary, I think, to answer the question. There are some indeed of the very High Churchmen, who, in defending the use of liturgies, do so upon this principle, and who apply to them the apostolic canon by which Paul sought to put down the jargon of unknown tongues and the immodesty of female speaking which had obtained in the Church of Corinth. They hold that the absence of a stated form of prayer in worship is no less contrary to the requirements of decency and order than were the scandalous proceedings rebuked by the apostle, and that without it the service of God must be indecent and disorderly. It is not needful to argue against such an assumption. If public and prescribed forms of prayer are to be judged of by the apostolic canon, there is much more reason to assert that the unvarying use of them by ministers and congregations, without any power in either to alter or depart from them as change of circumstances may demand, is opposed to the spirit, if not the letter, of Paul's rule announced to the Corinthian Church. That ministers should be bound, by an authority that admits of no latitude of discretion, to use one fixed and stereotyped form of prayer to the exclusion of any change or modification of it, however much circumstances may alter, and however inapplicable it may be to the present position of minister or congregation; that there should be no liberty allowed to adapt the prayer to the emergency, whether as regards the occurrence of new events or new feelings in the congregation demanding to be had regard to; this is an imposition which may in certain conjunctures, easily to be conceived, lead to something very like indecency. If the prayers offered up to God, in consequence of their being fixed by authority, cannot be so altered or adapted as to express the present feelings and desires of the people in the emergency,—if the language of the fixed and unalterable form utter to God one thing, while the language of the heart would express another,—the inconsistency can hardly in many cases be accounted to be less than indecent. Or if the prayers fixed and prescribed by authority shall still more palpably, if not more really, run counter to the circumstances that may have occurred or changed since their prescription, so as to exhibit a marked and outward variance or contrast between the language and the fact, the inconsistency here

may exhibit another example of disregard to the apostolic canon respecting decency and order. It is not difficult to conceive of such occurrences. Nay, such occurrences have already happened repeatedly, exhibiting in a manner all too palpable, that so far from the absence of fixed forms of prayer being indecent, the use of them may in certain emergencies become eminently so. "When," says Anderson, in his Defence of Presbyterian Church Government, Faith, and Worship, "when the Prince of Orange landed in England in 1688, it was very well known the body of the English clergy favoured his attempt; yet for several months after, they were not only obliged in law, but actually did pray for King James, begging, in the words of the Liturgy, 'that God would confound the devices of his enemies.' Once more: when Prince George of Denmark, Her Majesty's husband, was dead, the clergy continued as formerly to pray for issue to Her Majesty, till that clause of the Liturgy was discharged by an order of the Council. This is no secret, for we had it in the public newsprints. Were these petitions," continues Anderson, "either reasonable or decent?"

2d. If liturgies imposed by ecclesiastical authority cannot be defended on the ground that they are essential to the decency and order of Church worship, are they warranted on the ground that they form part of that worship itself, sanctioned by the authority of Christ in His Word?

I have already had occasion more than once to advert to the limits that are set to the power of the Church in matters of worship; and if we now in the briefest manner apply the principles which form these limits to the case of the imposition of liturgies by ecclesiastical authority, we shall find that such imposition is unauthorized and unlawful.

In the first place, the limitation affixed to the exercise of Church power by the Word of God as its rule, forbids the imposition of liturgies as a standing and ordinary part of worship, to the exclusion of free prayer. The only question here is: Are such liturgies

countenanced by Scripture? The Scripture argument in connection with this controversy lies within a very narrow compass indeed. There is hardly even the shadow of a ground for alleging that there is the slightest countenance given either in the Old or New Testament to the use or obligation of set forms of prayer,—far less to the use and obligation of them to the exclusion of every other kind of prayer. What is the Scripture testimony to the practice of the Jewish Church? The whole of it may be summed up in a single sentence. We know that they had synagogues and stated assemblies of the people for worship on the Sabbath-days. That worship included, as we learn from the book of Nehemiah, the reading in the book of the law of God day by day on the solemn feasts; and as we learn from the Apostle James in the Acts, "Moses was read in the synagogue every Sabbath-day." In addition to the reading of the Word, there was also the preaching of it. "The Levites," we are told, "caused the people to understand the law; and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." And the Apostle James, in the same passage in the Acts, declares "that Moses of old time had in every city them that preach him." Further still, in addition to the reading and preaching of the Word, they employed the singing of psalms as part of the ordinary public worship; for we are told that the Levites "were appointed to stand every morning, and likewise in the evening, to thank and praise the Lord."<sup>2</sup> Once more, we may certainly infer that prayer was included in the ordinary services of the Jewish synagogues, both from its being a duty proper to worship, and also from the fact that in the passage in Nehemiah already referred to, Ezra is represented as joining in prayer with the people, before proceeding to read or expound the Scripture: "And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God; and all the people answered Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground." And in another place we are told that "Mattaniah of the sons of Asaph was the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer." This is almost the whole of the testimony of Scripture in regard to the public worship of the Jews in their synagogues. And there is not the slightest ground for alleging, as the friends of liturgies have sometimes done, that it countenances set

forms of prayer. I say nothing of the alleged evidence in favour of set forms of prayer in the Jewish worship derived from the Talmud, because that compilation can be of no authority in a question of this nature in the absence of Scripture proof; and because it is chiefly made up of the unauthorized traditions which the Jews had added to the commandments of God.

Again, what is the Scripture testimony to the conduct or commands of our Lord Himself in regard to liturgies or set forms of prayer? The fact that our Lord joined in communion with the Jewish Church during at least a portion of the time He was on earth, and was accustomed to be present at its worship, has been alleged by the advocates of liturgies, in favour of the idea that He gave His countenance to set forms of prayer,—an argument which will be entitled to consideration and reply when it is first proved that the Jewish worship included fixed forms of prayer, but not until then. The additional fact, that our Saviour taught His disciples to pray, and instructed them in the form commonly known as the Lord's Prayer, is constantly quoted by the upholders of liturgies as giving countenance to their doctrine. Such an argument is one of those that prove nothing, by proving a great deal too much. If our Lord's expression addressed to His disciples as given in Matthew, "After this manner (οὕτως) pray ye;" or as in Luke, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven,"—if that expression is to be understood as a command to pray in these words and no other, then the argument proves a great deal too much, as it must necessarily exclude as forbidden any other form of prayer whatsoever, and render every other liturgy but itself unlawful. And if not so to be understood, it seems plainly to follow—what indeed is obvious on other grounds—that the Lord's Prayer was given as a pattern of the manner of prayer, and not as a binding form constantly to be employed, to the exclusion of every other.

Once more: what is the Scripture testimony to the example to or injunctions of Christ's inspired apostles in reference to fixed forms of prayer? There is literally nothing to be gathered from their personal

conduct or their official statements to others in favour of such forms, but very much the reverse. We meet with solemn and repeated exhortations to prayer, but we hear nothing of prayer after a written form; we find frequent examples in their own conduct of prayer, but not a word regarding prescribed liturgies: prayer at the dark hour of midnight, and amid the horrors and imprecations of the jail at Philippi; prayer with bended knees on the sea-shore, when the waves made music to their voices; but not prayer fettered and stinted by the page of a precomposed and written formula. Does Scripture, as the rule to limit the exercise of Church power, favour its use in the imposition of a fixed form of prayer? On the contrary, Scripture, rightly interpreted, forbids and excludes such forms.

In the second place, the limitation affixed to Church power by the authority of Christ, as the source of it, forbids the imposition of liturgies as a standing and ordinary part of Church worship, to the exclusion of free prayer. After what has already been said, it is unnecessary to do more than lay down this proposition. If Scripture, as the expressed will of Christ, discountenances the use of liturgies, it is plain that His authority as so expressed forbids them.

In the third place, the limitation affixed to Church power by a regard to the liberties and edification of Christ's people as its object, excludes the right of the Church to impose a fixed form of prayer, to the exclusion of free prayer. The imposition of such restraints upon free prayer by ecclesiastical authority touches very nearly the liberty of Christ's people, and that, too, in an aspect of it which they hold to be the most precious of all—the liberty of access to God at the mercy-seat. Both minister and people are equally deprived of the freedom which is their common right, of jointly expressing, in what words may suit best their condition, their mutual desires to God, their common confessions, their combined requests. A worshipping assembly joining together as one man, to utter through one mouth their common prayers to God, ought to have the freedom, which each individual has, to frame, as best suits their wants and wishes, their petitions unto God. To deprive them of their privilege by imposing,



to the exclusion of any discretion or latitude in the matter, prayers prepared for them by others, is to come between them and the throne of grace, and to shut up by human or ecclesiastical restriction the free and open way of access to it, purchased for sinners by the blood of Christ. No comprehensiveness in the language of prayer employed in liturgies will entirely do away with this objection. To bind down prescribed forms of prayer by authority on the consciences of the Christian members, however excellent these prayers may be, and to make unlawful the use of any other in Church worship, is no slight interference with the rights of conscience, and can be justified by no plea of the fulness or excellence of the formula. Even in those extreme cases when, from the ignorance or incapacity of the ministers, a Church might be justified in providing the help of forms of prayer rather than permit the work of the ministry to be left undone, such forms ought to be permissive and not compulsory,—open to be used by any, but not bound upon the conscience of all. No ecclesiastical authority has a right to frame the petitions, confessions, and thanksgivings of the people for them, and to forbid them in any other language, or with any other prayers, to approach in public worship the footstool of the Almighty.

In the fourth place, the limitation affixed to ecclesiastical power by a regard to its nature, as exclusively spiritual, forbids the use of set forms of prayers, to the exclusion of every other kind. The worship of God is a part of His service that is essentially and pre-eminently spiritual; nor can there be any acceptable prayer at all which is not prompted and pervaded by the Holy Spirit. Any other is a mere formal service, a carnal ordinance, an empty and worthless homage. Prayer is but an outward and unspiritual act, when it is not dictated and inspired by the Intercessor within the soul. The Scriptures give us warrant to believe the marvellous fact, that the Holy Ghost is given to the believer in acceptable supplication to make intercession with the heart; to suggest the desires that rise up to God in acceptable worship; to help the infirmities both of feeling and expression of him that lifts up his heart with his hands to the mercy-seat; and to assist both the wishes and the utterance of prayer. I do

not mean to deny that the free Spirit of God may be given, and is given, to those who use the precomposed forms of a liturgy in prayer; and that through the presence and power of the Spirit it may become, to those who use it aright, not a formal and outward, but a spiritual service. But in the use of prayers already dictated and expressed to their hands, it would seem to be impossible that ministers or people can be in a position leading them to such an entire dependence on the Holy Spirit for His help, as those must feel who without such forms seek to trust Him both for the materials and the manner of supplication. And is there no danger that, in trusting to a precomposed form to suggest both the desires to be expressed, and the expression of them, and not rather seeking to rely on the promised aid of the Spirit for both, He may be tempted to withdraw that aid which is not sought as it might be? Is there no danger that prayer, limited to a prescribed form of words, and not linked to a simple and single dependence on the Spirit both for desires and words, may become a formal and unspiritual service,—an outward homage, and not an inward one? Such seems to be the peril to which prescribed forms of prayer, imposed to the exclusion of free prayer, unquestionably expose those who submit to them. There may be the outward form without the indwelling Spirit,—the eloquence of words without the inspiration of the Holy Ghost,—incense offered to the Lord in the very censers that are His, but not kindled with a kindling taken from His altar,—strange fire, which, although offered as an offering to God, is yet an abomination in His sight.

## **SUBDIVISION II:**

### **THE TIME FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP**

# CHAPTER I:

## THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

WE have now brought to a close our argument on the subject of Church power in reference to public worship viewed generally. Following out the order of discussion already indicated, we have next to consider the question of when and how often public worship is stately to be celebrated. If public worship be a standing ordinance in the Church, and a perpetual duty binding on its members, it necessarily follows that a certain proportion of time must be specially set apart and employed in the observance of it. Apart altogether from any positive appointment in the matter, it is the office of natural reason, when it teaches men the duty of worship, to teach them at the same time to give a certain portion of their time to the discharge of the duty. What proportion of time is to be so employed, and when the season for the duty is to recur, are questions which natural reason may be unable distinctly to answer. But the light of nature itself dictates the necessity of setting apart a certain proportion of time for the worship of God,—founded as the duty of worship is in the necessary relation subsisting between the creature and the Creator.

But while natural reason dictates the duty of employing a certain proportion of our time in the worship of God, the question of when and how often the duty is to be discharged is one that belongs to God to determine. The length of time to be set apart for the duty, and the frequency of its return, are matters of positive appointment connected with His own worship, which, like other positive provisions for it, remain for God and not for man to dictate. We believe that the precise length of time to be set apart for ordinary worship, and also the interval between the recurrence of such seasons, have been fixed by God in that septenary division of time which He instituted for man in the beginning, and in the arbitrary singling out of one whole day in seven to be a holy Sabbath unto

Himself. In the institution of the Sabbath there was an arbitrary appointment of God grafted upon a natural duty; and hence the ordinance itself partakes of the character both of a moral and of a positive duty. It is of considerable importance in the argument, to distinguish clearly what belongs to it in the one character, and what belongs to it in the other. In so far as it recognises and embodies the obligation of devoting our time, more or less in amount, and at more or less frequent intervals, to the worship of God, it is a duty which the law of nature, apart from any positive appointment, enjoins. In so far as it defines this obligation as the duty to devote one whole day in seven, and a particular day in the week as the Sabbath, to the purposes of devotion, it must be regarded as a positive institution superinduced upon a natural one. The duty of setting apart some portion or other of our time to the worship of God, is a duty founded in the relation of a creature to his Creator, as much as the obligation of worship itself, and not to be set aside or changed any more than you could set aside or change that relation. The duty, on the other hand, of setting apart a seventh and not a sixth portion of the week, and fixing its return on the first or last day of the seven, rather than any other, is an appointment of a positive kind, determined by God on good and sufficient principles connected with the circumstances of man, but yet principles which, in so far as we know, might in other circumstances have led to another determination. In so far as it is a moral duty, founded on the very nature of man as God's creature, and demanding some proportion of his time to be employed in worship, it could not be altered. In so far as it is a positive duty, founded in the circumstances of man, and demanding the seventh portion of the week, and the first or last day of it to be so employed, it might, in so far as we can understand, have been different from what it is.

The time, then, to be specially dedicated to Divine service, like some of the other provisions for worship, has something in it of a natural institution; and, like all the other provisions of worship, it has something in it also of a positive ordinance. Is the time thus set apart by arbitrary appointment of God for His worship designed to be a

standing and perpetual institution in His Church—an ordinance of permanent and universal obligation? Is the Sabbath the exclusive appointment made by God as to the times and seasons of worship; or are there other days also binding on the conscience and obedience of the members of the Church? What is the office of the Church in the exercise of the power committed to it in regard to the time for public worship? These questions it is deeply important for us to be enabled to answer; and to the consideration of them we are naturally brought at this point in the order of our discussions. We have found public worship to be a permanent ordinance of God in His Church. Is the Sabbath, or the time for public worship, no less an ordinance of Divine and permanent obligation? To this subject we shall direct our attention in the first place. Is the Sabbath the only day set apart by God for His ordinary worship, and the only day which the Church has a right to ordain the observance of for that end? or are there other days also holy, and also to be set apart by the Church as stated and ordinary seasons for worship? To the consideration of this further subject we shall address ourselves in the second place.

In proceeding to consider the question of the Divine and permanent obligation of the Sabbath as the season set apart for worship, it is impossible for us to do more than state in the briefest possible manner the heads of argument in the discussion. To attempt to go further in such a wide and varied field, would be utterly inconsistent with the limits prescribed to us. All that we can do is, to lay down a few leading principles of a general nature applicable to the subject.

I. That the institution of the Sabbath had no reference to any temporary purpose or any special people, but was founded on a reason or ground of permanent and universal obligation, is manifest from the nature and circumstances of its appointment at first.

The Sabbath, as at first enjoined on man, was no part of a temporary or local economy. It was on man in the catholic and unalterable character of God's creature, and not on man as Jew or Gentile, as the subject of a limited and transient dispensation, that the day of

weekly rest was enjoined. Time, as forming a portion of the existence of the Eternal God, was all equally and alike holy to Him; time, as forming a portion of the days of the lifetime of unfallen man, was all equally and alike good to him for the purpose of worshipping His Creator. And when one particular day in the week, viewing it as a brief part of the everlasting existence of God, was singled out by God Himself that He might bless and sanctify it, and Himself rest on that day from His work of creation; when the same day, viewing it as a season in the earthly existence of man, was made in this manner holy and blessed to him; it was an ordinance in which not the Jews only, but all mankind, are equally interested,—an ordinance to man as the rational and moral creature of God, and not as the subject of any local or temporary obligation. A Sabbath so instituted had no connection with any peculiar economy, under which a portion of the human race afterwards came to be placed; but plainly belonged to that relationship into which man, as the creature of God, fresh from His almighty hand, entered in the hour of his creation. There were, indeed, two great laws given to man at first, fundamental and appropriate to the twofold relation into which at his creation he was introduced; the first bearing on his relation to God, the second on his relation to his fellows of the same race. At the creation man entered into relation with God as his Maker,—the relation of creatureship, to endure unaltered throughout every generation of the creature; and as fundamental and appropriate to that connection, God appointed the ordinance of the seventh day of worship as the very condition on which it was to subsist and be maintained. At the creation also man entered for the first time into relationship with his fellow-creature of the same race,—a relationship also destined to endure throughout all the changes and dispensations appointed for man as a social being; and as fundamental and appropriate to this connection, God ordained the law of marriage as the basis of all the subsequent intercourse of man with man. The one as lying at the foundation of all his relations with God, and the other as lying at the foundation of all his relations with his fellow-men, were alike laws appointed for him as man, and appropriate and essential to him in his twofold capacity as destined to hold intercourse with God, and as destined to

hold intercourse with his fellow-men. The law of the Sabbath not less than the law of marriage was given to man, and not to any race or period of men; and coeval with man's entrance into being, they are destined to endure and be binding while he has his existence on the earth.

There is no possibility of getting rid of this argument for the Divine and permanent obligation of the Sabbath, except either by denying the credibility and authenticity of the narrative of its institution in Genesis, or else by interpreting it so as to warrant the conclusion that it was appointed not at the creation, but subsequently to the Israelites in the wilderness. With those who deny the historical veracity of the book of Genesis this is not the place to enter into any argument. With those, again, who, like Paley, hold that the narrative of Genesis, admitted to be authentic and credible, is not to be interpreted as if it recorded the first institution of the Sabbath, but only as speaking of it by anticipation; and that the first appointment of the law of the Sabbath is really recorded in Exodus, in connection with the gathering of the manna by the Israelites in the desert; with this second class of objectors a very brief argument is all that is necessary. In the first place, unless extreme violence is to be done to the express statements of Genesis, it must be admitted that it is not in the way of anticipating an event to take place two thousand years afterwards, but in the way of recording an event occurring at the moment, that it speaks of God blessing and sanctifying and resting on the seventh day after the six previous days of creation. In the second place, the narrative in Exodus which speaks of the Israelites gathering a double portion of the manna on the sixth day, and none on the seventh, cannot, on any sound or sober principles of interpretation, be regarded in any other light than as a reference to the Sabbath, not as an institution then for the first time appointed, but rather as an ordinance well known and familiar. In the third place, the promulgation of the law at Sinai, embodying as it did the sabbatical ordinance, seems to imply the previous acquaintance of the Israelites with the appointment. And in the fourth place, the division of time into weeks of seven days, prevalent long before

among the patriarchs, seems no less to point to the previous existence of the Sabbath as the seventh day rest. Such considerations as these seem distinctly to demonstrate that the narrative of Genesis as to the appointment of the Sabbath is not the history of an event which did not take place until hundreds of years afterwards, but the history of an event which took place at the creation.<sup>2</sup> And if so, there is no way of escape from the conclusion, that the Sabbath appointed to man in the beginning had no connection with any temporary or local dispensation, but was given to man as the creature of God, to be the fundamental law of his worship; and that as such it is an ordinance binding upon men in every age, and under all the circumstances and changes of their being on earth.

II. That the ordinance of the Sabbath is one of universal and everlasting obligation, may be evinced from the place assigned to that ordinance in the moral law, reasserted and promulgated afresh at Sinai.

That the moral law embodied in the Ten Commandments was totally distinct from the political and ceremonial law appointed for the Israelites, is abundantly obvious. The one, as the law of right and wrong—as the expression of that unchangeable obligation which lies upon every human creature at all times—had been in force from the beginning, and was destined to continue in force to the end; the other, as embodying the political and ritual observances characteristic of Israel as a nation or Church, and intended to serve a temporary purpose until a better dispensation was brought in, had not previously any authority, and was designed to give place to the Gospel. Between these two laws there was a broad and indelible line of distinction, marking out the one as of local and temporary, the other as of universal and permanent obligation. There are four marks that may be mentioned as separating between the moral law of the Ten Commandments, of universal and perpetual authority, and the ceremonial and political law of the Israelites, of limited and local obligation.



1st. The manner of the promulgation of the Ten Commandments at Sinai indicated a difference between them and the ceremonial appointments of Israel. They were uttered by the voice of God Himself amid the most sublime indications of the presence and supremacy of Jehovah, in the hearing of all Israel, who trembled exceedingly as God spake to them all the words of His law. They were addressed directly to the people, not conveyed to them indirectly through Moses. They were graven by the finger of God Himself on the tables of stone. "These words," said Moses to the people, after solemnly rehearsing to them the Ten Commandments shortly before his death, "these words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice; and He added no more: and He wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me." None of these things can be said of any of the ceremonial or political commandments given to Israel. These latter were communicated to Moses personally, and written by him in a book. It cannot be doubted that, in an age when truth was so much taught by signs and significant actions, the striking difference in the manner of their promulgation was designed by God to call the attention of the Israelites to the still more striking difference between the laws themselves: the one being of everlasting and universal authority; the other being only local and temporary in its obligation.

2d. The manner of the preservation of the Ten Commandments, no less than that of their promulgation, indicated the marked and solemn difference put between them and the ceremonial and political laws of the Israelites. They were deposited, as the only possession it held, in the ark of the covenant; that ark with its contents was placed within the veil, in the holiest of all; to look into the ark where the law was contained, was, as the men of Bethshemesh found,<sup>3</sup> visited with death; day by day the mercy-seat over the ark was wet and sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices; and above the mercy-seat, guarding the law beneath, was the cloud of Divine glory that indicated the presence of Jehovah. In all these jealous and peculiar precautions employed about the preservation of the law of the Ten

Commandments, it is not difficult to read the lesson of the deep and indelible distinction drawn between it and the ceremonial commandments of the Jews. Was it, after having been once broken at the hands of man and written afresh by the finger of God, withdrawn from human eye, shut up in the ark of the covenant under the peril of death to him who should look upon it, and placed within the most holy place, to which none but the high priest once a year found entrance? This was indeed the high and holy law of God, which men had once broken; which never was again to be intrusted to sinners as a means of life, but to be withdrawn from their sight because they were unworthy to look upon it, and reserved only until a better man might be found to keep it and make it honourable. Were the ark and the mercy-seat over the law day by day moistened and sprinkled with the shed blood of the sacrifices offered continually? It was the law of God, whose inviolable holiness and unsullied justice still demanded blood because of the transgression of it, and waited until the hour when more than mortal blood, so long typically shed, was actually to be poured out in vindication of its claims. Did the living and burning glory of Jehovah keep watch above the spot where that law was deposited? It was the law of the Lord, whose unalterable and everlasting authority was guarded and sanctioned by all His perfections. In the significant circumstances that marked its preservation, we read the truth of the wide and essential distinction between the law of the Ten Commandments and the political and ceremonial commandments of Israel.<sup>2</sup>

3d. The manner of the vindication of the law contained in the Ten Commandments demonstrates the difference between that law and the ceremonial ordinances of the Jews. Christ came in the fulness of time to abolish the one, and to evince their utter vanity; Christ came in the fulness of time to obey and confirm and vindicate the other. The very same revelation of the Son of God in the flesh to set up a kingdom and a Church that cannot be moved, which demonstrated that the one set of laws were temporary and limited in their force, and neither designed nor fitted to be permanent or universal, served at the same time to demonstrate that the other set of laws were of

perpetual and unalterable obligation, eternally binding in their substance on all moral and intelligent beings. The ceremonial laws of the Jews were promulgated, observed, and obeyed throughout the nation; serving, until the manifestation of Christ, the local and temporary purpose of types pointing to the introduction of a future and higher economy by which they were to be displaced. The moral law, embodied in the Ten Commandments, was laid up in hiding within the ark, as no longer to be promulgated for man to keep as the means of life to his soul, but waiting there until the day came when their hiding-place was to be laid open, and the veil that concealed them rent in twain, and when they themselves should be brought forth to be fulfilled and vindicated and honoured by the obedience and death of the Son of God. That death did virtually abolish and put dishonour upon the ritual and carnal commandments of a worn-out and bygone dispensation. It no less confirmed and magnified the law of the Ten Commandments, as a law that could not be altered or abolished, even although the Son of God should die to fulfil it.

4th. The very nature of the law of the Ten Commandments, and the reasons out of which that law originated, demonstrate the difference between it and the ceremonial and temporary commandments given to Israel. This is not less obviously the case with the reasons given for the law of the Sabbath as in the case of the rest; and it is with the Sabbath ordinance that we have at present to do. The reasons rising out of the nature of the institution, by which its obligation is enforced, are such as to be in no respect peculiar to any one time or any one nation, but, on the contrary, reasons adapted to all times and all nations. The threefold reason given for the observance of the seventh day's rest in the fourth commandment is the very same as was given at the creation, and is adapted to man as man, the creature of God, wherever found, and under whatever dispensation. The example of God, or the Divine rest,—the "blessing the Sabbath," or making it a blessing to His creature,—the "hallowing it," or setting it apart to man for sacred purposes,—these are no limited and temporary reasons rendering the Sabbath-day binding on one nation, and not other branches of the human race, or making it of

authority at one time and not at another. They plainly point to a universal permanent obligation, such as the nature or reasons of the ceremonial observance of Israel could not indicate. Such marks of distinction as these between the institution of the Ten Commandments and the institution of Judaical observances, sufficiently demonstrate that the moral law of the former is of general and permanent authority, while the ceremonial law of the latter was meant to be local and temporary in its obligation.

III. That the ordinance of the Sabbath was designed to be of perpetual obligation is demonstrated by statements of Scripture, which expressly intimate the continuance of the ordinance after the Jewish Sabbath was abolished.

In the fifty-sixth chapter of Isaiah, for example, the prophet is prophesying of Gospel times, when the merely Jewish Sabbath should be no longer in force; and yet he speaks with marked and repeated emphasis of the blessing upon the man who should "keep the Sabbath from polluting it,"—language which can have no meaning at all except in reference to the Christian Sabbath which was to succeed the Jewish. In like manner, our Lord speaks of the observance of the Sabbath as still to be kept up at a time when all mere Jewish institutions were abrogated and no longer binding. "Pray ye," says He in speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, which was to take place forty years after the rites of the Jewish Church were done away with; "pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the Sabbath day." The language of our Lord in this passage very obviously implies, that just as certainly as there would be winter, so certainly there would be a Sabbath at that time; and that it was a blessing to be entreated for, that the Christians might not be forced to flee during the inclemency of the one season or during the sacredness of the other.

IV. The weekly Sabbath, or season for worship, has, since the resurrection of Christ, been transferred from the last to the first day of the week.

There are two sources of evidence from which the argument for this change is drawn:—1. There are very significant indications in the Old Testament Scriptures of such a change being intended. The Jewish Sabbath was the seventh day from the beginning of the work of creation by God; and the Christian Sabbath, now substituted in its place, is the following day, or the eighth, counting from the same commencement. Now it is a very striking and interesting fact, illustrated by a vast variety of different passages in the Old Testament Scriptures, that there are distinct intimations of the intention of God to exalt the eighth day above the seventh, and to transfer the honour which the seventh had attained among the days of the week to the eighth, or the following day. It is impossible, without a very ample quotation of passages, to give anything like an adequate idea of the force of the evidence for the change of the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week, derived from those typical and prophetic intimations of the intention of God in Gospel days to prefer the eighth day above the seventh, and to signalize the day of Christ's resurrection, when He entered into rest, above the day of His own finishing of the work of creation, when He Himself entered into rest. The evidence is given in much detail, and with great effect, in the late Mr. Robert Haldane's Dissertation on the Sanctification of the Sabbath. One or two examples taken from his work may suffice. The rite of circumcision was to be administered to children only on the eighth day. This was a standing ordinance in the Jewish Church. But we know that circumcision was "the seal of the righteousness of faith,"—the everlasting righteousness to be accomplished and brought in by Christ. That righteousness was actually brought in on the eighth day, or the day of Christ's resurrection; and the sign of circumcision in the Jewish Church long pointed out the very day when the type was to be fulfilled. Again, on the eighth day of their age animals were to be accepted in sacrifice,—plainly pointing to that day, honoured above all the rest, when in His resurrection Christ was publicly accepted as the sacrifice of His people. Yet, again, on the eighth day the consecration of the High Priest in the Jewish Church was completed,—another token of the honour to be put on that day when the High Priest of His people

arose from the dead, and was consecrated for evermore. Still further, it was on the eighth day the cleansing of the leprosy took place,—another sign still, pointing to the preference to be given to the day when Christ finished His atoning work, and cleansed His people from their sin. Once more, it was not until the eighth day that the first-born of cattle which belonged to the Lord were given to Him,—another indication of the mysterious honour awaiting that day of the week when "the first-born from the dead" was received by His Father.

In short, through the whole typical system and the prophetic Scriptures, the recurrence of the number eight, in connection with some mysterious preference to be given to it in that coming dispensation, in which all the types and prophecies were to find their fulfilment, is most frequent and marked. It is hardly possible to adopt any kind of interpretation which will not refer this to the day of Christ's resurrection, and which does not see in it a foreshadowing of the superior honour about to be put in Gospel days on the eighth day above the seventh. That this could refer to nothing except the honour which the seventh had so long enjoyed as the Sabbath of the Lord, seems to be very obvious; and the conclusion appears to be unavoidable, that there is a studied exhibition in type and prophecy throughout the whole of the ancient economy of the great truth that the seventh day, in the fulness of time, was to yield its place and its honours to the eighth, and that the Sabbath was to be transferred from the one to the other. They all point to the introduction on earth of a more glorious exhibition of the Divine character in connection with redemption than any connected with creation; and they indicate that the seventh day, so long linked to the remembrance of creation, was to yield its honours to the eighth day, as linked with the memory of redemption.

2. The change of the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week is demonstrated by Scripture examples. That there is no precept expressly appointing the change, and enjoining the observance of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath, is freely admitted. But

it is a general principle, which cannot be denied, that Scripture example in regard to any duty, when it is the example of inspired men, and not referable to their extraordinary office or character, is as binding as Scripture precept. And that we have such examples in the New Testament, sufficient to demonstrate the authoritative change of the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week, must be apparent to every attentive reader of it. We have the example of Christ, in His repeated and solemn appearances to His assembled disciples after His resurrection on the first day of the week; we have the stated meeting of the Churches under inspired and apostolic direction on the same day; we have the weekly contributions made by the congregations assembled on the first day of the week; we have the distinguishing name given to it of the Lord's day. All this is sufficient to establish a Scripture precedent for the change of the day, of equal authority with an express injunction.

V. The permanent and perpetual obligation of the Sabbatic ordinance is not affected by the change of the day on which it is observed.

Were we not able to prove that a change in the particular day for the observance of the Sabbath was intended and authorized, the only effect of this want of proof would be, not to exempt us from the keeping of a Sabbath, but to throw us back on the last day of the week as the season for its observance. But there is abundant proof, from inspired and authoritative example, for the change; and that change does not in the least affect the perpetuity of the ordinance. It is a change in what belongs to the Sabbath as a positive ordinance, and not in what belongs to it as a moral duty. That a certain portion of our time, more or less, is to be set apart for the worship of God, is one of those duties dictated by a consideration of the very relation in which as creatures we stand to God; and in this respect we could not conceive of the ordinance being changed. But that the last day of the week instead of any other day should be appointed for worship, is a matter of positive institution not affecting the essence of the ordinance any more than the positive law which at one time made death the penalty of a breach of the fourth commandment in Israel,

and which "the Lord of the Sabbath" may alter for sufficient reason, without affecting the permanence or the perpetual obligation of the institution. That such a sufficient reason has occurred in the superior glory of the finished work of Christ over that of creation to justify and require the change, few men who understand what that work is will be disposed to deny.

There are three Sabbaths referred to in Scripture, each excelling the other in glory as they occur in their order, because each one as it occurs comprehends, as it were, all the former. There is the Sabbath of creation, when God the Father rested from His work of power, and called upon man to enter with Him into rest, and to rejoice with Him in that finished work, because it was good. There is the Sabbath of redemption,—not superseding but embracing the former,—when God the Son rested from His work of grace, and once more invited man to enter with Him into rest, and rejoice with Him in the finished work, that, in a higher sense than in the former case, because it was creation restored, was also very good. And there is the Sabbath of glory yet to come, not superseding the former two, but embracing and comprehending both, when, creation restored and redemption completed, and both continued in glory, God the Spirit shall enter into His rest, and shall call upon His saints to rest with Him also, rejoicing together through eternity in the last and highest Sabbath of God.

## **CHAPTER II:**

### **ECCLESIASTICAL HOLIDAYS**



WE have had before us of late the subject of the one great distinction which has been drawn by God Himself between the times and seasons appointed for man on the earth,—the distinction, namely, between that one-seventh portion of the week which He made holy and set apart from the rest for the purpose of His own worship, and those six-sevenths of the week which He did not so sanctify or set apart, but gave to man for his ordinary uses. We believe that there is ample warrant in Scripture for saying that this distinction is not of human invention, but of God's positive command; that it was appointed at the creation as the fundamental law that was to regulate the intercourse of God and man; that it was dictated to men, not as the subjects of any peculiar or temporary dispensation, but as the creatures of God under all dispensations; that as such it is of permanent and universal obligation, destined to cease only with the existence of man on the earth; and that, even after his earthly existence is terminated, this Sabbath, suited to his present character here, shall be done away with, only because it shall be merged into the Sabbath of God in heaven. In reference to the ordinance of the Sabbath as the time marked out by God Himself for worship, it is the office of the Church, just as in regard to every other Divine ordinance, simply to administer the appointment of its Divine Head, to accept of it in all its fulness, integrity, and simplicity, as it comes from His hands, and to carry it into effect for the purposes He has designed by it, without addition or alteration by ecclesiastical authority.

This ordinance, which makes holy an entire day in seven, and sets it apart for God, is of God's own appointment. He who in the beginning divided the day from the night, and set His signs in the heavens to measure out the seasons of man on the earth, has also separated one day in the week from the rest, to be a sign between Him and His creatures, and to be sanctified to them as the season of worship. This separation of one portion of time from another, and this consecration of one day, returning every seven, above the rest, was the sovereign act of God, who alone has the right or the power to divide between day and day, and to stamp the character of holiness

upon one more than upon another. And the question here meets us, —and it is both an important and an interesting one,—whether or not the Sabbath, thus enjoined and set apart by God for the worship of the Church, is the only season so preferred above the rest; whether or not there are other solemnities of a similar character and authority to be observed by His people; and more especially whether the Church, by its own appointment, may ordain days to be kept holy in the stated and usual order of its worship? In other words, is there any ground to allege that there are other holy days besides the weekly Sabbath of binding and permanent obligation in the Church? or is there warrant in Scripture to believe that the Church has a right to ordain days of its own authority as regular and periodical solemnities, in addition to the Sabbath, and similarly obligatory on the conscience and obedience of its members? The question of the right of the Church to appoint holidays and fast days as part and parcel of her ordinary worship, and to impose the observance of them in addition to the keeping of the Sabbath, is one of the most important in the department of the exercise of Church power in connection with the worship of God.

There can be no doubt that, whether the power belongs to the Church or not of appointing fasts and holidays, the liberty to exercise that power was very early claimed by the Christian Church; and a multitude of days, unknown to Scripture and destitute of all Scriptural authority, were, very soon after the apostolic age, observed and honoured by Christians. The introduction of anniversary days, set apart for special purposes of devotion, was one of the earliest examples of the observance or appointment of uncommanded rites and ceremonies finding its way into the Christian society. Days consecrated to the memory of particular events in the history of our Lord's life and sufferings, and death, and resurrection, were early introduced and solemnized; and next in order, and following rapidly after them, we find the introduction of days dedicated to the remembrance of apostles, and saints, and martyrs,—a practice which, growing apace, at length filled the year with saints' days, and

has crowded the calendar of the Romish Church with an untold number of fasts, and feasts, and superstitions.

It is not difficult, perhaps, to trace back the origin of the superstitious reverence for days not appointed in Scripture to a practice of which we find traces even in the New Testament history. God Himself, by His express appointment, had ordained days of religious solemnities for the Jewish Church over and above the weekly Sabbath,—“days, and weeks, and years,”—the parts and elements of an outward typical and ceremonial economy. There was an interval of transition between the time when that economy was really cancelled by the resurrection of Christ and the time when it practically ceased to be regarded, during which its ceremonies, although no longer binding on the conscience, yet continued to be kept up and observed by the Jewish converts, ever prone to cling to the customs of their fathers,—a practice which was permitted by the apostles out of indulgence to their feelings and associations, although not enjoined as necessary to true Gospel obedience.

It was in accommodation to these habits and prejudices of the Jews that the practice of circumcision, for example, although legally abolished in the Christian Church, was for a time permitted to be continued as a matter of concession to their weak consciences; and that in one particular case—that, namely, of Timothy, we even find Paul actually ordering the rite to be performed, in order to avoid offence to his countrymen. And it is precisely on the same footing, during the transition interval between the disuse of the Mosaic and the full establishment of the Christian economy, that we find the observance of Jewish feasts and holidays placed. The observance of these days belonged to the elements of a ceremonial law, abrogated by the death of Christ; and yet the keeping of these seasons was permitted for a short time to reign still in the Christian Church among the Jewish converts, in accommodation to their weak consciences, and as a matter of indulgence, but not of necessity or obligation to them. In regard to the observance of such days, the conscience was free: if kept, it was a matter of gratification to the

feelings and habits of those who kept them; if not kept, it was because those who did not keep them found no profit and no duty in the observance. For, in express reference to such voluntary observance or non-observance of these seasons, the Apostle Paul says: "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it." But it can hardly be doubted that it was this permission given to individuals to keep or not to keep, as they felt it to be for their personal edification, these holidays of the Jewish Church that had been abrogated, that, through mistake and misapplication of the indulgence, was developed in after ages into the practice of the Church by its own authority enforcing the observance of fast and feast days upon all its members. Under the direction of the Apostles, and in the practice of the apostolic Church, the observance of Jewish days was a matter of permission to weak consciences, and not of command to the consciences of all,—a practice optional to individuals who felt they could use it aright, and not binding upon others. With the rapid inroad of human conceptions and superstitions into the primitive Church, the practice was converted from an individual permission to a general enactment binding upon all; and the observance of religious days, instead of being left outside of the Church as a matter of indulgence to individuals, was brought into the Church as part of its ordinary worship, and made binding on all its members indiscriminately.

It is important, then, to examine into the foundation or warrant for Church power when exercised in such a manner. We have already seen that the one distinction which separates one day in seven from others for worship is a distinction made by Divine appointment, and fitted and intended to be binding upon man universally and permanently. Is there any other distinction of days in a similar manner binding in connection with the worship by man of his Maker? In addition to the weekly Sabbath, are there any other days which the Church may by its own authority ordain as part of or

necessary to the ordinary worship of God, and which the members of the Church are bound to regard as similarly holy? Now, in order distinctly to apprehend and to keep in view the real point in dispute between the advocates and the opponents of ecclesiastical days, whether fast days or feast days, there are two preliminary remarks that it is important to make.

First, The question in debate between the friends and enemies of ecclesiastical holidays does not turn on the lawfulness or unlawfulness of private days set apart by individuals for their personal use and edification in the service of God, whether in the way of fasting or of thanksgiving. That such private and personal appointments may be lawful and profitable, it is neither our business nor our inclination to deny. If it be admitted that the duty of fasting, on occasions when sin committed or judgment incurred may call for humiliation and prayer of a special kind, is warranted by Scripture precept or example, then it would be difficult to deny that the individual so called upon to fast and pray may lawfully set apart a special time for the duty, whether that time be a portion or the whole of any particular day. Or, again, if it be admitted that the duty of thanksgiving for special mercies enjoyed, or special judgments averted or removed, be warranted by Scripture, it seems to be impossible not also to admit that the individual who desires so to pour out his heart to God may lawfully set apart a special time for the duty. In either case, the duty, once admitted to be binding, carries with it the warrant for setting aside from other employments or avocations a certain time for the performance of it. The rule laid down by the apostle in regard to those Jewish Christians, who desired to devote their ancient days of religious service under a former and worn-out economy to religious purposes under the Gospel economy, is plainly applicable here: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind: he that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, unto the Lord he doth not regard it." His convictions and his practice are not binding upon other men; his own conscience, when fully persuaded, is a warrant and justification in the matter to himself. It is a voluntary

observance, and not obligatory upon other men in other circumstances.

Second, The controversy between the advocates and opponents of ecclesiastical holidays does not turn on the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the Church, by its own authority, setting apart occasional days of fasting or thanksgiving, as emergencies in the dealings of God with the Church may warrant or demand. There is a wide difference between what it is lawful for the Church to do on those occasions when God in His providence may be calling its members to weeping and humiliation, or summoning them to special joy and thanksgiving, and what it is lawful for the Church to do in the way of setting up a standing ordinary part of its permanent worship. In the examples given us in Scripture of such practices, and in the general principles there laid down in regard to such matters, we believe that the Church has Divine warrant for the duty both of fasting and thanksgiving, when on special occasions there may be a call to that effect in the providence of God addressed to her, and that, not less collectively than individually, it may be right and profitable, on an emergency, to join in such special observances; and if it be a duty, then the duty carries with it the warrant for the Church to order and regulate the circumstances necessary for its performance. In other words, the duty of occasional fasting laid upon the Church justifies the Church in setting apart a fixed time, whether it be a part or the whole of a day, for the duty; and the obligation of occasional thanksgiving warrants, in like manner, the appointment of a season for thanksgiving. But there is a wide difference between this and the appointment of days warranted by no such emergency, but set apart as themselves holy, and constituting a stated and permanent part of ordinary religious worship, in virtue of the authority of the Church, and binding upon all its members. The occasional, as contradistinguished from the permanent and universal use of a day for special religious services, can give no holiness to it above other days; and the extraordinary, as contradistinguished from the ordinary use of such days, can make them no constituent part of the stated worship of God. The special call which warrants the

appointment of occasional days of religious service, sufficiently excludes the idea either of any holiness belonging to the day in itself, or in its appropriation, or of such extraordinary appointments forming any part of the ordinary worship of the Church, as if they were essential to it. It is not with the appointment of special days of fasting or thanksgiving that our present argument has to do.

There are two elements that enter into the notion of ecclesiastical holidays. First, they are public and general appointments, made binding by the ordinance of the Church upon all its members, and not merely private anniversaries of a voluntary kind, which each man individually may find it to be right or profitable for himself personally to observe; and second, they are stated and permanent appointments by the Church, recurring as regularly in religious service as the weekly Sabbath, and constituting part of ordinary worship, and not merely occasional and extraordinary appointments. These two elements seem plainly to belong to the idea of ecclesiastical holidays, properly so called, and must be taken along with us in our argument. Are such holidays, then, lawful or unlawful, when appointed by ecclesiastical authority? What are the limits set to the power of the Church in this matter? If we apply to the case of ecclesiastical holidays those general principles, which more than once we have already seen so distinctly to set limits to the exercise of Church power in other matters, we shall find that such holidays have no Scriptural warrant, and that the assumption of power on the part of the Church in their appointment is unlawful. "There is no day," says the Directory for Public Worship, sanctioned by our Church; "there is no day commanded in Scripture to be kept holy under the Gospel but the Lord's Day, which is the Christian Sabbath. Festival days, vulgarly called holy days, having no warrant in the Word of God, are not to be continued. Nevertheless, it is lawful and necessary, upon special emergent occasions, to separate a day or days for public fasting or thanksgiving, as the several eminent and extraordinary dispensations of God's providence shall administer cause and opportunity to His people."

I. Scripture, as the rule for the exercise of Church power, forbids the appointment of ecclesiastical holidays.

Under the Gospel dispensation, and within the New Testament, it cannot be pretended that there is any countenance to be found for the binding obligation of any sacred day except the weekly Sabbath. During Old Testament times, indeed, it was different; and typical days, as well as typical ordinances and typical persons, are to be found in the Jewish Church. But such days were abrogated, in so far as they had any authoritative force to command the obedience of Christians, when the ancient economy was abrogated. Nor can it be alleged that there is anything in the New Testament beyond a bare permission to the Jewish converts to use such days, and that granted only in accommodation to their weak consciences, and for no more than a time. They were matters of permission, not of commandment, and in this character suited only to the transition interval between the legal abrogation of the Jewish economy and its practical disuse. But while the former use of holidays in the Old Testament Church cannot be pleaded in their favour as making them lawful or binding at the present day, there are at least three passages of Scripture that may be referred to as very emphatically discountenancing such ecclesiastical appointments.

1st, The very terms of the grand Sabbatical law, as announced in the fourth commandment, seem very emphatically to mark out the Sabbath itself as the only day statedly to be separated from other days for the peculiar service of God, and withdrawn, in the ordinary practice of the Church, from common and secular avocations. This is not obscurely intimated in the very language instituting the ordinance: "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." The boundary line drawn around that portion of time given to man for his secular and necessary avocations is here as sharply and distinctly marked as the boundary line drawn around the portion of time appropriated to God. And it seems to be very decisively indicated, that the seventh part of the week, and neither more nor less, was to be secluded from



the rest and appointed for religious worship, as the general and ordinary law for the division of man's time; and that the remainder, consisting of six-sevenths, as the customary and common rule, was to be reserved entire for the ordinary and needful work of man in this life. Ecclesiastical holidays traverse and permanently encroach upon this grand principle laid down in the fourth commandment; and they must therefore be held to be clearly discountenanced by it.

2d, The Apostle Paul very distinctly includes holidays among the number of the things belonging to the bondage of a former dispensation, not to be considered binding upon those who had entered into the freedom of the Gospel. In his Epistle to the Galatians, much of which is directed to the object of vindicating the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free through the Gospel, he rebukes the Church of Galatia for the importance they attached to the requirements of the legal dispensation, and among these to the observance of holidays. "Ye observe," says he, "days and months, and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." And in the context it is not difficult to gather the twofold ground on which the apostle condemned such observances. First of all, he grounds his condemnation of ecclesiastical days on the fact that, in attaching importance to them, and regarding them as ordinary parts of the service due to God, the Galatians, like "children, were in bondage under the elements (στοιχαια) of the world;" in other words, he stigmatizes these appointments of days and seasons as rudimentary observances suited to the infancy of the Church, but only fetters to it now, when it ought to have arrived at spiritual manhood. And again, he characterizes them as "the weak and beggarly elements (or rudiments) whereunto the Galatians desired again to be in bondage." They were the empty and outward appointments of a carnal and worn-out dispensation.<sup>3</sup>

3d, In the Epistle to the Colossians the same apostle comes forth with a no less emphatic condemnation of Church holidays. Referring to the marvellous fulness of those privileges which in Christ and with

Him belong to every believer, the apostle condemns the value put on the observance or non-observance of mere outward ceremonies. "Let no man judge you," says Paul, "in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days." And here, too, he assigns a twofold reason for the warning and admonition. Such things were but types, under a former economy, of the very blessings which Christians now enjoyed through the Gospel; and these blessings themselves being now bestowed, the mere typical representations of them were done away; "which are a shadow of things to come, but the body (or substance) is of Christ." And still further, such ordinances, whatever authority they once had, were now but human appointments, from which it was the very object of the Gospel to emancipate them. "Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world,<sup>2</sup> why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (touch not, taste not, etc.), after the commandments and doctrines of men?" Judging by such statements as these, we seem to be inevitably shut up to the inference, that Scripture, as the rule for the use and limitation of Church power, forbids its exercise in the way of appointing ecclesiastical holidays.

II. The authority of Christ, as the source of Church power, limits it so as to exclude the right of appointing ecclesiastical holidays.

It is never to be forgotten, that all worship on the part of man addressed to God is an act done unto God. It is an acknowledgment of His authority as having opened up the way and appointed the manner for sinners to approach Him, and a religious expression of their homage to that authority. This is more especially apparent in regard to the positive institutions or parts of worship. Such institutions are used by us in worship, simply because God has appointed them; and in the use of these, and not of others, we do homage to God, as having the authority both to require the worship at our hands, and to regulate the forms and institutions of it. All this is abundantly obvious in the case of the Sabbath itself. In keeping the last day of the week as a day of religious observance, the Jews, by the very act, expressed their religious acknowledgment of God, who had

appointed it, and did an act of worship to Him as its author, in the character of the one Creator who made the heavens and the earth. In keeping the first day of the week now, Christians, by the very act, recognise Christ as the author of it, and do an act of religious homage to Him as the one Redeemer, who on that day rose from the dead, and secured the salvation of His people. By keeping the last day of the week holy, the Jews, by the very act, adored one God, the Creator of all. In keeping the first day of the week holy, Christians, by the very act, adore one Saviour, the Redeemer of all. Though there were no other service rendered on the Sabbath, and though our lips were silent and our tongues expressed no articulate praise, the single act of keeping the first day of the week holy would be an act of religious homage to the authority, and of solemn adoration to the person, of Christ. The observance of that day above the rest, as part of the ordinary worship of the Church, is an act of adoration to Christ, as much as a hymn in His praise would be an expression of adoration to Christ. And who does not see, that upon the very same principle the observance of holidays appointed by the Church, as ordinary and stated parts of Divine worship, is an expression of religious homage to man, who is the author of the appointment,—an unlawful acknowledgment of human or ecclesiastical authority in an act of worship. In keeping, after a religious sort, a day that has no authority but man's, we are paying a religious homage to that authority; we are bowing down, in the very act of our observance of the day as part of worship, not to Christ, who has not appointed it, but to the Church, which has. We are keeping the season holy, not to God, but to man.

Such uncommanded seasons, observed in religious worship as a part of it, cannot but be an unlawful encroachment upon the authority of Christ. They are instituted, not in His name, but in man's. They are kept, not in His name, but in the Church's name. They are holy, and honoured as holy, not because of His authority, but because of ecclesiastical authority. They are an expression of religious homage addressed, not to the Divine Master, but to His human servant. If they are acts of worship at all, they are the worship, not of Christ the Saviour, but of the Church's ordinance and authority. In this point of

view, the observance, after a religious manner, of human or ecclesiastical days is a daring interference with the sole authority of Him who is the Divine Head of the Church, to be adored in it, and the Divine Head of ordinances, to be adored through them. The authority of Christ as the Divine source of Church power, forbids the exercise of it in such a manner as to dishonour Himself; it forbids the appointment by it of holidays in worship, other than He has appointed.

III. The liberty and edification of Christ's people, the grand aim and end of Church power, are inconsistent with that exercise of it which ordains ecclesiastical holidays.

In drawing near to God in holy things, as emphatically as in other matters, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." It is of the very essence of acceptable worship, that men "be fully persuaded in their own minds," and that the conscience, out of a sense of duty, lend its free and willing consent to the acts of worship, as authorized and required by that God who has a right to bind the conscience, and to lay upon it the sense of obligation. The appointment of ecclesiastical holidays, as parts of worship addressed to God, is inconsistent with the right exercise of conscience in the matter; and that whether the conscience is offended and grieved by the introduction of human and uncommanded ordinances in Divine service, or whether the conscience, deluded and ignorant as to the sin, has no sense of the injury and wrong done to it. In the one case,—if the conscience is hurt and aggrieved by the imposition, in a matter so nearly concerning it as God's worship, of unwarranted and uncommanded rites, and is forced, although wounded and offended, to submit against its felt conviction, it is plain that here there can be no liberty left to it at all, but that its Christian rights and freedom in the very matter of approaching to God are trampled under foot. The oppression upon the conscience in such a case is both great and painfully felt. But even in the other case,—when the conscience is not forced to stifle its own convictions, because no convictions of the wrong done to it are felt,—when, knowing them to be no more than

human or ecclesiastical ordinances, they are yet made use of in God's worship at the bidding of the Church, without any feeling of being offended by the unlawful imposition, still Christian liberty is taken away not the less, and the conscience is enthralled as much, or rather all the more, because it is unconscious of the thralldom. That the conscience should be taught and trained, in a matter of conscience, to yield a passive and unconscious submission,—that in the very worship of God the conscience should be instructed to own the obligation, not of God's authority, but of man's,—that the act of religious service should be a homage, done, not to Christ, but to the Church,—this is to destroy true and intelligent liberty of conscience; and the deed is all the worse, and not the better, because the conscience is made to feel no wrong, but rather to love the yoke that binds it. It matters not whether, in the appointment and observance of human and uncommanded days, as part of God's worship, by ecclesiastical authority, the conscience of those on whom they are enforced feels the chain or not. In either case, the imposition is inconsistent with the true liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free.

IV. The true nature of Church power, as exclusively spiritual, excludes the imposition of holidays as stated and ordinary parts of worship.

The controversy with the friends of uncommanded ordinances, such as ecclesiastical holidays, in Divine worship, is very much the controversy which the Apostle Paul so strenuously maintained with the Judaizers of his day, who sought to bring into the spirituality and simplicity of the Gospel Church the carnal observances of a carnal economy that had been abrogated. For the Church to appoint and enforce such days, is a departure from the spirituality of that dispensation which is emphatically the dispensation of the Spirit; and a step, and no small one, backward in the direction of that fleshly system that had been done away with. There were under that former economy holy places, more sacred to God and more acceptable in His sight than others. There were holy seasons, in

which more than in others the presence of God was enjoyed, and the prayers of His worshippers were effectual. There was a formal consecration of places and times, by which the Jews were taught and warranted to connect the presence of God more particularly with one spot of earth and with certain seasons than with others. The Israelites had Jerusalem and the temple there, with its solemn feasts and sacred seasons; and these more especially and peculiarly were "holiness to the Lord." Such outward and ceremonial holiness of places and times has been done away, and is unknown under the Gospel. "Neither at Jerusalem, nor in the Temple, do men now worship the Father." There is no sacred spot on earth now, where we must take our shoes from off our feet, because it is, above all others, the dwelling-place of God. There is no temple on earth or in heaven consecrated to Jehovah and made holy by His presence, save the temple of Christ's glorified body, and the temple of each believer's soul. "The true worshippers now worship the Father in spirit as well as in truth." It is a spiritual service, linked to no altar, and chained to no place of prayer. And if there be yet one day in seven holier than others,—if the Sabbath, and that alone, is a time sacred to God, that ordinance of holiness had neither its birth nor its kindred with the ceremonial holy days of an outward economy. It had a higher origin and a loftier character; it was the resting time of God, when He finished His mighty work of creation, long before the Jewish dispensation was appointed; and, holier still, it was the resting time of Christ when He rose from His work of toil and blood, and entered into His rest when that dispensation was abrogated.

There is something mysteriously sublime in that peculiar holiness which distinguishes the Sabbath as the only holy day known under the Gospel dispensation, marked out as it is from all time, since time itself began to be numbered; and connecting, as it seems intended to do, the narrow section of time which belongs to the history of this world with that eternity into which it is about to be merged. For the ordinance of the Lord's Day shall bear witness to His resurrection, as the ordinance of the Lord's Table speaks of His death, "till He come again." It was the Sabbath of God the Father at the creation,—a day

of His eternal subsistence let down from heaven, and inserted among the days that then began to be counted on the unfallen earth. It was the Sabbath of God the Son at the redemption,—another day of heavenly rest let down from on high, and inserted amid the days of evil and sorrow which this fallen world had so long numbered,—a day on which the Redeemer rested and was refreshed, when His work was done. And now the Sabbath day both of creation and redemption awaits the development of the Divine dispensations, and points forward to a higher, so surely coming, when the earthly day shall be taken up into the heavenly, and become the Sabbath of God the Holy Ghost,—when He too shall rest from His special work, as the Father and the Son rested before, and shall repose and be refreshed in the contemplation and enjoyment, throughout eternity, of His finished work of grace and spiritual renovation.

**SUBDIVISION III:**

**THE INSTRUMENTALITY FOR PUBLIC  
WORSHIP, OR THE CHRISTIAN  
MINISTRY**

**CHAPTER I:**

THE MINISTRY A DIVINE AND STANDING ORDINANCE IN THE  
CHURCH—THE MINISTERIAL AND PASTORAL TITLE

HAVING dealt with and dismissed the subject of the time of Church worship, the order of discussion brings us next to the consideration of the power of the Church in reference to the ministry or instrumentality for public worship; or the consideration of the right and duty of the Church to set apart a particular order of men by ordination for discharging the duties included in the conducting of Divine service. There are certain duties that belong to Church worship which cannot be discharged by the members of the congregation indiscriminately. In the duty of joint prayer in public worship, there is needed some one who may act as the organ of the rest to express their united requests in language, and present them to God in their name as well as his own. In reading or preaching the Word, which is another important part of ordinary worship, there is needed one gifted and qualified for the task of doing so in presence of the congregation, and in such a manner as may be for their edification and instruction. In the dispensation of ordinances and Sacraments, also belonging to public worship as an ordinary part of it, it is impossible that the members of the Church can act collectively or indiscriminately; and it is necessary that some one be appointed suitably to discharge such duties on behalf of the rest. If public worship be an ordinance of God to be stately celebrated in His



Church on one day every seven, and if such duties as those of joint prayer and praise, of the reading and preaching of the Word in public, of the dispensation of Sacraments, be duties to be permanently performed in the Christian society, then it inevitably follows, even upon the principles of natural reason, that some special parties must be vested with the office and power necessary for such services, and be commissioned to discharge them on behalf of the rest. The stated administration of such services in the Church necessarily carries with it the warrant and authority to set apart certain office-bearers distinct from the rest to perform the duty. Were the Church of Christ no more than a voluntary society, and the worship of the Church on Sabbath no more than a human solemnity, experience would soon dictate the necessity for this. What might be the character or powers proper to such office-bearers, would be a question to be determined by the nature of the service to be rendered by them. But in every organized society, whether of Divine appointment or human arrangement, having numerous and important duties to discharge, there is a necessity for organs and office-bearers of some kind or other to act on behalf of the society, and to do its peculiar work; and the necessity would seem to be not diminished, but increased, if the society itself be a Divine appointment, such as is the Christian Church, and if the work to be performed be the celebration of Divine worship and administration of Divine ordinances on behalf of the Church's members.

We may safely assert, then, that there is a necessity laid upon the Christian Church, in common with every other society, to have officers of some kind, or a ministry, for the purpose of acting on behalf of the society and managing its affairs, more especially for conducting the stated and ordinary worship of the Church. Those who hold the ecclesiastical system of the Quakers are the only religious body who are prepared to negative this general proposition; all other denominations, however much they may differ as to the nature of the ministerial office or the power implied in it, agree in maintaining the general principle, that a ministry of some kind or other is necessary to the right performance of the Church's duties. An

order of men specially set apart for the work of the ministry in the Christian Church is, however, an institution the lawfulness of which is denied by those who hold the Quaker theory, on the same ground on which they deny the Divine authority or obligation of all the positive institutions of Christianity. The inward light given to every Christian, and the extraordinary influences of the Spirit vouchsafed, are, according to their system, sufficient to supersede the use of positive institutions of any kind; and the office of the ministry especially, as an office for teaching and dispensation of Word and Sacrament, is accounted inconsistent with the office of the Spirit, and hence unlawful. Beyond the circle of religious denominations, the denial of the office of a Christian ministry as a standing institution in the Church is shared in by those who account the Church to be no more than a human and voluntary society, and whose views regarding the Church itself lead them to look upon the ministry as a mere optional and economical arrangement, adopted by the Christian society at its own hand, and having no other authority. The Quakers hold that the ordinance of the ministry is unlawful, as an unwarranted encroachment on the office of the Spirit of God. Those who regard the Church as a mere human society, hold that the ordinance of the ministry is not unlawful so much as unauthoritative, and destitute of all warrant beyond human and voluntary arrangement. With both parties, the office of a peculiar set of men, set apart to conduct the worship and perform the work of the Church of Christ, is an office without authority from Him, and destitute of all real claims to be regarded as a Divine and permanent appointment in the Church.

In entering, then, on the consideration of the power of the Church in connection with the ministry for worship, the first question that meets us is as to the right of the Church to set apart some of her members to such an office. Is the office itself of human or Divine origin? Is it a mere matter of arrangement and convenience in the Christian society, to ordain certain men to the work of the ministry, as any other human and voluntary society might set apart office-bearers to act on its behalf and to do its work; and have these men no

more than human authority for the position they hold? Or, on the contrary, has the Church a right from Christ to ordain men in His name to be stewards of His Word and mysteries; and is the office to which they are thus set apart one of Divine appointment and permanent standing in the Christian Church? To this question, at the outset of the argument, we must turn our attention.

I. The office of pastors and teachers is a standing ordinance of Christ in His Church. The ministry is of Divine appointment, and it is a permanent office in the Christian Church.

The evidence at hand to substantiate this general proposition is derived from various and abundant sources.

1st, The ordinance of worship, as an ordinary and standing appointment in the Christian Church, requires the office of the ministry for its administration. In the very fact that Christ has appointed institutions of worship and a public service of the sanctuary, and destined these to be perpetual in the Christian society, we have a strong evidence for the Divine appointment and permanent nature of the ministerial office also. That public worship, with all its positive ordinances, was of Divine origin in the Church, and designed to be a standing appointment for Christians in all ages, we have had occasion already to prove; and it is not necessary now to go back upon the evidence. But the general proof then adduced goes much further than to demonstrate that the ordinances of worship are Divine, and permanently binding on the Church. Inasmuch as these ordinances cannot administer themselves, the proof in favour of them also carries with it an evidence in favour of a standing order of men set apart, and necessary for their administration. If Church worship is itself a Divine and permanent ordinance, it inevitably implies worshippers on the one hand, and the administration of worship on the other,—the office of those who are ministered unto in religious service, and the office of those who minister.

2d, The appointment of the Apostles by our Lord, with the commission given to them to "go and make disciples of all nations," is itself an evidence of His intention to employ, in the conversion of the world, not merely the mission of the Holy Spirit, but the mission of men holding an office and employing it for that use. It was not simply to the Apostles personally that Christ said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The promise which He joined to the command, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (ἕως της συντελειας του αιωνος), sufficiently intimates that the office of teaching and administering Sacraments was to be perpetual and permanent in the Church. In the commission thus given to the first teachers of the Word, linked as it is to the promise of His spiritual presence with them through all ages, we have in fact the twofold agency to be employed by Christ for the conversion of men, and evidence that both forms of that agency were equally and alike to be permanent on the earth. First, there is the agency of a human ministry for preaching the Word and dispensing the Sacraments; and second, there is the agency of the Spirit to be present with them and make them effectual. Both of these are made mention of in the commission and promise given to the Apostles as representing the Church; and both were to be standing and permanent instruments for the conversion of men, "even unto the end of the world."

3d, We find that provision was made by the Apostles for a sufficient staff of pastors and teachers to succeed them after their own removal, and to supply their absence in the Churches from which they were separated. In the New Testament history we find the inspired men, who are commissioned to be the founders of the Christian society, taking care to provide with teachers and ministers the Churches that they founded. To Timothy the Apostle Paul gave the injunction: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." To Titus he says: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and

ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee,"—men who would "hold fast the faithful Word as they had been taught, that they be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince gainsayers."<sup>2</sup> In every place, the first object of the Apostles was to provide for the continuance of the ministry.

4th, We have manifold passages of Scripture in which both the qualifications and duties of pastors and teachers are described and enjoined,—a decisive evidence that they were not merely appointed for a time, and to cease with the apostolic age, but were designed to be a permanent ordinance in the Christian Church. No small portion of Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus—commonly known as the Pastoral Epistles—are occupied with directions from the apostle as to the exercise of the ministerial office, as to the qualifications demanded in those who filled it, and as to the duties expected at their hands. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians we find the same apostle laying down at length those principles that were to guard against abuses and disorders in the exercise of ministerial gifts, and endeavouring anxiously not to do away with the office as only temporary, but rather to apply a perpetual and permanent remedy to its misapplications; and, scattered up and down through the New Testament writings, we find numerous passages prescribing the duties of the ministry, in a way that clearly implies that it was designed to be a standing and ordinary office in the Christian Church.

5th, As a counterpart to the duties enjoined on pastors and teachers in the New Testament, we have the duties enjoined on the flock towards their ministers,—another evidence, if such were needed, of the permanent nature of the office. "Let the elders," says Paul, "that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the Word and doctrine;" "Let him that is taught communicate to him that teacheth in all good things;" "Take heed how ye hear," etc. Such passages as these plainly take it for granted that the duty of members of the Church towards their pastors and teachers was an ordinary and permanent duty; and they warrant us

in saying that the office itself was not a temporary one, but, on the contrary, destined to occupy a perpetual place of authority and edification in the Christian Church.

6th, The very names and titles given to pastors and teachers in Scripture proclaim them to hold a standing and ordinary office in the Christian Church. They are called "ministers of Christ;" they are represented as "stewards of the mysteries of God;" they are spoken of as "ambassadors for Christ;" they are described as "labourers thrust forth unto the harvest by the Lord of the harvest." All these titles or designations seem, more or less, to forbid the idea that their office was only temporary, and about to be abolished. They amount, on the contrary, to pretty decisive evidence, that it was of permanent use and standing authority in the Christian Church.

Such, then, is the clear and abundant evidence that we have for the perpetuity of the office of the ministry in the Christian Church. It is no mere human device or optional arrangement, had recourse to for the convenience of the Christian society, and edification of its members. The convenience and edification that are linked so closely and manifestly to the office are the least of its claims to be perpetuated and revered in the Church of Christ. It forms one of those positive institutions of Christ by which He has made provision through every age for the advancement and perfecting of His own work on earth; and, armed with His authority, and appealing to Him for their warrant, the ministers of the Church are entitled to claim that they be regarded, in a high and peculiar sense, His representatives and servants in all the work of their ministry, and as His living and standing ordinance for the dispensation of Word and Sacrament in the Church. That a certain order of men should be set apart and ordained to the office of conducting the worship and ordering the affairs of the Christian society, is no assumption of power or authority by them alien to the character and hostile to the interests of the Church. The seclusion from the rest, and the ordination to peculiar duties, of a few of the members of the Church, for the benefit of the whole, is no human device or arrangement,

savouring of a love of power or an assumption of mysterious and super-eminent right by an exclusive caste. Whatever may be the power or rights that belong to them, it cannot be denied, that an office of the ministry and an order of ministers have been instituted by Christ in His Church. The office of pastors and teachers is of Divine appointment and of permanent authority in the Church of Christ.

But after establishing this general proposition, there is another question of a very important kind that meets us, and demands consideration and reply. From what quarter is a right and title to the office of the ministry derived; and who are the parties who have received commission and authority to exercise the office? There seems to be clear and satisfactory evidence to prove that such an office has been appointed by Christ in His Church, and designed to be permanent and perpetual there. Who, then, have a title to enter upon the authority and the duties implied in the office; and what is the warrant which the individual who lawfully fills the office can exhibit for his assumption of it? From what party or parties is the ministerial title derived?

II. The title to the possession of the ministerial office is conferred by the call of Christ.

The office is Christ's, and the title to enter upon the office is from Christ also. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God." It is the "Lord of the harvest" that "sendeth forth labourers into His harvest." "It is God that maketh able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit." The right to the ministerial office is a right bestowed on individuals by the Divine Head of the Church, and any appointment to the office without such a commission from Him is null and void. This unavoidably follows, from the very fact that Christ has reserved all rule and authority in His Church unto Himself, that He still wields it according to His own pleasure, and that, as the ever-living and ever-present Head of ordinances, He not only instituted them at the first, but continues to

administer them in the Christian society ever after. There can be no authority exercised in His Church which is not conferred immediately by Him, and no power administered except what He gives. Christ has not vested in the Church a deposit of power and authority communicable by it to its office-bearers or servants, and received and administered by them as from the Church itself. On the contrary, Christ has retained all such power and authority in His own hand, and gives it directly and immediately from Himself to those whom He appoints to office or rule in the Church. Its office-bearers receive their office, not from the Church, but from Christ Himself; they hold their office, not from the Church, but from its Head; they administer their office, not in virtue of power or authority conferred by the Church, but in virtue of the warrant and the power given by its Divine Lord. The Church does not come between its Head and its own office-bearers, as vesting them with office, or bestowing the commission and the gifts necessary to its discharge. The office is from Christ, the authority for administering its functions is from Christ, the gifts and graces and ability which men need in order to exercise it rightly are from Christ. They would not be "the ministers of Christ" were it otherwise; they would be only the nominees of the Church. If a minister is a minister of the Saviour, he must hold his commission, not from man, but from the Lord. If he be "an ambassador for Christ," he must have his credentials written by Christ Himself. If he is "called of God, as was Aaron," he must have his call directly from God, without the intervention of a third party. It was the immediate call and word of God addressed to Him that commissioned even Christ Himself to His office; "for He glorified not Himself to be made an high priest, but He that said unto Him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten Thee." And what was necessary to give validity to the office of Christ, is no less necessary to give validity to the office of any pastor or teacher in Christ's Church on earth. It is the immediate call and warrant of God addressed to a minister that give him his title to the ministerial office.

Is it asked, In what manner is the call or commission or warrant, which every real minister receives from Christ to the ministerial



office, obtained; or in what way may the individual himself come to know that he has received it? The answer to the question it is not difficult to find. The Scriptures themselves have given us a clear and authoritative rule whereby to ascertain who are and who are not called and commissioned by Christ to be His servants for the work of the ministry. They have described the gifts and qualifications which Christ gives to all to whom His call and commission are addressed. There are "gifts differing according to the grace that is given;" gifts, according to the statement of the apostle, for the various offices of the Church; gifts for "prophecy," for "the ministry," for "teaching," for "exhortation," for "ruling." And these special and peculiar gifts for office, thus bestowed by Christ and enjoyed by individuals, are the token and the evidence to such individuals that they have Christ's warrant and call to the office. There is needed no supernatural call personally addressed to a man to assure him of his warrant to serve the Church of Christ in its ministry. There is no miraculous light thrown across the path, no voice from on high, like that which met Paul on the road to Damascus, sent to meet a man now, and summon him to the public service of Christ. But the gifts and graces for the office, when conferred, are God's commission and call to the office. In the special endowments qualifying for the work bestowed by Christ, there are Christ's warrant and title giving a right to conclude that a man has been chosen for the work. When a man feels that his are the spiritual qualifications as well as the spiritual longing to serve the Church in the ministry of Christ, when "zeal for the honour of God and love for the souls of men" are added—as indeed "great motives and chief inducements"—to the special gifts and graces that fit for office, he has reason to judge that these are the call of Christ, and that unless he has misread and misinterpreted the commission, he has received from Him, who alone can bestow it, a title to the ministerial office in the Church.

III. The title to the exercise of the ministerial office is, in ordinary circumstances, conferred by Christ through the call of the Church.

There is a distinction, and a most important one in the argument, to be drawn between the title to the possession of the ministerial office, and the title to the exercise of the ministerial office. The former, or the right to the office, is the gift immediately of Christ; His call, directly addressed to the individual, gives him this first right. The latter, or the right to the exercise of the office, is also the gift of Christ; not, however, immediately or directly bestowed, but conferred through the regular and outward appointment of the Church.

The first, or a right to the ministerial office, is one involved in the call of the Saviour Himself, addressed and announced to the individual by the bestowment upon him of those special gifts and graces of a spiritual kind which alone can qualify him for the office. The second, or a right to the exercise of the office, is involved in the call of the Church, when, by ordination and regular investiture, he is outwardly set apart to the discharge of the duties connected with the office. The warrant both to possess and exercise the office is complete only then when he has received both the direct call of Christ and the outward call of the Church. The one of these, or the inward call addressed to him from His Lord in heaven, gives a warrant and title to the possession of the ministerial office; and that title is made good to the effect of conferring the right—not to the possession, but over and above that—to the exercise of the ministerial office, when it is recognised by the Church as coming from its Divine Head, and when the Church, in deference to His choice thus intimated, proceeds to give the outward call, and by ordination solemnly to set apart the individual so chosen to the office of the ministry. The distinction of the old divines, formerly adopted in regard to the residence of Church power, is the very distinction to be adopted in the case before us of a right to the ministerial office. That right may be regarded as existing "in esse," and it may be regarded as existing "in operari;" and in all ordinary cases the one of these must supplement the other before a man is entitled to assume the power of discharging the duties of the ministry. The right "in esse" is conferred immediately by the call of Christ, expressed to the individual through the

bestowment on him of the special gifts and graces suitable for office. The right "in operari" is conferred by Christ too, but in ordinary circumstances only through the call of the Church to the same individual, recognising in him the choice of Christ, and proceeding by the solemn act of ordination, to set him apart to the office of the ministry. Until this formal and outward call of the Church is superadded to the inward call of Christ, the individual's title to the ministerial office, both for the possession and for the exercise of it, is not, in ordinary circumstances, complete.

I do not stop at present, because I shall refer to it afterwards, to inquire what extraordinary circumstances may justify or demand. But on all ordinary occasions, the right to the ministerial office "in esse" and the right to it "in operari" must be conjoined; and the call of Christ and the call of the Church must unite before a man is justified in entering upon the work of the ministry. The outward investiture by ecclesiastical ordination is needful for the work of the ministry besides the call, inward and sovereign, of Christ to the office of the ministry. The one ought to be added to the other before a man may regularly enter upon ecclesiastical duties in the Church.

That in ordinary circumstances a minister ought to be ordained to his office by those who have been in office before, is an assertion which is justified both by Scripture injunction and Scripture example. The practice of ordination, through which an individual is admitted to the exercise of the ministry, is one very distinctly sanctioned and required by apostolic authority. The imposition of hands by the office-bearers of the Church was not a mere empty and unmeaning ceremony, but the last and crowning act by which the previous call of Christ to the individual was recognised and given practical effect to, and he was set apart to the work of the ministry. When the extraordinary call addressed to Paul and Barnabas by God to enter upon their ministry to the Gentiles was intimated to the Church,—when the office-bearers at Antioch were told, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them,"—the Church proceeded to implement and carry out the call from heaven

by human ordination to the work. "When they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." When Timothy was set apart to the work of an evangelist, we have again the twofold call from God in the first instance, and from the Church afterwards. The "gift," we are told, "was given him by prophecy," implying a Divine call; and, conjointly with this, "it was given him by laying on of the hands of the presbytery," implying an ecclesiastical call.<sup>2</sup> When Timothy is to be instructed by Paul how to set in order the things in the Church, he is strictly charged to "lay hands suddenly on no man,"—an injunction which plainly implies that Timothy ought to be careful to see that those who were ordained to office by the Church had the previous and necessary call from the Divine Head. In short, ordination by the Church was the ordinary and authorized method in the apostolic practice for the investiture with office of those found qualified by the previous call and special gifts conferred by Christ. Not that the ordination by the Church conferred a right to the office of the ministry. That right was previously conferred by Christ; and ordination, in itself, was no more than the Church's recognition of the right so conferred, and the Church's admission of the individual to the discharge of the office to which he was thus called. The solemn act of ordination, by which they were formally admitted to the office, or invested with the right to discharge its functions, is not to be confounded with the previous right to the office itself, derived from a higher source; far less is it to be regarded as itself conferring that right. It is not the title to the office, but the title to the exercise of the office—not the office "in esse," but the office "in operari"—that is bestowed by Christ through the outward call and ordination by the Church.

IV. The title to the pastoral office in addition to the ministerial office requires to be confirmed by the consent or election of the members of the congregation over whom the minister is appointed.

There is an obvious distinction—although not seldom overlooked—between the ministerial office and the pastoral office. The title to the ministerial office, and to the ordinary exercise of all its powers and

discharge of all its duties, is completed by the joint call of Christ inwardly and of the Church outwardly. Ordination by the office-bearers of the Church completes the title, and constitutes the individual ordained a minister of the Church universal, free to exercise the office wherever Providence may open the way to him. The existence of the ministerial office is noways dependent on the members of the Church, nor is the consent or election by the people necessary to the validity of ordination. It is different with the pastoral office, by ordination to which a man is constituted not so much a minister of the Church universal, as a minister of a particular congregation; and the pastoral relation is formed between him and a particular flock. That pastoral relation necessarily implies the election, or at least the consent, of the people, in order to make the formation of the tie lawful; and this element therefore enters as an essential one into the title to the pastoral office. In addition to the joint call by Christ and the Church, which is necessary to give a right to the exercise of the ministerial office, there is also the consent or election by the people, which is necessary to constitute, over and above the ministerial, the pastoral character. The pastor cannot properly discharge the duties of the pastoral office without the consent of the people over whom he is appointed. The minister, standing in no such pastoral relationship to any particular congregation, does not need the election or consent of the people to give him a valid right to the office which he holds.

It is true that the ministerial office is necessary to the full discharge of the duties implied in the pastoral office; and the latter is never conferred without the former, although the former may be conferred without the latter. The pastor must always be a minister, although it is not necessary that the minister should always be a pastor. The separation between the ministerial office and the pastoral must, in order to a right understanding of the subject, be kept distinctly in view, although such a separation in practice is not, in ordinary circumstances, a thing desirable. "It is agreeable to the Word of God," say the Westminster Divines in treating of the Ordination of Ministers; "it is agreeable to the Word of God, and very expedient,

that such as are to be ordained ministers be designed to some particular Church or other ministerial charge." But whatever in practice may be expedient, it cannot be doubted that there is a broad and important difference in the nature of the things between the ministerial and the pastoral office. Ordination to the ministry needs, in order to secure its validity, nothing but the call of Christ on the one hand, and the call of the Church through its office-bearers on the other. The right to the ministry—the right to go forth and preach the Gospel of Christ, wherever Christ may give opportunity—does not wait on the consent of the people, and is not suspended on the choice or invitations of men. Ordination to the pastorate, on the other hand, in order to be lawful and right, must, in addition to the call of Christ, and the ordination by the office-bearers of the Church, have also the consent and election of the people. It is the ministerial office tied down to a particular congregation, and not discharging its functions at large; and Scripture and reason both abundantly testify, that for this office the consent of the congregation is required.<sup>2</sup> The title to the pastoral office in addition to the ministerial requires to be strengthened and confirmed by the call of the people.

## **CHAPTER II:**

### **APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION**

IN considering the subject of the title to the ministerial office, the conclusions at which we arrived were briefly these: First, the minister of Christ, as peculiarly and emphatically Christ's, has his title to the office primarily and directly from Him, the call of the

Divine Head of the Church alone conferring a right to the possession of office in the Church. That call is an inward one, expressed to the individual himself, by the bestowment on him from Christ of those special gifts and graces which qualify for the ministry in the Church, the endowments for the office, when conferred, being an intimation that the person so endowed is chosen to the office. Second, in all ordinary circumstances the outward call of the Church must be added to the inward call of its Head, in order to give a man a title to enter upon the exercise of the ministerial office: there must be, first, Christ speaking to the soul of the man by a secret voice, heard only by himself; and, added to this, there must be Christ speaking to the same man through the public voice of the Church, heard by all, before he may assume to himself the right to advance to the work of the ministry. This second call is expressed to the individual through the solemn investiture with office bestowed by the Church in ordination,—the act of the Church in setting a man apart to the work of the ministry not conferring on him his title to the office, but being a public acknowledgment that the title already belongs to him in virtue of the choice of its Divine Head, and forming the last step necessary, in ordinary circumstances, to carry that choice into effect. Third, the call of the Church and the call of its Head must be supplemented by one further element in order to constitute and make up the pastoral title; and that additional element is the call of the people. Over and above the right to dispense Word and Sacrament at large, wherever Providence may open up his way, conferred upon a man by the ministerial title, the pastoral office implies a peculiar relationship to a particular congregation; and this relationship cannot lawfully be formed without the third element, or the call of the people.

There is a well-marked and important distinction, not to be overlooked without great detriment to the argument, between those three calls. The first, or the call of the Head of the Church, is necessary as a safeguard against human presumption, which would interfere with the service of Christ in His Church, lest a man should take to himself the office of the ministry at his own hand, or at the

bidding of man, and so run unbidden and unsent. Because he is called of Christ, His minister is "the servant, not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ." The second, or the public call of the office-bearers of the Church, is necessary as a safeguard against individual fanaticism, and vain pretensions on the part of any one to a Divine and extraordinary call from Christ, where none such is given. Ordination by the Church is the public acknowledgment on the part of its office-bearers that they believe that the call from Christ, laid claim to on the part of the person ordained, is a real call, and not merely his own mistaken impression or fanatical belief of one; and that, as the office-bearers of Christ, they feel constrained to recognise the choice made by their Master, and to carry it into effect by solemnly setting apart the individual to the work of the ministry in His Church. The third, or the call of the members of the congregation, is necessary as a safeguard against the encroachment by the office-bearers of the Church on the spiritual rights and liberties of the people. The necessity for the call of the flock, before bestowing the pastoral character or constituting the pastoral relationship, is the security that the office-bearers of the Church shall not establish, in the exercise of their right to ordain, a lordship over God's heritage.

Such are the general positions which Scripture warrants us to lay down on the subject of the ministerial title. These principles are controverted by two opposite parties,—by those who would add other conditions as necessary to constitute the ministerial title besides the call of Christ and of the office-bearers of Christ, and by those who deny that the conditions now named are both of them essential to the ministerial title. On the one side we have the doctrine of the Romanists and of High Churchmen in general, who hold that, over and above the joint call of Christ and the Church's office-bearers, there is needed, to complete the ministerial title, an uninterrupted ecclesiastical descent and commission, derived lineally from the Apostles; or, in other words, that "apostolical succession" is another element necessary to the validity of the ministerial title, over and above the call of Christ and the sanction by the office-bearers of the



Church. And, on the other side, there is the doctrine of the Independents, who deny that the call of the office-bearers of the Church is necessary, in ordinary circumstances, to complete the ministerial or pastoral title, and who account ordination by the Church as not itself of any essential force in making up the warrant of an individual to enter upon the office and work of the ministry. The general principles which we have already laid down are accounted by one of these parties to be erroneous in the way of defect, and by the other to be erroneous in the way of excess. High Churchmen hold that, without the addition of apostolical succession, every other warrant is insufficient to entitle a man to the ministerial office. Independents hold that a man is entitled to assume the office of the ministry without waiting for the call of the office-bearers of the Church in the shape of ordination at their hands. The doctrine of the Independents on this subject we must reserve for future discussion. The doctrine of High Churchmen, whether Popish or Episcopalian, we shall now proceed to deal with. There are two preliminary remarks which it is necessary to make, in order distinctly to understand the point at issue between the friends and the opponents of apostolical succession as necessary to the ministerial title.

The first remark to be made is, that the doctrine of apostolical succession, as essential to the validity of the ministerial title, is not necessarily connected with the Popish or Prelatic form of Church government, but may be maintained along with a Presbyterian creed. In point of fact, indeed, the theory of apostolical succession has seldom or—with but one or two singular and outré exceptions—never been held by Presbyterians in connection with the ministerial title, but has been almost exclusively maintained by High Churchmen, either Popish or Prelatic. But there is nothing in the nature of the doctrine to render this absolutely necessary. An ecclesiastical descent through the channel of presbyters is quite as possible a thing as an ecclesiastical succession through popes and prelates; although, practically, few or no Presbyterians have ever asserted such a claim. The question of the form of Church government established in the Church is not necessarily connected, therefore, with the present

subject of apostolical succession; and the question of apostolical succession, as necessary or not to the ministerial title, may be argued without entering upon the debate of what form of government has actually been established by Christ in His Church. This latter point, or the government of the Church by popes or prelates or presbyters, is a matter reserved for after consideration. The question before us at present is as to the necessity or non-necessity of an outward ecclesiastical succession, in one shape or other, from the Apostles to give validity to the ecclesiastical title.

The second remark to be attended to in proceeding to deal with the question of apostolical succession is, that there is a most important difference—although one constantly forgotten by the adherents of this doctrine—between the succession of a Christian ministry generally from the days of the Apostles down to our own, and the succession of this or the other minister individually. There is a vast difference between the unbroken ecclesiastical descent of the order, as an order, and the unbroken ecclesiastical descent of individuals belonging to the order, as individuals. There cannot be a doubt that the office of the ministry, as an office, has existed without interruption from the days of the Apostles to the present time, and that the office has been filled from age to age by men ordained and set apart to its duties. The ministry, embracing an order of men to discharge its duties, is a standing institution in the Christian Church since its first establishment until now; and Leslie, in his *Short Method with the Deists*, has fairly and justly appealed to the uninterrupted existence of the office as a standing and permanent monument of the great primary facts of Christianity, and therefore as demonstrative evidence of its truth. But to attribute—as can justly be done—an unbroken succession in this sense to the office, is a very different thing from attributing the same unbroken succession to any man who now holds the office. That the office has existed and been filled from the days of the Apostles until now, may be admitted; but that any individual now holding the office can trace back his own ordination to it through the successive ordinations of previous men in uninterrupted succession up to the Apostles, may be fairly denied.

There may have been—there must have been—breaks in the chain, fatal to the individual succession, although not fatal to the general succession of the order. There may have been interruptions and invalidities connected with the ordination of individual bishops or ministers at any one time, so as to break the line of succession with regard to those claiming descent from them individually, while there may have been no interruptions or invalidities connected with the ordination of all the bishops and all the ministers in the Church at any one time, so as to break the line of succession universally, or in regard to the ministry itself. There is an important difference between these two things as bearing upon the question of apostolical succession; and yet it is a difference which the advocates of the doctrine almost constantly overlook in their argument.<sup>2</sup>

I. In regard, then, to the general question of apostolical succession as necessary to the validity of the ministerial title, or—as most of the adherents of the doctrine maintain—as necessary to the essence of a Church, I remark in the first place, that no statements of Scripture can be alleged in favour of such a doctrine, but rather the reverse.

There are a number of Scripture declarations that give promise of the permanence and perpetuity of the Church, and declarations also that give promise of the permanence and perpetuity of a ministry in the Church, which have been appropriated and perverted by the advocates of apostolical succession into arguments in favour of the doctrine. The promise of our Lord to be with His Church, or the ministers of His Church, even to the last—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (or of the dispensation)"—has been turned and misinterpreted to the purpose of establishing the doctrine of a continued and unbroken succession of ministers in an individual line since the apostolical age. The promise of perpetuity to the Church—"Upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"—has also been misapplied to the same purpose. In short, most of those Scripture statements which afford us the warrant to say that there shall be a Church always on this earth, and that the office of minister and pastor is a standing

appointment in the Church, have been pressed into the service of the theory, that an apostolical succession in the line of each individual minister is essential to the validity of the ministerial title, and, as most if not all its advocates hold, essential also to the existence of a Church at all. Now, with regard to such statements of Scripture, it may readily be admitted—nay, it is to be strenuously affirmed—that they demonstrate this much, that a Church of Christ, more or less visible, is always to exist on earth; but this conclusion has nothing to do with the question of an apostolical succession in that Church. Further still, many of these texts may be held as demonstrating that the office of the ministry is a standing and permanent one in the Church, and that never at any time, throughout the universal Christian society and in all the branches of the Christian Church, will the office of the ministry become extinct through the interruption or invalidity of the ordination of those who hold it. But neither does this latter conclusion in the smallest measure go to substantiate the doctrine of an unbroken ecclesiastical succession in the line of individual ministers. There are not a few statements in Scripture that justify us in believing that the office of the ministry in the Church can never, as an office, become extinct; that an order of men set apart to its public duties can never, as an order, be interrupted and come to an end, so long as the Church itself endures. But there are no statements in Scripture applicable to the case of either individual Churches or individual ministers, and which prove that the ecclesiastical succession in regard to such may not be interrupted and brought to a fatal termination. On the contrary, in regard both to particular Churches and also to particular ministers, there are statements in Scripture to the very opposite effect. There are threatenings of judgment against particular Churches which, as in the case of the seven Churches of Asia, we know to have been fatally executed in their utter ruin and extinction; and there are statements likewise in regard to particular ministers, that distinctly enough intimate that there are false teachers as well as true who have been ordained into office in the Church, and that, in the persons of those who "have not been of God," the line of apostolical succession of

individual ministers has been broken, and the candlestick has been removed out of its place.<sup>2</sup>

II. There are no precedents or analogies in Scripture in favour of the doctrine of an apostolical succession as necessary to the validity of the ministry, but rather the reverse.

The advocates of the theory of apostolical succession have been accustomed to refer, in confirmation of their views, to the example afforded by the Jewish dispensation. Under that economy, the office of the priest descended by regular succession from father to son in the family of Aaron, the precise line being marked out by Divine appointment, and provision being made by Divine promise against any failure in the succession; and this case has been frequently appealed to in behalf of the doctrine which maintains that a like principle in regard to the succession of ministers is to be found under the Gospel dispensation. It is hardly necessary, in answer to such a plea, to remark that the succession of the priestly office in the family of Aaron was but a type of the priestly office of Christ, and that the right of the first-born in Aaron's house to minister before God in the sanctuary on behalf of the congregation was no more than a picture by anticipation of the right of Christ, as "the first-born among many brethren," to act on their behalf as mediator with God. The circumstances of the ministry under the Gospel are wholly unlike the circumstances of the priests under the law. The priests under the law inherited their office by the law of ordinary generation; the ministers under the Gospel by the call of Christ, special and extraordinary. The successors of Aaron ministered at the altar in virtue of natural birthright; the successors of the Apostles in virtue of a spiritual appointment. So far from the example of the Jewish priesthood affording a Scripture precedent or analogy applicable to the case of the Gospel ministry, it affords an argument the other way. We know from Scripture, that the principles that had predominated in and given form and fashion to the Jewish Church as a ceremonial system were to be reversed, not imitated, in the Christian Church. Under the latter, neither the place of members nor the office of ministers was to

be conferred "according to the law of a carnal commandment;" they were to be regulated by no considerations of mere natural birth or ecclesiastical extraction. "Think not," said the forerunner of the new economy, "think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

III. Scripture principles, clear and decisive, forbid the doctrine of those who maintain that an apostolical succession in the line of individual ministers is necessary to the validity of the ministerial title, and necessary also to the validity of ordinances in the Church.

The inconsistency of such a doctrine with Scripture principles may be demonstrated in two ways: 1st, It is not true, as is assumed in the doctrine of apostolical succession, that the Church has received any deposit of grace from Christ, which it is empowered to communicate from one age to another, and from one succession to another of its ministers. The whole doctrine of apostolical succession, and of the necessity of it to the validity of ordination and the existence of a true Church, is founded on this assumption. The theory proceeds on the idea that the Apostles originally received from Christ, and conferred on those ordained by them, a certain deposit or gift of grace at the moment of the ordination, with powers also to communicate it to those whom they in turn should ordain; that ministers, once consecrated, became the medium of transmitting this gift to their successors from age to age from the apostolic day until our own; that on this gift, so imparted, the right to the ministerial office and the virtue and authority of all its ministrations depend; and that this spiritual deposit or inheritance is so handed down, irrespective of the moral and spiritual character of bishop or minister, and in point of fact belongs, in virtue of ecclesiastical succession, as much to a Beaton or a Sharp as to a Hamilton or a Knox. Now, setting aside other difficulties connected with such a theory, the grand principle involved in it is, that Christ has actually committed to the Church a deposit of grace and authority and spiritual virtue, communicable by the Church to its own office-bearers, according to certain conditions

and through a certain channel. This is the fundamental principle which lies at the basis of the doctrine of apostolical succession, and is essential to it as a doctrine; and this principle is wholly opposed to the statements of Scripture on the subject. Christ has not surrendered up His priestly functions—nor, indeed, any part of His office as Mediator—to the Church. He has not given out of His own hand any deposit of spiritual grace into the hands of the Church, communicable by the Church through an ecclesiastical channel to its members. "Christ still worketh hitherto, and will work," as the only and ever-present Head of His Church, giving forth directly from Himself day by day the gifts that both office-bearers and members need, keeping ministers in immediate communication with Himself, as the source of all the grace they can receive or convey, and keeping people in direct dependence on Himself for all the spiritual blessing which, through His ordinances, they enjoy. In one word, Christ has not abdicated any part of His function as the ever-living and ever-active administrator from age to age and from hour to hour of the Church's provision of spiritual grace, giving to ministers and to members out of His own hand their daily supply; and He has not permitted His Apostles at first—far less ministers as their successors in every age—to enjoy themselves, or to communicate to others, saving and spiritual blessings apart from the gifts given immediately from Himself.

There is no exception to this universal law—namely, that Christ gives from His own hand, and not through the hand of others, all spiritual and saving grace—even in the case of those extraordinary gifts which were actually imparted in primitive times by the laying on of the Apostles' hands on the early disciples. The gifts so imparted were neither spiritual nor saving, but extraordinary and miraculous, that might have been enjoyed, and were actually enjoyed, by not a few not spiritually and savingly benefited by them. Nor is there an exception to the law, that not through the hands of others, but from His own, does Christ ever impart spiritual grace to His people, in the fact that an outward ministry and outward ordinance, dispensed by the hands of ministers, are made a blessing savingly to the souls of many. The

ministry and the outward ordinances of the Church are blessed in the experience of souls, only by bringing these souls to Christ to be blessed by Him. They become instruments of spiritual benefit to men, only by bringing men into communication and contact with Christ to be spiritually benefited by Him. There is no virtue in such ordinances or in such a ministry, except in so far as they bring men under "the blessing of Christ, and the working of His Spirit in them who by faith receive them." There is no deposit of grace in the Church communicable by one succession of the ministry to another, and handed down from age to age. The universal law of the Christian Church is, that not through the hands of others, but from His own, Christ gives every good and perfect gift unto His people.<sup>2</sup>

2d, It is not true, as is assumed in the doctrine of apostolical succession, that the gift of the ministry has been conferred exclusively on the office-bearers of the Christian Church, or that the Church is dependent entirely on a particular order of men for the existence and continuance of the ministry.

This is a second assumption, necessary to the theory of apostolical succession, but utterly opposed to Scripture principles. It is not true that Christ has bestowed a deposit of grace on the Church at large, to be communicated and transmitted from hand to hand and from generation to generation of the Church. Still less is it true that Christ has communicated a deposit of grace to the ministry, as a distinct order in the Church, separate from and to the exclusion of the members, to be transmitted from hand to hand, by means of ordination, from the Apostles' day down to the end of the world. The great and fundamental principle, enunciated and established at a previous stage in our discussions, that the proper subject in which Church power primarily resides is not the office-bearers exclusively, nor the members exclusively, but the office-bearers and the members together, and that it inheres in each according to their respective character and place in the Church, is obviously applicable here. The gift of the ministry has not been committed to the ministers exclusively, apart and contradistinguished from the members of the



Church, although the exercise of the ministry has been committed to them. The ministerial office is one of those gifts of Church power which have been committed to the Church at large to hold in possession, although it has been committed to the office-bearers of the Church to hold for the exercise of it. And so far is it from being true that a separate order of men in the Church both hold the ministerial office to the exclusion of the Church at large, and also have the sole power to transmit and communicate the office to others, that the Scriptures seem to lay down the very opposite doctrine. The Scriptures teach us, according to the language of the Confession of Faith, that "Unto the catholic visible Church,"—meaning by the visible Church, according to the definition of it previously given, "all throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children,"—"unto the catholic visible Church Christ has given the ministry," as well as "the oracles and ordinances of God." They teach us, that not in a distinct and privileged order in the Church, but in the Church collectively, the right of possession of the ministerial office resides; and that, so far from a distinct and privileged order having the exclusive right to give it to others, they do not exclusively possess it themselves. They teach us, moreover, that the call of Christ to any member of the Church gives him the right individually to the office; and that, on his application to the office-bearers of the Church for that object, it is their duty to proceed by ordination to give him the additional right to the exercise of the office. All this the Scriptures appear very decidedly to lay down; and it is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of the advocates of apostolical succession, when they tell us that the exclusive right to the ecclesiastical office, both as regards the possession and the exercise of it, belongs to a privileged class, and that upon them the Church is absolutely dependent for the ministry, and for ordinances being kept up and administered from age to age. Such a doctrine just reverses the true theory of the relations of the Church to the office-bearers of the Church. It makes the Church depend upon the ministry, instead of the ministry depending on the Church. The body of believers, the collective society of Christians, which we call the Church, has all the powers and privileges within

itself and inherently belonging to it, as given day after day by Christ Himself, which are necessary to its being and wellbeing. The ministry or office-bearers are but the organs of the Church for doing its work. The individuals in the ministry who do this work are selected from time to time out of the body of believers by the call of Christ, giving them the title individually to that office, which primarily belongs to the Church collectively; and even although the ministry were to become extinct in its present possessors, or the individuals who fill its offices apostate, the Church would have in itself the powers necessary to repair the loss, the ministerial office would still belong to it in possession, and by the act of its members, choosing out men to whom Christ had already given gifts for the ministry and a call to it, the Church might lawfully set apart others to the office that had been left vacant. It is not true, if we are to judge by Scripture principles, that Christ has committed the ministerial office exclusively to a distinct class of men, or left the Christian Church to depend on them alone for the existence and continuance of the ministry.

The general principles now laid down appear to be borne out by Scripture, and they overturn from its foundations the extravagant and intolerant doctrine by which the advocates of apostolical succession would unchurch every religious society except the Popish or the Episcopal Church, would restrict the Divine blessing to a ministry in the line of their so-called "apostolical succession," and would declare that ministers without prelatie ordination have no right to preach the Gospel or administer the Sacraments of Christ. It is needless to take the trouble of testing the hardihood of such a doctrine by the standard of history, or to appeal to the records of the past to show that, on such a principle, no Church on earth can be secure that it possesses a rightly constituted and commissioned ministry at the present day. "There is not," says Archbishop Whately, in reference to the bearing of the historical argument on the doctrine of apostolical succession; "there is not a minister in all Christendom who is able to trace up with any approach to certainty his own spiritual pedigree." But without reference to the argument that might

easily be brought from history to confound the pretensions of the advocates of apostolical succession, the Scripture principles of a general kind now laid down are sufficient to evince their fallacy.

It is a fundamental and most mischievous error to suppose that the entire body of believers constituting the Church of Christ have been left to depend exclusively for the existence of a ministry and Gospel ordinances among them on a certain exclusive body of men called ministers; or that the spiritual edification of the people, in so far as that can be secured and promoted by the outward provisions of the Church, is at the mercy of a particular order of its office-bearers. The principles embodied in the question of the right of the Church at large to the ministry and to ordinances, instead of the right being inherent in its office-bearers alone, were fully debated and brought out at the period of the Reformation, in the controversy between the adherents of the Papacy on the one hand—who asserted that the Churches of the Reformation, by their secession from Rome, had denuded themselves of a lawful ministry and valid ordinances—and Protestants on the other hand, who asserted the validity of their own ministry and Churches, notwithstanding of their secession. It is true that, in the case of not a few of the Churches of the Reformation, it could be argued that the ecclesiastical succession had not been broken, but preserved, and that the office of the ministry was continued through the crisis of the Reformation by means of men who were previously ordained in the Church of Rome, and brought with them their ordination into the Protestant Churches. But although this argument could to a large extent be borne out historically as true in the case of many Reformed Churches, as in our own Church, yet the broad and fundamental principle already laid down was the grand argument of the Reformers against their Popish assailants. It is not the ministry that makes the Church, but the Church that makes the ministry. It may be true—and we believe it is sanctioned by Scripture—that in all ordinary cases men ought to be ordained to the ministry by those ordained before. But it is no less true, that in extraordinary cases this may not be possible, and may not be required by Scripture. Is, therefore, the office of the ministry

in such a case extinct, so that it cannot be revived? Not so. Wherever there is a body of believers in Christ, there there is a Christian Church. Wherever there is a Christian Church, there belong to that Church within itself—because Christ is within it—all the powers necessary for its own being and wellbeing; it has within itself the ministerial office, and a right to the exercise of it, along with all the other gifts, many and precious, which Christ has bestowed. And if circumstances should forbid to it the use of the ordinary and regular methods for ordaining to the ministry, the Church is at liberty and has the power to restore the office, and constitute a ministry for itself. This was the answer of the Reformers to the Popish Church, when that Church denied the validity of Protestant ordination and Sacraments. And this is the true and conclusive answer to the advocates of apostolical succession at all times, when they would deny the validity of the ministerial title not sanctified by a Popish or Prelatic pedigree.

## **CHAPTER III:**

### **THE INDEPENDENT THEORY OF THE MINISTRY**

THERE are two things necessary in order to complete the ministerial title: first, the call by the Head of the Church, and second, a call by the office-bearers of the Church. The first of these, or a call by the Head of the Church to the office of the ministry, gives the primary and superior right; but in ordinary circumstances, even that call requires to be supplemented by the secondary and subordinate right which is conferred by a call from the office-bearers of the Church.

The act of the latter, when they proceed by ordination to set apart an individual to the ministry, is the public recognition, on their part, of the previous call which he has received from Christ, and their designation or admission of him into office in consequence. There are various analogies in ordinary life which help to illustrate the necessity which we affirm exists for the right conferred by the call of Christ being, in all ordinary cases, supplemented by the secondary and inferior right conferred by the call of the office-bearers of the Church, before an individual can complete his title to the ministerial office. Take, for example, the familiar instance of a man's title to an estate, and there is seen the same kind of distinction which applies to the ministerial title. There is a right of property and a right of possession known in law; and the one is needed to supplement the other, in order to complete the title to the estate. There is the higher and primary right, conferred, it may be, by immediate grant from the superior,—the right of property. But another party may be in the enjoyment of the estate; and my right of property must be supplemented by a right of possession, conferred by a court of law, before I can enter upon the actual exercise of my right of property, and complete my title to the estate. Or take the no less familiar example of a man's title to some office under the Crown,—such as the magistracy. The first and superior right is conferred by the commission of the Crown; but the second and subordinate right, which is nevertheless necessary to supplement the former, is conferred by the act of the magistrates previously in office when they receive and record the commission of the sovereign, and, in accordance with it, admit the bearer of that commission into the magistracy. Both the act of the Crown and the act of the bench of magistrates are necessary to complete his title to the office, and enable him to enter upon the exercise of it. And so with the office of the ministry. The right to it "in esse" is conferred by the act of Christ calling an individual to the office. The right to it "in operari" is conferred by the act of the office-bearers of the Church ordaining the same individual to the office. These two rights complete the ministerial title, and warrant a man to enter upon the work of the ministry; and the call of Christ and the call of the Church conferring

these two rights are both necessary in ordinary cases to make up the full title.

And it is not difficult to see how these two calls come to meet in the case of the same individual, and to work harmoniously together in setting apart the chosen person to the ministerial office. Both calls ultimately are derived from Christ. The first call comes from Christ directly, and is expressed to the individual by the bestowment upon him of gifts and graces for office. The second call also comes from Christ, although indirectly, when Christ moves the office-bearers of the Church to select the very man whom He has Himself before selected, and overrules them to ordain to the ministry the individual whom He has previously qualified by gifts and endowments for the work. It is thus that the two calls, first, of the Head of the Church, and second, of the office-bearers of the Church, meet in one person, and together make up his complete title to the ministerial office.

We have already considered the theory of those parties who maintain that, over and above these two conditions necessary to make the ministerial title complete, a third must be added—namely, a commission derived by unbroken ecclesiastical succession from the Apostles. It is but right to say that this doctrine of apostolical succession is not the doctrine laid down in the Articles of the Church of England, however often and strongly it has been advocated, more especially in later times, by her ministers, and whatever countenance it may appear to derive from her ordination service. In the twenty-third article, the Church of England says: "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard." This cautious and restricted language is very different indeed from that used by the majority of her representatives in the present day; and, as Bishop Burnet tells us, it was selected and employed for the very purpose of avoiding any

declaration on the theory of apostolical succession, or any implied censure upon other forms of ministry or other Churches, and also under the consciousness, "that all things among themselves had not gone according to those rules that ought to be sacred in regular times." It certainly does not embody the doctrine that a commission from the Apostles, handed down in unbroken succession, is a necessary element in the validity of the ministerial title.

But the positions which we have laid down on the subject of the ministerial title are impugned, not merely by those who, like the advocates of apostolical succession, hold that they err on the side of defect, but also by Independents, who maintain that they err on the side of excess. The Independents assert that the call of the office-bearers of the Church is not necessary to constitute the ministerial title; that the right to the office of the ministry and to the exercise of all its functions belongs essentially to all the members of the Church equally; and that it is no more than a matter of order and arrangement that one man should be set apart by the rest to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments on their behalf. According to their theory, the election by the members of the Church, and not the appointment by the office-bearers, is the act that invests a man with the ministerial title: by virtue of the choice of the people, and his own consent to the choice, he has authority given him to discharge all the duties and exercise all the authority of the ministry. And the call of the office-bearers is no part of the process through which, in ordinary circumstances, a man is made a minister of the Gospel. "When," says Dr. Davidson in his work on the Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament; "when a number of believers come together for the worship of God and mutual edification, one person may be selected to preach to or to exhort the rest on the occasion. It is the inherent right of every man to preach the Gospel; and the person so selected may feel strongly prompted to comply. At another period some other believer may be selected at the time of assembling to address the brethren.... The election of him by the brethren constitutes him their office-bearer. Whenever he accepts the position to which he has been invited by a Church of Christ in the free

exercise of their judgment, he possesses a full title to do whatever pertains to the new situation. He has a right to discharge all the acts appropriate to the office to which he has been chosen. He is invested with all the authority of office."

In entire accordance with this system, which places the election by the members of the Church in the room of the call by the office-bearers of the Church, ordination is no proper part of the process by which a man becomes invested with the ministerial title. By many of the Independent Churches the ceremony of ordination is entirely discarded; while by those of them who retain it, it is regarded, not as the act of the Church setting apart an individual to office, but simply as the act of the members and office-bearers in alike uniting together in prayer for a blessing upon the office previously conferred by election of the members. "The essence of ordination," says Dr. Davidson, "is in the solemn invocation of the Divine presence and assistance. The Divine power is implored on behalf of the person on whom hands are usually laid." "It is not the inducting of an office-bearer into an office which he did not possess until that precise time, but a formal and solemn commendation of him to the Head of the Church, when about to enter on the actual discharge of the functions included in office. As soon as he is called by the members of a Church to be their bishop or deacon, and consents to the invitation, he really becomes their bishop or deacon." After ordination has, in the Independent system, been thus made to consist of nothing more than the public prayer of the Church for the minister elected, and his investiture with the office has been resolved into his election by the members, it is but part of the same theory to hold, that one or more of the people have in themselves the power of ordination. "Several believers may ordain," says Dr. Davidson, "in the name of a Church, or even one deputed on behalf of his brethren. The act of one person veritably becomes the act of all the disciples."

Now, in endeavouring to estimate the merits of this system, there are two preliminary remarks which, to prevent confusion in the argument, it seems desirable to make.



I. There is a certain office or duty which all Christians must discharge in the way of teaching, exhorting, and admonishing one another, distinct and separate from the teaching of ministers, set apart officially to the work.

There are many passages of Scripture which lay upon private believers the duty of ministering in the way of doctrine and instruction to all whom they can so profit, which yet come very far short of enjoining that all private Christians should take upon them the work of the public ministry. It is very common with the advocates of Independent principles to cite such passages, as amounting to a proof that all believers have an inherent right to preach the Gospel, and that it is nothing more than a matter of order and convenience, if some men are chosen from others for the office of public preaching and instruction. Now, it cannot be doubted that Christians in a private station have a duty to perform in the way of bearing witness for the truth, and pressing it upon the attention and acceptance of those with whom they are associated by the ties of kindred, or even in the intercourse of social life. In respect of the Word of God, as much as in respect of the law of God, "no man liveth to himself," but has it laid upon him, as part of his duty, by all the means competent to his station, to press the truth of God, as well as the law of God, upon the consideration and acceptance of others. But just as there is an office in civil society and an officer specially set apart to execute the law of God, in so far as it is the law of society, so there is an officer in the Church and an officer specially set apart to enforce upon men the Word of God, in so far as it is the teaching of the Church. The private teaching of the truth by individual believers is wholly different from the official teaching of the truth by public ministers; and the passages of Scripture which enjoin the one are not to be held as countenancing the other. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to Titus, exhorts even "aged women" to be "teachers of good things;" but the same apostle, in his Epistle to Timothy and to the Corinthians, declares that he "suffers not a woman to teach in the Church."

II. The second remark necessary to be kept in view in dealing with the Independent theory is this, that extraordinary circumstances may justify the assumption of the office of the ministry by those who are not set apart or ordained to it by the office-bearers of the Church.

There may be extraordinary conjunctures in the history of the Christian Church which may warrant extraordinary measures; and when the necessity for avoiding a greater evil may justify or require a departure from the fixed rule for all ordinary cases, that the call of the Church, through the ordination of its office-bearers, is necessary, in addition to the call of Christ, to complete a man's title to the ministerial office. It is never to be forgotten that the Church, as "the body of Christ," "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all," must have within itself provision of every spiritual power and grace necessary for its own being and well-being; and that, were even the office of the ministry to become extinct, and the order of ministers to terminate, there would be within the Church both the right and the power to revive and reconstitute the ordinance. It is never to be forgotten, that the call of Christ addressed to the individual directly by the bestowment upon him of gifts and qualifications for office, is the primary and superior right, as compared with the call of the Church giving right to the same individual to enter upon the exercise of the office; and that when the latter cannot be obtained, when the call of the Church is unavoidably wanting, the former, or the call of Christ, is sufficient to justify a man in assuming the office of the ministry. All this seems to be fairly warranted both by a consideration of the ministerial office itself, and by the general principles laid down in Scripture. The right to the ministerial office "in esse," conferred by the call of Christ, is prior and superior to the right to the ministerial office "in operari," conferred by the call of the Church; and when, as in some extraordinary conjuncture, ordination by the office-bearers of the Christian Church, which usually supplements the call of Christ, cannot be enjoyed, the call from above does not need to wait on human investiture, but is sufficient of itself singly to give a man all the right to the ministerial office, to complete which, in common circumstances, both jointly are required.

The eighth chapter of the Acts is commonly appealed to by Independents on behalf of their views of the essential and inherent right of all believers to preach the Gospel and exercise the office of the ministry. We are there told that "there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." A few verses farther on we are told: "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (εὐαγγελίζομενοι τον λογον). From these statements the inference is drawn and urged by Independents, that the Church in general, including the private members of it, went forth preaching the Gospel. Now, although this passage of Scripture does not necessarily force us to such a conclusion, but may be interpreted upon another theory,<sup>2</sup> I have no disposition or wish to deny that it may countenance and warrant the conduct of private members of the Church in preaching the Gospel, in circumstances like those which it describes. These very circumstances both exhibit the warrant for private believers entering on the work of the ministry, and indicate the principle on which limits may be set to the right so used by them. It was in a time of persecution, when the believers at Jerusalem were scattered abroad from their homes, and when the Apostles, their ministers in the Lord, were left behind, and the people were thus separated from the pastors. The extraordinary emergency in the Church justified the extraordinary means adopted to continue the work of the ministry even by unordained believers; and it indicates the general principle also on which such justification in other cases must be based. It was in order to avoid the greater evil, that the lesser was incurred. That the ministry might not, in this particular case, become extinct, those who had the call of Christ to the office, although without the call of the Church, were justified in assuming it. Both the warrant for such conduct, and the limits to be set to the liberty assumed, are clearly brought out by the case of the persecuted and scattered believers at Jerusalem. It is a greater evil that the ministry of the Gospel should become extinct, that the office itself in any case should perish, than that men should assume it, without the ordinary call of the Church, but with the extraordinary call of the Church's Head. And therefore it

was that the dispersed and persecuted flock at Jerusalem, separated from their pastors, and having no opportunity to obtain the usual ordination for any of their number, were warranted, without ordination, to preach the Gospel both among themselves and among the Jews or Gentiles with whom they were brought in contact. Whether the case of the Church at Jerusalem be justly cited as an instance of private members of the Church preaching the Gospel or not, it at least distinctly enough illustrates the warrant, and the limits of the warrant, which extraordinary circumstances may give to unordained men to assume the office and duties of ministers.

Now, keeping in view these two preliminary remarks, the better to enable us to see the real point in debate between the advocates and opponents of the Independent theory, let us endeavour briefly to estimate the merits of that theory in so far as it bears on the ministerial title. Is the call of the office-bearers, as distinct from the members, and conferred by their setting apart by means of ordination a man to the office, necessary or not, in ordinary circumstances, to complete the ministerial title?

In answer to that question, I would lay down the general position, that ordination to office by the office-bearers of the Church is clearly distinguished from election to office in Scripture, and that ordination is, in ordinary circumstances, necessary to complete the ministerial title.

The fundamental error of the Independent system is the identifying or confounding of the ministerial with the pastoral office, and making the act of admission to the one the same as the act of admission to the other. With Independents the ministerial office and the pastoral office are one and the same; there can be no office of the ministry apart from the pastoral relation. According to this view, a man, by his election to the office of a pastor in a particular congregation, becomes a minister, and in no other way; so long as he remains as pastor of a congregation, he remains also a minister; but when his connection with the congregation, through any

circumstances, is dissolved, he ceases to be a minister of the Gospel, until he shall come to be re-elected by another congregation. Apart from the pastoral connection, there is no office of the ministry; apart from the election to the pastoral office, there is no ordination to the ministry; and apart from the continuance of the pastoral relationship, there is no holding of the character of a minister. "Is a missionary," asks Dr. Davidson,—and he proceeds to answer his own question,—"Is a missionary not to be ordained before his departure from a Christianized to a heathen land? Properly speaking, ordination does not apply to him. The Church, however, of which he is a member, may solemnly commend him to the grace of Christ, and pray for him in a manner suitable to the circumstances of the case. A religious service of this nature is becoming and appropriate; but should not be called an ordination, because the individual is not in office, not having been elected to the pastoral duties by any people. Nor does the ceremony invest him with any official character. He is still an unofficial personage. He has no more right to preside at the ordinance of the Lord's Supper than he had before.... A minister is either the minister of one Church—namely, that by which he has been chosen—or else he is not a minister at all. When he ceases to be the pastor of a Church, he ceases to be a minister of the Gospel, till he be elected by another." According to these views, then, the ministerial and pastoral office are one and the same; and the appointment to the one is the appointment to the other. Ordination and election are not to be separated in so far as they admit to the office of pastor or minister.

Now, in opposition to this view, it may be asserted that the Scriptures plainly distinguish between ordination to Church office and election to Church office,—the one being necessary to the ministerial title, and the other, in addition, being necessary to the pastoral title.

1st, The practice of the apostolic Church, as recorded in Scripture, in connection with ordination, plainly distinguishes between ordination and election to Church office. They are not only distinct acts, but

usually to be performed by distinct parties. First, We have an example of this in the election and ordination of deacons in the sixth chapter of the Acts: "Wherefore, brethren," said the Apostles, addressing the multitude of the disciples, "look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." "And the saying pleased the whole multitude and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the Apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." In this instance of the appointment of an ordinary ecclesiastical office-bearer—the deacon—we have the two separate acts of election to the office and ordination to the office, distinctly marked out, as different in themselves, and performed by different parties,—the one by the members, and the other by the office-bearers, of the Church. The two acts were separate from each other in nature, and in the performance of them; and yet both were conjoined to give the full title to the office of deacon.

Second, We have another example of this distinction between election to a Church office and ordination to it, in the instance of the appointment of Paul and Barnabas to the ministry of the Gentiles, in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts: "And when they (the prophets and teachers of the Church at Antioch) ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Here also there is a broad line of distinction drawn between the choice or election of the two apostles to the office, and their investiture with or ordination to it. In this instance, the choice or election was not the act of the members of the Church, but of God Himself, while the investiture with the office was through the ordination of the office-bearers. It cannot be justly alleged that this example is inapplicable to the present argument, because the mission of the two apostles was extraordinary. Doubtless the mission was an extraordinary one, in so far as the call to it was extraordinary, but in nothing more. In itself, it

affords an ordinary precedent of missionaries ordained to a foreign mission by the office-bearers of the Christian Church at home; and in this respect is expressly contradictory of the Independent theory, that the ministerial character cannot exist apart from the pastoral connection.

Third, In the twenty-third verse of the fourteenth chapter of the Acts we seem to have—when the passage is rightly interpreted—another practical example of the distinction uniformly maintained between election and ordination to office, in the instance of ordinary elders or ministers of a congregation: "And when they—that is, Barnabas and Saul—had ordained them elders in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." The word translated "ordained"—χειροτονησαντες—is the usual word to signify election by suffrage; and the meaning in this passage in all likelihood is: "When Barnabas and Saul had set apart elders, chosen by the suffrages of the members of the Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord." There is, first, the election by the people,—the χειροτονια; and then the ordination by the apostles, referred to under the mention of the special religious exercises of fasting and prayer, προσευξαμενοι μετα νηστειων.

Fourth, In the case of Timothy we have another illustration of the distinction between the choice or election of a minister to the office, and the ordination or setting him apart to it. He was elected or chosen by God, for his appointment to the office was intimated "by prophecy;" and he was ordained or set apart "by laying on of the hands of the presbytery." The office of evangelist, to which he was ordained, may be accounted indeed an extraordinary one; but the principle on which his election and his ordination to the office were kept distinct and separate, seems to have nothing extraordinary in it, but, on the contrary, is parallel to the other Scripture examples of appointment to the ministry.

Fifth, The injunction given to Timothy by the apostle, in regard to ordination of ministers: "Lay hands suddenly on no man;" and the case of Titus, who was left behind in Crete by the same apostle, "in order that he might settle or appoint (ἵνα καταστήσῃς) elders in every city," undoubtedly point in the same direction as the passages already quoted, and furnish an additional proof of the constant and wide distinction between election on the one hand, and ordination on the other. We have Scripture authority for saying that the first, or the election of elders or ministers, was in the hands of the members of the Church. We have no less Scripture authority for saying that Timothy and Titus ordained elders or ministers in the Churches; and the better to enable them to do so, and for their direction in so ordaining, the Apostle Paul lays down the special qualifications necessary both as to character and abilities in the persons to be ordained. Was the act of election of ministers by the people the same thing as, or did it include, the act of ordination by Timothy and Titus? The very opposite conclusion is the one to which their practice in the matter points. The act of election was wholly distinct from the act of ordination to the ministerial office.

Such is the abundant and satisfactory evidence which Scripture affords to prove, that election to Church office and ordination to Church office are not necessarily conjoined, but in reality wholly distinct; and that, contrary to the theory of Independency, we must draw a broad line of demarcation between the ministerial office and the pastoral, and between the call by the office-bearers of the Church, ordinarily necessary to the one, and the choice or call by the members of the Church, ordinarily necessary to the other.

2d, There are express Scripture statements which very distinctly mark out the difference between ordination to Church office and election to Church office,—the first being commonly necessary to the ministerial title, and the second, in addition, being necessary to the pastoral title.



I shall refer at present to no more than two passages of Scripture that seem very distinctly to indicate this distinction.

First, In the tenth chapter of Romans the Apostle asks: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" It is perfectly plain that, in this passage, in which the apostle speaks of sending preachers, it is such an authoritative sending by the Church as affords both a warrant to the preacher so sent to go forth to his work, and also a warrant to those among whom he is sent, that he has a right to preach and to minister among them. It is not a providential permission from God to go forth and preach, such as even false teachers may have, but an authoritative commission from the Church, such as those have who are specially set apart by the Church to the work of the ministry, whether at home or abroad. It is no less plain that this authoritative sending by the Church cannot be identified with the election by the members of the Church; for the very term "sent" is the opposite of "choosing" or electing." A congregation may choose or elect a minister for themselves; they cannot send a minister to themselves. The ordination, or sending by the Church, is in this passage unquestionably contradistinguished from election by the congregation. It is the act of the office-bearers of the Church, setting apart by ordination and authoritative commission an individual to the office of minister. It stands opposed, in this passage of Scripture, to the act of the members of the Church calling and inviting an individual to take among them the office of pastor.

Second, The same apostle, in writing to Timothy, says: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." There are various points in this solemn injunction by the apostle, either expressed or implied, that directly bear upon our present argument. In the first place, we have the marked distinction between the teachers and the taught in the Christian society,—the one being a

special and peculiar office in the Church, and not the common calling of all its members. Next, faithfulness and ability to teach were not the only necessary requisites of teachers; as if every good or gifted man in the Church might take to himself the office of the ministry. In addition to both graces and gifts, there was necessary, before a man could have, in ordinary circumstances, a title to the ministerial office, an authoritative commission from the Church: "The same commit thou to faithful men, able to teach." This special and authoritative committal of the work to them by Timothy, was as necessary as their endowments of faithfulness and ability to discharge it. And, lastly, we have this authoritative commission entrusted to them by Timothy, altogether apart from and independent of election by the people. The charge, "Commit thou to faithful men, able to teach," was separate from and over and above any choosing or election of such men by the members of the Church as their pastors.

The statements of Scripture, then, combine with the precedents afforded by Scripture example, to prove that the call by the office-bearers of the Church, in the shape of a solemn investiture of any man by them with office, is altogether separate and distinct from the election of the people; and that such solemn investiture or ordination is, in usual circumstances, necessary to give that man a title to ecclesiastical office. It is not in ordinary circumstances the inherent right of any man to preach the Gospel, as the Independent doctrine alleges. It is not in ordinary circumstances the inherent right of any man to preach the Gospel, even although he has been elected by a congregation for that end, without receiving, in addition to the election by the people, ordination by the office-bearers of the Church. Election by the members of the Church we find in Scripture, and we assert that it is by Divine authority. Ordination by the office-bearers of the Church we no less find in Scripture; and we equally affirm that this too is by Divine authority. The two are separate, and not inconsistent with each other. They are both and equally scriptural appointments. The same apostolic and inspired pattern, which gives warrant for "election or choosing of elders in every congregation" by the members of the Church (χειροτονια), also gives

warrant for the "ordaining of elders in every city" by the office-bearers of the Church (χειροθεσια or καταστασις). The one of these stands on the same platform with the other. In giving a right to the pastoral office, the one is as necessary as the other; and in all ordinary circumstances, and in settled times of the Christian Church, investiture with office by the office-bearers of the Church is essential to the validity of the ministerial title.<sup>3</sup>

## **CHAPTER IV:**

### **ORDINATION**

I HAVE already endeavoured to vindicate, against the views of Independents, the necessity, in all ordinary circumstances, of the call of the Church, expressed through her office-bearers, and by means of ordination, to complete the ministerial title. That there may be a crisis in the history of the Church, when in order to preserve the office itself it is lawful to sacrifice the outward call of the Church to the office, and to set apart men to the ministry without ordination by office-bearers, cannot be doubted. Such a crisis, perhaps, was the persecution at Jerusalem, when all except the Apostles were scattered abroad, and they went forth preaching the Gospel where they went. Certainly such a crisis was the Reformation from Popery, when, rather than acknowledge the authority of the Church of Rome, and receive ministers and ordination at her hands, it was lawful for the Reformed Churches—if such a necessity was laid upon them—by their own authority to revive the office of the ministry, and, without seeking ordination from those previously ordained, to set apart men

to its duties. We know that Luther, in his teaching on the subject, went much farther than this; mistaking the exception for the rule, and influenced perhaps by a regard to the extraordinary crisis in which he lived, rather than by views of the ordinary constitution of the Church, he adopted and expressed sentiments on this point very much at variance with the scriptural right of the office-bearers of the Church, in all common cases, to call and ordain to the ministry. The position taken up by Luther on this subject was a reaction from the extravagant and unscriptural principles of the Church of Rome. That Church had made ordination a sacrament, essential to the validity of the ministerial title and to the efficiency of Word and ordinances, and had held the necessity of apostolical succession and ordination in such a sense as to create a priestly caste in the Church, from whose lips alone saving truth was to be learned, and from whose hands alone saving grace was to be dispensed. In his letter on ordination addressed to the Bohemian Churches, Luther takes up his position at the opposite extreme: there and elsewhere he argues for the inherent right that every true believer has to do all which the priests of Rome pretended to do; and lays down the doctrine that it belongs to every private Christian, without regard to the ordination of the Church, to preach the Gospel, dispense the Sacraments, and exercise all the functions of the ministry.

This position of Luther's, taken up under the influence of a strong feeling of reaction from the extravagant pretensions of the Romish Church, was not adopted by Calvin. To the illustrious Reformer of Geneva we are indebted for the development of the scriptural doctrine on the subject of ordination, which, since their secession from Popery, the Protestant Churches have generally adopted. Calvin elevated to its true place the doctrine of the necessity of the call of the Church through ordination, in order to complete, in all ordinary circumstances, the ministerial title; and while acknowledging the force of much that was urged by Luther on behalf of the liberties and privileges of the Christian people, he modified and corrected his theory by placing the right of the office-bearers of the Church, in the matter of appointing to the pastorate, on the same level with the

right of the members. It is only by distinguishing, and yet combining as separate and co-ordinate forces, election by the people and ordination by the office-bearers of the Church, in all common cases, that the true and scriptural balance of power in the Christian society is maintained. The Independent theory identifies or confounds the two things. The views of Calvin, as maintained by Presbyterian Churches since his day, give a separate and co-ordinate authority to each.

We have already endeavoured to ascertain, in the matter of the pastorate and ministerial offices, the place occupied by the call of Christ, the call of the office-bearers of the Church, and the call of the members of the Church. There is one question, however, of an important and interesting nature, that still remains for our consideration. What is the nature of ordination, and what is implied in the act? I do not by this question refer to the mere outward action of imposition of hands, which usually accompanies ordination. That action is a mere accessory or circumstance of the Church's act when she ordains to the office of the ministry, not essential to the validity of ordination any more than sprinkling instead of immersion is essential to the validity of baptism. The ceremony of laying on of hands we find, indeed, to be an invariable accompaniment of ordination in Scripture; and therefore we are entitled to say that it forms a part, although it may not be an essential part, of the scriptural institution. There is no example that can be quoted from the New Testament of ordination without imposition of hands; and this of itself furnishes sufficient warrant and authority for the continuance of the practice in the Church, even although we may not attach any virtue to this part of the observance in itself. But without reference specially to the mere laying on of hands, what, I ask, is the meaning of the Church's act in ordination?

In answer to that question, the examination of Scripture doctrine and practice already made by us seems to warrant us in saying that ordination is the solemn act of the Church admitting a man to the office of the ministry, and giving him a right and title to discharge its

functions. In all ordinary circumstances it is necessary to a man's entering on the work of the ministry lawfully; and without it he has no authority to exercise the office. It is to be carefully marked that it does not confer the office. Christ confers the office by His own call, addressed to whom He will. But it invests with the office, or admits to it. And in the act of investiture, or admission by the Church with the laying on of hands, and prayer, we have warrant to believe that, in answer to prayer, all the promises connected with the office are fulfilled, and the special blessing or grace suited to the office will be conferred. The act of ordination itself does not, and cannot, confer the blessing as if *ex opere operato*. It is not a charm; nor does it act like a charm in the way of imparting grace. But there are special promises connected with the office of the ministry, and special grace to be warrantably expected by all who are rightly called to the office; and in the act of admission to the office those promises may be claimed in faith, and those graces entreated for; and we have a right to believe that then and there the promise will be fulfilled, and the grace conferred. This is the only virtue attaching to ordination, when rightly conferred by the Church and received by the individual. But it is a virtue connected with it, and not to be enjoyed without it. There are promises and blessings specially linked with the entrance on the office of the ministry not given in connection with anything else. And when the Church proceeds with prayer and imposition of hands to admit to the office, and when the person previously called by Christ seeks entrance to the office from the Church in a right spirit, it is no superstition, but a scriptural and reasonable faith, to believe that in ordination the promises will be found true, and the blessing will be made effectual. At the moment of being ordained to the office, and in the subsequent discharge of its duties, there will be grace given sufficient for the office. Without or apart from this solemn admission to office, we have no assurance that, in ordinary circumstances, that grace can be enjoyed. Ordination is less than a charm, but it is more than a form.

There are two parties, more especially, whose theories of ordination run counter to the position now laid down. First, there are the

Independents, who argue that we ascribe a virtue to ordination which does not belong to it; and second, there are the High Churchmen, who argue for a virtue in ordination which we have not ascribed to it.

I. The general principles of Independents necessarily lead them to undervalue the importance of ordination. We have had occasion in a former lecture to remark that they sink the separate and distinct character of ordination as a solemn act of the Church's office-bearers, and identify or confound it with the election by the people of the person to exercise the ministry over them. With Independents, ordination is not the act of the Church admitting to or investing with the office of the ministry; it is a convenient and becoming religious service that may or may not take place in connection with a man's beginning his labours in the office. The election of the people has already admitted him to office; and ordination is a ceremony that has nothing to do with that admission as necessary to it. According to Dr. Davidson, as formerly quoted, "the essence of ordination consists in the solemn invocation of the Divine presence and assistance." In other words, ordination is nothing more than a prayer for the minister, which may or may not be offered up; which in not a few Independent Churches is actually dispensed with; and which, whether offered up or not, is in no way essential to the admission to office of the person on whose behalf it is presented. Not only so. According to Dr. Davidson, there are no special or peculiar promises that stand connected with ordination in this fashion, or that are so appropriate to the act as not to be guaranteed to any other act of the Church or individual. "There is not," says Dr. Davidson, speaking the views of the denomination of which he is a distinguished representative; "there is not one promise annexed to the ordaining prayer, as it has been called, and another adapted to prayer on general occasions. One class of promises was equally intended for the sacred exercise under all circumstances."

Now, in reference to such views, I would remark that Presbyterians do not hold that there is any special promise annexed to the

ordaining prayer, properly speaking, but they do hold that there are special promises and special grace connected with the office of the ministry, and with admission to the office of the ministry; and when the Church, in accordance with the will of her Divine Head, proceeds to admit by ordination the individual to be set apart to its duties, and when all parties engage in the work in a right frame of mind, there and then the prayer of the Church will bring down the special promise and the special grace appropriate to the occasion. If the ministry be an office of Christ's appointment, and if admission to the office by ordination be also of Christ's appointment, then such ordinances will not be empty of the blessing. The act of ordination by the Church, if it is a Divine appointment, and if done in a right spirit, will not be without the presence and the peace of Christ, owning His own institution and blessing His own ordinance. The fundamental error of the Independents in regard to ordination is, that they hold it to be no Divine appointment for admitting to the office of the ministry. That admission is the act of the people in electing their pastor; and because ordination is not the appointed method of admission to the office, it can have no special or appropriate blessing attached to it. The key to their denial of any peculiar value in ordination is, their previous denial that it is an act of the Church admitting to the office of the ministry. Once acknowledge that ordination is the solemn act of the Church, by which, in accordance with Christ's appointment, His servant is admitted to the ministry, and you at once restore ordination to its proper place as a Divine institute, and assign to it its special virtue and importance, as both warranted and blessed by Christ for that end. When conducted in a right and scriptural manner by all parties, it stands connected with the bestowment of grace and the fulfilment of promises appropriate to the office of the ministry, and necessary for the performance of the solemn and responsible duties to which the minister is there and then set apart.

II. The High Church party, whether Popish or Prelatic, hold views on the subject of the virtue attached to ordination which run to the very opposite extreme from the Independents. With the Church of Rome



ordination is a sacrament, conferring on the party ordained an indelible "character," conveying to him, independently altogether of his faith in the matter or of his general spiritual condition, supernatural graces and priestly power *ex opere operato*; upon which the validity of his ministry and of his dispensation of Word and Sacrament depends. "If any shall say"—such is the deliverance of the Council of Trent on this subject—"that the Holy Spirit is not given by holy ordination, and that therefore the bishop says in vain, 'Receive thou the Holy Ghost;' or that by means of it a character is not imprinted; or that he who has once been a priest can afterwards become a layman,—let him be accursed." "If any shall say that in the New Testament there is no visible and outward priesthood, or that it has not any power of consecrating and offering the true body and blood of the Lord, and of remitting and retaining sins, but that it is the mere office and bare ministry of preaching the Gospel, let him be accursed." The proper doctrine of the Church of Rome, then, is that the Church or bishop in the act of ordination communicates the Holy Ghost to the person ordained; that he is thereby vested with a priestly character, and put in possession of supernatural grace; that, thus made a real priest, he can make the sacrifice and offer it to God for the people; and that, thus endowed with supernatural grace, he is qualified to remit or retain sins in the case of sinners.

Without, of course, making all the extravagant pretensions or using much of the extravagant language of Popery, the Church of England yet ascribes to ordination something of a similar efficacy and mysterious power, although much inferior to what is attached to it by the Church of Rome. In some sense or other, which I do not take it upon me to explain, and in language borrowed from the previous formula of the Papacy, the Church of England professes to exercise the power, in the act of ordination, of communicating the Holy Ghost. Still further, in as explicit language as can be employed, the Church of England professes to ordain men, not to the ministry, but to the priesthood. The office of a human priesthood and an order of human priests are standing and permanent ordinances in the Church of England. In corroboration of these statements, it is only necessary

to quote the words put into the mouth of the bishop in what is entitled, "The Form and Manner of Ordering of Priests," at the moment of conferring the office by ordination on the person set apart to it: "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of His holy Sacraments. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

What are the powers and grace, supernatural and mysterious, imparted at ordination, when the Church of England thus professes to confer the twofold gift of the Holy Ghost and the priesthood on the person ordained, and how far these powers and graces may differ from what the Church of Rome pretends to confer, I shall not take it upon me to determine, but rather allow one of the most illustrious of her own divines to speak. The words of Hooker—certainly not the least worthy or the least adequate of the representatives of the Church of England—shall explain her doctrine as to the grace and power imparted in ordination. Speaking of the miraculous powers of the Spirit, Hooker asserts that it was not of such that our Lord spake when He gave commission to His Apostles after His resurrection from the dead; and he then proceeds as follows: "What other effect of the Spirit likelier than that which himself doth mention, as it would seem of purpose to take away all ambiguous constructions, and to declare that the Holy Ghost which he then gave was a holy and a ghostly authority,—authority over the souls of men,—authority a part whereof consisteth in power to remit and retain sins. 'Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins soever ye remit, they are remitted; whose sins soever ye retain, they are retained.' Seeing, therefore, that the same power is now given, why should the same form of words expressing it be thought foolish?" "Now, besides that the power and authority delivered with those words is itself *χαρισμα*, a gracious donation which the Spirit of God doth bestow, we may most assuredly persuade ourselves that the hand which imposeth upon us the function of our ministry doth, under the same form of words, so

tie itself thereunto, that he which receiveth the burden is thereby for ever warranted to have the Spirit with him and in him for assistance, aid, countenance, and support in whatsoever he faithfully doth to discharge duty." "We have for the least and meanest duties, performed by virtue of ministerial power, that to dignify, grace, and authorize them, which no other offices on earth can challenge. Whether we preach, pray, baptize, communicate, condemn, give absolution, or whatsoever, as disposers of God's mysteries, our words, judgments, acts, and deeds are not ours, but the Holy Ghost's." And in another passage, if possible still more strong, Hooker declares, in regard to an ordained ministry: "The power of the ministry of God translateth out of darkness into glory; it raiseth men from the earth, and bringeth God Himself down from heaven; by blessing visible elements, it maketh them invisible grace; it giveth daily the Holy Ghost; it hath to dispose of that flesh which was given for the life of the world, and that blood which was poured out to redeem souls; when it poureth malediction on the heads of the wicked, they perish; when it revoketh the same, they revive."

Such is the doctrine of the Church of England in regard to ordination, as explained by one of the most gifted and eloquent of her sons, in connection with her own authorized service for ordination. It would be a somewhat perilous task, perhaps, to attempt to estimate the difference between the doctrine of the Church of England and the doctrine of Popery in reference to this matter. There are not a few points on which their theories of ordination coincide. In regard to the making of ordination a Sacrament, as is done by the Romish Church, they differ; and with reference to this point I do not intend at present to speak, as it may come under our notice at a subsequent stage in our discussions, when we have to deal with the doctrine of the Sacraments. In regard to other matters connected with ordination—and those not unimportant ones—they also differ. But in these two things they seem to agree. First, they agree in ascribing to the Church the power of communicating the Holy Ghost to the person ordained,—thereby conveying to him supernatural grace and power wherewith to

administer Word and Sacrament. Second, they agree in ascribing to the Church the power of conferring the office of the priesthood, and of making real priests and not ministers. In making these two claims, the Church of England and the Church of Rome agree; and on their professed ability to confer on the person ordained supernatural grace and priestly virtue, the validity of his ministrations in all their exercises depends. The magic charm of ordination has in it power to make priests and to give mysterious grace; and without this power, ordination, according to this theory, would be an empty form, and the office it confers of a ministry in Word and Sacrament would be invalid and inefficacious.

Has the Church, then, this power, attributed to it by High Churchmen, whether Popish or Prelatic, of communicating, through the act of ordination, a priestly character and sacramental grace to the person ordained? Is the Church vested with authority from its Divine Head to make priests, in ordaining men to be ministers, and to give grace, supernatural and mysterious, in giving admission to the office of the ministry? Let us try the assumption by the Church of such power by those tests which on former occasions have more than once enabled us to set just limits to the exercise of ecclesiastical authority.

1st, If we bring this theory to the test of Scripture, as the rule of Church power, it is evident that the Church has no power to confer the priestly character, and along with it supernatural grace in the act of ordination.

If we inquire into the examples afforded us in the New Testament of the imposition of hands, we shall find that generally, although not always, the observance was accompanied with the communication or bestowment of miraculous gifts. By laying on of hands, the Apostles conferred "gifts of miracle, and healing, and tongues." The instances that might be quoted from the New Testament to this effect are numerous and familiar. But the imposition of hands in the New Testament times was not uniformly the sign or indication that

miraculous gifts were conferred. The practice was observed when no such supernatural powers were bestowed, and when nothing beyond simple admission to Church office was implied. We know that the Apostle Paul possessed the gift of miraculous power long before he was set apart, along with Barnabas, by the pastors and Church at Antioch, to the ministry of the Gentiles; and yet on that occasion we find the Church laying on hands on the apostle's head, when nothing more than simple admission to the office could be implied. And in the case of Timothy, when he was commanded by Paul "to lay hands suddenly on no man," we have no reason whatsoever to believe that anything beyond admission to the ordinary office of minister, including no miraculous endowments, was intended. Even in New Testament times, then, we are justified in saying that ordination by imposition of hands might convey to the person ordained nothing supernatural. And much more since the time when these supernatural powers have wholly ceased in the Church, are we justified in saying that the laying on of hands in ordination conveys no such extraordinary gifts.

But what is much more decisive against the claims put forth by High Churchmen in the matter of ordination, is the fact that the New Testament entirely disowns and repudiates the character of priest, which both the Church of Rome and the Church of England profess to confer. We cannot at present enter at length into the discussion of this topic, which lies at the root of the High Church pretensions and principles avowed by both. But it is deeply important to mark, that the Gospel knows nothing of the office of priest, except the one Priest who for our sakes has passed into the heavens, and absolutely repudiates the notion of any one on earth now assuming the power or doing the work of the priest's office. The very nature of the priestly character and functions, in their proper sense, is inconsistent with the Gospel, in so far as these are attributed to any mortal on earth. The making of a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice, the standing between sinners and God for the purpose of reconciliation, the intercession or mediation with the Almighty on behalf of others,—these are the duties of the priest's office; and Scripture tells us that

these are no longer performed on earth, or performed in the Church of Christ by any human being on behalf of another. Under the former economy there were priests who ceremonially did these things, pointing by significant actions to what in the end of the world was to be done by the one Priest who was so not typically but really. In the Jewish Church there were priests, and sacrifices, and an altar, where the priest ministered, and the sacrifices were offered. But there is no such thing under the Gospel. Christianity is a religion without a priest, without an altar, without a sacrifice; or, rather, to state the case more accurately, Christianity is a religion whose Priest is already in heaven, whose sacrifice is already finished and accepted of God, and which consequently knows of no such ordinance now on earth. The notion of the priestly character, ascribed to its ministers both by the Church of Rome and the Church of England, in different degrees, is at variance with the whole character of the Gospel and the true nature of the Gospel Church. Popery invests her ministers with the entire character of priests, when she ascribes to them the power of making the sacrifice in the Supper, and presenting it to God; of retaining and remitting sins; of acting as mediators and intercessors, praying not with but for the people in an unknown tongue; and of conferring or withholding supernatural grace. The Church of England invests her ministers, if not entirely, at least partially, with the character of real priests, when she ascribes to them the power of absolving and condemning, of giving virtue to Sacraments, and of conferring grace through their ministry; or, in the words of Hooker, the power by their ministry "of blessing visible elements and making them invisible grace; of giving daily the Holy Ghost; of disposing of the flesh which was given for the life of the world, and that blood which was poured out to redeem souls; of pouring maledictions on the heads of the wicked, so that they perish, and of revoking the same, so that they revive." Such priestly power and authority are abhorrent to the Gospel, and opposed to the whole tenor of Scripture. If there be any priests on earth known to the New Testament, they are not the ministers of the Gospel, but believers at large; for, spiritually, believers are "a royal priesthood, and a holy nation,"—"kings and priests unto God." If there be any sacrifices

now, they are not the bread and wine blessed and broken by the hands of a priest of England or of Rome, but the souls and bodies of believers rendered unto the Lord as spiritual sacrifices. Scripture, as the rule of Church power, repudiates the idea of the Church making priests under the Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

2d, A regard to the authority of Christ as the source of Church power, forbids the idea of the Church having power to confer by ordination the priestly character and supernatural grace.

There is something greatly dishonouring to the authority of Christ in the attempt by the Church to admit men to that office which Christ Himself once held on earth, and in which He can have no mortal successor. The work which it was necessary for Him personally as priest to do in this world, our Saviour has long since ended; but He has neither abdicated nor ceased from the functions of His office. In contrasting the office of Christ with the brief continuance and the rapid succession of priests under the Mosaic dispensation, the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, declares, in regard to our Lord, "This man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood;" or, as it is better translated on the margin of our English version: "This man, because He continueth ever, hath a priesthood that passeth not from one to another" (ἀπαράβατον ἔχει την ἱερωσύνην). Although He Himself has passed away from the scene of His mighty and mysterious sacrifice, yet His is a priesthood which shall never come to an end. His anointing as priest He still bears upon His glorified head in heaven; the blood of His sacrifice He still presents before His Father, and the benefits of His sacrifice He still administers Himself unto His Church. He will permit no priest chosen from among sinful men to be even in name His successor in that incommunicable office. He will allow no mortal to enter upon any one, even the smallest, of the duties of His priesthood. He still gives by His own hands, and not by the hands of others, the priestly gifts of pardon and absolution, of grace and spiritual virtue in His Church,—the priestly gifts of supernatural blessing and power to ordinances and Sacraments, and a preached Word among His

people. The authority and rights of Christ forbid, as an unblessed and an evil thing, the conferring or the assumption of the priest's office by man.

3d, A regard to the liberty and edification of the Christian people, which forms the object of Church power, excludes the doctrine that the Church has power to confer by ordination the priestly character and supernatural grace.

There can be no thralldom on earth like the thralldom of being dependent on a fellow-creature—whether called a priest or a minister—for the spiritual blessings necessary for the salvation of the soul. To be in any measure at the mercy of a fellow-sinner for the bestowment of pardon and absolution from sin, of grace and peace,—to be at the mercy of a man like ourselves for dealing with God on our behalf, and obtaining from God priestly blessings,—this is wholly at variance with that liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free. The spiritual freedom of the believer cannot consist with subjection to or dependence on a man for the bestowment of those blessings which are essential to our peace here and our welfare hereafter. That freedom consists in immediate subjection to Christ, and direct dependence on Him for the grace and the blessing we require; for His service alone is liberty, and dependence on Him alone is freedom. The priestly character assumed by men ordained by Rome or by the Church of England, and the priestly power ascribed to them of conferring grace as the only authorized dispensers of it, are utterly inconsistent with the spiritual liberties of believers.

4th, A regard to the nature of Church power, as exclusively spiritual, forbids the notion that the Church has power by ordination to confer the priestly character or supernatural grace.

The very nature of such an assumption is inconsistent with the true character of Church power as purely spiritual. The assertion that the laying on of hands can convey the Holy Ghost, and communicate a priestly character and grace, does seem to approach indefinitely



near, if not altogether to reach, the claim of the opus operatum of the Church of Rome,—the pretension to a power by some mysterious manipulation, by some sleight of hand, old or new, to manufacture a Divine blessing. However it may be explained, it is wholly inconsistent with the spiritual nature of the Gospel dispensation, under which grace and blessing from on high are enjoyed, not by the use of outward ceremonies or the practice of outward observances, but by the spirit of man being brought into direct and immediate contact and communication with the Spirit of Christ. In no other way, except by the soul of man holding converse with the Spirit of God, as spirit with spirit, can grace be conferred or enjoyed; and outward ordinances are effectual for inward blessing, only when the ordinance brings the soul to the unseen Saviour to be blessed of Him. The claim to convey spiritual blessings by outward acts, and by them alone, is inconsistent with the true character and real nature of the power which the Church administers and wields.

## **SUBDIVISION IV:**

# **POSITIVE DIVINE INSTITUTIONS IN ADDITION TO THE ORDINARY PUBLIC WORSHIP OF THE LORD'S DAY; OR THE SACRAMENTS**

## **CHAPTER I:**

## THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL

FOR some time past we have been occupied with the subject of the ordinances of the Christian Church. We have discussed the questions connected with the public worship appointed in the Church, the special time set apart and sanctified for worship, and the ministry by means of which the worship of the Church is conducted. All these are outward ordinances which Christ has established in His Church, as parts of that external provision which He has made for the spiritual benefit and advancement of His people, and which He specially makes effectual to that end by the presence and power of His Spirit. All of these ordinances are in themselves, perhaps, and naturally adapted by their inherent character and influence to promote the edification of Christians; but above and beyond this natural or moral efficacy for that end, there is a spiritual blessing connected with them in consequence of the positive appointment of Christ, and the positive promise of His Spirit fulfilled in the right use of them. There may be a natural or moral efficacy in the ordinances of the Church considered in themselves, so that, apart from any other influence, they would, to a certain extent, be beneficial and advantageous in the case of those who used them. But in addition to this, there is a spiritual efficacy in the ordinances of the Church, distinct from the natural, and which is derived from the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in them who by faith make use of them as He has appointed. What this spiritual and supernatural efficacy of outward ordinance exactly is,—what is the measure or amount of the inward benefit to the believer,—in what way and to what extent grace is connected with the external observance,—how beyond the sphere of this natural or moral influence the positive institutions of the Church have a blessing not natively their own,—these are questions which it is impossible for us distinctly to answer. The only wise and fitting reply to such questions is, that we have now reached the region of the supernatural, and that there we have no data to guide us beyond what has been revealed. We know, from revelation, that there is a promise of grace annexed to outward ordinances when rightly used; we know that in the external observances Christ meets

with His people to bless them and to do them good;—but beyond this we do not know. The character, the measure, the amount of the blessing promised,—how it stands connected with the outward ordinance, and what is the extent and efficacy of the supernatural grace over and above the natural efficacy of the ordinance,—of all this we know nothing, because we have been told nothing. We can distinctly understand, from the analogy of other cases, how the preaching of the Word, viewed as a system of human teaching of truth, and no more, may have a natural tendency to benefit the understanding and the heart. But we do not understand the supernatural efficacy which, over and above the natural, is imparted to it by the presence and the power of the Spirit in the ordinance.

In passing, as we do at this stage, from the non-sacramental to the sacramental ordinances appointed by Christ in His Church, it is of great importance to carry this general principle along with us. A supernatural grace is not peculiar to the Sacraments, although it may be found in them in larger measure than in other ordinances. It is common to all the ordinances which Christ has appointed in His Church. Whatever mystery there may be in the connection which by the promise of Christ has been established between the outward act and the inward blessing,—between the external observance rightly used and the internal grace divinely bestowed,—it is a mystery not belonging to Sacraments alone, but belonging to them in common with all Church ordinances. There is the supernatural element in them all. There is that supernatural element connected in some manner with the outward act of the believer in the use of ordinances. There is a mystery in respect to any ordinance, not less than in respect of sacramental ordinances, which we cannot explain. It is, in short, the mystery of the Spirit of God, promised to dwell in the Church, and making every ordinance of the Church, whether sacramental or not, the channel for the conveyance of supernatural grace. If we would rid ourselves of this mystery, we can only do so by denying that the Spirit is present in ordinances at all. "As the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth,"—so is every

ordinance, as well as each person, touched and sanctified of the Holy Ghost. There can be no natural explanation of the supernatural.

What, then, is the character of those special ordinances instituted by Christ in His Church, which are usually denominated sacramental ordinances; and in what respect are they to be distinguished from the other ordinances of the Christian Church, not sacramental? In administering Sacraments, what is the peculiar nature or character of the Church's act; and in what manner does the administration differ from that of common ordinances?

The term Sacrament, by which these peculiar ordinances are known, is not of scriptural, but of ecclesiastical origin; and there is some doubt as to the manner in which it came to be applied to these special solemnities of the Church, and to be restricted to the peculiar meaning in which it is now almost universally employed. In classical use, the word "sacramentum" is almost always, if not invariably, employed to signify an oath,—more especially the military oath by which a soldier bound himself to obey the officer placed over him. And it has been conjectured that from its classical use it was transferred into the service of the Church, as significant of the obligation which the Christian comes under, in voluntarily participating in the Sacraments, to serve Christ as the Captain of his salvation,—these Sacraments being the characteristic badges or symbols by which the Christian is distinguished from other men. There is a second explanation, advocated by not a few, of the way in which the Latin term Sacrament came to be appropriated to its present ecclesiastical sense. It is the ordinary translation of the Greek word *μυστηριον* among the ecclesiastical writers of the early ages, and more especially in the Vulgate and other old Latin translations of the Bible. The term Sacrament, according to this supposition, came to be employed to signify the "mysteries" of Christianity,—whether "mystery" is employed to denote a doctrine unknown until it was revealed, or a type or emblem bearing a hidden and secret meaning. There is some reason to believe that both the Greek term *μυστηριον* and the Latin translation of it—*sacramentum*

—came at an early period to be applied by the primitive Christians to those special solemnities of their faith, which, although made up of outward and sensible signs or actions, bore in them a secret and spiritual meaning. In one or other of these ways, or perhaps in both, the term "Sacrament" soon came to be restricted in its meaning and application, by ecclesiastical practice, to those outward ordinances of Christianity which signify and seal its most precious and momentous truths. But as the term itself is of Church origin, and not found in Scripture, we must look not to it, but to the descriptions and intimations given in Scripture in regard to the ordinances themselves, for an explanation of their true nature and import. In what respects, then, do the Scriptures represent the Sacraments of the Church as differing from its other ordinances which are not sacramental? What, according to Scripture, must we regard as the true nature and design of a Sacrament? To this general question we shall direct our attention in the first place, postponing for the present the special consideration of the Sacraments individually. And in endeavouring to ascertain the real nature and design of the Sacraments of the New Testament, we shall be enabled to understand at the same time, and by means of the same inquiry, in what respects they differ from other ordinances not sacramental.

## **SECTION I.**

### **NATURE AND EFFICACY OF THE SACRAMENTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, AND DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM AND NON-SACRAMENTAL ORDINANCES**

I. The Sacraments of the New Testament are Divine institutions appointed by Christ.

It is the positive institution by Christ that sets these ordinances apart to the religious purpose for which they are intended, that makes them significant of spiritual things, and connects them with the virtue or blessing which they are made instrumental to impart. An

express Divine appointment is necessary to constitute a Sacrament. In this respect they are similar to the other ordinances which form part of Church worship. Like them, they can claim Divine authority for their institution; and without this authority they would not be Sacraments at all. No observance not ordained by God can properly form any part of His service; far less can any observance not instituted by Him become a sign of His spiritual grace, or a pledge of a blessing which it depends upon His pleasure to give or to withhold. Hence, that any outward institution may answer to our idea of a Sacrament, it must be a positive appointment of God, and made both a sign and a pledge of spiritual blessings, in consequence of His promise and command. Without this, it would be a mere human ordinance, not only destitute of all real religious significance and efficacy, but profanely mimicking the form and character of a Divine ordinance in the Church. This is the first element that goes to make up a Sacrament, and which it has in common with all other ordinances, really forming a lawful or proper part of Divine worship,—namely, that it be of positive appointment by Christ.

II. The Sacraments of the New Testament are sensible signs of spiritual blessings, teaching and representing by outward actions Gospel truths.

The word or promise of God is an appeal to the understanding only; the Sacraments, embodying the same word or promise in outward and sensible signs, form a twofold appeal, first, to the senses, and secondly, to the understanding. There is Christ in the Word preached; and in the preaching of the Word, Christ is presented directly to the understanding and heart, and the truth addressed singly to the spiritual nature of man. But Christ is also in the Sacrament administered; and, in the administration of the Sacrament, over and above the same truth taught to the understanding and spiritual nature of man, there is the truth taught to the senses, and impressed by sensible signs upon them. There is a striking similarity between the method God has employed in the Sacraments of the New Testament to embody the Word and

promises of Christ, and of a past salvation, to the view of His people since His departure, and the method that He employed before Christ's coming to embody the Word and promises of a future salvation. Under the Old Testament Church, there were, from the very first, two lines of promise and prediction,—both pointing forward to the coming of the Redeemer, running parallel with each other, and throwing mutual light upon each other's announcements. There was the line of promise embodied in verbal revelation, and there was the line of promise embodied in outward representation or type.

These two revelations ran parallel with each other since the first hour that a revelation was given to man in Paradise concerning the future coming of a Saviour. At that time there was a promise embodied in words, that "the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head, while His own heel was to be bruised;" and side by side with that verbal announcement, there was the same promise embodied in type through means of the ordinance of sacrifice then appointed. There was Christ in the word of promise, and Christ in the sign of promise. When the promise was renewed to Noah, the second father of the human family, we have again the revelation by word, and the revelation by sensible sign; the covenant was repeated in another form, and the bow was set in the cloud as the outward representation of it. Once more: when Abraham was selected by God to be the depository of a new development of the promise, we have again that promise embodied in words, and also in outward action; we have the special covenant with Abraham revealed in words, and revealed side by side with the word in the external sign of circumcision; and—to mention no further examples of a practice which must be familiar to every reader of the Old Testament—the whole of the Jewish economy was an exemplification of the two parallel lines that run through every economy of God,—the promise in word and the promise in sign revealed together, and throwing mutual light on each other. The typology of the Old Testament shows us God embodying His promises in signs; the revelation of the Old Testament shows us God embodying the same promises in words; and the Sacraments of the

New Testament afford, under the Gospel economy, an exemplification of the same great principle.

The connection between the outward action in the Sacraments and the spiritual blessings to which they stand related is not a mere arbitrary one, arising from positive institution: there is a natural analogy or resemblance between the external signs and the things represented; so that, in the Sacraments of the New Testament, as in the types of the Old, our senses are made to minister to our spiritual advantage, and the outward action becomes the image of inward grace. In the Word, Christ is impressed on the understanding; in the Sacraments, Christ is impressed both on the understanding and the senses. They become teaching signs, fitted and designed to address to the believer the very same truths as are addressed to him in the Word; but having this peculiarity, that they speak at the same time and alike to the outward senses and to the inward thought. In this respect the Sacraments differ from other ordinances of the New Testament Church. Prayer and preaching and praise are ordinances that address themselves to the intellectual and spiritual nature of man alone. They are the expressions and utterances of his intellectual and spiritual being in holding intercourse with God; or they are the means fitted to speak to that nature, and that only, in impressing Divine truth upon men. But in those significant and teaching signs, which we call the Sacraments, Christ is embodied in the ordinance in such a manner as to appeal to the twofold being of man, as made up of body and soul, to minister both to the senses and the understanding; and to speak at once to the outward and inward nature of the believer. In addition to Christ in the Word, we have Christ also in the sign, taught as really in the latter way as in the former, and taught with the advantage of being submitted to the eye, and pictured to the outward senses. This, then, is one important difference between the sacramental ordinances of the New Testament Church and those which are not sacramental.

III. The Sacraments of the New Testament are federal acts affording a seal or confirmation of the covenant between God and His people.



This is the main and primary characteristic of sacramental ordinances. They constitute a formal testimony to an engagement entered into by two parties through means, not of words, but of speaking and significant actions,—these actions being the visible witnesses to the engagement, and the outward confirmations of its validity. In other words, they become, according to the expression of the apostle in his Epistle to the Romans, when speaking of one of the Sacraments of the Old Testament, visible "seals" of the covenant, and of the blessings contained in it.

There are not a few examples to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures of covenants between man and man ratified by some outward monument, framed or chosen to attest and confirm the transaction. When Jacob parted from his father-in-law Laban, they made a covenant together, and raised a heap of stones and a pillar, to be a memorial of the transaction, and to serve as a witness on both sides to attest their fidelity to the terms of the covenant. "This heap be a witness, and this pillar be a witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, for harm." The outward monument or memorial of the covenant entered into between Jacob and Laban was a witness of the engagement, serving to bind the obligation of it more strongly on both parties, and to ratify and confirm, in a formal and significant manner, its validity. And what we find in patriarchal times, we also find, in one shape or other, in every stage of society, some outward sign or significant action being made use of between men to confirm and attest their plighted faith. In addition to the spoken promise or oath, there has been—if not the stone of the times of Jacob—at least the formal signature and solemn deed, and seal attached to the deed, to remain after the verbal engagement, as the witness and ratification of the transaction. Such outward monuments or significant solemnities are intended for the satisfaction of both parties, and to give additional certainty and confirmation to the agreement. And the practice in this respect, which has obtained universally among men, we find to be made use of also by God. There are repeated examples in the Old Testament Scriptures of God

ratifying His engagements or covenants with men by means of appropriate signs or solemnities, and making use of these solemnities for the very same purpose that a signed and sealed deed is employed for in the present day, when it attests or confirms a previous engagement, and gives additional security to both parties for the fulfilment of it. That in such a sense the rainbow in the cloud was employed by God, when it became the sign of His covenant with Noah, is very expressly stated by Himself: "And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth." In this point of view the bow was a seal, giving validity and additional security to the covenant then made, and serving as a standing witness for the truth of it. In a precisely similar manner, the rite of circumcision was appointed to Abraham for a voucher of the covenant between God and him. The terms of the institution of the rite would themselves lead us to this conclusion, even had they not been interpreted by the inspired commentary of the Apostle Paul in that sense. "And, God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee. Every man-child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." And in reference to this transaction, the Apostle Paul expressly says of Abraham: "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." The outward act of circumcision, then, was a witness or a seal of the covenant transaction between God and the patriarch, and thus became a voucher to ratify and confirm the validity of it.

In exact accordance with the practice, universal in one shape or other among men, and expressly sanctioned by the example of God Himself in the Old Testament Church, we affirm that the Sacraments of the New Testament are parts of a federal transaction between the

believer and Christ, and visible and outward attestations or vouchers of the covenant entered into between them. In addition to being signs to represent the blessings of the covenant of grace, they are also seals to vouch and ratify and confirm its validity. That the Sacraments of the Christian Church are thus seals of the covenant, appears to be very explicitly asserted, in so far at least as regards the Lord's Supper, in the words of the institution themselves: "This cup," said our Lord, "is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you,"—language which seems undoubtedly intended to convey the idea that the element used in the Supper was to be the witness of the new covenant,—a visible seal or security to ratify and vouch for it. No doubt that covenant in itself is sufficiently secure without any such confirmation, resting as it does on the word of God. That word alone, and without any further guarantee, is enough. But in condescension to the weakness of our faith, and adapting Himself to the feelings and customs of men, God has done more than give a promise. He has also given a guarantee for the promise,—has vouchsafed to bestow an outward confirmation of His word in the shape of a visible sign, appealing to our senses, and witnessing to the certainty and truth of the covenant. In the case of the Sacraments, God has proceeded on the same principle as is announced by the Apostle Paul in reference to His oath: "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." The word of promise was itself enough to warrant and demand the belief of God's people. But more than enough was granted: He has not only said it, but also sworn it. By two immutable things—His word and His oath—is the faith of the believer confirmed. The oath is the guarantee for His word. And more than this still: In the visible seal of the Sacraments God would add another and a third witness,—that at the mouth, not of two, but of three witnesses, His covenant may be established. He has not only given us the guarantee of His word, and confirmed that word by an oath, but also added to both the seal of visible ordinances. There is the word preached to declare the truth of the covenant to the

unbelieving heart. More than that,—there is the oath sworn to guarantee it. More than that still,—there is the sign administered in order to vouch for all. Christ in the word, unseen but heard, is ours, if we will receive that word with the hearing ear and the understanding heart. Over and above this, Christ, both seen and heard in the Sacrament, is ours, if we will see with the eye or hear with the ear.<sup>2</sup>

The Sacraments are the outward and sensible testimony and seal of the covenant, added to the word that declares it. This is the grand peculiarity of sacramental ordinances, separating them by a very marked line from ordinances not sacramental. They are federal acts,—seals and vouchers of the covenant between God and the believer. They presuppose and imply a covenant transaction between the man who partakes of them and God; and they are the attestations to and confirmations of that transaction, pledging God by a visible act to fulfil His share of the covenant, and engaging the individual by the same visible act to perform his part in it. Other ordinances, such as the preaching of the Word, presuppose and attest no such personal engagement or federal transaction between the individual and God. Christ in the Word is preached to all, and all are called upon to receive Him; but there is no personal act on the part of the hearer that singles him out as giving or receiving a voucher of his covenant with his Saviour. But when the same individual partakes of the Sacraments, his own personal deed is an act of covenanting with God; and Christ in the ordinance is made his individually, and he is made Christ's by the very action of partaking of the ordinance. He is singled out by his own voluntary act, if he rightly partakes of the ordinance, as giving a voucher for his engagement with Christ; and Christ Himself gives a voucher of His engagement to the individual; and the visible Sacrament is the seal to the personal and mutual engagement. In this respect, as not only signs but seals of the covenant of grace to the individual who in faith partakes of them, the Sacraments are very markedly distinguished from ordinances not sacramental.

IV. The Sacraments of the New Testament are made means of grace to the individual who rightly partakes of them.

It is carefully to be noted that they presuppose or imply the possession of grace in the case of those who partake of them; but they are also made the means of adding to that grace. They are seals of a covenant already made between the soul and Christ,—attestations of a federal transaction before completed,—confirmations, visible and outward, of engagement between the sinner and his Saviour previously entered into on both sides. They presuppose the existence of grace, else they could not be called seals of it. Just as the signature and seal of some human covenant necessarily presuppose that the covenant exists before they can become vouchers for it, so the seal of God's covenant, affirmed by means of sacramental ordinances, presupposes the existence of that covenant as already subsisting between God and the rightful participator in the ordinance. But although grace exists in the soul before, the Sacraments are made to those who rightly receive them the means of increasing that grace, and communicating yet more of spiritual blessing. They serve to strengthen the faith of those who already believe, and add to the grace of those who previously possessed grace. They become effectual means of imparting saving blessings in addition to those enjoyed before. In this respect they are similar to the other ordinances which Christ has appointed in His Church, and which by His power and Spirit are made instrumental in advancing the interests of His people. But from the very peculiarity that attaches to their distinctive character, as seals of a personal covenant between God and the believer, Sacraments may reasonably be supposed to be more effectual than non-sacramental ordinances in imparting spiritual blessings. The spiritual virtue of Sacraments is more and greater than other ordinances, just because, from their very nature, they imply more of a personal dealing between the sinner and his Saviour than non-sacramental ordinances necessarily involve.

What is the nature and extent of the supernatural grace imparted in Sacraments,—in what manner they work so as to impart spiritual benefit to the soul, it is not possible for us to define. As visible seals of God's promises and covenant, we can understand how they are naturally fitted, in the same way as the vouchers of any human engagement or covenant are naturally fitted, to attest and confirm them. But beyond this, all is unknown. The blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in Sacraments we cannot understand, any more than we can understand the operation of the same supernatural causes in respect of other ordinances. They have a virtue in them beyond what reason can discover in them, as naturally fitted to serve the purposes both of signs and seals of spiritual things. They have a blessing to the right receiver of them, not their own to give. "They are made effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of His Spirit in them who by faith receive them." In this respect their power and virtue are not more and not less mysterious than those of ordinances non-sacramental.

Such are the general conclusions which a consideration of the nature of the Sacraments of the New Testament lead us to acquiesce in. They are Divine institutions appointed by Christ; they are signs and significant representations of spiritual things; they are seals and vouchers of a federal transaction between God and the worthy receiver of Sacraments; they are the means for applying spiritual grace to the soul. To sum up the discussion in the language of the Shorter Catechism: "A Sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein by sensible signs Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers."

Sacraments and non-sacramental ordinances are like each other in two respects; and in two respects they differ. In the first place, sacramental and non-sacramental ordinances agree in this: first, that they are both positive institutions of Christ; and second, that they are both means of grace to believers. Without a Divine warrant and institution, neither non-sacramental ordinances nor Sacraments

could have any place in the worship of God as part of His service; and both are therefore Divine appointments. They are both likewise means of grace to believers,—there being a positive promise attached to the right use of them, and that promise being fulfilled in the bestowment of spiritual blessing in connection with their use. This spiritual benefit, linked to the proper use of ordinances, whether sacramental or not, is over and above and quite distinct from the natural or moral influence such ordinances may have to benefit those who employ them. There is a benefit, for example, which the ordinance of preaching the Word is naturally fitted to impart, because the truth preached is adapted to man's moral and intellectual nature, and so naturally fitted to be of advantage to the hearers. In like manner there is a benefit which Sacraments are naturally fitted to impart, because they are symbolical ordinances or teaching signs; and the truths represented or taught by them are, upon the very same principle, naturally fitted to be of advantage to the receiver. But in both cases there is a blessing distinct from and additional to the natural or moral effect of the Word preached or the Sacraments administered. There is the work of the Spirit making use of Word and Sacrament to reach the understanding and the heart, and to convey to the worthy hearer or worthy receiver a spiritual blessing. And this work of the Spirit, over and above the natural effect of the truth received, is a mystery, both in the case of the ordinance of preaching and the ordinance of the Sacraments; and not, I think, a greater mystery in the one case than in the other.

We do not plead for the Sacraments as means of grace, viewed merely as natural actions and ceremonies apart from the truths which they represent, any more than we would plead for the preaching of the Word being a means of grace, viewed as the mere letter of the Word apart from the meaning of the truth which is uttered. The case of infant Baptism, which is, as we shall afterwards see, in some respects exceptional, and not to be taken as completely bringing out the full and primary idea of the Sacrament, we for the present put aside, postponing it for future consideration. But in the case of adult participation in the Sacraments, we do not plead for

these generally as means of grace, when viewed simply as outward acts, and apart from the truths represented, any more than the sound of the Word preached would be a means of grace apart from the intelligent apprehension of it. Through the truths, however, in one case impressed on the hearer by significant words, and in the other case impressed on the participator through significant actions, the Spirit of God does operate upon the intellectual and moral nature of man, making both the one ordinance and the other a means of grace. How the Spirit thus operates and imparts of His gracious gifts, we cannot tell in the one instance more than in the other. What is the mode or measure of His communications of a spiritual kind, over and above the natural or outward influence of the truth, we cannot tell. It is His own secret and supernatural work, known and recognised by the believer in the effects wrought on His soul, both in the case of the Word preached and the Sacraments administered, but not to be explained or defined in the manner of working. Let it never be forgotten that there is a mystery not to be explained whenever we get beyond the natural effect of the ordinance, whether sacramental or not, necessarily resulting from the fact that it is an effect of the Spirit, and not of any natural cause. All ordinances, as means of grace, must in that character have something in them mysterious and inexplicable. We cannot rid ourselves of the mysterious by simply ridding ourselves of sacramental ordinances,—as very many in the present day seem to imagine. We can only disconnect all mystery from the ordinances of the Church when we limit their efficacy simply to their natural influence, and deny the influence of the Spirit of God as at all connected with them.

In the second place, Sacraments differ from ordinances not sacramental in the New Testament Church, in these two things: first, they are sensible signs of spiritual truths; and second, they are seals or vouchers of a federal transaction. In respect that they are sensible exhibitions and significant actions, having a definite meaning in them, Sacraments stand out distinctly marked from other ordinances. Speaking generally, sacramental ordinances are spiritual acts of the mind or soul embodying themselves in outward and



sensible actions, in so far as regards the part of the receiver in the ordinance. They are outward representations, by means of certain actions on the part of the worthy participator, of the great fact that he gives himself to Christ according to the terms of the covenant of grace. In partaking of the ordinance, he embodies in the sensible actions of the ordinance a spiritual surrender of himself to Christ, in the manner and upon the terms which Christ has appointed. This is the receiver's part in the ordinance. On the other side, Christ, through the person of the administrator of the ordinance, embodies in the actions of it a picture or representation of a spiritual communication of Himself and all the blessings of His grace to the worthy receiver. Christ, in the Sacrament, and by means of its sensible signs, gives Himself and the benefits of the new covenant, spiritually, although under an outward representation, to the believing participator. The outward signs of the Sacrament exhibit, then, a twofold action: the believer giving himself to Christ in covenant, and Christ giving Himself to the believer in the same covenant. There is a spiritual act on the part of the believer embodied in outward representation,—the act, namely, of his surrendering of himself to Christ in the way and on the terms which Christ has appointed; and there is a spiritual act on the part of Christ embodied in outward representation also,—the act, namely, of Christ with all His precious and unspeakable blessings communicating Himself to the soul of the worthy receiver. There is thus a double significance comprehended in the administration and in the participation of the sacramental ordinance, each of them having a definite and intelligible meaning of its own. In the administration of the Sacrament, Christ makes over Himself and all the benefits of His atonement to the believer, and accepts in return the believer as His. In the participation of the Sacrament on the part of the worthy receiver, he makes over himself to Christ; and receives, in return for his own soul, Christ and His covenant blessings. The double action of the administration and participation of the Sacrament is the embodiment in outward sign of a double spiritual act. There is a mutual intercommunication spiritually of Christ and the believer embodied and represented in action,—a covenant interchangeably

exhibited in sensible signs, whereby Christ becomes the believer's, and the believer becomes Christ's. In their being signs of spiritual truths, Sacraments differ in a marked manner from non-sacramental ordinances.

Sacraments differ also from other ordinances in this, that they are seals or vouchers of a federal or covenant transaction. This, after all, is the grand and essential distinction between sacramental and non-sacramental ordinances. As a kind of types, as speaking and teaching signs, they are fitted to express, by the help of significant actions cognisable by the senses, the twofold spiritual act of Christ making over Himself and all His blessings to the believer, and of the believer making over himself with all his poverty and sins to Christ. But they are more than signs of a covenant thus entered into between the two parties,—they are seals and vouchers for the covenant, serving to give confirmation and validity to the engagement, as one never to be broken. In the Sacraments there is a twofold seal, as well as a twofold action, represented. There is a seal on the part of Christ, and there is a seal on the part of the believer. In marvellous condescension to our infirmity and unbelief, Christ has been pleased to add to the promise of His covenant an outward and visible voucher for it,—thereby, as it were, binding Himself doubly to the fulfilment of it, and pledging Himself, both by word and by sign, to implement all its terms. And in the worthy receiving of the Sacrament, the believer gives also a visible voucher for his part of the engagement,—thereby placing himself under new and additional obligations to give himself to Christ, and adding the outward seal to ratify the inward pledge of his heart. The covenant is mutual, and the seal is mutual. Without either part of the covenant transaction, the Sacrament would be incomplete. Withdraw Christ from the ordinance as both entering into covenant with the believer and giving him a seal of it,—take away Christ sealed to the soul in the Sacrament,—and the ordinance is reduced to a bare sign of spiritual blessing, having, perhaps, a certain natural effect by signifying truth, but empty and destitute of all spiritual grace. Or withdraw the believer from the ordinance in so far as he really by means of it gives himself to Christ,—take away the

spiritual act by which the worthy participator surrenders his soul to the Saviour through his outward participation of the Sacrament,—and the Sacrament is made to be a charm, in which Christ and grace are communicated apart from the spiritual act or state of the receiver. Abstract from the ordinance the act of Christ covenanting with the believer and giving to the soul Himself and His blessings, and the remaining portion of the ordinance may continue,—the believer may still be accounted as giving himself to Christ in the Sacrament; but in the absence of Christ's act there is no spiritual blessing given in return, and the believer's act of participating in the Sacrament becomes a mere sign of adherence to Christ on his part, and nothing more than a sign. Again, abstract from the ordinance the act of the believer spiritually covenanting with Christ and giving his soul in faith to the Saviour, and the remaining portion of the ordinance may continue,—Christ may be held as present in the Sacrament giving Himself and His supernatural grace; but in the absence of the receiver's act surrendering his soul in faith to his Saviour, the communication of spiritual grace is degraded to the position of being the result of a charm or talismanic formula,—something effected, *ex opere operato*, apart from the spiritual character or faith of the receiver. It is only when the separate spiritual acts of both parties meet and combine in one transaction, that the covenant is real or complete; or that the ordinance, as a seal of the mutual engagement, is a true and proper Sacrament. As the voucher or seal of a real covenant, spiritually entered into between Christ and the believer through the ordinance, a Sacrament differs, in a very marked and important way, from ordinances not sacramental.

## **SECTION II.**

### **UNSCRIPTURAL OR DEFECTIVE VIEWS OF THE SACRAMENTS**

The principles which I have laid down in regard to the nature of Sacraments, and in regard to the difference between them and

ordinances not sacramental, stand opposed to the views of two parties holding extreme positions on either side of this question. There is one party who deny the grand and characteristic distinction between sacramental and other ordinances already enunciated, and hold that the Sacraments have no virtue except as badges of a Christian profession, and signs of spiritual truths. There is another party holding opinions on the subject admitting of various modifications, but agreeing in this, that they ascribe a high spiritual efficacy to the Sacraments apart from the faith or spiritual act of the receiver. By the first party the views of the Sacraments already stated by me are held to be erroneous in the way of attributing to them a greater virtue than actually belongs to them. By the second party these views are regarded as defective in the way of ascribing to Sacraments a less virtue than really belongs to them. Let us endeavour briefly and generally to estimate the merits and truth of the principles adopted by these two parties,—reserving until a future stage in our discussions the more particular examination of their theories, in their application to the Sacraments of the New Testament individually.

I. The Sacraments of the New Testament are regarded by one party as signs, and no more than signs, of spiritual things,—symbolical actions fitted to represent, and impress upon the minds of men, Gospel truths. The Socinian party have made this doctrine peculiarly their own. According to their views, a federal transaction between the believer and Christ founded on His atonement is no part of the Gospel system at all; and hence the Sacraments of the New Testament can be no seals appointed and designed to ratify such a covenant. The Socinian doctrine concerning the nature of the Sacraments allows to them no more than a twofold object and design. They are not essentially distinct from other ordinances, as set apart by themselves to be the seals of the one great covenant between the believer and Christ, at his entrance into the Church at first, and from time to time afterwards, as occasion justifies or demands. But in the first place, they are signs in which something external and material is used to express what is spiritual and invisible,—the only

virtue belonging to them being what they are naturally calculated to effect, as memorials, or illustrations, or exhibitions of the important facts and truths of the Gospel; and in the second place, the Sacraments are solemn pledges of discipleship on the part of those who receive them, discriminating them from other men, and forming a public profession of or testimony to their faith as Christians. These are the two grand objects, which, according to the Socinian view, the Sacraments were intended to serve; and such, according to their theory, is the nature of the ordinance.

The same system in substance, making, as it does, Sacraments entirely or essentially teaching and symbolical signs, has been adopted by many who disown the tenets of Socinianism in regard to the Gospel system generally. The theory of the Sacraments now described has been and is held by not a few in the Church of England of somewhat latitudinarian views,—the representative of such, as a class, being Bishop Hoadly. It is avowed and advocated in the present day by a very large proportion of the Independent body, who count the Sacraments to be no more than symbolical institutions, and who are ably represented by Dr. Halley in his work, entitled, *An Inquiry into the Nature of the Symbolic Institutions of the Christian Religion*, usually called the Sacraments. The single difference between the Socinian doctrine, as maintained by Socinians in the present day, and the Independent doctrine, as maintained by Dr. Halley and others, is probably this, that Socinians limit the efficacy of the Sacraments to the natural or moral power that belongs to them as signs of Gospel truth, while Independents may admit that beyond the natural and moral power of the ordinance, as symbolical of truth, the Spirit of God makes use of them in representing truth to the mind. Let Dr. Halley speak his own views as they are generally held by English Independents. "The opinion we propose is, that the Sacraments are significant rites,—emblems of Divine truth,—sacred signs of the evangelical doctrine,—designed to illustrate, to enforce, or to commemorate the great and most important truths of the Gospel. Baptism, we believe, is the sign of purification, on being admitted into the kingdom of Christ, but neither the cause nor the

seal of it; the Lord's Supper the commemoration of the death of Christ, the symbol of its propitiatory character, but not the assurance of our personal interest in its saving benefits. The truth exhibited in the Sacraments, just as when it is propounded in words, may be the means of the communication of Divine grace; but then the evangelical doctrine and not the Sacrament, the truth and not the symbol, the spirit and not the letter, gives life and sanctity to the recipient, as it may even to a spectator." According to this theory, it is the truth signified in the Sacrament—and not, over and above that, the Sacrament itself as a seal—that possesses any spiritual virtue; and that virtue may be, according to Socinians, the natural influence of the truth on the mind,—or, according to Independents, that natural influence, with the addition of the power communicated through the truth by the Spirit.

Now, in reference to this view of the Sacraments, it is necessary to bear in mind that there is no dispute as to the fact that sacramental ordinances are symbolical,—signs fitted to represent and to teach Gospel truths. Further, there is no dispute as to the fact, acknowledged by some of the advocates of this theory, that in so far as they teach or convey truth to the mind, they may be made the means of the communication of Divine grace, in the same manner very much as when the truth is propounded in words. But the point in debate is, whether the Sacraments are not more than signs, and more than merely symbolical representations of truth. We hold that they are. We contend that, in addition to being signs, they are also seals,—the visible vouchers of a federal transaction between Christ and the believer who partakes of His Sacraments,—the outward pledges speaking to the eye and the senses of the completed covenant by which Christ becomes the believer's, and the believer becomes Christ's. And further, we contend that, as seals, they are made a means of grace more powerful and efficacious than simply as signs of truth.

The arguments urged by Dr. Halley against this additional office and virtue attributed to Sacraments as more than signs, and as the seals

of a federal engagement between the worthy recipient and Christ, are the two following, as stated in his own words: "First, The ceremonial institutes of preceding dispensations, the Sacraments of the patriarchal and Jewish Church, correspond only with the view which we take of the Christian Sacraments as sacred signs of Divine truth. Second, The Sacraments considered as the causes or the means, or even the seals of converting or regenerating grace, stand opposed to the great Protestant doctrine of justification by faith without works." We shall very briefly examine each of these two objections to the view which we have announced. And we do this all the more readily, as it will afford us the better opportunity of bringing out our own principles in contrast with those embodied in the Independent theory of the Sacraments.

1st, Dr. Halley alleges, against the ascription to the New Testament Sacraments of the character of seals, that the ceremonial institutes of preceding dispensations, the Sacraments of the patriarchal and Jewish Church, correspond only with the views which he advocates of the Christian Sacraments as exclusively signs of Divine truth. Perhaps there never was a more unfortunate or unfounded assertion. "One passage of St. Paul," says Dr. Halley, "will establish this proposition." And the single passage which is to bear the weight of the whole argument is the following one from the Epistle to the Romans: "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." This is the solitary passage quoted to prove the broad and general assertion, that the Sacraments of the patriarchal and Jewish Church afford no precedent or example of Sacraments as seals, but only of Sacraments as signs. The verses quoted plainly amount to nothing more than a statement of the difference between what the apostle calls circumcision outwardly and circumcision inwardly, the external rite and the internal grace, and a declaration that a man might have the outward rite, and not the inward grace. The apostle does not say, and cannot, except by a violent misapplication of his words, be made to

say, that in the case of the man who has both the outward and inward circumcision, the external rite may not be the visible seal of the spiritual grace. The very opposite of this the same apostle in the very same Epistle undeniably asserts. In language as plain as he could possibly select or employ, Paul affirms that in the case of Abraham, who had the inward grace, the outward rite of circumcision was a seal to him of that grace. "Abraham," says the apostle, "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." And how is it that Dr. Halley gets rid of this express assertion of the apostle, standing as it does in explicit contradiction to his general averment that the Sacraments of the Jewish Church were signs and not seals? He admits that to Abraham personally and individually circumcision was a seal, and not merely a sign. But by a strange misapprehension of the doctrine of his opponents, he argues that it could not be a seal of faith to others of Abraham's family or countrymen who had not his faith. "Although," says Dr. Halley, "to him circumcision was the seal of faith, it could not have been so to his posterity." "Was it," he asks, "was it, in this sense, a seal of the righteousness which they had, an approval of their faith, to the men of his clan, or to Ishmael, or to the infants of his household, or to any of his posterity in subsequent ages?"<sup>3</sup> The answer to such a question is abundantly obvious. If the men of Abraham's clan had not faith, if Ishmael had not faith, circumcision could have been no seal of faith to them. The outward rite could not be a seal of the inward grace, when the latter did not exist. It could not be a seal of a spiritual covenant between them and God which had not been entered into. I do not stop to consider the question of whether or not circumcision is to be accounted, even in such a case, the seal to such individuals of the outward blessings promised to them, as Jews, by God, as the rightful King of Israel as a nation; but, as a seal of a spiritual covenant, it of course could not be a seal at all to those who were not parties to the covenant,—while it was a seal, according to the explicit assertion of the apostle, to those who were. The very express statement of Paul cannot be evaded, but fully bears out the assertion that the Sacraments of the Jewish Church were not signs alone, but



seals of a spiritual covenant to those who were really parties to the covenant. "Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had."

2d, Dr. Halley alleges that the Sacraments, if they are considered as the cause or the means, or even the seals of spiritual and saving grace, would be opposed to the great Protestant doctrine of justification by faith without works. Now it is readily admitted, that if Sacraments are regarded as the causes or means of justification, they are utterly inconsistent with the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone; and in this point of view the objection is true and unanswerable when directed against some of those theories of the Sacraments which we may be called upon to consider by and by. But it is denied that the objection is true when directed against the theory of the Sacraments which maintains that they are not causes and not means of justification, but seals of it and of other blessings of the new covenant. The Sacraments as seals, not causes of justification, cannot interfere with the doctrine of justification by faith, for this plain reason, that before the seal is added, the justification is completed. The seal implied in the Sacrament presupposes justification, and does not directly or instrumentally cause it; the seal is a voucher given to the believer that he is justified already, and not a means or a cause of procuring justification for him. Justification exists before the seal that attests it is bestowed. The believer has previously been "justified by faith without the works of the law," ere the Sacrament of which he partakes can affix the visible seal to his justification. All this is abundantly obvious; and the objection of Independents, that the doctrine of the Sacraments as personal seals is opposed to the principle of justification by faith, is wholly without foundation. That the Sacraments are a means of grace additional to what the believer possessed before his participation in them, it is not necessary to deny, but rather proper strongly to assert. In entering into a personal covenant with Christ through participation in the Sacraments, or in renewing that covenant from time to time, the faith of the believer is called forth and brought into exercise in the very act of participation, and by the aids to faith which the ordinance

affords. And in answer to this faith so exercised and elicited, there is an increase of grace given to the worthy recipient above and beyond what he had before. The faith of the believer, called into exercise in partaking of the ordinance and by means of it, is met by the bestowment of corresponding grace. But it is never to be forgotten that the Sacraments presuppose the existence of grace, however they may give to him that already has it more abundantly. They presuppose, and beforehand require, that a man is justified by faith before they give their seal to his justification.

There is no ground, then, in Scripture, but the very opposite, for asserting that the Sacraments are no more than signs or symbolical actions, as held by Dr. Halley and those whom on this question he represents. The fundamental error involved in the views now adverted to is, the denial of Christ's part in the federal transaction involved in a Sacrament. Independents overlook His department of the work in the engagement entered into through means of the act of receiving the Sacraments; and in the absence of the act of Christ giving Himself and all His spiritual blessings to the believer in the ordinance, the act of the recipient is not met by the grace that Christ confers, but is reduced to a mere significant dedication of himself to the Saviour unconnected with any grace at all. Take away Christ from the ordinance as present there, to covenant with the believer, actually giving Himself and His blessings spiritually through means of the outward ordinance, in answer to the faith of the believer giving himself to Christ through the same ordinance, and the Sacrament is evacuated of all spiritual grace; the act of the receiver becomes a mere expressive sign of what he is willing to do in the way of dedicating himself to Christ; but not an actual dedication, accomplished through means of a covenant then and there renewed, by which the believer becomes Christ's, and Christ becomes the believer's. The principle of the Independents in regard to the Sacraments cuts the Sacrament, as it were, in twain, and puts asunder what God has joined. It leaves to the believer his part in the transaction, in so far as he employs the Sacrament as a sign of his dedication to Christ; but it takes away Christ's part in the

transaction, in so far as He meets with the believer and enters into covenant with him,—accepting the believer as His, and giving Himself to the soul in return. Severed from Christ in the ordinance, and from the covenant with His people into which Christ there enters, the act of the recipient can be no more than an expressive sign, or convenient profession of faith, unconnected with true and proper sacramental grace.

II. The Sacraments of the New Testament are regarded by another party as in themselves, and by reason of the virtue that belongs to them, and not through the instrumentality of the faith or the Spirit in the heart of the recipient, effectual to impart justifying and saving grace directly, in all cases where it is not resisted by an unworthy reception of the ordinance. This general opinion may be held under various modifications; but all of them are opposed to the doctrine I have already laid down, that the Sacraments are seals of a justifying and saving grace already enjoyed by the recipient, and not intended for the conversion of sinners; and that they become means of grace only in so far as the Spirit of God, by the aid of the ordinance, calls forth the faith of the recipient, and no further.

The doctrine of the efficacy of Sacraments, directly and immediately of themselves, and not indirectly and mediately through the faith of the receiver, and through the Spirit in the receiver, is advocated in its extreme and unmodified form by the Church of Rome. According to that Church, these ordinances, as outward and material rites, become, after certain words of institution pronounced by the priest, possessed of a sacramental virtue, which is conveyed infallibly to the soul of the person who receives them, on two conditions, which are necessary to justifying and spiritual grace being really imparted. First, on the side of the priest who pronounces the words of institution, there is required, as a condition of the supernatural grace being imparted, that he have the intention to make the Sacrament and confer it; for without this, the outward matter of the ordinance would remain mere matter, and have no sacramental character or virtue. And second, on the side of the recipient of the ordinance, it is

required that he be free from any of those sins which, in the language of Popery, are called "mortal," and which, when contracted and not removed, would resist the operation of the sacramental virtue, and prevent his soul receiving spiritual grace. But when these two conditions are present,—when the priest intends to consecrate and dispense the ordinance, and the recipient is not barred from the reception of its virtue by mortal sin,—such is the efficacy of the Sacrament in itself, and directly, that it infallibly communicates to the partaker of it justifying and saving grace. The doctrine of the Church of Rome is very distinctly brought out in the canons of the Council of Trent, and also in her Catechism. "If any," says the 11th canon concerning the Sacraments in general, "if any shall say that there is not required in the ministers, when they make and confer the Sacraments, at least the intention of doing what the Church does, let him be accursed." "If any shall say that the Sacraments of the New Law do not contain the grace of which they are the signs, or that they do not confer that grace on those who place no obstacle in the way, as if they were only outward signs of grace or justification already received by faith, and certain badges of the Christian profession, by which believers are distinguished from infidels, let him be accursed." "If any shall say that grace is not conferred by the Sacraments of the New Law, *ex opere operato*, but that faith in the Divine promise alone avails to secure grace, let him be accursed." According to this doctrine, then, Sacraments impart grace, not through the channel of the faith of the receiver, and not in dependence in any way on his spiritual act, but immediately and directly from themselves, "*ex opere operato*." This last expression is to be interpreted in connection with the distinction drawn by the Church of Rome between the Sacraments of the Old and New Testament Churches. The Sacraments of the Gospel Church are superior in efficacy to those under the law, in the Popish theory, because the former, or the New Testament Sacraments, work grace independently of the spiritual disposition or act of the recipient; whereas the latter, or Old Testament Sacraments, were dependent on the spiritual disposition or act of the receiver of them. The "*opus operatum*" of the New Testament Sacraments, or the virtue they have by their own act,

apart from the spiritual state of the recipient, is contrasted with the "opus operantis" in the Old Testament Sacraments, or the virtue which they had, not in themselves, or in their own operation, but only in connection with the spiritual act of the partaker. According to the proper theory of the Church of Rome, the Sacraments of the New Testament impart grace *ex opere operato*, or from their own intrinsic virtue and direct act on the soul of him who receives them.

This doctrine of the inherent power of Sacraments in themselves to impart grace, held by the Church of Rome, is also the system maintained, although with some important modifications, by another party beyond the pale of that Church, the representatives of which, at the present day, are to be found in the High Churchmen of the English Establishment. The doctrine of the High Church party in the English Establishment in regard to the Sacraments differs indeed in two important particulars from the full and unmodified development of it found in the Popish system; but in other respects it is substantially the same,—equally implying the inherent power of Sacraments to impart grace, not through the spiritual act of the recipient, but apart from and independently of it. The advocates of High Church principles in the Church of England generally—although there is a numerous and increasing section of them who in this respect approximate more nearly to Rome—generally reject the Popish doctrines,—first, of the *opus operatum*, and second, of the necessity for the intention of the priest in the Sacrament. They deny that the Sacraments have any immediate physical influence upon the soul, by the very act of outwardly participating in them,—such as is implied in the *opus operatum* of the Church of Rome; and they deny, further, that the intention of the priest to make and confer the Sacrament is a necessary condition of it, without which it could impart no grace. These two elements in the Popish theory of sacramental ordinances are rejected, generally speaking, by the High Church disciples of the English Establishment, although instances are not wanting—and they seem to be multiplying of late—of both these monstrous pretensions being, in a certain sense, maintained by them. But they agree with the Romish Church in the grand and

fundamental principle which belongs to its doctrine of the Sacraments,—namely, that they communicate grace from the sacramental virtue that resides in themselves,—or, as some prefer to put it, that invariably accompanies them by Christ's appointment,—and by their own immediate influence on the soul, and not instrumentally by the operation of the Spirit of God on the worthy recipient and through the medium of his faith. This is the characteristic principle that is common both to the Popish and the High Church theories of Sacraments. Both these parties hold that there is something in or connected with the ordinance which directly and immediately does the work of grace upon the soul; and not merely indirectly and mediately through the Spirit of God working on the soul, and the faith of the soul working in return. The Church of Rome ascribes this efficacy of the ordinances to the *opus operatum* of the Sacraments, and the act and intention of the priest in consecrating them. The High Churchmen of the English Establishment usually reject both of these doctrines as laid down by the Council of Trent, and ascribe this efficacy of the ordinances to the deposit of spiritual grace which Christ has communicated to the Church, and connected with the Sacraments, and given them the power to impart. But the High Churchmen of Rome and the High Churchmen of England agree equally in this, that there are in the Sacraments an efficacy and power to impart grace of themselves, directly and immediately, to the soul of the recipient; and that they are not merely aids or instruments for bringing the recipient into direct and immediate communication with Christ to receive grace from Him.

Although both the Canons and Catechism of the Council of Trent lay down, to all appearance, expressly and undeniably the doctrine that there is a physical virtue in Sacraments, whereby they operate upon the recipient, yet there are not wanting doctors of the Romish Church who are anxious to soften down the dogma of the *opus operatum*, and to explain it in the sense of a moral and spiritual, and not a physical virtue, residing in the ordinance. And in this modified form of it, the Romish doctrine of the Sacraments—apart from the

necessity of the priest's intention—approximates very closely to the High Church theory entertained by many in the Church of England. That theory maintains the doctrine of not a physical but a spiritual virtue deposited and residing in the Sacrament, which operates universally, not through the faith or spiritual act of the recipient, but directly and immediately through the act of participation in the outward ordinance. This, in fact, is no more than part of the general doctrine that the Church is the grand storehouse of grace to man, and not Christ Himself; and that it is by communication with the Church, and not by direct communication with Christ, that the soul is made partaker of that grace. The Sacraments, as the chief medium through which the Church communicates of its stores of spiritual blessings, are the efficient instruments for imparting grace directly to the recipient.

Now, there is one preliminary remark which, in proceeding to estimate the value and truth of such principles in regard to the Sacraments, it is necessary to bear in mind. It is not denied, but, on the contrary, strongly maintained and asserted, that the Sacraments are means of grace. To the believer who uses them aright, they are made the means of conveying spiritual blessings. In regard to this, there is no controversy between the opponents and the advocates of High Church views of the Sacraments, whether Popish or Tractarian. But the question in dispute is, whether the Sacraments become effectual, from a virtue in themselves, or in the priest that consecrates them, or only by the work of the Spirit and the faith of the recipient? That the faith of the believer is called forth and exercised in the ordinance, and that through this faith he receives grace additional to what he enjoyed before, we do not dispute, but, on the contrary, strenuously maintain. That the spiritual act of the believer in the ordinance, when in faith he gives himself to his Saviour, is met by the spiritual act of Christ in the ordinance, when in return He gives Himself and His grace to the believer, is a doctrine at all times to be asserted and vindicated. That the faith of the recipient, in the act of committing and engaging himself to Christ, through means of the ordinance, is a faith unto which Christ is given

in return, we would constantly affirm; and in this sense, and in this way, the Sacraments become means or channels or instruments whereby grace is given and conveyed. But they are no means of grace except through the faith of the recipient, and in consequence of his own spiritual state and act. There is no inherent power in the ordinance itself to confer blessing, apart from the faith of the participator, and except through the channel of that faith. There is no deposit of power—whether, with the Church of Rome, we deem it physical and *ex opere operato*, or whether, with Tractarians and High Churchmen, we call it spiritual—in the Sacraments themselves to influence the mind of him who receives them. They have no virtue of themselves, apart from the work of Christ through His Spirit on the one side, and the spiritual act of the recipient through his faith on the other side. In the language of Amesius, in his admirable reply to Bellarmine, Sacraments have no power "*efficere gratiam immediate, sed mediante Spiritu Dei et fide.*"

Has the Church, then, ordinances for its administration and use which, either by the original appointment of Christ, or by deposit of grace from Christ, have in themselves virtue to impart spiritual blessing through the administration of them alone? Or has the Church ordinances for its administration and use which have no virtue in themselves to communicate grace, except in connection with the faith of the receiver, and the blessing imparted by the Spirit? Are the Sacraments of the New Testament themselves a quickening power in the soul, apart from the faith or spiritual act of the participator,—the original deposit of grace committed to them being still retained, and still communicable through their administration, and that alone? Or are these Sacraments effectual to impart grace only in connection with the faith and spiritual disposition of the recipient,—there being necessary to their efficacy, both the act of the believer, in the use of them, giving himself to Christ, and the act of Christ, through the same ordinance, giving Himself to the believer. It matters little whether, as with the Popish Church, the Sacraments are invested with a physical virtue, in consequence of which they impart grace; or whether, as with the High Churchmen of other



denominations, they are invested with a spiritual virtue in consequence of which they impart grace,—if in both cases the grace is given by the Sacrament itself, and not given through the Spirit and the faith in the heart of the recipient. It matters little whether a physical or a spiritual explanation is given of sacramental efficacy, if it be efficacy exerted apart from Christ in the ordinance giving Himself to the believer, and experienced apart from the believer in the ordinance giving himself to Christ. Whatever be the efficacy and virtue, physical or moral, if it is independent of and separate from the faith of the recipient covenanting in the ordinance with Christ, and the act in answer to that faith of Christ covenanting with the recipient, it is not the sacramental grace which the Scripture recognises. It becomes, when thus separated and drawn apart, a mere charm, a trick of magic, whether physical or spiritual, utterly unknown to the Gospel economy. Let us endeavour to apply to this theory those tests which may serve to try its merits and its truth. There are four different tests by which we may try the merits of this sacramental theory, whether held in its extreme form by Papists, or in its more modified form by High Churchmen of other communions.

1st, Tested by Scripture, which constitutes the rule for the exercise of Church power, there is no warrant for asserting that there is an inherent and independent virtue in Sacraments to impart justifying or saving grace.

The truth of this general proposition may be established by a very wide and ample deduction of evidence from Scripture. It is impossible for us to do more than advert to the leading heads of proof in connection with this question. In the first place, those multiplied and various declarations of Scripture, which state that we are justified by faith alone without works on our part, very distinctly prove that the Sacraments cannot have an independent and inherent power in themselves of conveying justifying and saving grace. Such passages expressly assert that faith is the immediate instrumental cause of justification. They are inconsistent, therefore, with the theory that the Sacraments directly and immediately of themselves

impart grace, although they are quite consistent with the doctrine that the Sacraments indirectly, and through the faith of the worthy receiver, may impart grace. In the second place, the doctrine that the Sacraments have an inherent virtue to confer grace, is opposed to the whole tenor of Scripture, which sets forth Christ as the one and the immediate object of faith and hope to the believer, in the matter of his justification and salvation. The Word of God, from its commencement to its close, clearly and constantly and invariably points to Christ, and to nothing but Christ, as the only source to which a sinner must look for forgiveness and acceptance with God. The theory of the Sacraments held by High Churchmen presents another and a different object for his faith, and teaches him to rest in an outward observance as sufficient. It is part of that most destructive system which places the Church and the ordinances of the Church between the sinner and his Saviour. In the third place, the very express testimony of the Apostle Paul, in regard to the insufficiency of the Sacraments under the Old Testament Church to communicate grace of themselves, is an argument equally effectual to show that the New Testament Sacraments are insufficient likewise. Abraham was not justified by circumcision, but by the faith of which his circumcision was the seal. In the fourth place, the statements of Scripture which at first sight might be construed as if they ascribed a gracious influence to the Sacraments of the New Testament in themselves, and which seem to connect saving benefits with the observance of them, are not stronger or more numerous, but less so, than those which ascribe justifying and saving blessings to the ordinance of the Word, or truth received by the reader or hearer of it. We know that the Word or the truth justifies, not of itself, but through the faith of him that receives it; and that, apart from this faith, it has no virtue or power of a gracious kind at all. In the same manner, Sacraments impart grace, not of themselves, but through the faith of those who receive them; and, apart from that faith, they have no life or blessing whatsoever. In the fifth place, the theory of an inherent virtue or power in the administration of the outward ordinance is utterly opposed to those numerous passages of Scripture which assert that the power of the Gospel is altogether of a

spiritual kind, and is in no respect akin to a mere external and material influence, as if such could impart a supernatural grace. It is "not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And instead of pointing to any outward source of power or efficacy, and exclaiming, "Lo here, or Lo there!" the Christian has been taught to think that "the kingdom of God" has its source and presence "within him." The theory which ascribes to the Sacraments an infallible virtue which, unless counteracted by some obstacle, such as infidelity or open vice, must operate to impart grace, is inconsistent with those numerous statements of Scripture which represent the Gospel as a spiritual power, adapted to the spiritual nature of man.<sup>3</sup>

In estimating the bearing of Scripture testimony on this question, there is one consideration of a general kind which it is of great importance to the argument to bear in mind. In every theory of the Sacraments that can be held,—from the lowest to the highest, from the Socinian up to the Popish,—the Sacraments are regarded as at least signs of spiritual things, representing and exhibiting the blessing in outward resemblance. The union thus established, according to any theory that can be held of them, between the sign and the thing signified by it, has introduced into Scripture a kind of phraseology which at first sight appears to give some sanction to the High Church system in regard to sacramental ordinances. There is often an exchange of names between the sign and the thing signified in Scripture, in consequence of which what may be predicated of the one is often asserted of the other, and vice versâ. This usage of language, so frequently exemplified in Scripture in connection with this matter, is a usage found commonly in other writings and in regard to other matters, and gives rise to no sort of misapprehension in our interpretation of it. It is the great foundation indeed of all figurative language. Thus, when Christ is said to be "the Passover sacrificed for us," there is an exchange of this kind, in which the name of the sign is given to the thing signified; and when Christ says of the bread, "This is my body," there is an exchange in the opposite way, and the name of the thing signified is attributed to the sign. And

in perfect accordance with this usage of language, there are several passages in Scripture in which the mere outward observance in the case of the New Testament Sacraments, the external sign, has a virtue attributed to it which in reality belongs, not to the sign, but to the grace represented in the observance, or to the thing signified. Thus, for example, "Baptism" is said in one passage "to save us;" although, from the further explanation contained in the passage itself, it is plain that it is not the outward sign but the thing signified that is spoken of under the name of the sign; for the apostle adds immediately, "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God." In the same manner the Apostle Paul speaks of "the cup of blessing" as "the communion of the blood of Christ,"<sup>3</sup>—language in which that is predicated of the sign which is truly predicated only of the thing signified. In short, the sacramental union between the outward sign and the inward grace gives occasion to not a few examples in Scripture in which what is true of the one only, or the inward grace, is attributed to the other, or the outward sign. Almost the whole plausibility of the argument from Scripture in favour of the High Church theory of the Sacraments comes from this source; and it is completely removed when the familiar canon of criticism, applicable to Scripture in common with other writings, is attended to,—namely, that what truly belongs to the thing signified is often predicated figuratively of the sign, and so ought to be interpreted and understood.

2d, The theory of an inherent power, physical or spiritual, in the Sacraments, is inconsistent with the supreme authority of Christ, from whom all Church power is derived.

The doctrine that would deposit in sacramental ordinances a grace communicable to the participator, apart from his communion with Christ, directly and immediately, is inconsistent with the office and right of Christ to hold in His own hand all blessing, and to dispense from His own hand, not mediately through another, but at once from Himself, the grace which His people receive. Such a theory takes the administration of grace out of the hands of Christ, ever present to

dispense it, and transfers it to a priest standing in His room. There can be no participation in heavenly blessing except what comes from direct communication with Christ on the part of the soul that receives it; and it is a dishonour to Him, who is the ever-living and ever-present administrator of all grace to His people, to put the mute and conscious ordinance in the place of Christ, and to transfer the dependence of the soul for spiritual blessing from the Divine Head in heaven to the outward ministry of Sacraments on earth. That Christ might by His original appointment have made the Sacraments the receptacle of a physical influence, fitted and able to work a supernatural blessing on the soul, it would perhaps be presumptuous to deny. That Christ might at the first institution of the ordinances have made them a reservoir or storehouse of grace enough for all ages of the Church, and imparted to them a spiritual blessing out of which every subsequent generation of His people might draw their supply, we need not be anxious to dispute. Or that Christ, without communicating at the beginning to Sacraments a store either of physical or spiritual grace sufficient for all generations, might have tied Himself up to the indiscriminate and invariable communication of His Spirit along with the administration of outward Sacraments, and bound Himself down, without any choice or discretion, to link spiritual grace to material rites, apart from the faith of the person observing them,—this, too, is perhaps a possible imagination. But had Christ, as the Head of ordinances in His Church, done either the one or the other of these things, He must to that extent have divested Himself of His office as Mediator, or resigned the exercise of it; He must in so far have abdicated His functions as the sole and living and ever-present administrator of grace to His Church; and been shut out from that exclusive and supreme agency which He maintains as the dispenser as well as author of every blessing by which the soul is to be saved.

3d, The theory of the Sacraments which ascribes to them an independent virtue or power, is inconsistent with the spiritual liberties of Christ's people.

Such a system brings the soul itself into bondage. It keeps the spirit, which Christ has Himself redeemed, waiting upon man for the communication of the blessings of its redemption; it makes the soul which Christ has ransomed dependent for its freedom on the ministry of a fellow-creature. There cannot be a worse or more abject thralldom than that which subordinates the flock of the Saviour's purchase to any one but Himself, and causes them to hang upon the intention entertained or not entertained by a priest for the enjoyment or forfeiture of spiritual blessing. But even apart from the monstrous doctrine of the Romish Church as to the intention of the priest being necessary to the efficacy of the ordinance, the sacramental theory we have been considering, whether Popish or Tractarian, is inconsistent with the spiritual freedom of those whom Christ has redeemed. That freedom consists in subjection to and dependence on Christ, and none but Christ,—in being emancipated from all dependence on any other except their Saviour,—in being kept waiting, not at the footstool of man for saving blessings, but at the footstool of Christ,—and in being taught to look for all the grace they need day by day, not to the ministry of man's hand, but to the hand of Christ. Spiritual freedom for the believer is bound up with a dependence on Christ immediately and directly, and on Him alone, for every blessing that he needs.

4th, The sacramental theory we have been considering is inconsistent with the spirituality of the Church, and of the power exercised by the Church for the spiritual good of men.

When, according to that theory, the Sacraments become the instruments of justification and the source of faith, instead of the seal of a justification already possessed, and the exercise and aid of a faith already in existence,—when they are made to come between the soul, in its approach to Christ, and Christ Himself, and communion in the external ordinance is substituted for the fellowship of the Spirit, it is a fatal evidence that the Church, which so teaches and so practises her teaching, although she has "begun in the Spirit," has "sought to be made perfect by the flesh." If the external ordinance be

made to occupy that place which belongs to the Spirit, and participation in the ordinance be the substitute for faith, the sacramental theory thus reduced to practice will be but the commencement of worse and deeper degradation. It is but the beginning of a course which, consistently followed, must lead to a religion of form and self-righteousness, of sense and sensuous observances, of carnal ordinances and a ceremonial holiness, of outward satisfaction and penances and merit. There will be the priest and the bloodless but efficacious sacrifice, grace conferred by the tricks of a physical or spiritual magic, a religion that manifests itself outwardly and not inwardly, the holiness of houses, and altars, and sacred wood and stone, but not the holiness of the Spirit; the atonement of Sacraments and penances and creature merits, but not the atonement of the Saviour received by faith; a righteousness of bodily discipline and fleshly mortification, but not the righteousness of God imputed to the believer; a justification made out of pains and merits, of sufferings and works, but not a justification freely given by Divine grace and freely accepted by faith; an outward baptism to regenerate the sinner with water at first,—the food of the communion table, made flesh and blood by the consecration of a priest, to sustain the life so begun, and the anointing with oil at last to prepare the soul for the burial. Such are the inevitable fruits of the sacramental theory, consistently carried out in the Church of Christ, making the very temple of God to be the habitation of every carnal and unclean thing.

## **CHAPTER II:**

### **THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**





# SECTION I.

## NATURE OF THE ORDINANCE

PASSING now from the doctrine of the Sacraments in general, or viewed in respect of what belongs to them in common, I proceed to consider them more in detail and individually; and for this purpose I commence with the Sacrament of Baptism, as the initiatory rite. Upon what grounds are we justified in attributing to Baptism the name and character of a Sacrament? What is the nature of the ordinance, the place which it occupies, and the office it is intended to serve in the Christian Church? The general principles which we have already laid down in regard to Sacraments as such, when applied more particularly to Baptism, will enable us to bring out distinctly the character, authority, and meaning of the ordinance. There were four elements which we found to enter into the idea of a Sacrament. Let us proceed to apply these to the ordinance of Baptism, in order that we may ascertain its true nature and import. And in doing so, we shall have an opportunity, at the same time, of noticing some of the opinions in regard to Baptism which we hold to be unscriptural and erroneous.

I. The first characteristic of a Sacrament is, that it must be a positive institution of Christ in His Church; and this mark applies to Baptism.

The doctrine of the Quakers is opposed to this first position. They contend that Baptism, and the Lord's Supper also, were Jewish practices, neither suited to the Gospel economy nor appointed for the Gospel Church, but destined to be done away with under the dispensation of the Spirit. Now, in reference to Baptism, it cannot be doubted that it was a Jewish observance before it became a Christian one, and that it was administered by the Jews to proselytes joining them from among the Gentiles, previously to the time when it was adopted by our Lord as one of the Sacraments of His Church. This is

sufficiently attested by the statements of Jewish writers; it may be inferred, indeed, from the narratives of the Evangelists. Baptism, as an initiatory rite and token of discipleship, connected with a sect or school of religion, was familiarly known among the Jews; and it is on the ground of their previous acquaintance with and practice of it amongst themselves, that we can understand the question addressed to John the Baptist: "Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that Prophet?" Had John been any of those personages come into the country as a teacher or founder of a new school of religion, the Jews would have felt no surprise, and expressed no objection to his practice of baptizing with water; and it was only because he denied that he was either Christ or Elias, that they were led to demand the authority by which he baptized. Although, then, there is no mention of any such ordinance in the law of Moses, yet there seems to be no doubt that it was a ceremony that had found its way into the practice of the Jews.<sup>2</sup> But we are not on this account to imagine that Christian Baptism was one of those temporary ordinances destined to be done away with, or that it is not a positive institution of Christ in His Church. During His own personal ministry on earth, we are given to understand that, acting on our Lord's direct authority, His Apostles adopted the rite, and administered it to the Jews who professed their desire to become Christ's disciples. Side by side with the commission to preach the Gospel given to the Apostles, when the Church was set up by our Lord after His own resurrection, we find the command to baptize those whom they taught; and the ordinances of the Word and of Baptism are spoken of in terms significant equally of the authority and standing obligation of both. "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The natural and indeed unavoidable interpretation of the apostolic commission seems to establish these two things: first, that a literal Baptism, or washing with water, was to accompany the discipleship

brought about by the preaching of the Apostles; and second, that both the ordinance of Baptism and that of preaching were to be continued unto the end of the world. Added to this, we have the evidence for the Divine authority and permanent obligation of Baptism in the Church of Christ, from the unvarying practice of the Apostles in regard to their converts, whether Jewish or Gentile, down to the latest period in the history of the Church to which the inspired narrative refers. Such considerations as these go to prove that Baptism was not a mere Jewish practice, suffered for a time in the Christian Church, and destined to be cast off with other Jewish customs and observances. On the contrary, the positive appointment of our Lord expressed in the commission He addressed to the Apostles as founders of the Christian society,—the apostolic example itself as regards Baptism equally of Gentile and Jewish converts,—and the entire absence of any intimation, either express or implied, that the practice was only temporary and designed to be discontinued, go undeniably to prove that Christian Baptism is a permanent institution of Christ in His Church.

II. Another characteristic of a Sacrament is, that it be an external and sensible sign of an internal grace,—a spiritual truth embodied in an outward action; and this mark is applicable to Christian Baptism.

That Baptism is symbolical of unseen and spiritual blessings, is admitted by all parties who hold the ordinance itself to be an appointment of Christ, whatever theory they may entertain as to its sacramental character or virtue. Adopted as it was by Christ from Jewish customs and practices, it could hardly fail, indeed, at its original institution in the Christian Church, to appear to those who used it to be of a symbolical character. They had been accustomed to the washings and sprinklings practised under the law as symbolical observances, expressive of the removal of ceremonial uncleanness, and of such a ceremonial purification as secured acceptance with God,—at least outwardly. And when Baptism was appointed by our Lord, the washing with water included in it must have been interpreted, in accordance with the previous use and meaning of the

Jewish observances, as a purification, or a putting away of defilement of sin, so that the person baptized was accounted clean, and fitted for acceptance with God. Hence the language of Scripture everywhere in connection with Baptism conveys the idea of its being a symbolical ordinance like the ancient washings and sprinklings customary among the Jews, and indeed among other nations, as expressive of religious purification or cleansing. The body washed with pure water was an emblem of the soul purified and cleansed through the blood and Spirit of Christ. The "Baptism for the remission of sin" was expressive of the cleansing by which sin is removed. The action by which water was applied by the administrator to the person, was representative of the application of the blood of Christ to the guilt of the soul. The action by which the washing of Baptism was submitted to by the recipient, was expressive of his passing under the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And the distinguishing practice in Christian Baptism, that the person who received the ordinance was baptized "into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost," was symbolical of his dedicating himself to the Father, through his justification by the blood of the Son, and his sanctification by the grace of the Spirit.

There was the twofold representation, exhibited in the ordinance of Baptism, of Christ giving Himself to the believer in the two great initial blessings of the covenant,—justification and sanctification,—and of the believer dedicating himself to Christ as one of His justified and sanctified people. Christ united to the believer, and the believer united to Christ, in consequence of the removal both of the guilt and pollution of sin which had separated between them, is the great lesson exhibited in the ordinance of Baptism as a symbol. Hence Baptism, rather than the Lord's Supper, forms the great initiatory rite of the Church. The former ordinance is more especially fitted symbolically to represent the union of the believer to Christ; the latter to set forth the communion of the believer with Christ. Baptism meets us at our entrance into the Church, and by the purification from the guilt and defilement of sin, which it more particularly

represents, it exhibits us as entering into union with a Saviour in the only way in which that union can be effected,—in the way, namely, of free justification by the blood of Christ sprinkled upon the soul, and full sanctification by the Spirit of Christ cleansing and renewing our nature. In regard to this office which we assign to Baptism, of being a sign of the spiritual blessings of the covenant by which the believer is united to Christ, all parties who hold Baptism to be an ordinance of Christ at all, agree, whatever additional views they may hold as to its sacramental character or virtue.

III. Another characteristic of a Sacrament, as we have already seen, is, that it is a seal of a federal transaction between two parties in the ordinance; and this third mark also belongs to Christian Baptism.

It is more than a sign of spiritual blessings; it is a visible seal and voucher of these to those who rightly partake of the ordinance. At this point the theory of Baptism laid down in the standards of our Church differs from the views held in regard to it by Socinians, and by many of the English Independents. They contend that Baptism is a symbol, and nothing more than a symbol, of spiritual blessings. We maintain that the statements of Scripture warrant us in asserting that, in addition to its being a symbol, it is also a seal of the covenant entered into between Christ and the believer through the ordinance. That in the administration and participation of Baptism there is a federal transaction between Christ and the believer who rightly receives it, and that the outward ordinance is a seal of the covenant engagement, may be established by abundant evidence from Scripture.

1st, There are a number of statements of Scripture connected with the ordinance which cannot be understood except upon the supposition that Baptism is not only a sign, but also a seal of a covenant transaction between Christ and the believer. The very words of the institution seem to point to this. Baptism "into the name (εἰς τὸ ὄνομα) of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost" means more than Baptism by their authority, or an expression of our

submission to them. It plainly implies, on the part of the baptized person, an act of dedication of himself to the Three Persons of the blessed Godhead, under the separate characters which they bear in the work of redemption,—an act of engagement by the recipient of the ordinance unto the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit; or, in other words, a dedication of himself to God through the medium of justification and sanctification. In exact accordance with this view, we find in Scripture that Baptism is connected with "remission of sins," obtained through Christ, and with "the washing of regeneration," performed by the Spirit,—expressions which go much farther than merely to represent the ordinance as symbolical of these blessings, and which appear to imply that there is an intimate connection between the right reception of Baptism and the privilege of forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ, and of sanctification of our nature by the Spirit. What that sort of connection is which is more than a mere sign to represent, and less than an outward charm to impart these blessings, is illustrated by the Apostle Paul in a remarkable passage of his Epistle to the Romans: "Know ye not," says the Apostle, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Of course in this passage the Apostle must be held as referring to the Baptism of a believer, in whose case it was a spiritual act of faith embodying itself in the outward ordinance. There are two things which seem plainly enough to be included in this remarkable statement. In the first place, the immersion in water of the persons of those who are baptized is set forth as their burial with Christ in His grave because of sin; and their being raised again out of the water is their resurrection with Christ in His rising again from the dead because of their justification. Their death with Christ was their bearing the penalty of sin, and their resurrection with Christ was their being freed from it, or justified. And in the second place, their burial in water, when dying with Christ, was the washing away of the

corruptness of the old man beneath the water; and their coming forth from the water in the image of His resurrection was their leaving behind them the old man with his sins, and emerging into newness of life. Their immersion beneath the water, and their emerging again, were the putting off the corruption of nature and rising again into holiness, or their sanctification. All this seems to be implied in this statement of the Apostle in regard to a believer's Baptism; and it cannot be doubted that, in accordance with many other passages of Scripture, it makes Baptism in the case of a believer far more than a sign of the initial blessings of justification and regeneration. The Apostle undoubtedly represents the act as a federal one, in which the believer gives himself to God in the way that God has appointed, through faith in Christ for pardon, and through submission to the Spirit for regeneration; and in which these blessings are communicated and confirmed to him. Such statements of Scripture seem to bear out the assertion, that in the Baptism of a believer there is a federal transaction, and that the outward ordinance is the seal of the spiritual covenant.

2d, The same conclusion, that Baptism is not only a sign but also a seal of the covenant, may be supported by the consideration, that Baptism has come in the room of the Old Testament Sacrament of circumcision. That the ordinance of Baptism under the New Testament has taken the place of circumcision in the ancient Church, is apparent from the statements of the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians, in which he argues against the necessity of circumcision under the Gospel, on the ground that Baptism was all to believers now that circumcision had been to believers in former times; and where he actually calls Baptism by the name of "the circumcision of Christ." "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." This assertion, that Baptism is now the circumcision of the Christian Church, leads very directly to the inference that we must regard

Baptism as being as much a seal of the covenant of grace, as circumcision was a seal of the Abrahamic covenant; and it goes very clearly to establish the position, that Baptism is far more than the simple symbolical institution which many Independents would make it,—that it has more in it than the character of a mere empty sign; that there belongs to it the grand characteristic of a sacramental ordinance, namely, the character of a seal, confirming and attesting a federal transaction between God and the believer.

IV. Another characteristic of a Sacrament is, that it is a means of grace; and this fourth mark, like the former ones, belongs to Christian Baptism.

Baptism is a means for confirming the faith of the believer, and adding to the grace which he possessed before. It is not intended for the benefit or conversion of unconverted men; it is not designed or fitted to impart justification or spiritual grace to those who were previously strangers to these; but it is made a means of grace by the Spirit to those who are believers already, and fitted and intended to promote their spiritual good. I do not at present speak of the case of infants baptized, or of the benefits which they may be supposed to receive from the administration of the ordinance. Their case, as peculiar and exceptional, I shall reserve for separate and more detailed consideration. But, putting aside the case of infant Baptism for the present, the position that I lay down is, that Baptism is a means of grace fitted and blessed by God for the spiritual good of the believer. And that it is so, the considerations already stated in regard to the nature of the ordinance, if they are correct and scriptural, will sufficiently enable us to understand. If the act of the adult believer in receiving Baptism be an act of making or renewing his covenant with God through the ordinance,—if his part of the transaction be the embodiment in outward sign of the spiritual act whereby he dedicates himself to Christ,—and if Christ's part of the transaction be the giving of Himself and His grace to the believer in return, then it is plain that the ordinance, so understood, must be a divinely instituted means of grace to the parties who rightly partake of it.



Christ given to the believer in the Sacrament is not less precious and blessed, but more so, than Christ given to the believer in the Word; and for this reason, that in the Sacrament Christ is not only in the Word, but in the sign also. In both cases, it is, however, only in connection with the faith of the believer that the blessing is received and enjoyed; and apart from that faith, there is no blessing either in Word or Sacrament. Christ in the Word, received into the soul by faith, is the source of saving grace to the soul. Christ in the Sacrament, received into the soul by faith, is not less, but more, a blessing likewise. But in neither case can the grace and blessing be enjoyed except in connection with the exercise of faith on the part of the hearer or receiver. There is no promise connected with Word or Sacrament over and above the promise that "the just shall live by faith." It is only in connection with faith, indeed, that grace can be imparted in a manner consistent with the nature of man as a moral and intelligent being, and without a subversion of its ordinary laws. The case of infants is an exceptional case, to be dealt with apart, and by itself. But in the case of adults, the communication of supernatural grace, whether through Word or Baptism, must be in connection with, and not apart from, the exercise of their own spiritual and intelligent nature, and in connection with that act of the spiritual nature which we call faith. Baptism is no exception to the ordinary principle that represents all the blessings of God's salvation as associated with faith on the part of the receiver of them. It becomes a means of grace in connection with the faith of the believer, which it calls into life and exercise.

The views now stated are of course opposed to the doctrine of what has been called "baptismal regeneration," whether held by Romanists or Romanizing Protestants. The Church of Rome considers Baptism, like the other Sacraments, to be a means of imparting grace *ex opere operato*, and to carry with it the virtue of so applying to the person baptized, whether infant or adult, the merits of Christ, as that both original and actual transgression are completely removed by the administration of it, in every case, apart altogether from the faith of the recipient. The authorized formularies

of the Church of England seem to maintain the doctrine of baptismal regeneration in a sense at least approximating to that of the Church of Rome. The Thirty-nine Articles, indeed, give no countenance to such a theory; but both her Liturgy and her Catechism appear to speak differently on the subject; and the doctrine, under various modifications, is held and asserted by a large number of her ablest divines. It is extremely difficult, in investigating this question, to ascertain the exact sense in which regeneration is understood to be imparted through the ordinance of Baptism, or the precise nature and amount of change which, according to the advocates of this doctrine, actually takes place on the person baptized. In some instances, I believe that the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is held in words, whilst it is not held in reality; the advantage conferred by Baptism on all equally and indiscriminately being nothing more than admission to the outward privileges of the visible Church, in consequence of the reception of it. But although, in the case of a few, the doctrine, as held by them, may be regarded as more nominal than real, yet it cannot be doubted that very many in the Church of England approximate, on this question, more or less closely to the views asserted in the standards of the Church of Rome.

There are at least three different modifications of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration held by divines of the Church of England, which can be readily enough distinguished from each other. First, there is one party who assert that Baptism, by the administration of it, gives the person baptized a place within the covenant of grace, in such a sense that he has a right to all its outward privileges and means of grace, and by a diligent and right use of them, may secure to himself salvation. This is the lowest view of the efficacy of Baptism held by those who assert the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and amounts apparently to this, that Baptism is necessary in order to the salvability of a man,—all unbaptized persons having no right to the privileges of the covenant, and being left to "the uncovenanted mercies of God." In answer to such a theory, it is enough to assert, with the Word of God, that the Gospel is free to all; that all, without exception of class or character, are invited to avail themselves of it;

and that "the free gift unto justification of life" is not restricted to any limited number of men, baptized or unbaptized, but is co-extensive in its promises and invitations with "the judgment that has come upon all unto condemnation." Second, there is another party who assert that Baptism conveys to the soul, by the administration of it, regenerating grace—a true spiritual life; which may continue with the baptized person, so as to avail at last to his everlasting salvation, but which may also be forfeited in after years by means of sin. This second form of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration proceeds upon an alleged distinction—held apparently by Augustine, and after him maintained by many Lutheran divines—between those who are predestinated unto life, and those who are regenerated. It is affirmed that the two classes do not coincide, and that regeneration, though once imparted to the soul, may be subsequently lost. Third, there is another party who admit that Baptism imparts saving grace and regeneration to the soul, which under no circumstance can be entirely forfeited, but which entitle the person baptized to everlasting life.

These three different forms of the theory of baptismal regeneration it is not necessary to reply to separately. The only plausible arguments which can be brought in defence of such a doctrine are derived from a few passages of Scripture which apparently, at first sight, connect the inward and spiritual grace with the outward action in Baptism which is its sign. These passages it is not difficult to explain by the help of the canon of interpretation, to which I formerly had occasion to refer, founded on the practice of Scripture, and the practice of every other book, of predicating of the sign figuratively what can only be truly and literally predicated of the thing signified. The sacramental relation between Baptism and regeneration, which it represents, easily explains the application to Baptism, figuratively, of language that belongs literally to regeneration. And while this principle, rightly understood and applied, is sufficient to explain the statements of Scripture that apparently, at first sight, give countenance to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, the whole tenor of the Word of God clearly and decisively contradicts the

theory. It is inconsistent with the fundamental principle which regulates the matter of a sinner's salvation,—the principle that he is saved and lives by faith; and that it is by faith, and not through any other channel, that he receives from God all that is necessary to his present and his everlasting well-being.

## **SECTION II.**

### **THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM AS REGARDS ADULTS**

Having discussed the general nature of Baptism, the question that next awaits our consideration is, as to the subjects of Christian Baptism, or the parties to whom this ordinance ought to be administered. There are three opinions that may be maintained in regard to this matter. There is one party who affirm that Baptism ought to be administered to all, not infants, who are qualified to become members of the Christian Church in virtue of a credible profession of faith in Christ and a corresponding conduct. There is a second party who assert that Baptism rightfully belongs not only to such persons, but also, in virtue of a representative relation between parents and their offspring, to their children. And there is a third party who hold that Baptism ought to be administered without restriction to parents and children, without demanding, as a prerequisite from the applicant, any profession of faith or corresponding conduct. These three classes, holding principles markedly different from each other, probably exhaust the answers to the question: To whom is Baptism to be administered? The first, or the Antipædobaptists, administer the ordinance only to adults, who, by their faith and obedience, appear to be possessed personally of a title to be regarded as members of the Christian Church, and exclude infants, who cannot, by their own faith and profession, make good their claim to be regarded as proper subjects of the ordinance. The second, or the Pædobaptists, administer the ordinance not only to adults, who personally possess a right to be regarded as members of the Christian Church, but also to their infants, who can have no right

except what they derive from their parents. And the third class, or the advocates of indiscriminate Baptism, administer the ordinance to all applicants without any restriction, and without demanding, in the case of adults, that they establish their claim to the ordinance by exhibiting a credible profession of faith in their own persons, or, in the case of infants, in the persons of their parents or guardians.

In proceeding to examine these different systems, it will not be necessary for me to discuss over again what occupied our attention at an early period of the course,—the question of what are the qualifications that give a person a title to be regarded as a member of the Christian Church,—or to enter into the controversy between Independents and Presbyterians as to the necessity in order to membership of a true and saving faith, or simply an outward profession and consistent practice. Without entering upon that subject a second time, the three systems of opinion as to the proper subjects of Baptism now mentioned may be conveniently discussed under the head of these two questions. First: Are we warranted by the Word of God to administer the ordinance of Baptism to all applicants for themselves or their children, without any restriction as to religious profession and character in the case of the applicant? And second: Are we warranted by the Word of God to administer the ordinance of Baptism to the children of a parent who would himself be a proper subject for Baptism, and is a member of the Church? The first question, or the point in debate between our Church and the advocates of indiscriminate Baptism, we shall now proceed to deal with, reserving the second, or the question of infant Baptism, for after consideration.

The doctrine of Baptism without restriction, and apart from the religious character and profession of the applicant, has assumed an aspect of more than ordinary importance recently, in consequence of the extent to which it has prevailed and the manner in which it has been advocated among Independents. Dr. Wardlaw,—who was no friend of such a doctrine, but the reverse,—when speaking in reference to a former statement of opinion, to the effect that all

parties were of one mind as to the necessity for a religious profession as a prerequisite to Baptism, says: "Until of late, I had no idea of the degree or of the extent of this laxity, both as to the requisites in adults to their own baptism, and in parents, to the baptism of their children. It has been a cause of equal surprise and concern to me to find, from the publications of more than one of my brethren which have recently appeared, that in my first statement I have been so very wide of the truth. The lax views to which I now refer have been propounded and argued at length in the Congregational Lecture for 1844, by my esteemed friend, Dr. Halley of Manchester." The surprise expressed by Dr. Wardlaw at the acceptance which the doctrine of indiscriminate Baptism has received, and the prevalence which the practice has obtained among English Independents, is not without foundation. Dr. Halley may, I believe, be fairly regarded as the representative of the views of Independents, at least in England, on the subject; and he is perhaps the ablest defender of the practice which prevails, very nearly universally, among them. The doctrine of the class to which he belongs, and whose views he advocates, is expressed by Halley as follows. After stating the principles held by other and opposite parties, he says: "There are, lastly, those who baptize all applicants whatsoever, provided the application does not appear to be made scoffingly and profanely,—for that would be a manifest desecration of the service,—and all children offered by their parents, guardians, or others who may have the care of them." "The third class maintain that, as no restriction is imposed upon baptism in the New Testament, none ought to be imposed by the ministers of the Gospel." "These views,"—I quote again from Dr. Wardlaw,—"these views, which he broaches and defends, are characterized by a latitudinarian laxity, which in my eyes is as mischievous as unscriptural,—the former, because the latter."<sup>2</sup> The question, then, of indiscriminate Baptism is one of very great interest and importance,—more especially in the present day,—and amply deserves discussion. In that discussion we must of course appeal for the only arguments which can decide the controversy to the Scriptures themselves. We learn from them that Baptism is a positive institution of Christ in the worship of the Christian Church; and from

them also we must learn the terms on which the ordinance is to be dispensed, and the parties entitled to receive it. Is the ordinance, then, to be administered to all applicants indiscriminately without regard to religious profession or character,—to believers and unbelievers alike,—without any restriction, except, according to Dr. Halley, that they do not apply for it "scoffingly and profanely?" Or, on the contrary, does a title to participation in the ordinance of Baptism imply, as a prerequisite, a religious profession and corresponding conduct on the part of the applicant?

Now, in examining into the doctrine and practice of Scripture bearing upon this question, it is important to understand distinctly at the outset the real point in debate. There are two preliminary remarks which may help to place it in its true light.

1st, The question in debate between the advocates and opponents of indiscriminate Baptism is not, as Dr. Halley has stated it to be: "Whether the Apostles and their assistants baptized indiscriminately all applicants, leaving their characters to be formed and tested by subsequent events." The question rather is: Whether, in such application made to the Apostles for Baptism, there was not included or implied a religious profession of faith in Christ, such as to warrant them to administer the ordinance because of the profession. It is manifest that, in apostolic times, when men were called upon in consequence of a Christian Baptism to forsake all that was dear to them on earth, and to incur the hazard of persecution and death, almost any such application necessarily involved or implied at least a credible profession of faith in Christ; inasmuch as hardly any conceivable motive except a belief in Christ would have induced any one to make the application, except, it may be, in rare and exceptional cases. Generally speaking, the fact of a man's applying for Baptism in apostolic times was itself the evidence of a credible profession, and enough to warrant the administration of the ordinance, not on the principle of baptizing all, believers and unbelievers alike, with a profession or without it; but rather on the principle that the applicant, by the very act of application, in the

circumstances of the early Church, professed his faith in Christ. Upon this principle we can easily explain why, in the Scripture narrative of the practice of baptizing in the early Church, we find no example of the applicant being kept for a length of time in the position of candidate for Baptism, so as thereby to test his character and profession.

2d, The question in debate between the advocates and opponents of indiscriminate Baptism is not, whether the Apostles, in their administration of the ordinance, baptized, as Dr. Halley asserts, "bad men as well as good." That the Apostles did so in particular instances, the case of Simon Magus plainly attests. But that case no less plainly attests that the Baptism was administered, not in the absence of any religious profession, but in consequence of such a profession. Nothing can be more undeniable than that it was upon the ground of his professed belief in the Gospel preached by Philip that Simon Magus was baptized. "Then Simon," says the inspired account of the transaction, "then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized," etc. Like the other hearers who were baptized in consequence of their profession of faith in Philip's doctrine, Simon professed to believe, and, on the credit of that profession, was baptized as they were. But although among the number of those who received apostolic Baptism there were good men and bad men, as there must be among the members of the Church in all ages, this is not the real question at issue between the friends and opponents of indiscriminate Baptism. The real question in controversy between them is, whether Baptism was generally, or was ever, administered without a religious profession at all on the part of the applicant; or whether such a profession was invariably present as a prerequisite to Baptism. "Baptism," says the Shorter Catechism, "is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible Church, till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him."<sup>2</sup>

Bearing in mind these preliminary remarks, it is not difficult, I think, from an examination of Scripture doctrine and practice in regard to Baptism, to establish the conclusion, that it is a sacramental



ordinance not to be administered indiscriminately and without restriction to all applying for it, but, on the contrary, limited to those maintaining an outward character and profession of Christianity.

I. The nature and import of the ordinance of Baptism are inconsistent with the idea of an indiscriminate administration of it to all, without respect to religious character and profession.

The doctrine and practice of the advocates of indiscriminate Baptism very naturally arise out of the system maintained by them as to the nature of the ordinance. With Dr. Halley and the Independents, whom he represents, Baptism is not, in the proper and peculiar sense of the term, a Sacrament, but only a sign; and a sign, too, of a very restricted meaning indeed. It is a sign that the person holds certain Christian truths, or is willing to learn them; which truths may be held in the way of a mere intellectual apprehension, without the man who so holds them being a Christian, or even seriously professing to be one. Upon this theory,—that Baptism is no more than a sign, expressive of certain truths of Christianity,—it is quite possible to engraft the doctrine of an indiscriminate administration of the ordinance in every instance where those truths, as is usually the case in a Christian country, are not openly renounced or publicly denied. To affix the sign of allegiance to those truths in the case of every man who merely does not deny them, and must be held by the very act of applying for the sign, as at least in some tolerable degree acquainted with them, is consistent enough. To affix the sign to all infants proposed for Baptism, is also consistent; for they are capable of being instructed in the truths represented, and the act of their parents in bringing them to receive the ordinance may be regarded as an acknowledgment that they are willing that their children be so instructed. Restrict the import of Baptism to that of a mere sign of certain Gospel truths, and it is quite in accordance with the theory of indiscriminate administration. "Practically," says Dr. Halley, "those who baptize indiscriminately all applicants and all children proposed for baptism, and those who reckon upon the prospect of teaching the baptized, will be found seldom at variance; for scarcely ever is any

one proposed whose religious instruction might not be secured by proper care." As a sign expressive of acquaintance with certain Christian truths, or of a capacity and willingness to receive them, Baptism may consistently enough be administered without restriction to all applicants, whether adults or infants.

But the very opposite doctrine and practice must be maintained, on the supposition that the Sacrament of Baptism is not a sign merely, and that in a very restricted sense, of Christian truth, but a seal of a federal transaction between two parties in the ordinance, whereby the recipient gives himself in Baptism to Christ, and Christ in Baptism gives Himself and His grace to the recipient. A seal of a covenant which the party baptized does not even profess to make, and has avowedly no intention of entering into,—a voucher to a federal transaction, in which there is no person in the least professing to be a party,—an attestation to a mutual engagement never pretended by the individual who is supposed to give the attestation,—this is a contradiction and inconsistency not to be got over. There is a manifest incongruity in administering equally to those who avow that they are believers, and to unbelievers with no such avowal, the same Christian ordinance,—in dispensing a Gospel Sacrament indiscriminately to those who profess to have received the Gospel, and to those who do not,—in giving a religious privilege to those who make no religious profession, not less than to those who do. If Baptism be no more than a sign of certain religious truths known, or at least that may be learned, by the party baptized, then indeed there is no such incongruity between the nature of the rite and its unrestricted administration. But if Baptism be the outward seal of a federal engagement, distinctively marking the true Christian, then the very nature of the ordinance forbids it to be administered to men with no profession of Christianity. If it be the Sacrament of union to the Saviour and admission into the Christian Church, the ordinance itself points out the necessity of its restriction to those who "name the name of Christ," and whose life and conduct are not outwardly inconsistent with their claim to be numbered among His people.

II. The administration of Baptism by John, the forerunner of our Lord, has been very generally appealed to in favour of an indiscriminate dispensation of the ordinance, but in point of fact may be regarded as affording evidence of a contrary practice.

The Baptism of John, when we are told that multitudes of the Jews flocked to him in the wilderness to be baptized, has been quoted in favour of the doctrine and practice of English Independents. There are two things which it is necessary to establish before any argument for indiscriminate Baptism in the Christian Church could be drawn from the preaching of John; and both these things, so far from being proved, may with good reason be denied. In the first place, it were necessary to prove that the Baptism of John was identical with Christian Baptism, before any countenance could be derived from his practice,—even if it were, as is alleged, that of indiscriminate Baptism,—in favour of the same custom in the Christian Church. And in the second place, it were necessary to establish the assumption that John really baptized all equally who came to him, without regard to their religious profession. I believe that neither the one nor the other of these positions can be established from Scripture, but the reverse.

With regard to the first position, there seems to be warrant from Scripture to say that John's Baptism was not identical with that of Christ. His doctrine and his office occupied an intermediate place between those of the Old Testament teachers and those of the Gospel Church; and his Baptism corresponded with his doctrine. He taught the doctrine of repentance and of preparation for Him that should come after him; he pointed to the future Saviour, rather than preached a present one; and his Baptism was the same in character. We have no reason to believe that he baptized in the name of Christ; and we have ground for asserting that the Baptism of John, in the case of those who received it, was afterwards replaced by Christian Baptism, when they were received into the Christian Church. That such was the case, the instance of the disciples at Ephesus proves; whom Paul rebaptized, as is recorded in the nineteenth chapter of

the Acts of the Apostles: "And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

With regard to the second point, or the assumption that the Baptism of John was really given to all applicants indiscriminately, without respect to religious character, there seems to be no evidence for it in Scripture, but the reverse. We seem to have as good evidence, that John demanded a profession of a religious kind from those whom he baptized, as the character of the very brief and scanty narrative which has come down to us of the transaction would naturally lead us to expect. That vast multitudes of the Jews enrolled themselves by Baptism in the number of John's disciples, would appear to admit of no doubt; for we are expressly told that "there went out unto him into the wilderness all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river Jordan." That of this great multitude all were truly brought to repentance, and turned from sin, and savingly taught to look forward to the Messiah who was to come, may, from many circumstances, appear improbable. But that they were all admitted to the ordinance of John's Baptism, without any regard to the religious profession that they made, is undeniably contradicted by the express language of the sacred historian; for it is added: "They were all baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." The Baptism and the confession of sins went together,—the one being the accompanying condition of the other. So far is it from being true that the practice of John gives countenance to the theory of indiscriminate Baptism, that the very opposite may be proved from the inspired narrative, brief though it be.

III. The terms of the commission given by our Lord after His resurrection to His Apostles in regard to founding and establishing the Christian Church, seem very clearly to forbid the practice of

indiscriminate Baptism, and to require a profession of faith in Christ as a prerequisite to Baptism in His name.

The terms of the commission, as recorded in the Gospel by Matthew, are these: "Go ye therefore, and disciple—μαθητευσσατε—all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Such is the language employed by our Lord in what must be regarded, I think, as the original institution of Christian Baptism. The commentary of Dr. Halley on these words brings out his argument in favour of indiscriminate Baptism. "The question," says he, "respecting the subject of Baptism is here resolved into one of grammar and criticism. It is simply what is the antecedent to the word them, or for what noun is that pronoun substituted. 'Going forth, disciple all the nations—παντα τα εθνη—baptizing them—αυτους—all the nations, into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; teaching them—all the nations—to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' So far as the grammatical construction is concerned, the meaning of the terms is precisely the same, as it would be if the words of the commission were, 'baptize all the nations.' Adhering, therefore, to the grammar of the words, we say, the commission, which no man has a right to alter, is, 'baptize all the nations.' " Now, this somewhat summary and confident mode of reasoning may be satisfactorily set aside in two ways.

1. There is some weight due to the order in which the terms of the commission run, as indicating the order in which the discipling, the baptizing, and the teaching of all the nations were to take place, and were to be accounted necessary parts of the Apostles' or the Church's obedience to the commission of Christ. There are three particulars embraced in the authoritative commission addressed to the Apostles, and, through them, binding upon the Church in every age. First, the command is to make disciples of all nations, turning them to the profession and belief of the faith of Christ. Second, there is the command to baptize all nations, granting them the formal and public

rite by which their admission into the Church was to be attested and ratified. And third, there is the command to teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever Christ had appointed for His Church collectively, or His people individually. This is the order in which, according to the nature of the various particulars embraced in the commission, they were to be accomplished. That the order of procedure here indicated is in harmony with the nature of the work to be done by the Church in reference to the world, is abundantly plain from the scriptural account given of it in many other passages of the Bible. First of all is the preaching of the Gospel, as the grand instrument employed by the Church to gather in the disciples of Christ within its pale. Next there is the affixing to the disciples thus gathered the characteristic badge of discipleship, and granting them, by the initiatory rite of Baptism, formal admission into the Christian Church. And lastly, there is the instructing those thus admitted in the observance of all their appointed duties as disciples of Christ and members of His Church. This is plainly, I think, the order of procedure indicated in the apostolic commission; and it is an order which implies that a knowledge and profession of the faith as disciples preceded the administration of Baptism to them. The expression, "all nations"—παντα τα εθνη—upon which Dr. Halley builds his argument for universal and indiscriminate Baptism, is not to be regarded so much as declaring the duty of the Apostles to teach and baptize every individual of the world, or as denoting the absolute extent of the commission, as asserting that individuals of every nation were to be discipled and baptized, and marking out that no nation or class were excluded from the range of the commission. The terms, "disciple," "baptizing," must be taken together, and not separately; and in the order of the inspired declaration, and not in the reverse of that order.

2. The words of institution in the baptismal service seem to imply that a knowledge and profession of the faith of Christ are necessary as a prerequisite to Baptism. The recipients of the ordinance are to be baptized "into the name, εις το ονομα, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,"—language which obviously refers to the peculiar

character the Three Persons of the Godhead sustain, and the offices they discharge in the work of man's redemption. Unless Christian Baptism, then, be a mere heathen mystery, to suffice as a sign or to work as a charm, it necessarily implies previous knowledge and instruction in the fundamental truths of the Gospel system; and this, again, implies that the Church, in administering the ordinance, has a right to require some evidence, such as an intelligent profession of the faith, that such knowledge has been obtained. All this points very distinctly to a profession of faith in Christ as a necessary prerequisite to the administration of the ordinance in the case of candidates for Baptism.

IV. An examination in detail of Scripture practice, as bearing upon the doctrine of indiscriminate Baptism as contradistinguished from Baptism restricted to professing Christians, will sufficiently bear out the conclusion to be drawn from the previous considerations, that at least a profession of faith is necessary as a prerequisite to the scriptural administration of the ordinance.

It is impossible, and indeed unnecessary, for us to enter at length into this field of argument. Nothing but the most violent injustice done to the language of Scripture by a bold and unscrupulous system of interpretation can suffice to get rid of the evidence which, in the case of the Baptism of converts mentioned in Scripture, connects the administration of the rite with a profession of faith in Christ on the part of the person who was the recipient of it. The association of the person's profession, faith, repentance, or believing, with Baptism, appears in a multitude of passages; while not one passage or example can be quoted in favour of the connection of Baptism with an absence of profession. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved;" "repent every one of you, and be baptized;" "many having believed, and been baptized,"—these and many other passages of a like import connect together, as inseparable in the process by which under the eye of the Apostles many in their days were added to the Christian Church, the two facts of the religious profession of the candidate, and the administration of the religious ordinance by

which formally he became a member of the Church of Christ. In the history, although brief and incomplete, of the Baptism of the early converts to the Christian faith, there is almost invariably some statement by which is attested the distinctive Christian profession that stands connected with the administration of the outward rite; while in no instances are there any statements from which it could be proved that Baptism ever stood connected with the absence of such a profession. Connected with the Baptism of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, there stands the statement, "Then they that gladly received the Word were baptized." Connected with the Baptism of the people of Samaria in consequence of the preaching of Philip, there stands the assertion, "When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." In regard to the Baptism of the Ethiopian treasurer, we are told that, after the Gospel was preached to him by the same evangelist, "the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." In connection with the Baptism of Lydia, and as preceding the administration of the rite, we have the statement: "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul." Connected with the Baptism of the Philippian jailer, there stands the statement: "And he rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house." In short, in almost every example of Baptism which the New Testament records, there is enough in the narrative, however scanty and compressed it be, to bring out the fact, that in close association with the administration of the rite appears the religious profession of the recipient. And, on the other hand, it may be safely asserted, that in no example of Baptism recorded in the New Testament can it be distinctly proved that no such profession was made.

What, then, is the answer given to this abundant and apparently satisfactory evidence for a Baptism restricted to and connected with



a religious profession by the advocates of its indiscriminate administration? The answer given by them is twofold: first, that there are examples of bad men as well as good baptized by the Apostles; and second, that many or most of these Baptisms were administered so immediately in point of time after the profession made, that there was no opportunity to test by any satisfactory process the sincerity of it. Neither of these replies to the Scripture evidence is satisfactory. With regard to the first, or the fact that unbelievers and hypocrites were baptized, it is enough to say that we do not hold the Independent doctrine that a saving belief is necessary to entitle a man to Church membership; but, on the contrary, maintain that a profession of faith is enough, and that we have no security beyond the mere circumstance of an outwardly decent life against such profession being insincere. With regard to the second, or the fact that the profession on which the apostolic Baptisms in many instances proceeded could have been of no more than a few hours' standing, and therefore not proved by the lapse of time to be true, it is enough to say that there may be, and in apostolic times were, circumstances apart altogether from its duration sufficient to give credibility to the profession.<sup>2</sup>

## **SECTION III.**

### **INFANT BAPTISM**

We have now considered the question, To whom ought Baptism to be administered, in so far as it regards adults? The conclusion to which we were conducted was, that the ordinance ought to be dispensed to those alone who "profess their faith in Christ, and their obedience to Him." The theory of indiscriminate Baptism we set aside as inconsistent with the nature and meaning of the Sacrament, as destitute of any countenance from the practice of John the Baptist, as contrary to the terms of the apostolical commission, and opposed to the practice of the apostles and the New Testament Church. There still remains for our consideration the question as to the connection

of infants with Baptism, and as to the lawfulness or duty of administering the ordinance to them. The subject is a delicate and a difficult one, and demands a more than usually earnest investigation. The practice of baptizing infants may be regarded at first sight as running counter to all those views which we have already asserted in regard to the nature of Sacraments in general, and of Baptism in particular. Add to this, that it seems at first view directly to traverse the principles we have so lately laid down on the question of indiscriminate Baptism. The advocates of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, who hold that Baptism is a charm with an inherent and independent power to confer grace in all circumstances and on all parties, can readily defend the practice of administering it to infants, as efficacious in the case of unconscious children, not less than in the case of intelligent adults. The advocates of the doctrine that Baptism is no more than a sign, have also an obvious ground on which they may defend the practice of infant Baptism,—the parents' professional badge being, not without reason or precedent in other matters, affixed to the child. And once more, the party who hold the doctrine of indiscriminate Baptism, and regard themselves as authorized to dispense the rite without regard to religious character or profession, can have no sufficient reason for excluding infants from this comprehensive commission. But if Baptism be the seal of a federal transaction between the party baptized and Christ; if this be the main and characteristic feature of the ordinance; and if a religious profession be a prerequisite to its reception; it would appear as if there were no small difficulty in the way of admitting to the participation of it those who, by reason of nonage, can be no parties to the engagement in virtue of their own act or will. The difficulty that stands in the way of infant Baptism lies on the very surface of the question; and Antipædobaptists have the advantage of an argument on their side which is both popular and plausible.

But in this case, as in all others connected with matters of positive institution in the Church of Christ, the primary and ruling consideration in the controversy must be the express Divine appointment on the subject. In those positive, and in a sense

arbitrary, institutions, set up by God in the worship of His Church, mere inferential considerations drawn from reason must be of secondary authority and subordinate force to determine their nature and use, as compared with express intimations of the Divine will. Positive observances, from their very nature, must be regulated by positive institution; and it is only as secondary to such positive institution, that we can listen to arguments drawn from our views of the moral character or meaning of the ordinance. Our first appeal in the case of infant Baptism must, therefore, be to the express statements of the Word of God, and to the view of the ordinance as a positive institution which is there presented. We shall consider, then, in the first place, the scriptural principles which bear upon the question of the lawfulness or duty of infant Baptism. Thereafter we shall examine into the objections, from reason or Scripture, that have been brought against the practice; and also discuss the subject of the efficacy of the ordinance in the case of infants; and lastly, the scriptural mode of administering it.

What, then, is the bearing of Scripture doctrine and practice on the question of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of infant Baptism? The following five propositions I shall endeavour to establish in connection with this subject; and the discussion of these will very nearly exhaust the question. First, the covenant of grace, as revealed by God at different periods for the salvation of His people, has been essentially the same in former and in later times, and has always comprehended infants within it. Second, the Church of God, made up of His professing people, has been essentially the same in character in former and in later times, and has always included infants among its members. Third, the ordinance of outward admission into the Church has, in its essential character and meaning, been the same in former and in later times, and has always been administered to infants. Fourth, the principle on which the initiatory ordinance of admission into the Church has been administered has been the same in former and in later times, and has always applied to the case of infants. And fifth, the practice in regard to the administration of the initiatory rite has been the same in

former and in later times, and has always included the case of infants. The illustration of these five propositions must, in consequence of the limits prescribed to us, be very brief, and more in the way of giving the heads of the argument than the argument itself. But taken under consideration even in the briefest way, they will embrace the prominent points of the controversy in regard to infant Baptism. One or more of them separately, if sufficiently established by an appeal to Scripture, would suffice to demonstrate that "the infants of such as are members of the visible Church are to be baptized;" while all taken together afford a very full and cumulative proof of the lawfulness of the practice.

I. The covenant of grace, as revealed by God at different periods for the salvation of His people, has been essentially the same in former and in later times, and has always comprehended infants within it.

This proposition is, properly speaking, made up of two: first, that the covenant was essentially the same in all ages; and second, that within the covenant, infants were always included. Neither of these two assertions ought to be very difficult of proof. In regard to the first, it is undeniable that God has had a people on the earth since the fall, chosen from the rest of mankind, who called upon His name, and were themselves called by it. The faith and hope of that chosen people, through every generation, have been sustained by a revelation of a Saviour, who either was to come or had come, expressed in promise and in type, in prediction and in symbol before His coming, and in plainer and ampler narrative of actual fact after His appearance. In whatever outward form it was revealed, this was God's covenant—His free promise of grace—His Gospel of glad tidings for the salvation of His people, identical in character and in substance, one in its announcements and its terms in every age from the first revelation in Paradise down to the last in Patmos. It was one and the same covenant of grace which was revealed to Adam in the first promise given to him, and the first ordinance of sacrifice appointed for him; revealed in other terms and form to Noah; repeated to Abraham in the word of promise and type; embodied in

history, and prophecy, and symbolic institutions to the Church under the Mosaic economy; and fully brought to light under the Gospel dispensation. That the covenant of grace established under the Gospel was not then for the first time made known, but had been announced long before,—that although in the latter times it was more fully revealed, it had been revealed all along in substance, and proved to be the same at first as at the last,—the plain statements of Scripture very expressly affirm. The Apostle Paul tells us in the Epistle to the Galatians, that "the Gospel was preached before unto Abraham." And in the same Epistle he tells us that "the covenant confirmed of God in Christ was given to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law" of Moses,—language fitted to mark both the identity of the covenant of Abraham with the Gospel covenant, and its independence of the Mosaic ceremonial institutions. If we turn to the book of Genesis, we shall find the account of the revelation of the covenant of grace given to Abraham, and referred to by Paul,—a covenant which, as then revealed, comprehended in it temporal blessings, such as the promise of Canaan to the patriarch and his seed, but was in itself independent of these; which preceded the law by more than four hundred years, and was not disannulled by the giving of the law; which was founded on the free grace and unchangeable promise of God, and thus was not bound up with any temporary institution; and which was the very Gospel afterwards "confirmed in Christ."<sup>2</sup> So clear and abundant is the evidence for the first part of our proposition, that the covenant of grace, revealed under various forms in former and in latter times, was in substance one and the same.

The proof of the second part of our proposition is not less full and satisfactory, that this covenant has always comprehended infants within it. The infants of the parents with whom God's covenant was made, were not left outside that covenant. The promises of grace were not given to the parents, to the exclusion of the children. Infants were not left to their chance of uncovenanted mercies, while to adults the blessings were insured by covenant. On the contrary, that infants were comprehended within the covenant as well as their

parents, is a fact that the plainest statements of Scripture demonstrate. In what sense or to what effect infants were so included, may come to be inquired into when we afterwards consider the efficacy of Baptism in their case, or the seal of the covenant as regards infants. But that the covenant made with the parents did not exclude but included their infant children also, the plain assertions of Scripture leave no room to doubt. In the inspired account of the various announcements made by God of His covenant from time to time, the terms of the announcement are almost invariably "you and your seed." In the case of Abraham, as referred to by the Apostle Paul, this is very expressly stated: "And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; Every man-child among you shall be circumcised." The covenant of grace, as then revealed to Abraham, included infant children of eight days old; and it has at all times been equally comprehensive and the same. The seal of the covenant, as affixed to the child when eight days old, was the standing evidence and memorial for two thousand years, that infants were included in God's federal promises."<sup>2</sup>

And in what manner is this argument from the example of Abraham, in favour of the fact that infants are comprehended within the covenant, met by the advocates of Antipædobaptist doctrines. The ordinary reply given by the opponents of infant Baptism is this: They affirm that there were two covenants, distinct and separate from each other, made by God with the patriarch at that time; the one a covenant of temporal, and the other of spiritual blessing. They assert that the "seed" mentioned in the history of the transaction, were the natural seed of Abraham, including adults and infants, in so far as regards the temporal covenant; and the spiritual seed of Abraham, or adult believers alone, in so far as regards the spiritual; and that the seal of circumcision administered to his children was the token of a temporal, and not a spiritual blessing. And lastly, they argue that under the Gospel the natural relationship of children to their parents, which under a former economy warranted their admission

to the sign and seal of a temporal covenant, does not warrant their admission to the sign and seal of a spiritual one.

Now in regard to this attempted reply to the Scripture evidence for infants being included in the covenant of grace as revealed to Abraham, it is unnecessary to do more than make the following observations.

1st, Even although it were capable of being proved that there were two covenants made with Abraham, and not one simply,—a covenant of temporal blessing separated from the covenant of grace,—and that infants were included in the one but not in the other, this would not do away with the whole tenor of Scripture declaration in many other passages which evinces that the covenant of grace, under whatever shape and to whatever parties it was revealed, included not only the parties themselves, but also their infant offspring. The covenant of grace, as revealed to Abraham, and recorded in Genesis, has been very generally appealed to by the advocates of infant Baptism in demonstration of the interest infants had in it; and it has been so appealed to because it contains a more detailed and distinct evidence of the fact than most other passages of Scripture. But even were the record of the Abrahamic covenant expunged from the Bible, the interest of infants jointly with their parents in the covenant of grace could be satisfactorily established without it. The whole tenor of Scripture justifies us in saying, that it was a covenant which, at whatever time or in whatever form it was revealed to men, embraced both them and their infant seed.

2d, There is certainly no countenance in the narrative in Genesis given to the notion of two covenants, separate and distinct from each other; in the one of which the children of Abraham, being infants, were to have an interest, and in the other of which the descendants of Abraham, not being infants, but adult believers, were alone comprehended. The terms employed very expressly refer to one covenant, and not to two. "Thou shalt keep my covenant. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, betwixt me and you, and thy seed after

thee." Such is the language emphatically reiterated in the original narrative of the transaction, marking a single covenant and not many. It is true, indeed, that there was a twofold blessing, the temporal and the spiritual,—the inheritance of Canaan, and the inheritance of the heavenly Canaan,—embodied in that one covenant. But these two orders of blessing were promised by the same covenant, and referred to the same end. There is no mention of one covenant intended for the natural posterity of the patriarch, and a second intended for his spiritual posterity. The temporal blessings might, indeed, be enjoyed by the descendants of Abraham after the flesh, while they had no interest in the spiritual; just in the same manner as a man under the Gospel may enjoy the outward privileges of a Church state without participation in the inward and saving blessings. But there is nothing whatever in the book of Genesis to warrant the distinction which the opponents of infant Baptism draw between a temporal covenant made with Abraham including infants, and a second and a spiritual one made at the same time and excluding them.

3d, The rite of circumcision, appointed for every man-child when eight days old, in the Abrahamic covenant as the token of it, excludes the theory of the Antipædobaptists, that the covenant in which infants were interested was a temporal covenant only. The fact that circumcision was ordained in connection with the covenant proves that it was not a mere temporal covenant, as Antipædobaptists allege, but a spiritual one,—the very covenant of grace which was the same through all times and dispensations of the Church. It does so in two ways. First, circumcision, as the token of the Abrahamic covenant, was a sign not of temporal, but of spiritual blessings. That this is the case is very expressly asserted by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. "He is not a Jew," says Paul, "which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." The ordinance of circumcision, then, had a spiritual import; it was expressive of Gospel blessings. And when it was



appointed by God as the token of His covenant with Abraham, and administered in that capacity to children, it very plainly declared that the covenant, of which it was the token, and into which it introduced infants, was spiritual too. Circumcision, as the sign of the Gospel blessings, when it was appended to the covenant, demonstrated that the covenant itself was the covenant of grace. Second, circumcision is declared by the Apostle Paul to be more than a sign of grace; it is asserted to be a seal of grace. It is declared to be so, when he tells us, in reference to this very matter of the covenant established with Abraham, that "he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being yet uncircumcised." As the seal, then, of the covenant according to which Abraham was justified, the ordinance plainly testified that it was the covenant of grace; and, when administered to infants eight days old, it no less plainly indicated that they were interested in that covenant.<sup>3</sup>

The objections, then, brought by Antipædobaptists against the evidence from Scripture,—more especially derived from the covenant of grace as revealed to Abraham, but by no means confined to that source,—to the fact that infants are interested in that covenant, are of no great force. Our first position seems to be fairly established by Scripture evidence, namely, that the covenant of grace has been, under all the different forms in which from time to time it has been revealed, identical in substance and essentially unchanged; and that it has ever included infants within its provisions. The denial of infant Baptism cannot very well be maintained in the face of this proposition. If included in the provisions of the covenant of grace under the Gospel, infants must have a right to Baptism as one of them. They cannot be excluded from the initiatory ordinance which signifies and seals its blessings, unless the covenant of grace under the New Testament is different essentially both in its extent and in its terms from what it was before. The covenant of grace under former dispensations comprehended within its limits the infants of parties interested in it, as well as the parties themselves. This is undeniable. And the covenant must be altered essentially as to its extent,—it must be a different covenant as to the parties with whom it is made,

—if so large a portion of the members included in it formerly, as infants were, should appear under the New Testament Church to be excluded. Further, it must be altered essentially as to the terms of it, and as to its free and gracious character,—it must be a different covenant as to the conditions of it,—if by these conditions one important class, made up of irresponsible parties such as infants, are now cast out when they were formerly comprehended. Unless the covenant of grace, in short, under the New Testament Church is another covenant from what it was under the Old Testament, infants must have a place in it now as much as then. But it is not so altered or restricted. Neither its extent nor its terms are altered. It is God's covenant of grace still; and as it was gracious enough and wide enough to comprehend within its limits infants under a former economy, it does so still.

There are manifold intimations in the New Testament that the covenant of grace is not less comprehensive in latter times than in former. At the first planting of the Christian Church the Apostle Peter assured the Jews that there was no change in this respect of the covenant under the Gospel economy as compared with its comprehensiveness under the Old Testament: "For," said he, "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." To the Philippian jailer Paul declared in the very form of the Old Testament promises: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." In these, and a multitude of other expressions of similar force and import, we recognise the great and important truth, that the covenant of grace was the same under the Gospel as under the law; that it was not limited or straitened in latter times in comparison with former; but that in its grace and comprehensiveness it embraces infants under the New Testament dispensation as well as under previous economies. We conclude, then, that the covenant of grace, revealed by God at different periods for the salvation of His people, has been essentially the same in former as in latter times; and has always comprehended infants within it.<sup>3</sup>

II. My next proposition is, that the Church of God, made up of His professing people, has been essentially the same in character in former and in latter times, and has always included infants among its members. This second proposition, like the first, consists of two parts, each of which admits of being established separately; the first part of the statement being, that the Church of God, under whatever outward form it has appeared, has been identical in substance throughout every dispensation; and the second part of it being, that it has always included infants among its members.

The first part of the proposition, which affirms the identity of the Church of God under all its outward forms, in Old Testament times and in New, may be readily demonstrated from two general considerations, independent of other arguments.

1. The oneness of the covenant of grace in every age necessarily implies the oneness of the Church of God in every age. It was on the foundation of that covenant that the Church of God was built at first, and has ever since been maintained. It is that covenant that gives to its members every privilege which, as belonging to the Church of God, they possess; it defines the nature and limits the extent of their rights; it is the title by which they hold their standing and place as members of the Church; it constitutes the badge that distinguishes between a Church state and character, and the absence of them. The covenant is the charter of the Church of God in every age; and that charter remaining unchanged and identical from age to age, the Church that is built upon it must, in all its essential features, be one and the same also,—whatever may be the outward form it may bear, or the circumstantial and accidental changes that may be superinduced upon it. The Church of God in the days of Abraham,—the Church in the days of Moses,—the Church under the Gospel,—are in all vital respects the same; one Church, founded on the same covenant of grace, having the same essential character, and the same chartered rights, although different in outward things, according to the different stages and periods in the development of the Divine dispensations. The reason of this is obvious. The charter that

constituted the society was the same in the earlier as in the later times. The covenant that called into existence and defined the character of the Church was essentially identical in the age of Abraham, and in the present age. We are not to confound with the unchanged and unchanging covenant of grace, on which the Church of God was and is built, the covenant made with Israel at Sinai, and destined to be a mere local and temporary ordinance. That subsequent and secondary covenant could neither disannul nor alter the former. It superinduced, indeed, upon the former certain local and temporary ordinances; but nowise enlarged, or contracted, or changed the original charter of the Church's existence and rights. The Church of Israel under the former economy, and the Church of Christ now under the Gospel, are constituted and defined as to their character, their extent, and their membership, by the same covenant of grace. They form the same society in their nature, their essential privileges, and their real members.

2. The identity of the Church of God in every age and under every dispensation, might be evinced by the relation which the Church ever bears to Christ as Mediator, and the relation which Christ as Mediator ever bears to the Church. Since the beginning He has been the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church, immediately discharging all His offices as Mediator towards it, and sustaining it in existence by His continual presence in the midst of it. At different periods, indeed, He has been differently related to the Church, in so far as regards the extent of His manifestations of Himself, and the extent of His communications of spiritual gifts and blessings. But at no period has the Church existed, except through the same presence and power of Christ, as Mediator, that the Christian Church now enjoys,—the same in nature, although different in amount. The Church has ever been the Church of Christ; and this spiritual relationship, the same and unaltered from age to age, has caused the Church itself to be identical as a society throughout all times in its essential character, and privileges, and membership. Such considerations as these very clearly and abundantly attest the truth of the first part of our proposition, namely, that the Church of God, made up of His

professing people, has been essentially the same in character in former and in later times.

As regards the second part of the proposition, namely, that the Church has always included infants among its members, the proof, after what has already been said, need not demand a lengthened illustration. If the Church of God, made up of His professing people, be one and the same society at all times, and under all its different dispensations, then the proof that infants were members of it at one period must be a proof that they are competent to be members of it at any subsequent period; unless, indeed, some express and positive enactment can be produced, altering the charter of the society, and excluding, as incompetent to be admitted by the new and altered terms of the deed, those formerly comprehended within it. If no such proof of alteration in the charter or constitution of the society can be produced,—if the society itself remains the same in character and terms of admission as before,—then the proof that infants were once its members may suffice for proof that they are still competent to be so. We know that under the Abrahamic Church infants, as well as their parents, were admitted to the place of members. We have already proved that they were interested and comprehended in the covenant that constituted the Church in those days. The sign and seal of the covenant marked them out at eight days old, as embraced within it. The initiatory ordinance of the Church, which was the formal evidence of admission to its membership, was administered to the infants of such as were themselves members of the Church; and with that token in their flesh they grew up within the pale of the Church in Old Testament times. Circumcision was not part and parcel of the Sinaitic covenant, revealed afterwards through Moses. Our Lord Himself testifies that the ordinance was "not of Moses, but of the fathers." It constituted the door of admission, not into the Sinaitic Church as distinct from the Abrahamic, but into that Church of which Abraham was a member, and of which all in every age are members who have like faith with Abraham. It constituted the door of admission, in the days of Abraham, into that very Church of which Christians are members now. And turning to Gospel times, we have a

right to say that infants are competent to be members of the Christian Church now, unless it can be demonstrated that the Church of God is not the same now as in former times; that it is different in character and extent; and that those capable of admission before are, through an express alteration in the fundamental principles of the society, excluded now. Falling back upon our general proposition, already demonstrated, that the Church of God, as the society of His professing people, is one and the same in its essential nature in every age, we are entitled to affirm that infants once competent members of it are competent members of it still.

This proof is sufficient in the absence of any statute of limitation alleged to have been enacted in New Testament times, altering the character of the Church of God, and restricting it to the reception into its membership of adults, and adults alone. But there are very plain intimations in the New Testament, not only that no statute of limitation has been passed excluding infants, but that the privilege they once undeniably enjoyed under the Old Testament economy has been continued to them under the New. I do not dwell again upon the very express declaration of Peter to the Jews, when explaining to them the Gospel privilege: "the promise is unto you and to your children,"—language which, in the case of a Jewish parent, could have only one meaning. I would refer to the language of our Lord Himself, when the Jewish parents brought their little ones to Christ, and He took them up in His arms and blessed them, accompanying the blessing with the words: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." There can be no plausible interpretation of this passage given which proceeds upon the idea that those very infants blessed of Christ, and said by Him to belong to His kingdom, were actually excluded from it as its members. That they were not persons grown up, as one party of Antipædobaptists allege, but infants, who could by no act of their own profess their faith in Christ, is clear from the act of Christ taking them up in His arms when He blessed them. That the expression, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," means no more than that persons of the like dispositions with children belonged to the kingdom of

heaven, and that those very children were actually excluded from it, as another class of opponents of infant Baptism affirm, may be safely denied; inasmuch as the act of Christ in blessing them, in connection with the words He used, cannot be explained on the supposition that they were shut out beyond the pale of His covenant, and actually cut off from His Church. In short, the words of our Lord, taken in conjunction with His action, very distinctly demonstrate that the right of infants to be members of His Church, formerly recognised under the Old Testament, was not cancelled, but rather confirmed and continued under the New.<sup>2</sup> We are entitled thus far to hold as proved our second grand proposition in all its parts, namely, that the Church of God, made up of all His professing people, has been essentially one in character in former and in latter times; and has always included infants among its members.

The two propositions, which we have already had under consideration, established as we believe them to be by Scripture evidence, go very far indeed, taken by themselves, to decide the question as to the lawfulness of infant Baptism. If infants as well as their parents have an interest in God's covenant,—if infants as well as their parents have a place in the Church as members,—it were difficult to affirm that they have no right to share in the privilege of Baptism, as the seal of the covenant, and the ordinance appointed for the formal admission into the Church of its members. An express prohibition forbidding the administration of the ordinance to them, or an incompatibility no less distinct between the nature of the Sacrament and their condition as infants, might, indeed, force upon us the conclusion that they are excepted. But in the absence of any such exception forced upon us by explicit prohibition or explicit incompatibility, we seem to be warranted in saying that the covenant state of infants and the Church state of infants, fairly demonstrated, unavoidably carry with them the inference that infants are entitled to the administration of Baptism as the seal of the one, and the door of formal admission into the other. The opponents of infant Baptism feel considerable difficulty in giving any explicit or consistent explanation of the relation sustained by infants either to the

covenant or to the Church. Some of them deny absolutely that infants have any place either in the covenant or in the visible Church as members; while others of them hesitate about such a sweeping denial in the face of the strong Scripture evidence available to establish the fact, and rather consider infants as possessed of an inchoate and undeveloped right to be members, and as put under the care of the Church in order to be prepared for claiming and exercising the full right afterwards. But the covenant state and the Church state of infants, once fairly established, as they can readily be from Scripture, and the absence of any express bar interposed by Divine authority to the contrary, seem unquestionably to lead to a conclusion in favour of infant Baptism, even were there no further evidence that could be adduced in support of it. But there is much additional evidence at hand. The three propositions which still remain to be discussed and illustrated afford strong additional confirmation of the same conclusion; and, taken along with the positions already established, furnish a complete proof of the lawfulness and duty of baptizing infants.

III. The ordinance of outward admission into the Church has, in its essential character and meaning, been the same in former and in later times; and has always been administered to infants.

The main object of this third general proposition, as forming part of the argument for infant Baptism, is to identify, as essentially one and the same in their use and import and character, the Old Testament rite of circumcision with the New Testament rite of Baptism. If we can prove that they meant the same thing, and held the same place, and performed the same office in the Church of God in former and in later times, it were difficult to object to the conclusion that the one ought to be administered to the same infant members of the Church as was the other. To establish this general proposition we may make use of these three steps. First, circumcision and Baptism are both to be regarded as the appointed ordinance for the formal and public admission of its members into the Church. Second, both circumcision and Baptism have essentially the same meaning as the



signs and seals of the same Divine truths and the same spiritual grace. Third, Baptism has been appointed to occupy the place and come in the room of circumcision, which has been done away.

In the first place, then, circumcision and Baptism are both to be regarded as the authorized ordinances for the formal admission of members into the Church.

That circumcision was the initiatory ordinance for the Old Testament Church, an appeal to the history of its institution and administration in ancient times will sufficiently evince. Without it no Israelite was accounted a member of the Old Testament Church; with it he could establish a right of membership, and a title to its ordinances. From the days of Abraham down to the date of the discontinuance of the ordinance in Gospel times, circumcision was the only thing that gave a right of admission to the privileges of the Old Testament Church; and apart from circumcision no one had a right to these. There was no access to the membership or ordinances of the ancient Church, except through the door of circumcision. That this was the case, is proved both from the case of infants and the case of adults. In the case of infants, the ordinance was universally administered; and in virtue of it alone, the circumcised infant, as it grew to manhood, was regarded as a member of the visible Church, and ceremonially qualified to receive its privileges without any other initiation or admission. In the case of adults, the administration of the rite to those who had not received it before,—as, for example, in the instance of Gentile proselytes,—was necessary as the door of admission into the fellowship of the Church. Without circumcision they were not admitted. By Divine appointment, circumcision bestowed on "the stranger, who joined himself to the Lord," a right, the same as that of the Israelites themselves, to Church privileges and to partake of the passover. "When a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord,"—such were the terms of the enactment,—"let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof." Both in the case of infants, then, and of adults, circumcision

constituted the initiatory ordinance of admission into the ancient Church from the days of Abraham downwards.

Against this fact, so very plainly attested in Scripture, it has been objected on the part of the opponents of infant Baptism, that it was not circumcision, but birth and natural descent, that gave admission into the ancient Church; and that every one born an Israelite became a member of the Israelitish Church. And in confirmation of this view, the fact of the circumcision of the descendants of Ishmael and Esau, without the observance giving them a title to admission to Church membership among the Israelites, is appealed to. The objection has not the least force in it. The tribes that sprang from Ishmael and Esau were divinely separated from the descendants of Abraham in the line of the covenant; and had not, like the other children of the patriarch, any interest in the federal promise. With these, therefore, circumcision could avail nothing to give them admission into the Church. Although practised by them, it was not with them a Church ordinance in connection with the covenant Church; and could not, therefore, admit them among its members. And on the other hand, mere birth did not give to the Israelite a right of admission into the Church, unless when connected with circumcision administered and submitted to. No Israelite was born a Church member. Unless, in addition to his birth as an Israelite, he was also circumcised, he had no right to the privileges of the ancient Church. So very far is it from being true, as some Antipædobaptists affirm, that his birth as an Israelite gave him a right to be considered a member of the Church, without circumcision, that it only placed him under the certainty of a heavy judicial sentence. To be born an Israelite, without circumcision being added to birth, only brought upon his head the sentence of God: "He shall be cut off from his people."<sup>3</sup>

There is quite as little foundation for another objection brought by other opponents of infant Baptism against our position, when they allege that circumcision was no more than a door of entrance to the Mosaic Church, and a token of admission to its outward and ceremonial privileges; and not the initiatory ordinance of the

spiritual Church of God in Old Testament times. In answer to this objection, it is enough to say, that circumcision was instituted more than four hundred years before the legal economy was set up; and although it afterwards came to be associated with the law of Moses, yet it never lost its original meaning and use as the initiatory ordinance through which members entered into the Old Testament Church. It was in that character that we are to regard it when first instituted and administered in Abraham's family; and although four hundred years later there was superinduced upon the Church, to which circumcision was the door, a number of outward and ceremonial observances, yet it never ceased to be the initiatory rite of that Church of which Abraham was a member, and of which believers in every age, who have Abraham's faith, are members also. Under the Mosaic law, circumcision used and owned as an outward badge or privilege, admitted a man to an interest in an outward ceremonial institute; but not the less under the Mosaic law circumcision used and owned as a spiritual ordinance, and connected with the faith of the recipient, admitted also to an interest in that inner and spiritual Church, which was one and the same in the days of Abraham, in the time of Moses, and at the present time. Circumcision, although when associated with the Mosaic economy it was an outward badge of an outward Church, never ceased to be what it was at the first hour of its administration to Abraham himself, the ordinance of admission into the true Gospel Church.

The argument from Scripture, then, to prove that circumcision was the authorized ordinance for the admission of members into the Old Testament Church, is clear and satisfactory. It is hardly necessary to prove that Baptism is the authorized ordinance for the admission of members into the New Testament Church. That it is so, is admitted well nigh on all hands. The terms of the apostolic commission prove it to be so. The practice of Apostles and apostolic men in admitting converts to the Christian Church by Baptism, proves it to be so. The meaning of the ordinance as the Sacrament of union to Christ, proves it to be so. In this respect, the two ordinances occupy the same ground, and stand at the entrance of the Church publicly to

mark and define its members; being the rites respectively belonging to the Old Testament Church and the New, for accomplishing the same object. To this extent, as the ordinance of admission into the Church of God, circumcision and Baptism are identical.

In the second place, circumcision and Baptism are expressive of the same spiritual truths, and are to be identified as signs and seals of the same covenant blessings.

With reference to circumcision, it is important to bear in mind that it was the sign and seal of a spiritual covenant, and not merely, as has been alleged, of the Sinai covenant, with its outward and ceremonial privileges. It was the covenant of grace as revealed to Abraham of which circumcision was primarily the token; and hence we have distinct evidence in Scripture that the spiritual blessings conveyed in that covenant to the believer were precisely the blessings which the ordinance of circumcision represents. The two cardinal blessings given by the covenant of grace are justification from guilt by faith in the righteousness of Christ, and sanctification from sin by the renewal of the heart through the work of the Holy Spirit; and these two blessings, we have express Scripture warrant to say, circumcision was intended to signify and seal. That circumcision was expressive of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ, we are distinctly taught by the Apostle Paul to believe, in that passage of the Epistle to the Romans already more than once referred to: "And Abraham," says the Apostle, "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised." And again, that circumcision was a token of the sanctification of the heart and renewal from sin by the Spirit, is proved by several passages of Scripture which speak of "the circumcision of the heart" as the true meaning of the ordinance. "He is not a Jew," says the same Apostle, "which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."<sup>2</sup> These passages, and others which might easily be adduced,

abundantly demonstrate that circumcision, as a sign and seal, represented and attested those two spiritual blessings of the covenant of grace, which are introductory to all the rest,—the blessings of justification and sanctification. And it is hardly necessary to add, that these are the two very blessings mainly and emphatically represented in the ordinance of Baptism under the New Testament Church. The very words of the Baptismal service tell us, that the member formally admitted into the Church is baptized "into the name of the Father" through means of justification by the Son, and sanctification through the Spirit. That is to say, the very same spiritual blessings represented and attested of old time by circumcision, are now represented and attested by Baptism. In this respect, as the signs and seals of the very same covenant blessings, circumcision and Baptism are one and the same.

In the third place, the oneness of circumcision and Baptism is yet further established by the fact that Baptism has come in the room of circumcision.

They are not only both initiatory ordinances for the admission of members into the Church, the one under the Old, and the other under the New Testament. They are not only appointed to be expressions of exactly the same spiritual truths, which stand permanently connected with the admission of a sinner into an interest in the covenant of grace. There is distinct enough evidence to show, that when circumcision was done away with at the establishment of the Gospel Church, Baptism was appointed to stand in its stead and fulfil its office. This appears, among other proofs, from the statement of the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Colossians. "And ye are complete in Him," says the Apostle, referring to the unspeakable fulness of blessing laid up in Christ,— "and ye are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him." Such language seems plainly enough to imply

that Baptism comes to Christians now in the room of circumcision to believers under the former dispensation; and that it is both fitted and intended to supply its place as a sign and seal of the blessings of the covenant. The reasoning of the Apostle appears very distinctly to intimate, that all which circumcision could do under the former dispensation, Baptism does now.

Upon these grounds, then, we are warranted to say that our third proposition is established,—namely, that the ordinance of admission into the Church has, in its essential character and meaning, been the same in former and in latter times, and has always been administered to infants.

IV. The next general proposition which I laid down at the outset of the discussion was this, that the principle on which the initiatory ordinance of admission into the Church of God has been administered, has been the same in former and in latter times, and has always applied to the case of infants.

This is a proposition of much interest and importance as forming part of the argument for infant Baptism. What was the principle on which circumcision, recognising a title to membership in the Church under the Old Testament, was administered, and in accordance with which parties had a right to participate in the ordinance? This is the first question. What is the principle on which Baptism, recognising a title to membership in the Church under the Gospel, is administered, and in accordance with which parties have a right to participation in the ordinance? This is the second question. These questions in our present discussion must, of course, be restricted to the case of infants under both economies. The case of adults does not so directly concern our argument; and indeed in itself admits of little dispute. The personal act of the adult professing his religious faith is the ground on which, under the Old Testament in the case of proselytes, and under the Gospel in the case of converts, their right to be admitted as members of the Church, and to receive its initiatory ordinance, as the formal recognition of their admission, is obviously

founded. But setting aside the case of adult proselytes or converts, upon what principle were infants entitled to circumcision in ancient times, and are infants entitled to Baptism in these latter days? Can it be established that the principle on which the ordinance is administered is one and the same in both cases?

1st, Upon what principle was the right of infants to circumcision founded under the Old Testament Church?

The analogy of the proceedings of God in providence and in grace not indistinctly points to the principle on which infants in the ancient Church were admitted to the same ordinance and to the membership of the same Church as their parents. By no personal act of theirs could infants become entitled, in the same manner as adults become entitled, to the privileges of the Church. But there is a familiar principle of representation, illustrated in the case of civil society, of providence, and of God's spiritual dispensations, in consequence of which infants, in certain cases and to certain effects, are held to be one with their parents, and through this relationship become entitled to the privileges of their parents. We see this representative principle in civil society, when, in consequence of no personal act of theirs, but simply in consequence of being accounted one with their father, infants become members of the civil society in which their father is a member, and their civil character and standing are the same as his. We see the representative principle, again, in the constitution of God's providence, when, in virtue of no deed of their own, but because of their relationship to their father, his place in society, his moral and intellectual character, his very bodily constitution for good or evil, to a certain extent become theirs. We see the representative principle, once more, in God's spiritual dispensation, where infants, in consequence of no personal act of theirs, but in accordance with that prevailing and universal constitution of things which is found in this world, become, in consequence of their filial relationship and the inheritance of the same flesh and blood as their father, concluded under his sin, and made one with him in original transgression and liability to punishment. In all these cases the representative principle

is familiar to us, and infants are seen to partake for good or evil of the relations of their father. In most cases,—perhaps, if we were capable of understanding it, in all cases,—in which God deals with infants so as to show His method or law of dealing, He does so on the representative principle when He cannot deal with them on the principle of personal action and responsibility; and He acts with respect to them as if to a certain extent they were one with their parents.

That God may act towards infants in a way of sovereignty, without regard to their connection with their parents, may be true. But when He deals with them, and desires at the same time to manifest to us His rule or method of dealing, He does so on the principle of representation; a principle revealed to us both in His providential and spiritual economies. And such is unquestionably the principle according to which, in the constitution of the Old Testament Church, infants were dealt with. God made His covenant with infants as well as with adults; and the way in which He did so was never in connection with any personal act of theirs, which was impossible, but in connection with their filial relationship. God made His Church to include infants among its members as well as adult believers; and this too He did not in connection with their personal act, which was impossible, but in connection with the act of their parents. The membership of the father was counted to the infant; and the circumcision of the father gave a right to the infant to be circumcised also.

There are two views somewhat different from each other, that may be held on this point, which it is of considerable importance to discriminate between. The right of the child to circumcision and to the privileges of the Jewish Church, may be viewed as depending on his immediate father; or it may be regarded as depending on his remote progenitor, Abraham. In the one case, his title to be circumcised is counted good because of his relationship to his immediate parent, who was a member of the Jewish Church, and interested in the covenant. In the other case, his title to be



circumcised is counted good because of his relationship to Abraham, his remote progenitor, with whom the covenant was made, and independently of his connection with his immediate parent, and without regard to the circumstance of his parent being or not being a member of the Jewish Church. The evidence of Scripture seems not indistinctly to point to the first view as the correct one, or to the view that connects the right of the infant directly with his immediate father's interest in the Church and covenant, and not the view that connects it indirectly with Abraham's. Dr. Halley advocates the view that connects the infant's right not with the parent's, but with Abraham's interest in the covenant, making that right independent of the parent's connection or non-connection with the Church; and he does so apparently with the view of founding upon it the doctrine of indiscriminate Baptism to all infants alike, whatever be the father's Church state, and whether he be a member of the Church or not. The two following considerations, however, seem very decisively to prove that the right of the infant to circumcision in the Jewish Church was valid in consequence of the Church membership of the father, and not in consequence of his remoter connection with Abraham. First, mere connection with Abraham did not in all cases give a right to the privileges of the Jewish Church, as we see exemplified in the instance of the descendants of Abraham in the lines of Ishmael and Esau. They were directly connected with Abraham as their ancestor, and yet were separated from the communion of the Jewish Church. Second, the case of the infants of Gentile proselytes demonstrates that not remote connection with Abraham, but immediate connection with the parent, is the ground of the infant's right to circumcision. The infants of such Gentile proselytes as were circumcised and members of the Jewish Church, had no connection with Abraham through ordinary descent; and yet in virtue of their father's circumcision they had a right to be circumcised also. These two considerations seem sufficient to prove that the right of the infant to circumcision was not derived remotely from Abraham, passing over his immediate parent, but came directly from the parent. In other words, the case of circumcision under the Old Testament presents to us a complete and perfect illustration of

the representative principle, and of the privileges of the child being held to be the same as those of the parent. By no personal act of their own did children become entitled to circumcision; but they were so entitled, in consequence of the right of their father to the ordinance.

2d, Now, what is the principle on which infants under the New Testament Church become entitled to Baptism? Are we warranted by Scripture in identifying the principle on which Baptism is administered now with the principle on which circumcision was administered before? I think that we are. The identity in meaning, and character, and use, already proved between circumcision and Baptism, would afford a strong presumption in favour of the conclusion, even had we no further evidence for it. The strong and close analogy between the two cases would go very far of itself to establish it. But there is one passage of Scripture more especially, which seems of itself explicitly to announce that the very principle of representation found under the Old Testament in the case of parent and child, is not cancelled, but continued under the New, and must be held as a permanent principle in the dealings of God with infants. The passage to which I refer is in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and is to the following effect. Speaking of the case of husband and wife, when one of the parties is not a Christian but an unbeliever, the Apostle says: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified (ἡγιασται) by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy (ἅγια)." The principle of representation found under the Old Testament is the very principle introduced by the Apostle to explain the position and character of children in the case where no more than one parent is a believer and member of the Church.<sup>2</sup> That the contrasted terms, "unclean" and "holy," are to be understood in the Old Testament sense of not set apart and set apart to the service or fellowship of God, seems to be undoubted. And the assertion of the Apostle is, that one of the parents being a believer, although the other is not, avails, so that the infants are to be accounted clean, or fit for the service of God and the fellowship of His Church. The holiness of the one parent that is a member of the Christian Church, communicates a relative

holiness to the infant, so that the child also is fitted to be a member of the Church, and to be baptized. The forced and unnatural interpretation put upon this passage by Antipædobaptists cannot stand a moment's investigation. They interpret the "cleanness" of the infant as the legitimacy of the infant,—a construction plainly forbidden by the consideration that marriages are lawful, and the children legitimate, whether the parents be believers or unbelievers. In this passage, then, we have a very express avowal of the principle of representation, proved to obtain in the case of circumcision under the Old Testament. The child is accounted clean because the parent is clean; or, to translate the phrase into ecclesiastical language, the child is entitled to Church membership because the parent is a Church member.<sup>2</sup> We recognise at once the identity of the principle under the former economy and the present; and we are entitled to hold as proved the fourth of our general propositions, namely, that the principle on which the initiatory ordinance of admission into the Church of God has been administered, has been the same in former and in latter times, and has always applied to the case of infants.

V. The practice in regard to the administration of the initiatory ordinance has been the same in former and in latter times, and has always included the case of infants.

This is the fifth and last of the general propositions which I laid down at the outset; and after what has already been established, it requires no more than the briefest notice. Of course in regard to the practice of the Old Testament Church the proposition may be regarded as proved; the circumcision of the infant eight days old being the standing proof of the practice of the Church in former times. With regard to the practice of the Church under the Gospel, there are two preliminary remarks which it is important to carry along with us. First, the uniform practice of the ancient Church down to the epoch of the Gospel, taken in connection with the total silence of Scripture as to any change of practice when the Jewish passed into the Christian Church, is itself very nearly conclusive as to the practice of the early Christians in regard to infant Baptism. Second,

there is not a single instance among all the Baptisms recorded in Scripture in which we find a person, who had grown up a Christian and without Baptism, receiving the ordinance when he became an adult. We have many examples of adult Baptism in Scripture, but none of adults who for years had been Christians before they received the ordinance.

Carrying these remarks along with us, nothing more is necessary, in regard to the practice of the Primitive Church in the matter of infant Baptism, than to refer to the frequent and almost constant mention of the Baptism of "households" and "families," in which it is morally certain that there must have been infant members. "I baptized the household of Stephanas." "He was baptized, and all his, straightway." "She was baptized, and her household," etc. Such expressions as these, interpreted in the light of the previous undoubted practice of the Jewish Church, can admit of only one meaning. Infants are not mentioned specifically as baptized along with the parents, because it is taken for granted that everybody understood that they were. Had they been pointedly and separately mentioned in such cases, it would very fairly and reasonably have given rise to the suspicion or inference that infant Baptism was in principle an entire novelty, that it was a new thing for the Church to have infant members. The notices of household and family Baptisms, that occur in the New Testament so repeatedly, cannot be explained on the theory of the Antipædobaptists, that the family or household were adults. In the case of Lydia, for example, it is said: "She was baptized, and her household." If, according to the theory of the opponents of infant Baptism, the household of Lydia consisted of adults, who separately and personally were converted like herself, and on a personal profession of faith like hers were separately baptized, it is very difficult to understand why their conversion and Baptism were not, like hers, separately mentioned, or on what principle they are all merged under her single name. Upon the theory of infant Baptism, on the contrary, it is easy to understand how infants, with no personal profession of faith, and no conversion like her own, were merged under her name as "her household." Under the

circumstances of the Apostolic Church, the repeated mention of household or family Baptism is of itself decisive evidence of the practice by which infants were baptized. We are justified in saying that our fifth and last proposition, like the former, is sufficiently established, namely, that the practice in regard to the administration of the initiatory ordinance of the Church has been the same in former and in latter times, and has always included the case of infants.<sup>2</sup>

## **SECTION IV.**

### **OBJECTIONS TO INFANT BAPTISM**

We have been occupied of late with the consideration of the general principles laid down in Scripture, upon which the lawfulness and duty of the Baptism of infants may be argued. I have endeavoured to establish and explain five general propositions, from any of which singly, but more especially from all taken together, may be drawn a proof in favour of infant Baptism. In doing this I adopted, as upon the whole the best, the plan of following the natural order of the argument, without caring to turn aside at every step to answer the objections which Antipædobaptists have urged against it, except when these lay directly in the line of my own illustration of it. In the right understanding of the argument itself, there is contained an answer to these objections, so that they may be considered as in a good degree met by anticipation. But still, as the subject is an important one, and as it may better help to develop the principles of the argument, I shall now proceed to consider some of the most common and plausible of the objections brought by Antipædobaptists against the relevancy or conclusiveness of our reasonings.

That in the case of infants baptized, there are difficulties connected with their condition as infants, which it may be hard to solve, it would be useless to deny. But that those difficulties, in one form or other, are peculiar to infant Baptism, and nowhere else to be met

with, may reasonably be questioned. Above all, that those difficulties should be permitted to overbear the very strong and cumulative evidence from Scripture in favour of the doctrine and practice, it is not the part of truth or wisdom to assert. And yet I believe that it is mainly those difficulties which have led many to scruple to accept as valid or conclusive the Scripture evidence for infant Baptism. In what sense, or to what effect, infants are interested in the ordinance of Baptism, or benefited by it; what explanation is to be given of the use and efficacy of the Sacrament in their case; in what manner we are to reconcile infant participation in the sign and seal of the covenant of grace with the absence of intelligence and responsibility in infants: these are difficulties which have had more to do in bringing about that state of mind which has led many to declare infant Baptism to be unscriptural, than the force of Scripture argument against it. I believe that these difficulties which have influenced so many against the practice of infant Baptism, and which at first sight appear to be peculiar to it, are not really peculiar to it. In one shape or other, and to a greater or less extent, these difficulties are to be encountered in the case of adult Baptism as much as in the case of infant; and, indeed, are common to the supernatural grace or virtue connected with all Divine ordinances. Such difficulties may appear more palpably and prominently in their association with infant Baptism, and by many have been regarded as connected with it alone; but in reality they will be found in greater or less measure present, wherever we admit that the work of the Spirit of God in His own ordinances is present, making them the means or instruments of supernatural grace.

This matter will come on for consideration at a subsequent stage, when I proceed to deal with the question of the efficacy of Baptism in the case of infants. I advert to it at present for the purpose of indicating my conviction that the source of not a few of the objections to infant Baptism is to be found, not in the Scripture evidence against it, but rather in those difficulties which are thought to embarrass the theory or explanation of its efficacy. It is plain that, in the first instance, our duty is to examine and weigh the Scripture

evidence on the subject, and to be guided in our belief and practice by its force and conclusiveness. It is only in the second instance that it is lawful for us to inquire as to what explanation is to be given of the difficulties which stand connected with the Scripture ordinance. Objections drawn from the mere difficulty of framing a theological theory of the Sacrament, in its application to infants, are not for one instant to be allowed to contradict Scripture evidence, where it is clear and conclusive on the subject. That such evidence we have in support of infant Baptism, the heads of argument already given may be enough to evince. Postponing, then, for after consideration, the question of the efficacy of the ordinance in the case of infants, and the difficulties alleged to be connected with that point, because that question ought not to be allowed to interfere with the Scripture evidence to be weighed and examined in the first place, I now go on to consider some of the common and most plausible objections to that evidence as it has been already laid down.

The objections generally urged against the Scripture argument for infant Baptism, may be ranged under two heads: those which deny the relevancy of a large portion of our reasoning; and those which controvert the conclusiveness of it. There are two general objections which I shall examine, as commonly urged against the relevancy of the argument; and there are two objections also which I shall notice, directed against the conclusiveness of our reasoning. Under these heads we shall probably be able to discuss all that is of much weight or plausibility in the objections of Antipædobaptists.

I. Under the head of objections to the relevancy of our reasoning in favour of infant Baptism, I remark in the first place, that not a few object to our argument as one based upon, as they allege, an outward and ceremonial dispensation that was to be done away, and which has no place under the Gospel. They regard our reasoning from the Abrahamic covenant as irrelevant to our duty or practice under the Gospel economy; and hold that, in transplanting the custom of affixing to infants the outward seal of the covenant from the ancient to the present dispensation, we are borrowing the carnal ordinances

of a bygone time, and giving them, without warrant and unlawfully, a place in the spiritual Church of Christ.

Now in reference to this objection, it is at once admitted, that the argument for infant Baptism rests partly, although not by any means exclusively, upon a consideration of the Abrahamic covenant and Church. But it rests upon nothing peculiar to that Church, or that has been done away with. It is not unfrequently demanded of the advocates of infant Baptism, why they so often begin their argument in favour of a New Testament ordinance, such as Baptism, from the days of Abraham and from the nature of the covenant made with him. The answer to such a question is very plain. We not unfrequently begin with the Abrahamic covenant in the argument for infant Baptism, because with Abraham the Gospel Church was first formally established, and endowed with that ordinance which we believe to be in its character and use identical with Baptism. No doubt the Church of God had existed from the days of the first promise made to Adam of a Saviour, and of the first believer in that promise; and downward to the present time, under all its different forms, a Church has existed in this world. But with Abraham, and not before, began that outward provision in the Church for the admission of infants by means of an initiatory rite which was to signify and seal their interest in the covenant of grace; and therefore, in seeking to ascertain the meaning and nature and use of that initiatory rite, whether you view it under the form of circumcision in other days, or of Baptism now, it is both natural and lawful to go back to its origin and first institution the better to understand it. Circumcision was, in short, the Baptism of the Church of God in former days; and in arguing in respect to its use and administration, it is both justifiable and reasonable to inquire into its origin, and into the terms on which it was originally enforced. Nor is there the slightest ground for alleging that in doing this we are guilty of transplanting an Old Testament, carnal, and temporary practice into the New Testament and spiritual Church without warrant, and against the meaning and nature of Gospel ordinances. It is granted, that there is a vast and unspeakable difference between the



spirituality of the Gospel dispensation and the outward and ceremonial nature of the Jewish economy. But it is carefully to be remarked,—and if marked, would prevent much confusion in the argument,—that although in popular and common language we are wont to speak of the Jewish and Christian Churches as if they were two separate and contrasted Churches, and not one Church under two dispensations, yet strictly speaking the expression is not correct, and has led to much confusion both of thought and argument on this question as well as on others. There were two dispensations, the Jewish and the Christian; a carnal and outward dispensation, and a spiritual and more inward one. But it was the same Church of God under both, identical in character and essence, and all that is fundamental to a Church; although in the one case, under the Mosaic dispensation, it was the Church encircled by and subsisting in a carnal and outward economy, and in the other case, under the Gospel dispensation, it was the same Church encircled by and subsisting in a less outward and more spiritual economy. What belonged to the mere dispensation within which the Church of God was at any time encircled might be done away; what belonged to the Church itself was not to be done away.

There are two brief considerations that will be sufficient to remove the objection to the relevancy of our argument for infant Baptism, from the alleged fact that it is built upon the practice of a former and temporary dispensation.

1. As already indicated, the objection is founded on the fallacy that the Old Testament Church and the New Testament Church were not one but different Churches; the one being carnal and the other spiritual,—the one being outward and ceremonial, as contrasted with the other, which is not so. It is hardly necessary to repeat what has already been largely established, that the Church of God has been one and the same in all ages, whether it is made up of "the household of Abraham" whom the patriarch circumcised, or "the household of Stephanas" whom Paul baptized; whether it numbers as its members Jews as in the days of Moses, or Gentiles as in our own. The outward

dispensation superinduced upon the Church was changed from time to time; but the Church itself remained the same. Circumcision did not belong to the dispensation; it belonged to the Church. The initiatory ordinance by which infants were admitted as its members, was appointed more than four hundred years before the Jewish dispensation, and was administered before as well as during the period of the ceremonial economy. That economy, with its legal observances and symbolic ritual, might have been removed, as indeed it was removed, at the introduction of the Gospel dispensation; and yet, had God not intended to introduce Baptism in the place of circumcision in these latter times, circumcision might have still remained in force as the initiatory rite of His Church, in virtue of the place which it had in the Abrahamic covenant. Circumcision was independent either of the introduction or abolition of the law of Moses; and would have continued the standing ordinance for admission into the Church of God, as the seal of the covenant of grace, had not Baptism been expressly appointed as a substitute for it.

2. The objection to our reasoning, that it is founded on the practice of a bygone and temporary dispensation, arises partly out of a misapprehension in regard to the typical nature of the ordinance. Under the general and comprehensive formula that all types are now merged in their antitypes, and that all that was symbolic in other days is abolished in the New Testament Church, Antipædobaptists have argued in support of the conclusion that circumcision belonged to a temporary economy, which can be no precedent under the Gospel. Now circumcision may, it is frankly admitted, have served the purpose of a type of Christian sanctification under the ancient economy; and as a type, it had place no longer than until the antitype was realized. But it cannot be denied that it served another purpose also. It cannot be denied that it was instituted and used as a sacramental ordinance in the Church of God, altogether apart from its typical character as expressive of Christian regeneration; that it was, in short, a sign and seal of the covenant of grace. And in this character, which it unquestionably sustained, over and above its

typical one, we cannot regard it as part and parcel of the Mosaic institute; nor is there any ground for alleging that, in appealing to the authority of circumcision in favour of infant Baptism, we are appealing to a carnal dispensation as a precedent for the practice of the Gospel Church.

II. But under the head of objections to the relevancy of our reasoning for infant Baptism, I remark, in the second place, that not a few object to our argument, because, as they allege, it is applicable to an outward, but not applicable to a spiritual, Church. This second objection is no more than a modification of the preceding one. It is allied to the fallacy that circumcision was the badge of a temporary and typical dispensation, opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, and not to be represented under the Gospel by any parallel or identical ordinance, equally binding, and equally administered to infants.

In many cases, the source of the feeling which regards infant Baptism as akin to an outward but unsuited to the character of a spiritual Church, is to be found in the denial of the Scripture distinction, so important to be kept in mind, between the visible and invisible Church. When the character of the Church as a visible corporate society is ignored or denied,—when the Church on earth is identified with the invisible Church made up of true believers alone,—when the title to membership in the Church here below is restricted to a saving faith in Christ and regeneration by His Spirit, and none but those possessed of saving faith are considered to have a right to entrance,—when such views as to the nature of the Church and its membership are held, it is not unnatural, but the reverse, that infants should be regarded as not members of the Church, and that infant Baptism should be accounted a misapplication of the ordinance. And hence, historically, it is a fact of great significance and interest, that among Independents, who deny the distinction between the visible and invisible Church, mainly, if not entirely, have been found also that religious party who deny infant Baptism; while among Presbyterians, whose principles lead them to mark distinctly and maintain strongly the difference between the visible and invisible Church, few or no

deniers of the lawfulness of infant Baptism have been found. I feel myself exempted from the necessity of falling back upon the question of the grounds on which the important distinction between the visible and invisible Church of Christ rests, inasmuch as these have been fully argued at a previous stage in our discussions. It is enough for me to remind you that the Church of Christ, as exhibited in this world, has, as we have already established, a visible and corporate character, and is possessed of certain outward privileges and certain outward ordinances, by which it is known in the eyes of men, as well as an inward and spiritual character, by which it is known in the eyes of God; that the tares grow side by side with the wheat in the enclosure of the Christian Church; and that even the external provision of ordinances and Sacraments, administered, although they may be, in numberless instances, to merely nominal Christians, is not to be undervalued or set aside, but rather esteemed a gift of God to His Church exceedingly great and precious. The ordinance of Baptism, administered to infants as well as to adults, forms part of the outward provision of ordinance which God has made for the visible Church. And it is an unscriptural theory, which, by denying the existence of such a Church, and assuming one purely and exclusively spiritual, would bear with an unfriendly influence on the doctrine and practice of infant Baptism.

But passing from the objections to the relevancy of our argument in favour of infant Baptism, I go on to consider some of the more common objections to the conclusiveness of our reasonings.

1st, Under the head of the objections to the conclusiveness of the reasoning in favour of infant Baptism, I remark, in the first place, that it has been objected against infant Baptism that there is no express or explicit command in the New Testament to administer the ordinance to infants.

It is readily admitted that Baptism is a positive institution; and that in regard to the nature and use of positive institutions in the Church of Christ we must be guided solely by the communications of the

Word of God in regard to them. But that the objection to infant Baptism from the absence of a positive and articulate formula, enjoining the administration of the Sacrament to infants, is of no real force, can be readily evinced.

First, the absence in Scripture of an express formula enjoining any duty, is no proof that the duty is not required; and the absence of any express formula imposing the duty of infant Baptism in particular, is no argument against the practice, but the reverse. Looking at the proposition as a general one applicable to all cases, it is evidently both unwarrantable and perilous to lay down as a canon of Scripture interpretation, that whenever there is no express and explicit injunction, in so many words, requiring a duty to be performed, there the deed is unlawful, or at least not commanded. It is unwarrantable; because we have no right to limit God as to the form in which He may be pleased to make known to us His will, if, in one form or other, it is made known. It is perilous as regards ourselves; because there can be no more dangerous position than to assume the attitude of refusing to regard the will of God intimated to us, because it is not intimated in the manner which we may consider the plainest and the best. Whatever is laid upon us in Scripture, whether it be in the way of direct and explicit commandment, or in the way of indirect but necessary inference from what is commanded, is equally binding and of Divine obligation.

But the absence of any express formula enforcing the Baptism of infants in Scripture is more especially and emphatically to be regarded as no argument against the practice, but rather an argument on its side. A positive formula for infant Baptism, parallel to that which was given to the Apostles, to preach the Gospel, and to baptize all nations, would have looked very much as if infant Baptism was a novelty in the Church, unknown in principle and substance before. To preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, to baptize the Gentiles, were duties unknown to the exclusiveness of the Jewish Church; and hence a new and express formula enjoining them was necessary at the outset of the new economy. Had the admission of infants as

members been equally unknown to the Church, there would have been a no less urgent necessity for an express and explicit command in regard to it. But infants had been accounted and treated as members of the Church of God for well nigh four thousand years; and at the era of the Gospel dispensation there was no need for the proclamation of any new law in regard to their admission. Any such new law formally enjoining it might well have given rise to the idea that the practice had never been heard of before; that it was as much a new thing in the Church as seeking to proselytize and baptize the Gentile nations was. All that was necessary was a positive intimation that the outward manner of admitting infants into the Church was to be different under the Gospel from what it was before,—that the ordinance of Baptism was to be used instead of circumcision; and such an intimation is very expressly given both in the way of precept and example in the New Testament. Anything beyond this in the shape of an express formula to admit infants into the Church would reasonably have led to the belief that they had been excluded before.

Second, in reply to the objection to infant Baptism taken from the absence of any explicit injunction of the practice, it may be remarked that exactly the same objection may be brought against other Christian duties, which notwithstanding are generally or universally acknowledged to be duties, because, in the absence of an express command, the authority of Scripture imposing them can be certainly learned by "good and necessary inference." For example, the duty of females to commemorate the Lord's death at His table, and the duty of keeping the Sabbath under the Gospel, are not, it has often been remarked, expressly enjoined by any separate formula in the New Testament Scriptures. The duty of females to join in the Lord's Supper is only to be gathered inferentially by a process of reasoning not more direct than that which establishes the lawfulness and duty of infant Baptism. In like manner, the duty of keeping the first day of the week holy unto the Lord can claim no express or separate injunction in the New Testament any more than the practice of infant Baptism can.

There is a marked resemblance, indeed, between the sanctification of the first day of the week and the practice of baptizing infants, in regard both to what is enjoined and what is left to be inferred in respect of each, in the New Testament. The sanctification of one day in seven was not a new appointment in the Christian Church, but rested on the practice and authority of the more ancient dispensation of God; and hence there is no re-enactment in the New Testament of the general Sabbath law. But the change in the circumstance of the time when the Sabbath was to be kept, was a new appointment under the Gospel; and hence, by explicit examples of an authoritative kind, the change of the day is intimated and fixed in the New Testament. Exactly parallel to this, the admission of infants as members of the Church was no new appointment in the Church of God at the introduction of the Gospel dispensation; and hence it was left very much to rest for its authority on the previous law and practice of the Church, without any re-enactment of what was binding before. But the change in the form of admitting infants into the Church,—the change from circumcision to Baptism,—was a new appointment; and hence, by explicit command and example in the New Testament, we have authority for the change.

Third, in reply to the objection against infant Baptism, drawn from the absence of any separate authority for the practice, it might be enough to challenge the Antipædobaptist upon his own principles to prove his own practice to be scriptural; and show an explicit precept or explicit precedent for baptizing the child of a Church member not along with the parent in his infancy, but afterwards when the child has grown to manhood. The inspired history of the Christian Church contained in the Acts of the Apostles embraces a period of more than twice the number of years required to allow the infants of a baptized convert themselves to grow up to the years of discretion, when they might have been accounted able to make a personal profession of their faith, as their parents had done before; and yet there is neither precept nor example in Scripture giving express authority for baptizing the children of Christian parents, after they had grown up to years of maturity, apart from the case of adult converts, which

forms common ground to both parties in this controversy. Tried by their own principles, the practice of Antipædobaptists would be found wanting in Scripture authority.

2d, Under the head of objections to the conclusiveness of our reasoning for infant Baptism, I remark further, that it is commonly or universally objected by Antipædobaptists against the practice of infant Baptism, that faith, or at least a profession of faith, in Christ, is positively demanded as a prerequisite to Baptism in all cases; and that as infants cannot have such faith, or make such a profession, they cannot be admitted to the ordinance. Of the fact asserted in this objection, namely, that a profession of faith is required, both by the scriptural commission given to the Apostles to baptize, and by the apostolic examples in this matter, on the part of the person to be baptized in all ordinary cases, there is no room for doubt. We have already had occasion to illustrate and assert the fact against the doctrine and practice of indiscriminate Baptism. But the fact there asserted is too narrow a foundation to build an objection on against infant Baptism.

In the first place, the demand of Scripture for faith or a profession of faith, as a prerequisite for Baptism, is a demand that has respect to adults, and is not addressed to infants; and not being addressed to infants, it cannot be regarded as laying down the conditions or terms on which infants are to be made partakers of the ordinance. It is quite plain that those passages of Scripture in which a profession of faith is connected with Baptism, like the Scriptures at large, are intended for adults and not for infants,—for the common and general case of men in the full possession of their intellectual and moral powers, and not for the exceptional case of infants not in full possession of those powers. That this is the case, the single consideration that the Bible is God's message to men and not to infants, is enough to prove; unless it could be shown, which it cannot, that in those passages, not men but infants are specifically referred to. The passages usually quoted by Antipædobaptists in support of their objection, are the commission to the Apostles, as



recorded in Mark, and the saying of Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The apostolic commission in Mark is to this effect: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned." It is abundantly obvious that this language applies primarily to the ordinary case of adults, and not to the exceptional case of infants; and while the order—first belief, and then Baptism—refers to adults, it cannot apply to infants, to whom the Gospel cannot be preached, and who cannot be expected to believe it. Are infants, then, in virtue of this passage, to be excluded from Baptism, because in consequence of their infancy they are excluded from believing? Certainly not; for by the very same argument they would be excluded also from salvation. The order of the passage is, first, belief; second, Baptism; third, salvation. And if, on the strength of this passage, infants, as Antipædobaptists assert, are to be excluded from Baptism because they are excluded from believing, they must, in like manner, be excluded from salvation too.

The saying of Philip addressed to the Ethiopian eunuch, is quite as little available for the Antipædobaptist objection. "If," said Philip, addressing the man upon whose understanding and heart there had dawned, through the evangelist's preaching, a saving knowledge of Christ,— "if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized." The language was addressed to an adult in the full possession of all his powers of mind, and laid down for him the order of faith as preceding Baptism. But Philip never applied the same language, nor laid down the same order, in the extraordinary case of infants, whose salvation must be according to a different order and a different method. The announcements of Scripture which imply the necessity of faith or a profession of faith in order to Baptism, are framed upon the principle of adult Baptism, not upon the exceptional case of infant Baptism.

In the second place, the objection of Antipædobaptists, grounded on the impossibility of infants complying with the conditions on which Baptism ought to be administered, may be proved to be fallacious by

a consideration of the case of circumcised infants. That infants were circumcised, and had a title to be so, will not by any party be denied. And yet circumcision involved in it the very same profession of faith, in all its essential respects, that Baptism now does. Substantially, it is the same ordinance as Baptism. It expressed the same truths. It implied on the part of the worthy recipient essentially the same spiritual qualifications. That this was the case is very expressly asserted by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians. "Every man," says he, "that is circumcised is a debtor to do the whole law." In other words, circumcision in the case of the person circumcised involved a profession of his obligation to keep God's law, very much in the same manner as Baptism involves such a profession now. And yet infants, incapable of making such a profession, were circumcised. And exactly on the same principle, infants incapable now of making such a profession are to be baptized.

In the third place, the objection of Antipædobaptists may be proved to be groundless by a consideration of the case of infants saved. The very same difficulty, if difficulty it can be called, alleged to stand in the way of the doctrine of infant Baptism, applies with undiminished force to the case of infant salvation. "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned." Such is the simple and unchangeable formula that declares in Scripture the order and connection of faith and salvation. It is a formula adopted and intended to apply to the case of adults, responsible for their belief; and it makes the salvation of their souls to be suspended on the existence of their faith. Interpreted in the same manner, and applied in the same unlimited extent to infants, it would close against them the door of the kingdom of heaven, and exclude the possibility of their salvation; for they are incapable, by reason of their infancy, of that faith which stands connected with the justification of the sinner before God. Shall we, in virtue of the Antipædobaptist canon of criticism, proceed to reverse the Saviour's words, and turn His blessing into a curse, and say in regard to infants, that of such is not the kingdom of heaven? Or shall we not, on the contrary, reject a

canon of interpretation that would lead to such results, and rather say that infants are subjects both of Baptism and salvation?

## **SECTION V.**

### **THE EFFICACY OF INFANT BAPTISM**

The efficacy of Baptism in the case of adults may be understood' from what has been already said of the nature of the Sacraments in general. Baptism, like the Lord's Supper, is a sign and seal of a federal engagement between the receiver and Christ. It presupposes the existence of justifying and saving grace in the person baptized; and it seals or attests that grace to the soul, in this manner becoming the means of further grace.

There is a meaning in the fact that the person receiving the Sacrament has a part to perform in the ordinance,—that in the Lord's Supper he personally takes and partakes of the elements of bread and wine, and that in Baptism he personally submits himself to and receives the sprinkling of water. In both Sacraments there is a personal act on the part of the participator, which has its spiritual meaning, which cannot and ought not to be overlooked in the transaction. That act forms the link that connects the receiver of the ordinance with the ordinance itself; and the spiritual faith embodied in the act forms the link which connects his soul with the covenant blessings which the ordinance represents. The Sacrament is a seal, then, of more than the covenant generally; it is a seal of the covenant in its appropriation by the believer to himself personally in the ordinance.

There are some theologians indeed who in their explanation of the Sacraments make them seals of the covenant in general, and not seals of the believer's own personal interest in the covenant. They make the Sacraments attestations vouching for God's promises of grace at large, but not vouching for those promises as appropriated

by the believer and realized in the experience of the worthy receiver of the Sacrament. This explanation of the Sacraments, however, is, I think, much too narrow and limited. It overlooks the personal act of the receiver in the Sacrament, and the spiritual meaning of that act. It disowns or neglects as not essential to the ordinance, the part which the participator has to perform, when in the case of the Lord's Supper he personally takes of the bread and wine, or when in the case of Baptism he personally presents himself to be sprinkled with water in the name of the Trinity. There is a spiritual meaning in these personal acts not to be overlooked in our explanation of the Sacraments, and essential to a right understanding of them. These personal acts constitute the part performed by the believer in the covenant transaction between him and Christ in the ordinance, and are necessary to make up the covenant. And the Sacrament, as a seal, is applicable to that part of the covenant transaction by which the believer appropriated the blessing to himself, not less than to that other part of the covenant transaction by which Christ exhibits or makes offer of the promise of grace to the believer. In other words, the Sacrament is not merely a seal of the covenant offered, or exhibited, or declared in general, but a seal of the covenant appropriated by the believer in particular, and, through means of his own spiritual act in the ordinance as well as Christ's, received in his personal experience.

In the case of Baptism administered to a believing adult, his own personal part in the ordinance, when he presents himself to the sprinkling of water, is the sign of that spiritual act of his through which the blessings of justification and regeneration, represented in the Sacrament, have previously become his; and Baptism is to him a seal not merely of these blessings as exhibited and promised in the covenant generally, but of these blessings realized and enjoyed by himself. Through the channel of his faith, and by means of the Spirit in the ordinance, Baptism becomes a seal in his justification and regeneration, and so a means of grace and spiritual blessing to his soul.

Such is the efficacy of Baptism administered to an adult believer. What is the virtue or efficacy of the ordinance when administered to infants incapable of faith, although not incapable of being made partakers in the grace which the Spirit confers? In entering on the consideration of this delicate and difficult subject, it is necessary, in order to clear our way to it, to lay down one or two preliminary propositions of much importance in the discussion.

First, The proper and true type of Baptism, as a Sacrament in the Church of Christ, is the Baptism of adults, and not the Baptism of infants. In consequence of the altered circumstances of the Christian Church at present, as compared with the era when Baptism was first appointed, we are apt to overlook this truth. The growth and prevalence of the visible Church, and the comparative fewness of the instances of adult conversion to an outward profession of Christianity amongst us, have led to the Baptism of infants being almost the only Baptism with which we are familiar. The very opposite of this was witnessed in the Church of Christ at first. And the true type of Baptism, from examining which we are to gather our notions of its nature and efficacy, is to be found in the adult Baptisms of the early days of Christianity, and not in the only Baptism commonly practised now in the professing Church, the Baptism of infants. It is of very great importance, in dealing with the question of the nature and efficacy of Baptism, to remember this. Both among the enemies and the friends of infant Baptism the neglect of this distinction has been the occasion of numberless errors in regard to the import and effects of the Sacrament. Men have judged of the nature and efficacy of Baptism from the type of the ordinance, as exhibited in the case of baptized adults. They have reversed the legitimate order of the argument, and argued from the case of infants to that of adults, and not from the case of adults to that of infants. It is abundantly obvious that adult Baptism is the rule, and infant Baptism the exceptional case; and we must take our idea of the ordinance in its nature and effects not from the exception, but from the rule. The ordinance of Baptism is no more to be judged of from its ministration to children, than is the ordinance of preaching to be

judged of from its ministration to children. The Sacrament in its complete features and perfect character is to be witnessed in the case of those subjects of it whose moral and intellectual nature has been fully developed and is entire, and not in the case of those subjects of it whose moral and intellectual being is no more than rudimental and in embryo. Infants are subjects of Baptism in so far as, and no farther than their spiritual and intellectual nature permits of it. And it is an error, abundant illustration of which could be given from the writings both of the advocates and opponents of infant Baptism, to make Baptism applicable in the same sense and to the same extent to infants and to adults, and to form our notions and frame our theory of the Sacrament from its character as exhibited in the case of infants. It is very plain, and very important to remember, that the only true and complete type of Baptism is found in the instance of those subjects of it who are capable both of faith and repentance, not in the instance of those subjects of it who are not capable of either. The Bible model of Baptism is adult Baptism, and not infant.

Second, The virtue of infant Baptism, whatever that may be, is not more mysterious than the virtue ascribed to adult Baptism, although it may have the appearance of being so. It is a very common idea, that the difficulty in framing an explanation of the efficacy of Baptism in the case of infants, is peculiar to the ordinance in its administration to them, and does not attach to it in its administration to adults. I believe that this is not the case. There may be greater difficulty in gathering from the statements of Scripture what the virtue of Baptism really is in its application to infants, than in ascertaining what it is in its application to adults. But to explain the supernatural virtue itself is just as difficult in the one case as in the other, and simply from this reason, that it is supernatural. Up to a certain point it is easy enough to explain the efficacy of adult Baptism, but beyond that fixed point it is impossible to explain it. That point is where the natural efficacy of the ordinance passes into the supernatural efficacy. There is a certain natural influence which Baptism, as expressive of certain spiritual truths, and through means of these truths, is fitted to exert upon the adult, because he is a moral

and intelligent being, with his faculties developed and complete. And this natural influence of Baptism, through means of the truths expressed by it, cannot be exerted upon the infant, because, although he is a moral and intelligent being, his faculties are not developed or complete. As a sign of spiritual truths understood by the adult, and not understood by the infant, Baptism has a certain natural effect on the one and not on the other, which it is not difficult to explain. But this effect is moral or natural, and not, properly speaking, the sacramental efficacy that is peculiar to the ordinance. The sacramental efficacy peculiar to the ordinance is not natural, but supernatural,—an efficacy not belonging to it from its moral character, but belonging to it in consequence of the presence and power of the Spirit of God in the ordinance. This distinctive efficacy of Baptism as a Sacrament, we cannot understand or explain, either in the case of adults or the case of infants. It is a supernatural effect of a gracious kind, wrought by the Spirit of God in connection with the ordinance; and because it is supernatural, it is not more and not less a mystery in the case of infants than in the case of adults.

The supernatural efficacy connected with Baptism, and owing to the presence of the Spirit of God with the ordinance, is an efficacy competent to infants as much as to adults. Even upon their unconscious natures the Spirit is free to work His work of grace, not less than upon the natures of adults whose understandings and hearts are consciously consenting to the work. The work of regeneration by the Holy Ghost is a work which it is as easy for Him to accomplish upon the infant of days as upon the man of mature age,—upon the child who enjoys but the rudiments of his moral and intellectual life, as upon the adult whose moral and intellectual powers are co-operating in and consenting to the gracious change. But broadly marked although the regeneration of the infant and the regeneration of the adult be, by the absence in the one instance, and the presence in the other, of a capacity moral and intellectual for faith and repentance, yet it is never to be lost sight of or forgotten that the work is the work of the Spirit of God, and not to be explained on any natural principle either in the former case or in the latter. The

presence of his complete and perfect intellectual and moral powers in the case of the baptized adult, and the exercise of those powers in connection with the truths represented and signified in the Sacrament, afford no adequate explanation of the sacramental grace or efficacy connected with the ordinance in consequence of the power of the Spirit in it. At this point we have got beyond the limits of the natural, and into the region of the supernatural; and it is not more and not less supernatural in the case of infants than in the case of adults. Sacramental grace, properly so called, is a mystery of which there is no explanation, except that it is the grace of the Spirit of God. Admit that this grace is conveyed in any given case through the channel of Baptism to the believing adult, and you admit a mystery, which the presence and active exercise of his moral and intellectual powers do not in the least explain. Admit that this grace is conveyed in any given case through the channel of Baptism to the infant incapable of believing, and you admit a mystery too, but one not more mysterious than the former, and not more difficult to explain, from the absence or incapacity of his moral and intellectual faculties. In one word, the efficacy of infant Baptism, whatever that may be shown from Scripture to be, is not more mysterious than the sacramental virtue ascribed to adult Baptism.

Bearing in mind these preliminary remarks, what, I ask, are the effects of Baptism in so far as regards infants baptized? I do not pause at present in order to examine into the nature and benefit of the ordinance in so far as regards parents, who, in the exercise of a parent's right to represent their unconscious children, claim the administration of the ordinance for their offspring. In acting as the substitute for the infant, who cannot act for itself, in the solemn federal transaction between it and Christ,—in becoming a party in its name to the covenant made between the baptized infant and its Saviour through the ordinance,—the parent comes under a very great and solemn obligation on behalf of the child, thus pledged and given to the Redeemer through the parent's deed and not its own. But passing by this, let us confine our attention to the case of the infant, and proceed to inquire what are the benefits and efficacy of Baptism



to the infant participators in the ordinance? In the case of adults, we know that Baptism is fitted and designed not to confer faith, but rather to confirm it,—not to originate grace, but to increase it,—not to effect that inward change of regeneration by which we are numbered with the children of God, or that outward change of justification by which we are accepted of Him, but to seal these blessings before bestowed. With adults, Baptism is not regeneration or justification, but the seal of both to the regenerated and justified man. And in the case of infants, the Sacrament cannot be regarded as accomplishing without their faith, what in the case of adults with their faith, it fails to accomplish. In other words, infant Baptism is not infant regeneration or justification, any more than in the instance of adults. The Baptism with water to a child is not the same thing as the birth by the Spirit. It is not a supernatural charm. It is not a magic spell to confer the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Ghost. Sacraments in the case of infants, as in the case of adults, have no mysterious and supernatural power of their own to impart, by the bare administration of them, spiritual life. Let us endeavour to understand what are the effects of Baptism in the case of infants.

I. Baptism, in the case of all infants baptized, gives to them an interest in the Church of Christ, as its members.

Circumcision gave to infants in other days a place in the ancient Church as its members; and they grew up within its pale entitled to all its outward privileges and rights, needing no other admission in after life. And what circumcision did during the time when it was in force, that Baptism does now in regard to infants baptized. It constitutes the door of admission into that visible Church of God on earth of which the parent himself is a member; and the baptized one grows up within the pale of its distinctive communion, needing no other admission, marked off at least outwardly from a world that has no interest in God, and having a right to the enjoyment of privileges which, as an outward provision for His own in this earth, God has given to them and not to the world. And this of itself is no small

privilege, outward and temporal though it be, and not inward and spiritual. That outward provision of the means of grace, which has been given to the visible Church in this world for its establishment and benefit, is always represented in Scripture as a gift of Christ to His people, not to be undervalued or despised because it comes short, in those who enjoy it, of a saving blessing, but rather to be accounted exceeding great and precious. It is a gift of Christ to His Church which is of such worth and moment that the giving of it is spoken of in the Word of God as one of the great purposes for which the Saviour ascended up on high. "When He ascended up on high," says the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians,— "when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." That outward provision of ordinances and means of grace for the visible Church, the bestowment of which is thus represented as one of the grand objects for which Christ left this world and ascended to the Father, must be to that Church of no ordinary importance and value. It is a right to this provision of outward ordinances and means of grace which the baptized infant receives, when by his Baptism he becomes formally a member of the visible Church; and growing up in the use and enjoyment of them, the benefit to him, although short of a saving benefit, is beyond all price. Baptism as the sign of membership and the passport to the infant into the sanctuary of the visible Church, does not bestow the saving blessing, but brings him in after life into contact with the blessing; it does not constitute him a member of the kingdom of heaven, but it brings him to the very door, and bids him there knock and it shall be opened unto him.

II. Baptism, in the case of all infants baptized, gives them a right of property in the covenant of grace; which may in after life, by means of their personal faith, be supplemented by a right of possession.

In regard to this matter, I would have recourse again to a distinction, which in other discussions we have found it necessary to adopt, and

which has more than once helped us to clear our way to a right understanding of the question in debate. A man may have a right of property in an estate, and yet a stranger may be in possession of it; and he may require to add to his right of property a right of possession, acquired by making good the former in a court of law, before the stranger is extruded, and he himself introduced into the enjoyment of the inheritance. Now, to apply this distinction to the case in hand, a right of property in the blessings of the covenant of grace is conferred by the gift and promise of God, made over to every man who hears the Gospel message addressed to him. "And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." This right of property in the blessings of the covenant of grace, belonging to every man, is written down in these words. The charter which every man has, bearing in it inscribed his right of property to these blessings, is the revealed Word of God. This is the first and superior title. But in itself it is incomplete, and inadequate to put him into the personal possession of his heritage. It requires to be supplemented by another title, before he can actually enjoy the salvation so made over to him by right of property, and certified by God's word and promise. To his right of property there must be added a right of possession; and this latter is obtained by means of his own personal act of faith, appropriating to himself the salvation before made over to him. The Word of God addressed to him, giving him a right of property in the blessings of the covenant, and his faith receiving that Word, giving him a right of possession, complete the full and perfect title to the blessing; and both together admit him to the enjoyment of it. There are many, who have the right of property in the covenant of grace, who never complete their title by seeking for themselves a right of possession in it. The Word of God giving the one, is not supplemented by the faith in that Word which would confer the other; and hence they are never put in actual possession of the salvation of which they are invited to partake.

Now, what the Word of God addressed to the intelligent and responsible adult is, that Baptism is when administered to the unconscious and irresponsible infant. The word of God's promise,

giving a right of property in His covenant to all who hear it, cannot penetrate the silent ear, nor reach the unconscious spirit of the little child. That word cannot convey to its mind the glad tidings of its covenant right to God's grace. But is it therefore denied that right, which adults have by the hearing of the ear and the perception of the understanding, in connection with the word of promise addressed to them? Not so. If the outward word that speaks the promise of God cannot pierce to its dormant spirit,—sleeping in the germ of its moral and intellectual being,—the outward sign, that represents the promises of God, can be impressed upon it, giving to the unconscious infant, as the word gives to the intelligent adult, a right of property in the blessing of the covenant. And that is much. The infant, sprinkled with the water of that Baptism which is a sign of the covenant, has—even as the adult addressed with the word of the covenant has—a right of property in the blessings which the covenant contains; and in after life he may, by his own personal act, supplement his right of property by a right of possession obtained through faith. When the period of infancy is passed and he is a child no longer, he bears about with him, in virtue of his Baptism, a right of property in the promise of his God; and laying his hand upon that right, and pleading it with God in faith, he may add to it the right of possession, and so enter into the full enjoyment of the salvation that he requires for his soul. The written or preached Word cannot speak to the mute and insensible infant, as it speaks to the hearing ear and understanding mind of the adult, making over to him in conscious possession a right of property in the blessings of the everlasting covenant. But the little one is not thereby shut out from all interest in the covenant. The outward sign suited to his state of infancy, the outward mark impressed upon his outward person, when the significant Word were in vain addressed to his ear, have been given by God in gracious condescension to supply to him the want of that Word heard and understood. By the act of Baptism, suited and appropriate to his wholly sensitive condition of being and life, his name is put into the covenant with his God. And after years may witness the infant,—then an infant no more,—reading in faith his name there, and with the charter of his right in his hand making good his right, not of property

merely, but of personal possession in all the blessings which are written in it.

Baptism, then, in the case of all baptized infants, gives them a right of property in the covenant of grace; which may in after life, by means of their personal faith, be supplemented by a right of possession, so that they shall enter into the full enjoyment of all the blessings of the covenant. The benefits of Baptism in the case of infants are not fully experienced by them until in after years they add to Baptism their personal faith, thereby really making out a complete title, not only to the property, but also to the possession of salvation. In this respect there is an obvious distinction between the Baptism of infants and the Baptism of adults. Infants are not capable of faith and repentance; and Baptism can be to infants no seal of the blessings which these stand connected with, at the time of its administration. But it may become a seal of such blessings afterwards, when the child has grown to years of intelligence, and has superinduced upon his Baptism a personal act of faith, and thereby become possessed of the salvation which he had not before. In such a case, he can look back upon his Baptism with water, administered in the days of his unconscious infancy; and through the faith that he has subsequently received, that Baptism which his own memory cannot recall, and to which his own consciousness at the time was a stranger, becomes to him a seal of his now found salvation. In adults it is otherwise; and the difference is appropriate to their condition as adults. Baptism to the believing adult is a seal at the moment of his interest in the covenant of grace; a sensible attestation of the blessings of justification and regeneration, of which at the time he is in possession, through the exercise of his faith contemporaneously with his Baptism. In the case of the adult, Baptism is a present seal in connection with the faith which he presently has. In the case of the infant, it is a prospective seal in connection with the faith which he has not at the moment, but which he may have afterwards. The full enjoyment of the benefits of the ordinance the adult experiences at the moment of its administration, in virtue of the faith which at the moment makes him a partaker in

the blessings of the covenant. The full enjoyment of the benefits of the ordinance the infant cannot experience at the moment of its administration, in virtue of his incapacity of faith; but it may be experienced afterwards, when, in consequence of his newly formed faith in Christ, he too is made partaker of the covenant, and can look back in believing confidence on his former Baptism as a seal. "The efficacy of Baptism," says the Confession of Faith, "is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will in His appointed time."

III. There seems to be reason for inferring that, in the case of infants regenerated in infancy, Baptism is ordinarily connected with that regeneration.

To all infants without exception, Baptism, as we have already asserted, gives an interest in the Church of Christ as its members. To all infants without exception, Baptism, as we have also already asserted, gives a right of property in the covenant of grace, which may, by their personal faith in after life, be completed by a right of possession, so that they shall enter on the full enjoyment of all the blessings sealed to them by their previous Baptism. And beyond these two positions, in so far as infants are concerned, it is perhaps hazardous to go, in the absence of any very explicit Scripture evidence; and certainly, in going further, it were the reverse of wisdom to dogmatize. But I think that there is some reason to add to these positions the third one, which I have just announced, namely, that in the case of infants regenerated in infancy, Baptism is ordinarily connected with such regeneration. I would limit myself to the case of baptized infants regenerated in infancy,—a class of course to be distinguished broadly from baptized infants who never at any time in their lives experience a saving change; and also to be distinguished from baptized infants who experience that change, not in infancy, but in maturer years. There are these three cases, plainly

to be distinguished from one another. There are, first, those infants baptized with an outward Baptism who never at any period come to know a saving change of state or nature. To such Baptism may be an ordinance giving them a place in the visible Church, and giving them also a right of property in the covenant of grace, never completed by a right of possession, and therefore given to them in vain; but it can be nothing more. There are, secondly, those infants baptized with water in infancy, but not regenerated in infancy by the Spirit of God, whose saving change of state and nature is experienced by them in after life. To such Baptism is an ordinance giving them a place in the visible Church, and giving them also a right of property in the covenant, at the moment of its administration; and in after years, when born again by the Spirit through faith, Baptism becomes to them, in addition, the seal, as it had previously been the sign, of the covenant,—their right of property having been completed by the right of possession, and the Sacrament, although long past, having become in consequence a present grace to their souls. But there are, thirdly, those infants baptized with water in infancy and also regenerated in infancy; and with regard to them I think there is reason to believe that this Baptism with water stands connected ordinarily with the Baptism of the Spirit.

That many an infant is sanctified and called by God even from its mother's womb, and undergoes, while yet incapable of faith or repentance, that blessed change of nature which is wrought by the Spirit of God, there can be no reason to doubt. There are multitudes born into this world who die ere their infancy is past,—who open their unconscious eyes upon the light only to shut them again ere they have gazed their fill,—and who, in the brief moment of their earthly being, know nothing of life save the sorrow which marks both its beginning and its close. And with regard to such infants dying in infancy, there is a blessed hope, which the Scriptures give us to entertain, that they are not lost but saved,—that they suffer, and sorrow, and die here from their interest in Adam's sin, but that, not knowing sin by their own personal act or thought, they are redeemed through their interest in Christ's righteousness. But saved though

infants dying in infancy may be, yet there is no exemption, even in their case, from the universal law of God's spiritual dispensation towards men, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Within the brief hour of an infant's life, and ere the unconscious babe passes through the avenue of death into the Divine presence, must that mighty change of regeneration be undergone, which none but the Spirit of God can work; and among the rudiments of its intellectual and moral life, sleeping in the germ, there must be planted the seed of that higher life, which in heaven is destined to expand and endure through all eternity. And where, in the brief history of the young life and early death of these baptized little ones, shall we say that this mysterious work is wrought? At what moment, rather than another, is this regeneration by the Spirit accomplished? We dare not limit the free Spirit of God. The beginning of the life that comes from Him may be contemporaneous with the commencement of natural life in the infant, or it may be contemporaneous with its close. The Spirit of God is free to do His own work at His own time. But in the appointment of an ordinance to signify and represent that very work,—in the command to administer that ordinance as a sign to the little infant during the brief hour of its earthly life and ere it passes into eternity, there does seem to me some ground to believe that in such a case, of infants regenerated in infancy, the sign is meant to be connected with the thing signified,—that the moment of its Baptism is the appointed moment of its regeneration too,—and that, ordinarily, its birth by water and its birth by the Spirit of God are bound in one. It is Baptism which gives the baptized infant a right of property in the blessings of the covenant of grace; and when the infant is placed,—not from its own fault,—in such circumstances as to bar the possibility of its completing its title to those blessings by seeking through its personal faith a right of possession in them also, then it is consistent with the analogy of God's appointments in other departments of His Church, that in such extraordinary cases the absence of a right of possession should not exclude from the blessings, but that the right of property alone should avail to secure them; or in other words, that in the case of infants regenerated and



dying in infancy, their Baptism should coincide with their regeneration.

I do not wish to speak dogmatically on such a question as this, when Scripture has given us so little light to enable us to read the truth with certainty. But in the particular case of infants regenerated in infancy, there does seem to be some reason to believe, that the washing with water in virtue of God's own appointment stands ordinarily connected with the renewing of nature by God's own Spirit. In the instance of believing adults, regeneration is linked inseparably with the Word believed. In connection with the Word,—although the Spirit of God is free to work without it,—He does His mysterious work of regeneration upon the adult's nature. But that Word cannot profit the little infant who is to die ere his eyes can look upon it. The Spirit of God cannot, therefore, do His gracious work of spiritual renewal and cleansing on the unconscious babe in connection with the Word believed. But there is another ordinance adapted to the infant nature, which needs to be regenerated ere it passes into another state of being. There is another ordinance, not the Word, which we are commanded to administer to the babe, incapable of receiving or profiting by the Word. There is the Baptism with water, expressive of that very regeneration which, before the little one shall pass from us to eternity, its unconscious nature must undergo. And when the infant carries with it to the tomb the sign of the covenant, administered in faith, shall we not say that with the sign, and mysteriously linked to it, there was also the thing that was signified; and that in such a case of a dying babe regenerated in infancy, the laver of Baptism was the laver of regeneration too? In the sign of the covenant thus administered to the child, and linked, as we believe, in such a case to a new and spiritual life, there is a ground of hope and consolation to a bereaved but Christian parent beyond all price. There is a joy at its birth, which none but a mother can feel, when it is said unto her that a man-child is born into the world; and there is a bitter sorrow at its early death, which none but a mother can know, when she is called upon to resign the little one whom she brought forth in sorrow, and to give it to the dust in

sorrow deeper still. And when a Christian mother has been called upon thus to weep at the open grave of many of her infants, ere it close in peace upon herself, it is an unspeakable consolation for her to know, that the little one, whom she took from off her bosom to lay in the tomb, was indeed signed with the sign of a Christian Baptism; and that in its case the Baptism with water and the Baptism with the Spirit were bound up in one.

"Oh when a mother meets on high

The babe she lost in infancy,

Hath she not then for pains and fears,

The day of woe, the watchful night,

For all her sorrows, all her tears,

An over-payment of delight?"

## **SECTION VI.**

### **THE MODES OF BAPTISM**

Before passing altogether from the subject of Baptism, it may be desirable briefly to consider the mode or modes in which the ordinance may lawfully be administered. It may seem, indeed, at first sight, a question of no great importance whether we baptize by sprinkling or by immersion,—the former being the method adopted by almost all Protestant Churches and by Western Christendom generally, the latter prevailing to a great extent in the early centuries, and still practised largely in the East. The almost unanimous opinion of orthodox theologians has always been, that Baptism in the name of the Trinity was equally valid in whichever of the two ways referred to it was administered. The position, however, taken up in our own day by many of the advocates of Baptism by immersion has given to

the question an importance not properly belonging to it. The Evangelical Baptists in America, for example,—a numerous and energetic denomination,—deny the validity of Baptism by sprinkling, and declare that all persons thus baptized are living in open sin, should not be regarded as members of the Church of Christ, nor be admitted to the Lord's table. Further, they aver that the English authorized version of the Scriptures is false and unfaithful on the subject of Baptism,—purposely so, many of them add. They have issued accordingly a translation of their own with the requisite changes, and consider,—to use the words of a resolution of the Baptist American and Foreign Bible Society,—"That the nations of the earth must now look to the Baptist denomination alone for faithful translations of the Word of God."

Our translators, in point of fact, seeing that they had to frame their version of the Bible in the very heat of a controversy about Baptism, strove carefully to stand neutral on the subject. They simply gave the Greek word an English dress; instead of βαπτίζω and βαπτισμα, they wrote "baptize" and "baptism," thereby deciding nothing either way.

The real question at issue has been very clearly stated by President Beecher, to whose valuable work on the Mode of Baptism I would refer you for an exceedingly able and exhaustive discussion of this whole subject. "The case," he says, "is this: Christ has enjoined the performance of a duty in the command to baptize. What is the duty enjoined? or, in other words, What does the word 'baptize,' in which the command is given, mean? One of two things must be true: Either it is, as to mode, generic, denoting merely the production of an effect (as purity), so that the command may be fulfilled in many ways; or it is so specific, denoting a definite mode, that it can be fulfilled in but one. To illustrate by an analogous case, Christ said: 'Go, teach all nations.' Here the word go is so generic as to include all modes of going which any one may choose to adopt. If a man walks, or runs, or rides, or sails, he equally fulfils the command. On the other hand, some king or ruler, for particular reasons, might command motion by a word entirely specific, as, for example, that certain mourners

should walk in a funeral procession. Now it is plain that such a command could not be fulfilled by riding or by running, for, though these are modes of going, they are not modes of walking, and the command is not to go in general, but specifically to walk.... So likewise, when Christ said, 'baptize,' He either used a word which had a generic sense, denoting the production of an effect, in any mode, such as 'purify,' 'cleanse;' or a specific sense, denoting a particular mode, such as 'immerse,' 'sprinkle,' 'pour.' "

Now the scriptural meaning of the term βαπτίζω, I believe there is abundant evidence to show, is generic and not specific; it denotes the production of an effect which can be brought about equally well in more ways than one. The adherents of Baptist views, on the other hand, consider that the word is so specific in its signification as to fix down the lawful performance of the duty enjoined to one method only; they hold that "in Baptism the mode is the ordinance; and if the mode is altered, the ordinance is abolished."

The word βαπτω, from which βαπτίζω is derived, was long maintained by Dr. Gale and other advocates of the Baptist theory to have one meaning, and only one, alike in classic, Hellenistic, and ecclesiastical Greek. It meant, they held, to immerse or dip; and it never meant anything else. This view, however, was with good reason abandoned by Dr. Carson, probably the ablest defender of the Baptist theory in our own days. It is now very generally admitted by our opponents on this question that βαπτω has at least two meanings; first, to immerse, and second, to dye or colour. The same is true of the Latin "tingo," and various similar words in other languages. It will not therefore be thought improbable that the derivative βαπτίζω should also have a primary and a secondary meaning. In point of fact, we find that, especially in later Greek, while often denoting to immerse or overwhelm, it means also, in many cases, to wash, sprinkle, cleanse. It is natural, however, to suppose that when transferred from common to ecclesiastical use, and applied in Scripture to a religious ordinance which is confessed by all parties to symbolize regeneration or spiritual purification, the meaning of the

word might undergo some change. The question therefore comes to be, What is the *usus loquendi* of the New Testament as regards the term βαπτίζω? Looking, then, to all the passages in which the word occurs, it becomes plain, I think, that the only meaning which will carry us consistently through all of them is that of purification or cleansing. It is perfectly clear that whatever signification of the word we adopt, we must adhere to it throughout. It is quite true that βαπτίζω may have, and has, more meanings than one in ordinary Greek; but that is when it is applied to different things, and used under different circumstances. It can have but one meaning when used with respect to one definite appointment or rite, and under the same circumstances. This test can be easily applied to the various interpretations of the word in question. Take, for example, the first passage in the New Testament in which the term baptize occurs, the third chapter of Matthew, and substitute for it first the rendering which I have adopted, and then that of our Baptist brethren. It is not difficult, I think, to see which of the two best suits the whole scope of the passage: "Then went out unto John Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, and were purified (immersed, or plunged) of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his purification (immersion, or plunging), he said, ... I indeed purify (immerse or plunge) you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall purify (immerse or plunge) you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.... Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be purified (immersed or plunged) of him. But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be purified (immersed or plunged) of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

That such a transition of meaning should have taken place in the case of the word βαπτίζω, appears very natural when we consider the historical circumstances connected with it. It is repeatedly used in the Septuagint, and in the works of Jewish writers who employed the Hellenistic or Alexandrian dialect, to denote the ceremonial

immersions, washings, and sprinklings with water, blood, or ashes, common among the Jews. These "divers baptisms," as the Apostle Paul calls them, were all practised for the sake of purification, legal or ceremonial. The two ideas, of "baptizing" and of "purifying," were therefore constantly associated in the minds of the Jewish people; and nothing seems more natural than that in the course of time the one should pass into the other, and the words come to be used as synonymous. To recur to the history of the kindred word already alluded to: Men dipped objects in liquid in order to impart colour to them; and βαπτω came to signify "to dye." The Jews immersed, or washed, or sprinkled, in order to attain purity; and so βαπτίζω came to mean "to purify." In Jewish ecclesiastical language, considerably before our Lord's time, βαπτίζω seems to have dropped all reference to mode, and to have become a general term for purifying, practically equivalent to καθαρίζω. A remarkable confirmation of this may be found in the third chapter of John. We are there told that a dispute had arisen between the disciples of John the Baptist and a Jew (as the true reading seems to be; not Jews as in the A. V.) "about purifying" (περικαθαρισμού). Now this dispute, as is shown by the context, was simply about the respective Baptisms of John and of Christ. The followers of the former were jealous on their master's behalf of the seemingly rival claims of our Lord, which had apparently been urged against them by this Jew. "They came unto John, and said, Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come unto Him." The "question about purifying" was just a "question about baptizing;" and the Evangelist uses the words interchangeably, just because in the ecclesiastical language of his day the two meant the same thing.

The evidence by which the position which I have laid down on this subject can be still further established and strengthened, is of a cumulative sort, and for the details of it I must refer you to such works as that by Dr. Beecher, already referred to. With respect to the apostolic practice in this matter, I am disposed to agree with the author last named, that "it is not possible decisively to prove the

mode used by the Apostles; for if going to rivers, going down to the water and up from it, etc., create a presumption in favour of immersion; so does the Baptism of three thousand on the day of Pentecost in a city where water was scarce, and of the jailor (and his household) in a prison, create a presumption in favour of sprinkling. And if a possibility of immersion can be shown in the latter cases, so can a possibility of sprinkling or pouring be shown in the former. The command being to purify, and the facts being as stated, the decided probability is, that either sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, was allowed, and Christian liberty was everywhere enjoyed. A tendency to formalism led to a misinterpretation of Paul in Rom. 6:3, 4, and Col. 2:12; and this gave the ascendancy to immersion, which increased (in the postapostolic Church) until it became general, though it was not insisted on as absolutely essential on philological grounds."

In conclusion, I remark, that many take up what appears to me a wrong ground on this question, in seeking first to prove that the word βαπτίζω, in the whole wide field in which it occurs, sometimes means to immerse, sometimes to wash, sometimes to sprinkle or pour; and then drawing from that the inference that we may lawfully baptize in any of these ways. It may be perfectly true that in profane literature the word has several meanings, but it by no means follows from that fact that, when used ecclesiastically, and applied definitely to one thing, it has more meanings than one. As employed to denote a definite religious rite, the term Baptism must have but one definite signification. And whatever we hold that to be, we must adhere to it throughout, and in all cases in which the word occurs. The true meaning of Baptism in the New Testament I believe to be purification or cleansing. That purification may be effected either by sprinkling or by immersion, according to the dictates of Christian expediency. The command to baptize is a generic command, which may be carried out in either way with equal lawfulness.





# **CHAPTER III:**

## **THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

### **SECTION I.**

#### **NATURE OF THE ORDINANCE**

CHRIST, as Head of His Church, has dealt out to it with a guarded hand merely outward and visible rites. In the provision which He has made for it there is enough in the way of outward and sensible ordinances for creatures made up of flesh as well as spirit to repose upon for the strengthening and confirmation of their faith; and yet not enough to convert their religion from a spiritual to a bodily service, and to transmute their faith into sight. There are but two ordinances, properly speaking, that link the Spirit with the flesh in the Christian Church; and lend the aid of a seen and sensible confirmation to an unseen and saving faith. There is one ordinance adapted to, and, it may be, specially designed for the case of infants, whose moral and intellectual life, still in the germ, lies hidden in a merely sensitive nature; and Baptism administered to the unconscious babe, whose ear cannot hear the word of salvation, becomes a visible and sensible token and seal impressed upon its flesh, of its interest in the covenant of its God. There is a second ordinance in a similar manner adapted for adults, in which an outward and sensible seal gives witness to their inward and unseen faith; and the Lord's Supper, preaching Christ by sign as well as word, is a fleshly witness, speaking to the flesh as well as to the spirit of the believer, of the blessings of the covenant of grace. There are these two, but no more than these two, outward and visible ordinances in the Church of Christ, like material buttresses, to

strengthen and confirm a spiritual and immaterial faith,—the guarded and sparing acknowledgments of the fleshly nature, as well as the spiritual, which in the person of the Christian has shared in the sin, and shared also in the salvation from sin, which he knows.

We cannot doubt that a religion with these two, and neither more nor less than these two, outward rites is divinely proportioned and adapted to the need and benefit of our twofold nature, made up as it is of the fleshly and the spiritual, and both partners in the redemption, as they were formerly partners in the ruin, that belong to us. More than this in the way of the outward and sensible in the religion of Christ would have ministered all too strongly to the carnal and sensuous propensities of our nature, and would have tended towards a system which would have been "meat and drink," and not "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Less than this in the way of outward and sensible ordinance would have left no room in the provision made in the Church for the adequate acknowledgment of our fleshly nature; and denied to our spiritual faith the benefit and support which it derives from some visible witness and confirmation of what it surely believes. Again, Baptism, as commonly administered to entrants into the Church, takes infetment, so to speak, of our flesh when we enter into covenant with Christ, that not even the lower part of our being may be left without the attestation that He has redeemed it. The Lord's Supper, as administered from time to time to those who have been admitted into the Church before, renews this infetment at intervals, and attests that the covenant by which we are Christ's still holds good both for the body and spirit which He has ransomed to Himself. The Sacrament of union to and the Sacrament of communion with Christ, tell that our very dust is precious in His sight, and has shared with the spirit in His glorious redemption. Other ordinances address themselves to the intellectual and moral nature exclusively, and speak of the care of Christ and the provision He has made for the growth and advancement of the spirit in all spiritual strength and life. The two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, at different periods of our natural existence, and commonly in infancy

and age, address themselves to both our outward and inward nature; and speak to us the testimony that both body and soul are cared for and redeemed by Christ, and that both in body and in soul we are His.

In formerly dealing with the case of Baptism as a sacramental ordinance, I endeavoured to ascertain its nature by an appeal to those marks or characteristics, in their application to Baptism, which we have found to define a Sacrament generally. Let us endeavour, by the same process, to make out the true nature and import of the Lord's Supper as a sacramental ordinance.

I. The first mark or characteristic of a Sacrament which we laid down is, that it be a Divine institute appointed by Christ for His Church. There is no religious party, whatever be their opinions in regard to the meaning of the ordinance, who do not hold the Divine appointment of the Lord's Supper as a permanent institution in the Christian Church, with the single exception of the Quakers. According to their view, the Lord's Supper, like Baptism, is to be regarded as a Jewish ordinance, and the practice of it in early times as an accommodation to Jewish prejudices and customs, but an ordinance really opposed in its nature to the spirituality of the Gospel dispensation, and not intended for continuance in the Gospel Church.

Now, in reference to this averment by the Quakers, it cannot be denied that, in the case of the Lord's Supper, as in the case of Baptism formerly noticed, our Lord adopted a Jewish practice or observance, and consecrated it as an ordinance in the Christian Church. The parts and ritual of the Supper are evidently derived from the observances connected with the passover as practised among the Jews. The Christian ordinance seems to be grafted upon the Jewish. We know from the Jewish accounts that we have of the passover service, that the master of the family or priest took unleavened bread, and broke it, and gave thanks to God, in much the same manner as we find it recorded of our Lord at the institution of

the Supper. We know also from the same quarter, that there was one particular cup called "the cup of blessing," or of "thanksgiving," used at the paschal feast, of which the guests partook; and this was followed by the singing of psalms. These usages, connected with the Jewish passover, Christ adopted and accommodated to the ritual of that ordinance which we regard as the commemoration of His own death,—very much in the same manner as the washing with water employed in the Jewish baptisms or purifications was adopted and accommodated by Him to the other Sacrament which He established in the Christian Church. All this must be conceded to the Quaker theory in regard to the origin of the Christian Sacrament of the Supper. But all this, so far from making the ordinance a Jewish one, or justifying the explanation given by Quakers of the apostolic practice of administering it, as a mere accommodation to Jewish customs or feelings, is very evidently calculated to demonstrate the reverse. The adoption of some parts of the paschal feast without the rest,—the eating bread and drinking wine as at the passover by Christians, without the slaying of the paschal lamb,—the observance of the practice at other times than once a year on the return of the anniversary of its first institution,—must, so far from being an accommodation or concession to Jewish feeling or prejudice on the part of the Apostles and first Christians, have been in reality a usage most repugnant to all the habits and prepossessions of the Israelites. The withdrawal of the outward ritual of the paschal service from the object of its original institution, and its destination to the purposes of a feast in commemoration of an event by which that service was abolished, were the very circumstances, above all others, calculated to make the ordinance not acceptable, but revolting, to Jewish feeling.

There is no truth, therefore, but the reverse, in the Quaker assumption, that the temporary continuance of the Lord's Supper in the Christian Church is to be accounted for on the theory of a concession to prejudices on the part of the Jewish converts. Add to this, that both in the statements of Scripture, and in the practice of apostolic men as recorded in Scripture, there is abundant evidence to

prove that the Lord's Supper was no temporary ordinance, destined to pass away with the first merging of the Jewish into the Christian Church; but, on the contrary, was intended to be an abiding appointment for the use of its members. The command of our Lord to the disciples at the moment of the institution of the ordinance, spoke of its standing and permanent observance: "This do in remembrance of me." The connection intimated by the Apostle Paul, in his account of the Supper, between the keeping of it and the second coming of Christ, evinces his opinion of the perpetual duration of the ordinance: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come." The practice in the primitive Church, while under inspired direction in regard to the Lord's Supper, taken in connection with the absence of the faintest indication that it was meant for no more than a temporary purpose, is decisive evidence of the same conclusion. In short, the nature of the ordinance, as a memorial of Christ until that memorial shall be no more required on earth, in consequence of His second appearing,—the command to Jew and Gentile alike to keep the feast,—the universal practice of the Church under apostolic guidance,—and the absence of any statement express or implied in regard to the temporary character of the ordinance,—very clearly and abundantly demonstrate that the Supper of our Lord was a Divine and permanent appointment for the Church.

II. The next mark laid down by us as characteristic of sacramental ordinances, was, that they be sensible and outward signs of spiritual truths; and this mark applies to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

Simple and obvious although the idea be, that in the Lord's Supper we are commemorating, by appropriate and sensible images and actions, the grand spiritual truths characteristic of the Gospel, yet it is the omission or denial of this that has been the primary cause of numberless errors in regard to the nature of the ordinance. The Lord's Supper is not merely a commemoration; it is much more. But the fundamental idea which must be carried along with us in all our explanations of its nature and meaning is, that it is in the first

instance a commemoration of the great truths connected with the death of Christ, as the sacrifice for the sins of His people. Nothing is easier, indeed, than to confound the sign with the thing signified; and nothing is more common in theological argument in reference to this matter. The nature and necessities of language lead us to attribute to the type what is only actually and literally true of the thing imaged or represented by the type; and in the frequent or common identification of the one with the other, we may be led not unnaturally to one or other extreme,—that of sinking the sign in the thing signified, or that of sinking the thing signified in the sign. The result is, either that we make the Sacrament to be nothing more than a sign, with no spiritual reality; or that we make it a mysterious spiritual reality, without being a sign at all. The identifying of the sign with the supernatural grace, and making them one and the same thing, must either lead to the Socinian notion that the Sacraments are nothing but symbols,—thereby evacuating the ordinance of all sacramental grace; or must lead to the Romanist or semi-Romanist notion that they are charms embodying and conveying spiritual grace, without regard to the spiritual meaning realized and appropriated by the believer in the ordinance. Hence the necessity and importance of bringing out distinctly, and laying down broadly, the character which Sacraments possess as signs of spiritual truths.

In regard to the Lord's Supper, nothing can be more distinct or conclusive than the commemorative character which is impressed upon the original institution of the ordinance by our Lord. With regard to the bread, the commandment was: "Take, eat: this is my body broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." With regard to the second element in the ordinance—the cup—the appointment was no less explicit: "This is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." And in entire accordance with these declarations of our Lord as to the grand object of the Supper as commemorative, we have the further statement by the Apostle Paul, received by immediate revelation, as to the nature of the institution: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come." In addition to

all this, which very clearly exhibits the Sacrament of the Supper as in its first and most obvious character commemorative, we have the natural significance or pictorial meaning of the elements and actions in the ordinance. A rite may be in its sole or primary character commemorative in consequence of arbitrary appointment, although it may have nothing in itself naturally representative of the event commemorated. But this is not the case with the ordinance of the Communion Table. Over and above its positive institution in remembrance of the death and crucifixion of our Lord, there is a pictorial significance in the actions and elements of the Sacrament, fitted to keep constantly in view the grand and essential idea of the rite, as a rite of commemoration. The broken bread representing the broken and crucified body,—the wine poured out, the shed blood,—the eating and drinking of them, the participation in Christ's blessings to nourish the soul and make it glad,—the "one bread" and "one cup," the communion of Christ with His people, and of them with each other,<sup>2</sup>—all these are no dumb or dark signs, but speaking and expressive of what it is intended to commemorate. This obvious characteristic of a sacramental ordinance, then, is most clearly seen in the Lord's Supper, that it is an outward and sensible sign of an inward and spiritual truth. It is the primary idea of the institution, never to be forgotten without infinite damage done to our understanding of its meaning, that, both naturally and by express Divine appointment, it is a symbolical and commemorative observance.

That the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is an outward and sensible sign expressive of the grand and central truths connected with His death and sacrifice, is professedly held by all parties who hold that it is a Christian ordinance at all, and consider it to be binding upon Christians. And yet, notwithstanding of this professed and apparent unanimity upon the point, there is one religious denomination whose principles amount to a denial of this simple truth; and who virtually and really make the Lord's Supper to be not a sign, and not a commemorative ordinance at all,—thereby denying to it the proper character of a Sacrament. I allude to the Church of Rome. I do not

mean to enter upon a consideration of the doctrine of that Church with regard to the Lord's Supper at present—for I intend to take up that subject afterwards,—but it may be not unsuitable or unimportant, meanwhile, to remark, that many of the errors of the Church of Rome in regard to this Sacrament are to be traced back to the neglect or denial of the simple but fundamental truth, that in its primary and essential character the Lord's Supper is a commemorative ordinance,—a remembrance of a sacrifice, and not a sacrifice itself,—a memorial of the great atonement and offering up of Christ on the Cross, and not a repetition of that atonement. By the doctrine of transubstantiation held by the Church of Rome, the elements of bread and wine are asserted to be changed into the actual body and blood of Christ, the Son of God; so that the use of these elements in the Sacrament is not to represent, but to repeat or continue the offering once made for sinners upon the Cross. The sign is identified with the thing signified; the symbol, instead of remaining a symbol, becomes one and the same with what was symbolized; the image and the reality are not two separate and independent things, but are confounded together. This is the unavoidable consequence of the doctrine of transubstantiation held in regard to the communion elements. The bread in the ordinance ceases to be the sensible sign of the Lord's body, and actually becomes that body; the wine in the cup ceases to be the representation symbolically of the blood of the Lord, and is transmuted into that very blood. There is no separating idea which continues to divide the symbol from the reality represented. The two are lost in one. The grand and fundamental characteristic of a Sacrament—that it is the outward and sensible sign of an inward and spiritual truth—is utterly forgotten or denied; and the consequence is the subversion of every idea essential to a Sacrament. While professedly, in some sort of way not easily understood, the Church of Rome holds that the Lord's Supper is a commemorative Sacrament, it in reality does away with the fundamental characteristic of a Sacrament as a sensible sign of spiritual truth.<sup>2</sup>



III. The third mark laid down by us as characteristic of sacramental ordinances, is, that they are the seals of a federal transaction between the believer and Christ through means of the ordinance; and this mark is applicable to the Lord's Supper.

There are not a few who rest contented with the position already laid down in regard to the Lord's Supper, and restrict themselves to the view which makes it a sensible sign of spiritual truth. At the date of the Reformation the subject of the Lord's Supper was very keenly canvassed amongst the Protestant Churches; and the Sacramentarian controversy, or the dispute as to the true meaning and nature of the Lord's Supper, went further than any other to divide the opinions of the early Reformers. While Luther held views approximating to those of the Church of Rome on this subject, although denying the doctrine of transubstantiation, there was another party among the first Reformers, especially in Switzerland, headed by Zwingli, who advocated principles differing very widely from those of Luther. Zwingli, the chief founder of the Protestant Churches in Switzerland, and the predecessor of Calvin in the Swiss Reformation, is not uncommonly regarded as the originator of those views of the Lord's Supper which represent it as a symbolical action commemorative of the death of Christ, and as nothing more than this. There seems to be good ground to question this opinion, and to doubt whether Zwingli ever really meant to deny that the Lord's Supper is a seal, as well as a sign of spiritual grace,—the outward voucher as well as representation of a spiritual and federal transaction between the believer and Christ through means of the ordinance. Under the strong reaction then felt from the views of the Lord's Supper entertained by the Church of Rome, which virtually set aside and denied the symbolical character of the ordinance, and superseded the outward sign by the thing signified, Zwingli and others felt that the true source of the doctrine of transubstantiation was the denial of the primary character of the ordinance as a commemorative sign, and the making the symbol give place to the reality symbolized under it. In other words, Zwingli and his associates in Switzerland held that the root of the evil lay in denying

that the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper were signs, and constituting them the thing signified,—the very body and blood of the Lord. And in bringing out this principle as against the dogma of transubstantiation, they were led in their argument to speak somewhat unguardedly, as if, while Scripture represented the Sacrament as symbolical, it did not represent it as anything more than symbolical. Notwithstanding the violent controversy which the opinions of Zwingli and his followers excited, and the opposition they encountered from Luther and others of the German section of the Reformation, it is very doubtful indeed whether their opinion really excluded or denied the idea of a seal of a federal transaction, as well as a sign, as really belonging to the character of the Lord's Supper. However this may be, it was reserved for the successor of Zwingli, as the leader in the Swiss Reformation, to bring out from Scripture, and to establish on its true foundation, the proper notion of the Lord's Supper as more generally entertained by Protestant Churches since his time; and it is not the least of the many debts due by the Church to the illustrious Calvin, that we owe to him the first full and accurate development and decided maintenance of the true doctrine of the ordinance, as neither a sign alone, nor yet the thing signified alone,—as neither an empty symbol, nor yet the transubstantiated body and blood of Christ,—but as a sign and, at the same time, a seal of spiritual and covenant blessings, made over in the ordinance to the believer. The doctrine of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper as a sign or symbol, and nothing more, has become the characteristic system of the Socinian party. More recently still, it has become the theory of not a few of the Independent body in England, as represented by Dr. Halley.

That the Lord's Supper, in addition to being a sign, is also a seal of a federal transaction, in which the believer through the ordinance makes himself over to Christ, and Christ makes Himself over with His blessings to the believer, may be satisfactorily evinced from a brief review of the statements of Scripture on the subject. There are four different occasions on which the Lord's Supper is more especially referred to in Scripture; and from the statements made in

regard to it on these occasions, it may be conclusively proved that much more is attributed to the ordinance than merely the character of a sign.

1st, There is the description given of the nature and meaning of the ordinance in connection with the history of its institution, as given by the different evangelists, and deduced from a comparison of them, which seems not indistinctly to intimate that the Lord's Supper is more than a commemorative sign. In the words of the institution, our Lord calls the cup "the New Testament or covenant in His blood,"—language which can be interpreted, and apparently requires to be interpreted, so as to assert a more intimate connection than any between a symbol and the thing signified, between the cup drunk in the Supper and the covenant of grace which secures the blessings represented. Add to this, that our Lord asserts the bread to be His body, and the wine to be His blood, in such terms as certainly imply that the one was a sign of the other, but apparently imply more than this,—the words seeming to intimate a sacredness in the symbols more than could belong to mere outward signs, and unavoidably suggesting a more intimate relationship between the elements of the ordinance and the spiritual blessings represented,—even such a connection as that which would make the use of the one by the worthy receiver stand connected with the actual enjoyment spiritually of the other.

2d, There is a separate account of the institution of the Lord's Supper given by the Apostle Paul in the 11th chapter of 1st Corinthians, in which the intimacy and sacredness of the connection between the symbols of the ordinance and the blessings represented are still more strongly brought out. The "eating and drinking unworthily" is represented as the sin of being "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord;" a second time it is spoken of by the apostle as the guilt on the part of the unworthy participator of "eating and drinking judgment to himself,"—the reason assigned for the heinousness of the offence being, that he "has not discerned the Lord's body;" and, as a precaution against the danger of such transgression, a man is

commanded to "examine himself" before he partake of the Supper. It seems impossible, with any show of reason, to assert that the "discernment" (διακρίσις) here spoken of is the mere power of interpreting the signs as representative of Christ's death; or that the "guilt" incurred is nothing more than the danger of abusing certain outward symbols; or that the "examination" enjoined is no more than an inquiry into one's knowledge of the meaning of the commemorative rite. All these expressions evidently point to a spiritual discernment and participation by the believer, not of the sign, but of the blessing signified; and to a spiritual and awful sin, not of misusing and profaning outward symbols, but of misusing and profaning Christ actually present in them.

3d, There is a brief but most emphatic reference to the Lord's Supper in the 10th chapter of 1st Corinthians, which can be interpreted upon no principle which limits the meaning of the ordinance to a mere sign, but which very plainly asserts a federal transaction between the believer and Christ in the ordinance, and the communication through the ordinance of spiritual blessings. "I speak as to wise men," says the apostle; "judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" The κοινωνία—the communion, or participation, or interchange, or mutual fellowship of the blood of Christ and the body of Christ—cannot possibly be understood of the mere signs of the body and blood, without a very violent experiment practised on the language of the apostle. And if "the fellowship" does not refer to the outward symbol, it can only refer to the spiritual blessings represented in the ordinance,—to Christ Himself present after a spiritual manner in the Sacrament, and giving Himself to the believer, while the believer gives himself to Christ, so as to establish a true κοινωνία, or fellowship, or communion between them. It is hardly possible with any plausibility to interpret the language of the apostle in any other way than as expressive of a federal transaction between the believer and Christ in the ordinance.

4th, There is a lengthened discourse in the 6th chapter of the Gospel by John, in which our Lord indeed makes no express reference to the Supper by name, but which it is hardly possible, I think, to avoid applying in its spiritual meaning to the ordinance. In that discourse our Saviour declares Himself to the Jews to be "the bread of life which came down from heaven;" He tells them that "except they eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, they have no life in them;" He asserts that "His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood drink indeed;" and He affirms that "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." Whether this discourse refers directly and expressly to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper or not, it is quite plain that it affords, by the parallelism of the language employed to that used in connection with the ordinance, a key to interpret the sacramental phraseology applied to the Supper. It very plainly points to a spiritual eating and drinking of the flesh and blood of the Son of God, and a spiritual participation, far beyond a mere fellowship in an outward and empty symbol.<sup>4</sup>

On such grounds as these, we hold that the theory which explains the Sacrament of the Supper to be no more than a commemorative sign comes very far short of the Scripture representations of the ordinance; and that nothing but the idea of a seal of a federal transaction between the believer and Christ in the Sacrament will come up to the full import of the observance.

IV. The fourth and last mark laid down by us as characteristic of a sacramental ordinance, is, that it is a means of grace; and this mark also applies to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

After what has been said, it is not necessary to do more than lay down this position. As the sign and seal of a federal transaction between the believer and Christ, it is plain that it must be the means of grace to his soul. It presupposes, indeed, the existence of saving grace on the part of the participator in the ordinance; it is a seal to him of the covenant actually and previously realized and appropriated by him; but, as a seal, it is fitted to add to the grace

previously enjoyed, and to impart yet higher and further blessing. What is the manner in which this grace is imparted; how the Sacrament of the Supper becomes a living virtue in the heart of the participator; what is the efficacy of the ordinance,—these are questions the consideration of which opens up to us those further discussions to which we have next to address ourselves. While we believe that the Sacrament of the Supper is an eminent and effectual means of grace, as a seal of the covenant transaction represented in the ordinance, and through the faith of the participator, Romanists and semi-Romanists attribute to the ordinance a character and an efficacy which we believe that Scripture does not sanction, but, on the contrary, disowns. To the unscriptural views of the Supper held by the Church of Rome we shall now turn our attention.

## **SECTION II.**

### **TRANSUBSTANTIATION**

Both the Lord's Supper and Baptism are Divine appointments of perpetual authority in the Christian Church. Both are outward and sensible signs, expressive of spiritual truths; both are seals of a federal transaction between Christ and the believer in the ordinance; and both, while they presuppose the existence of grace on the part of the receiver, are at the same time the means, by the Spirit, and through the believer's faith, of adding to that grace, and imparting a fresh spiritual blessing. And thus, parallel as the Sacraments of the Christian Church are in their nature and efficacy, they are alike also in the misapprehensions to which they have been exposed. Baptism has been misrepresented as an ordinance possessed in itself of an independent and supernatural virtue, apart from the spiritual state or disposition of the participator, so that, *ex opere operato*, it infallibly communicates saving grace to the soul. And, in like manner, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper has been misrepresented as an ordinance embodying in itself a spiritual power, and efficacious of itself to impart saving grace. The full-grown

and legitimate development of these views in regard to the Lord's Supper is to be found in the principles of the Church of Rome, and in the doctrine which she propounds under the name of transubstantiation.

The Romish system of belief and instruction in regard to the ordinance of the Supper is briefly this. At the original institution of the ordinance, it is believed by the Church of Rome that our Lord, by an exertion of His almighty power, changed miraculously the bread and wine into His body and blood, His human soul and His Divine Godhead; that this supernatural change was effected in connection with the words of institution uttered by Him: "This is my body; this is my blood;" that in giving the appearance of ordinary elements into the hands of His Apostles, He actually gave Himself, including both His humanity and His Divinity; and that they really received and ate His flesh, and drank His blood, with all their accompanying blessings to their souls. And what was thus done in a supernatural manner by Christ Himself at the first institution of the ordinance, is repeated in a manner no less supernatural every time the Lord's Supper is administered by a priest of Rome with a good intention. The priest stands in the place of Christ, with an office and power similar to Christ's, in every case in which he dispenses the Supper; the words of institution repeated by the lips of the priest are accompanied or followed by the same supernatural change as took place at first; the substance of the bread and wine used in the ordinance is annihilated, while the properties of bread and wine remain. In place of the substance of the natural elements, the substance of Christ in His human and Divine nature is truly present, although under all the outward attributes of bread and wine; and those who receive what the priest has thus miraculously transubstantiated are actual partakers of whole Christ, under the appearance of the ordinary sacramental elements.

Under this fearful and blasphemous system there are properly two grand and fundamental errors from which the rest flow; and which it is important to mark and deal with separately, although they are

intimately connected, and form part of the same revolting theory of the Sacrament. There is, first of all, that supernatural change alleged to be wrought upon the elements by the authority of the priest in uttering the words of institution,—the transubstantiation properly so called,—by which the bread and wine become not a sign or symbol, but the actual substance of the crucified Saviour; and there is, secondly, and in consequence of such transubstantiation, the making of the elements not the signs of Christ's sacrifice, but the reality of it,—the bread and wine having become Christ Himself, and the priest having, in so transubstantiating them, actually made the sacrifice of the Cross once more, and offered it to God. These two doctrines of real transubstantiation, and a real sacrifice in the ordinance of the Supper, are both avowed as fundamental in the theory of the Church of Rome; and from these two doctrines all the others connected with the subject are derived. First, From the doctrine of the transubstantiation of the elements into the actual humanity and Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, there very obviously, and perhaps not unnaturally, follows that other doctrine, which declares that the elements are proper objects for the worship of Christians; and hence we have the elevation and adoration of the Host in connection with the Romanist doctrine of the Supper. Second, From the doctrine that the elements, transubstantiated into a crucified Saviour, become a real sacrifice, and a true repetition or continuation of the offering made upon the Cross, there very obviously and naturally follows that other doctrine, which teaches that the ordinance procures for the participator in it atonement and forgiveness of sin; and hence we have the saving grace infallibly communicated by the Sacrament wherever there is a priest to dispense it, or a soul to be saved by the participation of it. We shall consider, then, the doctrine of the Church of Rome in connection with the Supper, under the twofold aspect of the real transubstantiation alleged to pass upon the elements, and the real sacrifice alleged to be offered in the ordinance. These two points form the grand and essential features of the Romanist theory of this Sacrament; and, separately discussed, will enable us to review all that is of chief importance connected with it.



The doctrine of transubstantiation is thus laid down in the Canons of the Council of Trent: "If any shall deny that in the Sacrament of the most holy Eucharist there is contained truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so whole Christ, but shall say that He is only in it in sign, or figure, or virtue, let him be accursed." "If any shall say that in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist there remains the substance of bread and wine, together with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and shall deny that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood, while only the appearances (species) of bread and wine remain—which conversion the Catholic Church most aptly styles transubstantiation,—let him be accursed." "If any shall say that Christ, as exhibited in the Eucharist, is only spiritually eaten, and not also sacramentally and really, let him be accursed."

This monstrous and audacious perversion of the doctrine of Scripture by the Church of Rome is founded upon and defended by an appeal to the literal meaning of the words of Scripture in speaking of the ordinance, in contradistinction to the figurative meaning of them. It is on this literal sense of the Scripture language that the only argument of Romanists in support of their system is built; and, over and above an appeal to the bare literalities of the expressions employed, there is not the shadow of a reason that can be alleged in defence of it. "It is impossible for me," says Cardinal Wiseman in his Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church,— "it is impossible for me, by any commentary or paraphrase that I can make, to render our Saviour's words more explicit, or reduce them to a form more completely expressing the Catholic doctrine than they do themselves: 'This is my body; this is my blood.' The Catholic doctrine teaches that it was Christ's body, that it was Christ's blood. It would consequently appear as though all we had here to do were simply and exclusively to rest at once on these words, and leave to others to show reason why we should depart from the literal interpretation which we give them." Since Romanists, then,

take up their position in defence of transubstantiation on the literal construction of the words employed in reference to the ordinance, and on that alone, what is material or essential to the argument is brought within a very narrow compass indeed. That argument may be, and indeed often is, encumbered with much irrelevant matter. But the main and only essential point to be discussed is simply this: Are we bound to interpret the Scripture phraseology employed in connection with the Lord's Supper in a literal sense, as affirming that the true body and blood of Christ are given in the ordinance; or, do the very terms of that phraseology, and the nature of the thing spoken of, compel us to adopt not a literal, but a figurative interpretation? This is evidently the status quæstionis between the Romanists and their adversaries in reference to the debate about transubstantiation. Romanists never pretend to bring any argument in aid of their theory of the Supper, except the argument of the literal meaning of the sacramental words. This disposed of, there is no other in the least available to defend their position. Is it, then, possible to adopt a literal interpretation of the words which Scripture employs to describe the sacramental elements? Is it competent to adopt a figurative interpretation? Is it necessary to adopt a figurative interpretation? These three questions, fairly answered, will embrace the whole controversy necessary to the discussion of the Romanist dogma of transubstantiation.

I. It is impossible to adopt a literal interpretation of the sacramental phraseology; and this is evinced by Romanists themselves, in their own departure from it in the very matter under discussion.

The principle of a strictly literal interpretation of the sacramental language of Scripture is the only principle which furnishes a single plea in favour of the dogma of transubstantiation; and yet the necessities of the language employed compel Romanists to surrender that principle in its application to the very case in which they demand that we shall observe it. The advocate of transubstantiation, by his own practice in the very matter in hand, nullifies his own solitary argument. He demands from us a literal rendering of the

Scripture language; and yet in the very same passage of Scripture he is himself forced to adopt a non-literal. Take the words of Luke as he records the first institution of the Supper, and we see at once that in these the Romanist is forced again and again to abandon a literal, and have recourse to a figurative interpretation. "And He took the cup," says the evangelist, describing our Lord's action, "and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves." According to the strictly literal method of interpretation advocated and demanded by the Romanist, it was the cup, and not the wine in the cup, that was to be taken and shared by the disciples; and the Romanist is obliged to adopt the non-literal rendering in this case to suit his views of what occurred. Again, we find the inspired historian saying, in reference to what our Lord did, "Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood,"—language which once more demands that the Romanist shall surrender his literal, and have recourse to a non-literal interpretation, so that he may not identify the vessel in which the wine was contained with the New Covenant, nor transubstantiate the cup into a covenant, but make the one merely a sign or symbol of the other by a figurative use of the language. Once more, the Romanist departs from his principle of a literal interpretation, when the evangelist tells us that Christ spoke of His blood "which is shed for you." At the moment of the utterance of these words, the shedding of His blood was a future event, to happen some hours afterwards, and not a present one, as the words literally rendered would assert; and, accordingly, the Romanist has no scruple in interpreting it in a non-literal sense, as indeed he is forced to do by the very necessity of the language. Or, take the words of the Apostle Paul in his account of the ordinance of the Supper, which he had, separately from the evangelists, himself received of the Lord. Here, again, we have the same use of terms which no literal interpretation will enable even the Romanist to explain. The apostle, like the evangelist, tells us that the words of our Lord were expressly, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood,"—language which, interpreted upon the principle of strict literality, would identify the vessel containing the wine with the Divine covenant, and which requires, therefore, even in the opinion

of the Romanist, to be understood figuratively. And, further still, the apostle, after the giving of thanks by our Lord, still speaks of the elements, not in language which denotes their transubstantiation, but in terms which plainly declare that they were bread and wine still. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." In this case no literal rendering of these words will be sufficient to reconcile them with the dogma of transubstantiation; and even in supporting that dogma, the Romanist is compelled in this passage to fall back upon an interpretation not literal. We are warranted, then, by the practice of Romanists themselves, in the very case of the sacramental language employed in Scripture, to say that it is not possible to adhere to, or consistently to carry out, a strictly literal interpretation.<sup>3</sup>

II. A figurative interpretation of the sacramental language is perfectly competent and possible.

It cannot be denied—and we have no occasion or wish to deny it—that, as a general canon of interpretation, it is true that the literal rendering of any statement made by a writer ought, in the first instance, to be tried and to be adopted, if it be in accordance with the use of words and the import and object of the statement. But the necessities and use of language justify and demand a figurative interpretation of terms, rather than a literal, in manifold instances; and those instances in which words are to be rendered not literally, but figuratively, must plainly be determined by the nature, connection, and object of the words. Now, in reference to the use of the sacramental language found in the Bible, it has often been argued, and has never yet been fairly met by the advocates of a literal meaning, that many similar passages are to be found in Scripture in which the same words admit of, and indeed require, not a literal, but a figurative interpretation, by the confession of all parties; and the conclusion is drawn from this, and fairly drawn, that the terms used in regard to the ordinance of the Supper may be figurative too. The occurrence of such texts, demanding, as all parties allow, a figurative or non-literal rendering, is valid and relevant evidence in regard to

the nature of Scripture language, and proves at least this, that the words employed in reference to the Supper may admit of a figurative rendering also. This citation of parallel language does not in itself, indeed, demonstrate that the sacramental terms must be figurative; but it unquestionably proves that they may be figurative. Cardinal Wiseman, in his discussion of the doctrine of transubstantiation, gives a list of some texts bearing on the question, which have been referred to by Protestants as evidence in their favour, to the effect that the language, "This is my body," "this is my blood," may be understood, not literally, but figuratively. They are to the following effect:

"The seven good kine are seven years."

"The ten horns are ten kings."

"The field is the world."

"And that rock was Christ."

"For these are the two covenants."

"The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches."

"I am the door."

"I am the true vine."

"This is my covenant between me and you."

"It is the Lord's passover."

In these instances, and many similar ones, it is admitted by all parties, Romanists as well as Protestants, that the verb to be must be understood in its non-literal signification, and cannot by any possibility be understood literally. From the nature of the assertion made, from the context, and from the manner in which the terms are

made use of, there is no possibility of denying that these texts are to be understood not literally, but figuratively; and they seem, therefore, by this parallelism to the words employed in connection with the Supper, to prove all that they were ever quoted to prove, namely, that the expressions, "This is my body," "this is my blood," may be understood in a figurative sense too. Such texts are not quoted to demonstrate that the sacramental phraseology of Scripture must be figurative; they are only quoted to prove that there is nothing in the nature of Scripture language, judging by its use in similar cases, to prevent us, if the nature of the statement and the context should require it, from interpreting the language concerning the Supper in a non-literal or figurative sense also. The multitude of texts closely analogous in form to the phrases, "This is my body," "this is my blood," and which, as all parties allow, must be understood figuratively, may not indeed, taken singly, necessitate a non-literal rendering in the latter case also; but they, at the very least, authorize it, should the import and connection of the passage make the demand, if they do not go a step further, and of themselves recommend a figurative interpretation.

Now, how is it that Cardinal Wiseman in his Lectures deals with these passages, and disposes of the argument drawn from them? He bestows a vast deal of minute criticism upon them, in order to show that these passages must, either from the meaning of the statement made in each, or the sense of the context, or the express assertion of the sacred writer, be accounted figurative and symbolical; and that, therefore, the verb to be in each of these cases must be reckoned equivalent to the verb to signify. And having done this, he considers he has done enough to prove that the cases referred to are not parallel to the sacramental language, "This is my body," "this is my blood." Now, it is enough, in reference to such an argument, to say that we willingly adopt his explanation of these passages, accounting them, as he does, to be figurative, and reckoning, as he does, the verb to be, when employed in such texts, as equivalent to the verb to signify. And it is for this very reason that we quote them as a justification of our assertion, that the same verb, when employed in

reference to the Lord's Supper, may be equivalent there also to the verb to signify. If these texts did not admit of a figurative interpretation, and if the verb to be did not in them appear equivalent to the verb to signify, we should not have quoted them, because they would not have served our purpose. The reasoning of the Cardinal is certainly a singular specimen of an attempt at logical argument. I shall give it in his own words: "Suppose," says he in his Lectures, "suppose I wish to illustrate one of these passages by another, I should say this text, 'The seven kine are seven years,' is parallel with 'The field is the world,' and both of them with the phrase, 'These are the two covenants;' and I can illustrate them by one another. And why? Because in every one of them the same thing exists; that is to say, in every one of these passages there is the interpretation of an allegorical teaching,—a vision in the one, a parable in the second, and an allegory in the third. I do not put them into one class because they all contain the verb to be, but because they all contain the same thing. They speak of something mystical and typical,—the interpretation of a dream, an allegory, and a parable. Therefore, having ascertained that in one of these the verb to be means to represent, I conclude that it has the same sense in the others; and I frame a general rule, that wherever such symbolical teaching occurs, these verbs are synonymous. When, therefore, you tell me that 'this is my body' may mean 'this represents my body,' because in those passages the same word occurs with this sense, I must, in like manner, ascertain not only that the word to be is common to the text, but that the same thing is to be found in it as in them; in other words, that in the forms of institution there was given the explanation of some symbol, such as the interpretation of a vision, a parable, or a prophecy ... Until you have done this, you have no right to consider them all as parallel, or to interpret it by them."

The objection here urged by Cardinal Wiseman seems to amount to this, that we have quoted passages which, by the nature of the statement they contain, or by the context, or by the direct assertion of the writer, are plainly demonstrated to be figurative, while the sacramental expressions, "This is my body," "this is my blood," are

not so demonstrated to be figurative. The answer is obvious. We do not quote such texts to prove that the terms of the sacramental institution must be understood figuratively, but to prove that they may be understood figuratively; to demonstrate that there is no bar in the shape of Scripture usage in the way to prevent us from interpreting them figuratively, if it is necessary. We are prepared to prove, by the very same means as the Cardinal employs,—by the nature of the statement itself, by the context, and such like considerations,—that the sacramental terms are figurative, just as Cardinal Wiseman proves that the words, "This cup is the New Testament," are to be understood figuratively, or as these other terms, "The seven kine are seven years," must be interpreted figuratively. The very nature of the statement itself proves it to be a statement to be understood, not in a literal, but a figurative sense. We interpret the expression, "The seven kine are seven years," in a figurative sense, not because these words occur in the interpretation of a dream,—for both the dream and the interpretation may be embodied in words, literal, and not figurative,—but because the very nature of the proposition and the sense of the context necessitate it, it being impossible that the seven kine can be literally seven years. Again, we interpret, and so does Cardinal Wiseman, the expression, "This cup is the New Testament," not literally, but figuratively, for a similar reason,—that the very nature of the proposition, and the sense of the context, demand a non-literal rendering; and in like manner we interpret the expression, "This is my body," "this is my blood," not literally, but figuratively, for the very same reason, because the very nature of the proposition, and the sense of the context, necessitate such an interpretation. The citation of other passages of Scripture in which the verb to be is used for the verb to represent or signify, is had recourse to in the argument simply to prove that the usage of Scripture language does not forbid, but countenances such a kind of interpretation. And the numerous texts already referred to are both relevant and sufficient to accomplish that object.



III. A figurative interpretation of the sacramental language, "This is my body," "this is my blood," is not only possible and competent, but necessary.

In no other way can we ever discriminate between figurative and literal terms, whether scriptural or non-scriptural, whether used by inspired or uninspired men, than by a reference to the nature of the proposition which the language embodies, to the sense of the context, and to the object of the speaker or writer; unless in those exceptional cases in which he directly tells us that he is to be understood in the one way or in the other. Very seldom indeed, in regard to language not meant to deceive, is it difficult to understand, from a consideration of these points, whether it is to be interpreted figuratively or not. In the case of the Lord's Supper, the words employed in reference to the elements could have presented to the disciples who heard them no difficulty at all. The ordinance was grafted upon the passover, with the figurative language and actions of which the Apostles, as Jews, were abundantly familiar; and this circumstance alone must have familiarized their minds with, and prepared them for the figurative meaning of the words and elements in the Supper. Above all, the nature of the proposition, "This is my body," "this is my blood," interpreted by the commentary of our Lord, "This do in remembrance of me," and understood in the light of His accompanying actions and words, renders it nearly impossible that they could believe that a miracle had been wrought on the bread and wine, and that the body and blood, soul and Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, then present to their eyes, could be at the same instant contained under the appearance of the morsel of bread and the mouthful of wine that they ate and drank. Nothing but the "strong delusion that believes a lie" can lead any man who reads and understands the simple narrative of Scripture, to deny that the interpretation of the sacramental phraseology employed must be figurative, and not literal.

There are two attempts commonly made by Romanists to explain away the impossibility of the Apostles,—or indeed any other man not

wholly blinded by spiritual delusion,—believing in the literal interpretation of the sacramental words that refer to the Supper.

1st, The power of Christ to work a miracle, like that which is alleged to have been wrought in the case of the bread and wine, is asserted; and it is averred that the Apostles could not doubt the supernatural ability of their Lord and Master, so often in other days exerted before their eyes. "What," asks Dr. Wiseman, "is possible or impossible to God? What is contradictory to His power? Who shall venture to define it further than what may be the obvious, the first, and simplest principle of contradiction,—the existence and simultaneous non-existence of a thing? But who will pretend to say that any ordinary mind would be able to measure this perplexed subject, and to reason thus: 'The Almighty may indeed, for instance, change water into wine, but He cannot change bread into a body?' Who that looks on these two propositions with the eye of an uneducated man, could say that in his mind there was a broad distinction between them, that while he saw one effected by the power of a Being believed by him to be omnipotent, he still held the other to be of a class so widely different as to venture to pronounce it absolutely impossible?... Now, such as I have described were the minds of the Apostles,—those of illiterate, uncultivated men. They had been accustomed to see Christ perform the most extraordinary works. They had seen Him walking on the water, His body consequently deprived for a time of the usual properties of matter,—of that gravity which, according to the laws of nature, should have caused it to sink. They had seen Him, by His simple word, command the elements and raise the dead to life, etc. Can we, then, believe that with such minds as these, and with such evidences, the Apostles were likely to have words addressed to them by our Saviour, which they were to interpret rightly, only by the reasoning of our opponents,—that is, on the ground of what He asserted being philosophically impossible?"

It is hardly necessary to reply to such an argument as this. In the first place, the miracles with which the Apostles were familiar had no analogy whatsoever to the stupendous wonder of transubstantiation.

Those miracles were appeals to the senses in proof of truths not seen; and they were tested by the senses, as things to be judged of by them all. The so-called miracle of transubstantiation is no appeal to the senses, but the reverse,—a thing not to be tested by the exercise of any one of them, if it were possible, and a thing denied by any one of them, because impossible. If it were a possible thing, it would subvert the very principle on which our perceptions are made to us by God the primary source of our beliefs, and the foundation of truth to us; and it would cause the very instincts which His hand has laid deep within our inmost being to be to us a lie. The conversion of water into wine at that marriage supper in Cana of Galilee of old was a wonder seen by the eye, and in agreement with the evidence of the senses, because the properties, first of the water, and afterwards of the wine, were seen and judged of by all. The conversion of the bread into the body of the Lord, while yet the properties of bread remain, is a wonder that contradicts the evidence of our senses, and involves an impossibility.

In the second place, even Cardinal Wiseman himself admits that there are impossibilities in the nature of things, not competent even for Almighty power to accomplish. Such an impossibility, according to his own statement, is the "existence and simultaneous non-existence of a thing;" and side by side with this one limitation, which, upon the authority of Dr. Wiseman, is to be put even upon the power of God, we may put another limitation, and that upon higher authority than his: "God cannot deny Himself." In that revelation which He has given to us in our instinctive and primary perceptions of sensible things, and in that other revelation which He has given to us in His Word, God, who is the Truth, cannot contradict Himself.<sup>3</sup>

2d, An attempt is made by Romanists to identify, as one and the same in principle, the dogma of transubstantiation and what are called the mysteries of revelation. "What," says Cardinal Wiseman, "becomes of the Trinity? What becomes of the incarnation of our Saviour? What of His birth from a virgin? And, in short, what of every mystery of the Christian religion?" It will be time enough to

answer such questions as these when it is proved that such mysteries contradict our rational nature, in the same manner as the dogma of transubstantiation contradicts our perceptive nature. Such mysteries as those referred to are above our reason, but not against it. They are beyond the powers of our rational nature fully to understand, but not contradictory to our rational nature so as to be inconsistent with it. The argument in defence of transubstantiation, drawn from such a source, is but one example out of many that could be quoted, of the common tactics of Romish controversialists, who are but too often prepared to hand over to the unbeliever the most sacred truths which the Scripture has recorded, rather than not make out a plea for their own superstitions.

### **SECTION III.**

#### **THE DOCTRINE OF THE "REAL PRESENCE" AND THE PRIESTLY THEORY**

With the dogma of transubstantiation, as held by the Church of Rome, stands very closely connected the question as to the manner in which Christ is present in the ordinance of the Supper. The doctrine of the "real presence" of Christ in the Sacrament has, more almost than any other in theology, been made the subject of prolonged and bitter controversy. By the Church of Rome, as we have seen, the real presence of Christ is explained to be the true and actual existence of the body and blood, the soul and Divinity of the Saviour, under the sensible appearances of bread and wine; so that in the elements Christ is as much present after a bodily sort, in consequence of their transubstantiation, as He ever was present to His disciples of old in the days of His flesh. By the Lutheran Church, the real presence of Christ in the ordinance is maintained, not upon the principle of such a change in the substance of the elements into Christ's body and blood as contradicts the testimony of our senses, but, rather upon the supposition that the bread and wine remaining the same, the real body and blood of Christ are nevertheless united to

them in some mysterious manner, so as to be actually present with them, and actually received along with them, when they are partaken of by the communicant. By our own Church, as well as by many other Protestant communions, the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament is asserted on the ground that He is not in a bodily manner present in the substance of the elements, nor yet in a bodily manner mysteriously present with the elements, but only spiritually present to the faith of him who receives the ordinance in faith.

The influence of the fierce and frequent controversies waged in connection with the nature and efficacy of the Lord's Supper shortly after the date of the Reformation, and the disposition on the part of Luther, and the Churches affected by his influence, to depart as little as possible from the established phraseology of the ancient Church on the subject of the Sacrament, served to introduce, or to continue in theological discussions, a language somewhat exaggerated, and occasionally almost unintelligible, in regard to this question. Such, undoubtedly, was the phrase "consubstantiation," used by some of the Lutherans to express the mysterious corporeal presence of Christ, not in, but with, or under, or somehow in connection with the elements; and such also was the phrase "impanation," employed by others to elucidate, or rather to obscure, the doctrine of the manner in which Christ's bodily presence is connected with the sacramental bread. And I cannot help thinking that, under the power of very much the same influences, the term "real presence" has not unfrequently been employed and explained, even by orthodox divines, in such a way as to give a somewhat exaggerated and mysterious aspect to the connection subsisting between Christ and the Sacrament. That phrase has occasionally been employed in association with such language as to leave the impression that Christ was present in the Supper, not spiritually to the faith of the believer, and not corporeally to the senses of the communicant, but in some indefinite manner between the two, and after a sort mysterious and peculiar to the Sacrament of the Supper. Such language seems to have no warrant in the Word of God.

The Scriptures give us no ground to assert that Christ is present in the Sacrament of the Supper in a manner different from that in which He is present in the Sacrament of Baptism. I do not speak at present of the extent of the blessing or of the grace which He may impart in the one or the other Sacrament by His presence; I speak only of the manner of His presence. There is nothing, I think, in Scripture to warrant us in affirming that the manner of Christ's presence in the Supper is in itself unique or peculiar, or indeed in any respect different from the manner of His presence in Baptism, or any other of His own ordinances. In all of these He is present, after a spiritual manner, to the faith of the participator in the ordinance, and in no other way. The blessings which that presence may impart may be different in different ordinances, and may be more or less in one than in another. But there is nothing in the Word of God which would lead us to say that the real presence of Christ in any of His ordinances, whether sacramental or not, is anything else than Christ present, through his Spirit and power, to the faith of the believer. Such promises as these—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world;" "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of you;" "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me;" and such like—plainly give us ground to affirm that Christ, through His Spirit, is present in His ordinances to the faith of the believer, imparting spiritual blessing and grace. But there is nothing that would lead us to make a difference or distinction between the presence of Christ in the Supper and the presence of Christ in His other ordinances, in so far as the manner of that presence is concerned. The efficacy of the Saviour's presence may be different in the way of imparting more or less of saving grace, according to the nature of the ordinance, and the degree of the believer's faith. But the manner of that presence is the same, being realized through the Spirit of Christ, and to the faith of the believer. The Sacramentarian controversy has tended in no small measure to introduce into the language of theology, in connection with the "real presence," an ambiguity of thought and statement, not confined to Romanist, or even semi-Romanist divines.

But, passing from that part of the Popish theory of the Supper which refers to the alleged change produced on the elements by transubstantiation, and to the manner of Christ's presence in the ordinance, I go on to consider the other part of the Popish theory of the Supper which refers to the office of the ministering priest in the Sacrament, or his power to offer the body and blood of Christ, actually present, as a true sacrifice for sin. The first grand error in the Popish doctrine of the Lord's Supper is the monstrous figment of the transubstantiation of the elements; the second, intimately connected with the first, and perhaps yet more extensive and mischievous as an error in its practical bearings, is the doctrine of the power of the Church, in the ordinance of bread and wine, to offer a true and efficacious propitiation to God, both for the living and the dead. The sacrifice of the mass is founded upon, and very closely connected with, the dogma of transubstantiation,—in some sort following as an inference from the assumption that the priest stands in Christ's stead at the Communion Table, and, by a supernatural power not inferior to Christ's, changes, by the utterance of the words of institution, the elements of bread and wine into the actual body and blood, soul and Divinity, which were once the sacrifice offered up for this world upon the Cross. In the performance of this supernatural and mysterious office, which, according to its own theory, it is given to the Church of Rome to discharge, we see both the priest and the sacrifice,—the priest, acting as mediator between God and the people, offering a true satisfaction to God for sin, and promising remission and reconciliation; and the sacrifice presented to God, real and efficacious, because in fact the very same sacrifice, in its substance, of the flesh and blood of Christ, as He Himself once made and presented, and not less availing in its mighty virtue to propitiate God, and procure salvation for the sinner. A real office of priesthood, and a real offering of sacrifice, are the two features that characterize this second portion of the Popish theory of the Sacraments. Both are asserted, and both are essential in the sacrifice of the mass, which has been grafted on the dogma of transubstantiation, and both form integral parts of that monstrous system of sacerdotal usurpation by which the Church of Rome seeks

to build up her spiritual tyranny. The position, then, laid down by the Church of Rome in connection with the subject of the mass, may be conveniently discussed under these two heads: first, the claim which she makes to possess and exercise the office of a true priesthood; and second, the power that she arrogates to make and offer a true sacrifice to God. Reserving the second of these points for future consideration, we shall now proceed to deal with the claim put forth by the Church of Rome to hold and exercise the office of a real priesthood.

This claim runs through the doctrine and practice of the Popish Church in all its departments, and is not restricted to the case of its views in connection with the Supper. The priestly office and sacerdotal pretensions are recognised in almost every branch of its administration as a Church, and, indeed, are fundamental to the system. But the priesthood which it pretends to exercise towards God and on behalf of man is perhaps developed most prominently and conspicuously in connection with its doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The question is one that lies at the very root of the difference between the Popish and Protestant systems, and on that account is of more than ordinary interest and importance.

The doctrine of a real priesthood residing in the Christian ministry, more especially in connection with its chief function of offering the sacrifice of the mass, is thus stated by the Council of Trent: "Sacrifice and priesthood are so joined together by the ordinance of God that they existed under every dispensation. Since, therefore, under the New Testament the Catholic Church has received the holy visible sacrifice of the Eucharist by the institution of the Lord, it is necessary also to confess that there is in it a new, visible, and outward priesthood into which the old has been transferred. Now the sacred writings show, and the tradition of the Catholic Church has always taught, that this was instituted by the same Lord our Saviour, and that a power was given to the Apostles, and their successors in the priesthood, of consecrating, offering, and administering His body and blood, and also of remitting and retaining sins." "If any shall say



that by these words, 'Do this in remembrance of me,' Christ did not appoint the Apostles to be priests, or did not ordain that they and other priests should offer His body and blood, let him be accursed." "If any shall say that the sacrifice of the mass is only one of praise and thanksgiving, or a bare commemoration of the sacrifice accomplished upon the Cross, but not propitiatory; or that it only profits him who receives it, and ought not to be offered for the living and dead, for sins, pains, satisfactions, and other necessities,—let him be accursed."

Amid the other errors contained in these statements by the Council of Trent, what we have chiefly to do with at present is the claim which is put forth on behalf of the Church of Rome and her ministers to hold and exercise the office of priesthood in the same sense as, ceremonially, the priests of a former dispensation did so; with power now, not ceremonially, but really, to act as priests in the absence of Christ in heaven, and truly to offer sacrifice to God for sin. The question in regard to such a claim is this: Have we any warrant to believe that a visible and external priesthood has been established in the New Testament Church, with powers to act as mediators between God and man, and offer the propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead; or has the office of priesthood which existed under a former economy no longer an existence now in the Gospel Church, there being none on earth authorized or qualified to undertake it,—the one Priesthood, in the end of the world for sin, having completed its work on earth, and the Priest who held the office having returned to heaven to continue it there? This is a vital and fundamental question, not only in order to enable us to form an estimate of the real character of the system of Romanists, but also because it enters so essentially into the principles held by High Churchmen of other denominations.

I. The existence of a priesthood as a standing ordinance in the Christian Church is inconsistent with the fact that such an office was abrogated with the Jewish economy, and necessarily came to an end when that dispensation gave place to the Gospel economy.

An earthly priesthood was an ordinance appointed for a special purpose and a special time; and the purpose having been served, and the time past, it is necessarily at an end. The priestly office, and the institution of sacrifice with which it stands inseparably connected, formed part of that instrumentality by which, for thousands of years, God prepared this world for the coming and the death of His own Son as its Saviour. First of all, it was the father of the family who was ordained the priest to offer the sacrifice for the rest, and to approach unto God on behalf of his household; the members of which drew near to God, and worshipped, and were accepted only through him. Such seems to have been the practice in patriarchal times, and apparently not without the appointment, or at least the sanction, of God. The father of the family, as well as the divinely appointed sacrifice he offered, thus in a general and distant way represented Christ as the medium whereby sinners might approach to God in worship. But the patriarchal institute was too general and vague a type of the One Mediator through whom alone, when fully revealed, men were to find access to God. Accordingly it was done away with, and another institute was ordained in its place, with priests specially set apart to the office of mediators between God and the people, and with more special authority given, and more distinct provision made for them to be the media through whom the rest were to present their worship and sacrifices, and themselves to make their approach to God and find acceptance. Under the Mosaic ritual, it was no longer lawful for the sinner himself directly to approach to God with his own offering of worship or sacrifice; it was no longer lawful for the sinner even to draw near with his sacrifice unto God through the head of the family, as under the patriarchal institute. The avenue of approach to God was, step by step, narrowed and restricted. First, the father of the family was marked out and selected as the recognised priest and mediator for the rest. Next, a further limitation took place, and the priest of Aaron's line was specially appointed to stand in the stead of the whole families of the nation in their approach to God; and strict provision was made—and guarded by the most solemn penalties—that no man should venture to present the sacrifice himself, or to worship except through the media of this one

commissioned priesthood. The thousands of Israel were restricted in their legal worship to the one avenue, and forbidden to draw near to the Holy One of Israel except through the one mediation of the earthly priest of Aaron's lineage.

And why was it that this earthly priesthood was thus marked off from all the rest, and the other worshippers made dependent on the one appointed priest of Aaron's house? And why were men forbidden to approach to God directly and immediately themselves, or even indirectly through any other but this one mediator? The answer is obvious. The priesthood was so restricted, and so fenced about with solemn limitations, in order that it might be a type of Christ, "the one Mediator between God and man." From age to age, and from step to step, the worshippers of God under the old economies were more and more shut up to the idea and the practice of approaching the Most High God only through the channel of one Priesthood and the person of one High Priest. The typical priests and priesthoods of former dispensations led men's hearts and habits to fix upon the one Mediator through whom alone we now draw near to God. They taught the worshippers to anticipate and to hope in that one Man, who is now the Priest, not of one family, as in patriarchal times, nor of one nation, as in Jewish times, but the Priest through whom all the families and all the nations of the world draw nigh to God. The earthly priesthoods of the former days of the Church all converged upon and pointed to and centred in Christ. With Christ, therefore, those priesthoods came to an end. The type was merged in the Antitype, and then was done away. The priests of other days, together with the sacrifices which they offered, have served the object designed by them, and are abolished. They can, from the very nature of their office, have no use, and no meaning, and no place in a Church to which another and a higher priesthood has been given, and when the sign has given place to the thing that was signified. The office of the priesthood on earth ceased with the former dispensation; and not only is there no re-appointment under the Gospel of such an order of men in the Church, but they would, from the very place and office that they occupied, be inconsistent with the

Gospel economy. They formed part and parcel of a typical system which has been abolished.

II. The existence of a priesthood as a standing ordinance in the Christian Church is inconsistent with the privileges of believers under the Gospel.

It is not unfrequently argued by the advocates of Romanist or semi-Romanist principles on this subject, that the privilege of a human priesthood and a human mediatorship is one so great and precious that it cannot be conceived to exist, as we know it did, under the earlier and far inferior dispensation, and yet to be wanting under the later and far better dispensation of the Gospel. The presence of an earthly priesthood, it is urged, must be enjoyed by the Church now, inasmuch as it cannot be supposed to be deprived of one of the highest privileges which belonged to the former and less richly endowed Church of the Old Testament.

A comparison between the superior advantages of the Gospel Church, as measured by those of the Jewish, is the very consideration which, instead of proving that a human priesthood is continued to us now, most emphatically demonstrates that it is abrogated. The presence and office of a human priesthood, enjoyed by worshippers under the law, are far surpassed by the higher and more glorious privileges enjoyed by believers under the Gospel. No doubt it was an act of grace and condescension on the part of God, to permit sinners to approach His presence through the avenue of a visible priesthood and a visible sacrifice in former times, even although that boon was granted to them under solemn and jealous restrictions; and it was a great and precious privilege for the worshipper to be allowed to draw near to the mercy-seat through means of a human mediator, and by the intervention of a material offering. But the privilege of Christians in the New Testament Church is better and more glorious still. Through Christ a new and living way has been opened up for all to draw nigh to God, not indirectly through a human mediator, but directly, each man for

himself. The whole brotherhood of believers are no longer dependent upon one of themselves for the liberty or opportunity of access to the common Father; and without distinction of special office, it is the freedom purchased for all, without earthly priest or earthly intercessor interposed, to go with boldness into the very holiest. The presence of an earthly and external priesthood is no evidence of superior privilege, but the reverse. It is the mark of an imperfect and carnal dispensation.

That it was necessary for the worshipper to employ the intervention of another than himself in order that he might approach to his Creator,—that a sinner should be dependent on another sinner for pardon or access to heaven,—that he should not dare to engage his heart to draw near to God except through the medium of a human priesthood,—were strong arguments to prove the essential imperfection of that dispensation which witnessed such things, and constituted a yoke of bondage which it was hard to bear. And what it was when the sons of Aaron by God's own appointment were the human priests and mediators, that it is now in the case of those Churches who bind upon their own necks the institute of a human priesthood, and then boast of it as their exclusive distinction and privilege. It is a spiritual yoke that is too heavy to bear; it is a retrogression from the freedom wherewith under the Gospel Christ has made His people free; it is a badge of the voluntary thralldom and debasement of a Church that has itself gone into bondage to men, instead of maintaining the liberty of Christ the Lord. The restriction of approaching God only through the earthly priest in the local temple at Jerusalem, and by the blood of bulls and goats,—the prohibition forbidding the sinner to draw near to the mercy-seat directly himself, or through any other medium,—those were evidences of essential imperfection in the Church state of the worshippers under a former economy. And the human priesthood of the Church of Rome,—the material sacrifice made and offered for the worshippers,—the priest standing between the sinner and God, and barring or opening the way of approach,—the mediator acting as the medium of communication between the Most High and His

creatures, and retaining or remitting their sin,—these, too, are restrictions, and, because human and unauthorized, daring and impious restrictions, upon the freeness of God's grace and the liberties of His redeemed people.

It is a fact of much significance, and indeed of decisive force in this argument, that throughout the whole of the New Testament Scriptures there is no instance in which either the name of priest, or the functions belonging to the office of priesthood, are ascribed to the ministers of the Christian Church; that the only examples of the use of the term are those in which it is given, not to the minister, but to the people; and that the ascription of the privileges of the office is uniformly made to the members at large. On the one hand, the term ἱερεὺς, or "priest," is never in any single instance in the New Testament applied to a minister of the Christian Church, although always made use of to designate the priest of the Aaronic dispensation. The usual name given to the minister of the New Testament Church is πρεσβυτερος,—the change of designation marking very decisively the change in the nature of the office. On the other hand, on the only occasions on which the word ἱερεὺς is used in the New Testament in reference to any except a Jewish priest, it is given to the members of the Christian Church at large, and not to the ministers of that Church. In the Book of Revelation, believers are spoken of as "kings and priests to God;" and in the first Epistle of Peter they are described as a "royal priesthood." The name formerly appropriated to the sons of Aaron, selected and anointed from among the rest of the congregation to be priests to God, is not inherited by the ministers of the Christian Church in the same exclusive manner, but, on the contrary, is applied in an enlarged and extended sense to the whole body of believers. More than this: the privilege enjoyed by the priests of old, of alone of all the worshipping assembly drawing near to God without the intervention of any other, is a privilege uniformly represented in the New Testament as not peculiar to the ministers of the Church, but extended now to all its members, and common to all believers. The office peculiar to the minister of the Christian Church is described at large in the New

Testament Scriptures, and is a "ministry" or "service" unto others (διακονια, λειτουργια), not a mediatorship on behalf of others. It is spoken of as an office of "ministering," "preaching," "exhorting," "ruling," amid the flock of Christ, not an office of sacrificing, and making reconciliation, and approaching to God as the mediator on behalf of the rest, and becoming the avenue for the access of their persons or worship to the Divine presence. On the contrary, this privilege of approaching directly to God without the intervention of any substitute or proxy on earth, is a privilege which is expressly attributed to all believers as their personal right: so that, if in any sense there are priests now on earth, those priests are the believing people of God at large; and if in any sense there are priestly sacrifices now offered up, they are the spiritual sacrifices of the prayer and praise of Christians, without distinction of office or place in the Church. The sacerdotal theory on which the Church system of Rome is built, and the priestly office which is so conspicuously developed in her practice as regards the Lord's Supper, are utterly repugnant to the spirit of the New Testament Church, and to the privileges which it has secured to believers. The privilege of a human priesthood, which existed under the law, is abolished under the Gospel; or rather, in its spirit and substance, the privilege is enlarged and extended to all believers under the New Testament Church. It was the peculiar and distinctive prerogative of the priests under the law, that they alone of all the worshippers drew near to God without a human mediator. That prerogative is common to all the royal priesthood of believers under the Gospel.

III. The existence of an earthly priesthood as a standing ordinance of the Christian Church is inconsistent with the one office of Christ as the Priest and Mediator of His people.

Earthly priest the New Testament Church has none. The very name is blotted out from the inspired history of the Church under the Gospel in its application to any office-bearer within its pale; and it is found, in so far as it can now be found on earth, only in connection with that spiritual and universal priesthood which belongs alike to all true

believers, who have equally the privilege of free approach to God, equally the anointing which makes them His people, and equally the consecration that sets them apart for His service. In any other sense than this, there is no priest in the Christian Church on earth. The material sacrifice made by men has ceased, the incense kindled by men no longer burns, the atonement presented by men is no more offered up. The Gospel is a religion without a priest on earth, without a sacrifice, and without an altar. And yet there is a priesthood that belongs to the Christian Church still; and there is a Priest who yet discharges that office on behalf of His people. "We have a great High Priest that hath passed into the heavens for us,"—not a mortal and dying man, but one "of whom it is witnessed that He liveth for ever,"—not a priest who offers, as did the sons of Aaron of old, the typical sacrifices of blood, or, as the ministers of Rome do now, the pretended sacrifices of an unbloody offering of bread and wine,—but one who, once for all, offered up a Divine yet human sacrifice for men,—not an intercessor, who, like the high priest under the law, entered into God's presence with the blood of bulls and goats, nor yet like the priest of the Papacy with a consecrated wafer,—but an Intercessor, who, with His own precious and more than mortal blood, has passed into the presence of God,—an Intercessor, the Son of God, presenting the offering of Himself without spot or blemish, and pleading for us on the ground of His meritorious sacrifice. And this office which the Son of God now discharges in heaven for His Church passes not from Him to any other (ἀπαρβατον ἔχει την ἱερωσυνην.) His is an unchangeable and undying Priesthood; and He ever liveth to make intercession for His people. The office which He sustains and discharges in heaven is His own incommunicable office, which none save Himself has either the right or the power to discharge. The one Priest that has made the sacrifice and offered it to God for the sins of many,—there was none that could share with Him in that mighty and mysterious work. The one Priest to stand between God and a sinful world,—there was none but the Son that could undertake so to approach unto the Most High. The one Priest to intercede with an offended God for the guilty,—there was none but the equal of the Father that could so plead. The one Priest to



dispense unto men throughout all ages the blessings of redemption and grace,—there is none equal to the task but He "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Alone in His office as in His nature, unapproachable in His work as in His greatness, "He abideth a Priest for ever,"—the ever-present and ever-living Mediator, who has no fellow to share in His priestly functions, and whose glory as Mediator He will not give unto another.

And what shall we say of those Church systems, Romanist and semi-Romanist, that give to mortal men that office of Priest which none can bear but the Son of God, and constitute sinners mediators on earth between their fellow-sinners and the Almighty? Such an encroachment upon His incommunicable office touches very nearly the honour of Christ. The assumption by men of His personal and inalienable prerogatives, inseparable from Himself as Mediator, is a dishonour done to Him in that very character in which He stands forth supreme and alone before the eyes of the universe. The very title of Mediator belongs in the Christian Church to none but One, and He the only-begotten Son of the Father. Our lips are now forbidden to name another Priest but Jesus. Even in the Old Testament Church, the name and the office of the Priest had something in them of awful and mysterious import, typical as they were of the fulness of the Gospel day, and of the greatness of the Gospel Mediator, and fenced about, as we know them to have been, with the solemn and irrevocable sentence of death upon those who should unwarrantably assume or encroach upon them. And still more awful are that name and office of Priest, now that in these latter days they have been sustained by the Son of God Incarnate, and mysteriously sanctified by the shedding of that more than mortal blood which was poured out on Calvary, and which He still day by day presents in heaven, as He continually pleads with the Father there. To stand between God and man, as Christ once stood amid the darkness of Calvary, was a work which none but He could do. To stand between God and man, as Christ now stands, a Priest in heaven no less than on earth, is a work which none but He can accomplish. To bear the burden of such an office now is as little competent to

mortal man as it was to bear the burden of it in the Garden, or at the Cross. The name of Priest between God and man is Christ's inalienable and incommunicable name,—whether He bears the anger of an offended Judge, or pleads with the compassion of a reconciled Father,—whether He makes, as He once did, atonement by sacrifice, or makes, as He now does, intercession by prayer. It is the sin above others of the Church of Rome, that it has assumed to itself that name of Priest, which none in heaven or in earth is worthy to bear but the Son of God, and that its ministers pretend to stand between the creature and the Creator in the exercise of His priestly office among men.

## **SECTION IV.**

### **THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS, AND OTHER FORMS OF THE SACRIFICIAL THEORY**

The claim to the possession of a real priesthood, and to the power of making and presenting to God a real propitiatory sacrifice, is fundamental to the theory of the Church of Rome, and is one of the great pillars on which its spiritual strength leans. The right to stand between God and man in the character of mediator, to exercise the priest's office in place of Christ on the earth, to negotiate as man's intercessor with God, and to arrange the terms of his acceptance or condemnation, to make and offer the sacrifice which alone can avail unto justification of life, to retain or remit sin, to give or withhold saving grace,—in short, the claim to the sacerdotal office lies at the very foundation of the Popish system. This one principle of a priestly power existing in her ministry, accompanying all their administrations, and sanctifying all their acts, runs through the whole details of the Church system of Rome, and is the grand secret of very much of its success. We see it fully and conspicuously developed in connection with the Romish doctrine of the Supper, and as the foundation of the sacrifice of the mass. But it is not confined to that one department of the Popish Church system. The

sacerdotal principle pervades it, more or less, throughout its entire range; and the Church of Rome has thus added to its many sins the one emphatic sin of usurping the place of Him who has an unchangeable priesthood in heaven and on earth, and of seizing out of His hands the powers that He wields as "Priest for ever." But great and awful though the sin be of arrogating the place and prerogatives of the one High Priest of His people, it is yet a sin which pays its price to the Church that commits it, in the spiritual prestige that it confers, and the spiritual authority that it brings along with it. A sense of the need of some mediator between the sinner and an offended God, a feeling of the absolute necessity of a priest and intercessor for a fallen creature, to negotiate the terms of his pardon and acceptance, can hardly ever be rooted out from the guilty conscience. And the Church of Rome, when it ventures to arrogate to itself on earth that very office which guilty nature needs, and succeeds in its perilous claim to be regarded as the only priest and intercessor between sinners and God, establishes for itself a spiritual dominion over the souls of its victims, greater and more absolute than any other dominion in this world. And hence the tenacity with which the Romish Church clings to the claim of a priestly or sacerdotal office, inseparably connected as it is with some of the most monstrous and incredible pretensions, with the dogma of transubstantiation, with the claim to forgive sin, which none but God can do, with the pretence of making and presenting a Divine and propitiatory sacrifice to the Almighty.

In spite of the explicit abrogation of the office with the abrogation of the Old Testament dispensation; in spite of the palpable inconsistency of the office with the spirit of the Gospel, and the privileges of believers; and, worse still, in spite of the inconsistency of the office with the sole priesthood of Christ, the Church of Rome ordains each one of her ministers to be a priest, and invests him with the power and authority of an earthly priesthood. It needs must be that a priest have a sacrifice to present unto God. "This man must of necessity have somewhat to offer." And having ordained, as she alleges, a real priest, the Church of Rome proceeds to put into his

hands a real sacrifice, and gives him warrant to offer it to God for the sins of the living and the dead.

The doctrine of the Church of Rome on this vital point is laid down in such a manner in her authorized formularies that it is impossible to explain it away. The Council of Trent has defined it in such terms, that the attempts made by more modern Romanists to soften down the atrocious dogma of the real offering-up of the sacrifice of the Lord, body and blood, soul and Divinity, in the Sacrament by the priest, are in vain. Speaking of "the institution of the most holy sacrifice of the mass," the Council declares that it is "a visible sacrifice, as the nature of man requires, by which that bloody one, once to be accomplished on the Cross, might be represented, and the memory of it remain even unto the end of the world." And with this statement, expressive of the representative or commemorative character of the ordinance, the apologists of the Church of Rome, whose desire is to conceal the real doctrine held by her on this subject, very often terminate their quotation, as if the Council of Trent held it to be no more than a symbolical sacrifice in memory of Christ's. But that this is not the case, the words of the Council's definition leave us no room to doubt. It proceeds: "For after the celebration of the old passover, which the multitude of the children of Israel sacrificed in memory of their departure from Egypt, Christ instituted a new passover, even Himself, to be sacrificed by the Church through the priests under visible signs (*Seipsum ab Ecclesiâ per sacerdotes sub signis visibilibus immolandum*), in memory of His departure out of this world unto the Father, when by the shedding of His blood He redeemed us and snatched us from the power of darkness, and translated us into His kingdom." "And since in this Divine sacrifice, which is performed in the mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, who on the altar of the Cross once offered Himself with blood, the holy Synod teaches that that sacrifice is, and becomes of itself, truly propitiatory; so that if with a true heart and right faith, with fear and reverence, we approach to God, contrite and penitent, we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Wherefore the Lord,

being appeased by the offering of this, and granting grace and the gift of repentance, remits crimes and sins, even great ones. For it is one and the same victim,—He who then offered Himself on the Cross being the same Person who now offers through the ministry of the priests, the only difference being in the manner of offering (*Una enim eademque est hostia, idem nunc offerens sacerdotum ministerio, qui Seipsum tunc in cruce obtulit, sola offerendi ratione diversa*).” And, once more: “If any shall say that the sacrifice of the mass is only one of praise and thanksgiving, or a bare commemoration of the sacrifice which was made upon the Cross, but not propitiatory; or that it only profits him who receives it, and ought not to be offered for the living and the dead, for sins, pains, satisfactions, and other necessities,—let him be accursed.”

There are two things in regard to the doctrine of the Church of Rome put beyond all dispute or cavil by these statements. First, it is Christ Himself transubstantiated into the elements, and corporeally present in the Sacrament, that is offered up by the priest as a real sacrifice. It is utterly impossible for Romanists to escape from this dogma so long as the language of Trent remains uncanceled. No attempt can succeed to give it a mystical or symbolical meaning, and soften down the authoritative assertion of the Council, that in the Supper there is a real sacrifice of Christ Himself by the priest. Romish controversialists may indeed adopt different modes of explaining how the sacrifice of the mass stands related to the sacrifice of the Cross. Some of them, like Harding the Jesuit, in his reply to Bishop Jewel, may plainly and unhesitatingly assert “that Christ offered and sacrificed His body and blood twice,—first in that holy Supper, unbloodily, when He took bread in His hands and brake it, and afterwards on the Cross with shedding of His blood.” Others of them, like Möhler, in his *Symbolism*, with a view to make the doctrine less palpably inconsistent with Scripture, may assert another form of it, and maintain that there are not two sacrifices, but one, and that the sacrifice of the Supper constitutes a part of that sacrifice which Christ offered on the Cross; or, to use Möhler’s own language, “Christ’s ministry and sufferings, as well as His perpetual

condescension to our infirmity in the Eucharist, constitute one great sacrificial act, one mighty action undertaken out of love for us, and expiatory of our sins, consisting, indeed, of various individual parts, yet so that none by itself is, strictly speaking, the sacrifice." "The will of Christ to manifest His gracious condescension to us in the Eucharist, forms no less an integral part of His great work than all besides, and in a way so necessary, indeed, that whilst we here find the whole scheme of redemption reflected, without it the other parts would not have sufficed for our complete atonement." But however Romanists may choose to explain it,—whether as a repetition of the sacrifice of the Cross, or a continuation of it,—the Supper is unquestionably, according to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, a real sacrifice, made up of Christ's body and blood. And second, this real sacrifice is truly propitiatory in its nature, having virtue in it to satisfy Divine justice, and to constitute a proper atonement for sin. These two doctrinal positions are clearly and undeniably laid down by the Council of Trent, and in such a manner that Romanists cannot evade them. And it is certainly one cause of thankfulness, and no small one, that the Council of Trent was overruled by Divine Providence to put this and other of the monstrous tenets of Romanism into such a dogmatic and articulate form, that it is now utterly impossible for the Church of Rome to deny or escape from them.

What, then, are we to say to the real sacrifice asserted by the Church of Rome, a true propitiation to God for sin, repeated day after day by countless priests who have authority and power to make and offer it?

I. The doctrine of the Church of Rome is in direct contradiction to the doctrine of Scripture, which declares that there is one Priest, and no more than one under the Gospel.

"Sacrifice and priesthood," say the Fathers of the Council of Trent, "are so joined together by the ordinance of God, that they existed under every dispensation." There can be no doubt that the statement is correct in this sense, that wherever there is a sacrifice, there must

be a priest to offer it, and wherever there is a priest, he must of necessity have a sacrifice to offer.<sup>2</sup> And hence, as part of the sacrificial theory of the Supper and essential to it, the ordination by which the Church of Rome sets apart persons for the work of the ministry includes, as its main and characteristic feature, a commission not to preach the Gospel and to dispense its ordinances, but to make and offer sacrifices to God for the souls of men. Hers is mainly and distinctively an order of priests, and not an order of ministers,—a succession from age to age of sacrificers and intercessors, and not of preachers. And thus her system is distinctively opposed to the system of Scripture, which points to one Priest, and forbids our lips to name a second in the Gospel Church. The argument of the last section might be sufficient, without further illustration, to establish this. But the point is so vital, and it is brought out with such power and effect by the Apostle Paul, that I cannot help advert to his statements on this subject.

The grand design of that magnificent exposition of the doctrine of Christ's office and nature and work in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is to prove that, far above and beyond the mediators and priests under the law, Christ was the one Son and the one Priest of God, in a way and manner altogether exclusive and peculiar, and such as to contrast Him with all others who ever, in any secondary sense, bore these names. In regard to the priesthood more especially, there were under former dispensations two orders of priests, with one of which the apostle compares our Lord, with the other of which the apostle contrasts Him; and both the comparison and the contrast serve to bring out more distinctly the singular and exclusive character that He bears as the Priest of God, who has neither partner nor successor in the office. There was, according to the apostle, a priesthood after the order of Melchisedec, and there was a priesthood after the order of Aaron. With the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec our Lord is compared. There was room in that order for but one Priest, and no more than one; and for this reason, as stated by the apostle, "He abideth a Priest continually." In the office that he held He had no predecessor, and He had no successor. Melchisedec stood alone in

the typical order that bears his name; and the more surely and distinctly to mark out this singularity of his position, we are told, with respect to his office, that he was "fatherless, motherless, ungenealogied, having neither beginning of days nor end of life" (άπατωρ, άμητωρ, άγενεαλογητος, μητε άρχην ήμερων μητε ζωης τελος έχων). And such as the type was, so is the Antitype. The Lord Jesus Christ was "made a Priest after the order of Melchisedec;" and, like that of His type, His office is singular and exclusive; He knows neither predecessor nor successor in it; having not only in His Divine nature, but in His mediatorial character, "neither beginning of days nor end of life." None went before, and none shall come after this Priest; or, as the apostle expresses it, His office is one "that passeth not from Him to any other."<sup>2</sup> The comparison instituted between our Lord's priesthood and that of Melchisedec demonstrates that He is the one Priest, with none to go before or succeed Him in that character.

But again, with the priesthood of Aaron that of our Lord is contrasted by the apostle; and the contrast serves to bring out in like manner the very same grand doctrine. In that priesthood there were not one, but many priests, following each other in rapid succession. The mortal and dying men who inherited the blood and the office of Aaron "were not," as the apostle tells us, "suffered to continue by reason of death." One after another passed away in swift succession, so that in the not lengthened period of the Aaronic Church there were truly "many priests," following each other rapidly in office, as ever and anon death removed them from beside the altar where they sacrificed and interceded. With them our Lord is contrasted, and not compared in this respect. "This man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." "He is consecrated for evermore." He is endued with "the power of an endless life," and "ever liveth to make intercession for His people." Compared with the order of Melchisedec, and contrasted with the order of Aaron, our Lord is emphatically marked out as the one Priest of God, who can have none to follow, even as He had none to go before Him in His office. And the many priests, anointed day by day continually, and



succeeding each other in rapid succession in the Church of Rome, are most decisively declared to be inconsistent with His one glorious priesthood.

II. The Popish theory of the Lord's Supper is in direct opposition to the doctrine of Scripture, which declares that there is one sacrifice, and no more than one, under the Gospel.

This argument is likewise brought out with commanding force and effect—as if by way of anticipation of the very error of the Papacy—in Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews. He exhibits the contrast between the many priests under the law and the one Priest of God under the Gospel, immortal, and living ever to discharge that office of priesthood in which He had no predecessor and can have no follower, and in which, like Melchisedec, He stood alone. But in close relation with this, he exhibits the contrast also between the many sacrifices under the law with their ceaseless repetition, and the one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, which never was, and never could be, repeated. The argument by which the apostle demonstrates the unspeakable superiority of the sacrifice of Christ over the sacrifices offered by the sons of Aaron, is a brief and decisive one. The very fact of the repetition of the one, and the non-repetition of the other, was the conclusive evidence of that superiority. The sacrifices under the law were repeated day by day continually; the priest had never done with offering, and the altar never ceased to be wet with the blood of the victims. What was done to-day had to be repeated to-morrow; and the sacrifice was never so completely made and finished but that it had to be repeated afresh, and renewed times without number. And why? The reason was obvious. They were essentially imperfect. They could never so accomplish the great object of atoning for sin but that their renewal was necessary; and what was done on one day had to be supplemented by what was to be done on the next. "The law," says the apostle, "having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered?"

because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." The fact of their ceaseless repetition was the evidence of their essential imperfection. But in contrast with this, and as an evidence of its sufficiency, the apostle urges the consideration that the sacrifice made by Christ was offered up once, and no more than once. It stood alone, as an offering made once for all, and never again to be repeated,—a sacrifice so complete in its single presentation that it admits of no repetition or renewal. Christ cannot die a second time upon the Cross, as if His first death were incomplete in its efficacy or its merits; for "by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified" or atoned for. Again and again the apostle renews his argument, and his assertion of the fact on which the argument is founded. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." "Nor yet that He should offer Himself often as the high priest." "For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world." "He entered in once into the holy place;" and "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." The argument is decisive. The perfection of Christ's sacrifice, and the non-repetition of Christ's sacrifice, are inseparable. If that sacrifice needs to be repeated, then it cannot be perfect.

And the reasoning of the apostle is conclusive, as if by anticipation, against the many sacrifices of the Church of Rome in the Supper, whatever explanation may be adopted by its advocates to explain away the contradiction between their practice and the doctrine of Scripture. Let the sacrifice of the mass be a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross, as some Romanist controversialists hold it to be,—and their explanation plainly and undeniably means, that the sacrifice of the Cross needs to be repeated day by day, in order to accomplish the salvation of sinners. Or, let the sacrifice of the mass be a continuation of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, and a part of the same atonement, as other Romanists expound it,—and this explanation plainly and undeniably means, that the sacrifice of the

Cross was not finished when Christ bowed His head and gave up the ghost. Explain the connection as you will between the sacrifice of the mass and the atonement made upon the Cross, it is utterly inconsistent with the argument of the apostle by which he proves the unapproachable perfection of Christ's work, from its being that one offering which never can be repeated or followed by another.

III. What is essential to the very nature of a true propitiatory sacrifice is wanting in the pretended sacrifice of the mass.

What was offered on the altar in former times could be no propitiatory sacrifice to God unless it was dedicated to Him by death. Believing sacrifice itself to be a positive institution of God, we must look for the nature and import of the observance only in His Word, and in the practice sanctioned by His appointment. And taking the case of the Old Testament sacrifices, we are warranted in saying that they were uniformly dedicated to God by death, and that "without shedding of blood there could be no remission." There were, indeed, offerings under the law not connected with the shedding of blood, and not accompanied by the destruction of life; but these were not propitiatory. In every case of a propitiatory offering the victim was slain, and the atonement made through the shedding of blood. Expiation and the death of the offering—atonement and shedding of blood—were so inseparably connected, that there could be no real sacrifice of a propitiatory nature when the sacrifice was not dedicated to God by death. From the very earliest times blood was accounted a holy thing, not to be eaten or made use of for common purposes; and the very terms of the prohibition explain the reason of it: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your soul; for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul."<sup>3</sup> Without blood shed there could be no expiation. And here lies one difficulty of the Romish dogma of the sacrifice of the mass. It is a propitiation for the sins of the living and the dead; it is no bare commemoration of a sacrifice, but itself a sacrifice, with virtue to satisfy Divine justice and atone for sin; it is an offering of expiation offered wherever there is a priest to

consecrate the ordinance and present it to God. It is a sacrifice of Christ, offered up in propitiation of His Father's righteous displeasure, and efficacious for the remission of sin. But yet we are assured by the apostle that "Christ dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." The Lord Jesus Christ, in His glorified human nature, has long since passed away from the scene of His suffering and humiliation; seated at the Father's right hand, He has rested Him from His work of sorrow and blood, and can repeat no more the agony of the Garden or of the Cross. He does bear with Him indeed in heaven, impressed for ever on His human flesh, the tokens of suffering and crucifixion; "as a lamb that has been slain," He appears on high in the sight of His Father and His angels, marked with the visible evidence of sacrifice and death. But He repeats the sacrifice no more; His blood is not afresh poured out. The proofs of His once finished sacrifice which He carries about in His person are enough; and with these silent but eloquent witnesses to make good His cause, He pleads the virtue of that sacrifice, and never pleads in vain. His uninterrupted and continual advocacy, founded on the merits of His one sacrifice, all-sufficient and complete, supersedes the necessity of its repetition; He needs to die no more for the many sins of His people, which they daily renew, because He once died a death enough for them all, and now lives a life of everlasting intercession, based upon that death, for His people. Without shedding of blood, without atoning suffering, without life rendered as expiation for life, the pretended sacrifice of the mass is inconsistent with the scriptural idea of sacrifice dedicated to God by death.<sup>2</sup>

Upon such grounds as these we are warranted to say that the sacrificial theory of the Church of Rome, more fully developed in her dogma of the mass, but running throughout her whole spiritual system, is entirely opposed to the doctrine of the Word of God, which asserts, as fundamental to the Gospel, that as there is but one Priest, so there is but one sacrifice known in the New Testament Church. But there are various modifications of this sacrificial theory which,

avoiding the extreme doctrine of the Papacy, are held by many semi-Romanists, and still assert that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice. There are two of these held very commonly by High Churchmen in the English Establishment, to which I would very briefly advert.

1st, In a sense very different from the Romish, it was held by not a few of the Christian Fathers in the early centuries,—and the doctrine has been revived in more recent times in the Church of England,—that the elements of bread and wine were a true material sacrifice, not indeed propitiatory, but eucharistic; very much in the same way as the first fruits laid upon the altar by appointment of the Mosaic law, were a thank-offering to God for the overflowing of His bounties to His creatures. According to this view, the elements of bread and wine, offered to God in the Supper as a material sacrifice without blood, are the fulfilment of the prophecy of Malachi, in which he foretells, in regard to Gospel times, that "a pure offering," as contradistinguished from the bloody sacrifice of the law, should then be offered in to God's name. "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, Thy name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto Thy name, and a pure offering." This sacrificial theory of the Supper is certainly free from the vital and most fundamental error of the Church of Rome, when it ascribes to the sacrifice in the ordinance a propitiatory character; but it is open to insurmountable objections.

First, a material sacrifice, in the sense of a thank-offering to God for the bounties of His providence, has not the slightest countenance in any of those passages of the New Testament which describe the nature and design of the Supper. It is hardly anything else than a conceit, gratuitously invented by those who saw that it was impossible to regard the Supper as a propitiation for sin, but who were anxious, in conformity with the unguarded language of the patristic writers on the subject, to devise some plausible excuse for applying the term "sacrifice" to the Supper. Second, the theory is entirely inconsistent with the first and primary characteristic of the Supper, as clearly laid down in Scripture, namely, that it is an

ordinance commemorative of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. Third, the theory of a material sacrifice in the Supper, in the sense of a thank-offering of bread and wine for the bounties of Providence, is repugnant to the spiritual nature of the Gospel dispensation, which stands opposed to typical worship.

2d, There is another sacrificial theory of the Supper, much more common than the one now mentioned, and indeed, with various but unimportant modifications, the prevalent theory among those High Churchmen of the English Establishment who reject the extreme views of Popery, as asserted in the doctrine of the mass, but who hold that in the Supper there is a real propitiatory sacrifice, and a real sacrificing priest. According to this view, the elements of bread and wine, not transubstantiated, but remaining unchanged, become, by the words of institution and the consecration of the priest, the body and blood of Christ symbolically and mystically; in consequence of the sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified in the Sacrament, the elements are both to God and to us equivalent to and of the same value with Christ Himself; and the offering up to God of the elements, thus both representing a crucified Saviour, and not inferior in virtue or worth to the Saviour Himself, becomes a true propitiatory sacrifice made to the Almighty for sin. Upon this theory of the Supper, the office of priest in the Christian Church is similar to that of priest under the law: both offer to God real, although symbolical sacrifices, equally pointing to Christ,—there being this difference, that the Aaronic priesthood offered a sacrifice of blood in the prospect of the Saviour's sacrifice to come; while the Christian priesthood offers an unbloody sacrifice in memory of the Saviour's sacrifice now past; and also, that the sacrifices presented now in the Supper, in consequence of their sacramental union with Christ, are infinitely more precious than the sacrifices of the former economy. Such, briefly, and so far as I am able to understand it, is the prevalent doctrine among the majority of the High Church party in the Church of England at the present day, who are not yet prepared, as an extreme section of them appear to be, to accept the Tridentine definitions of the nature and efficacy of the Sacrament of the Lord's

Supper. It is maintained and expounded at length in a work recently republished in the Anglo-Catholic Library, entitled, *The Unbloody Sacrifice and Altar Unveiled and Supported*, by Johnson.

This theory, while excluding the dogma of transubstantiation, which Romanists feel to be necessary to give consistency and foundation to their doctrine of the Supper, approaches in other essential respects very closely to that doctrine, asserting, as it does, a real sacrificing priest and a real propitiatory sacrifice in the Supper. The principles already laid down in opposition to the Popish theory of the Supper are almost all equally available against the now mentioned modification of it. It is subversive of the whole doctrine and character of the Gospel. Under the Christian dispensation there is no priest but One, and He is in heaven. It is His incommunicable name, which none in heaven or on earth may bear but Himself. There is no sacrifice or propitiation but one, and that was finished on the Cross erected upon Calvary, looking back, as it does, for thousands of years over the long array of bloody offerings, which were but the types that pointed towards it, not yet come; and looking forward, as it does, over the long array of ordinances in the Christian Church, commemorative of it, now that it is past. Neither type beforehand, nor commemoration afterward, could share in its character as an expiatory sacrifice for sin. There is now no dedication of victims to God by death,—life given for life, and blood exchanged for blood,—in order to make a propitiation. The tragedy of the Cross cannot now be renewed, nor atoning blood be shed afresh; and yet "without the shedding of blood there is no remission" in Sacrament or in sacrifice. Under whatever form, or modification the sacramental theory be held, which asserts in the Supper a real sacrifice, and a true propitiation for sin, it is a dishonour done to the Lamb of God, who "by the one offering of Himself has perfected for ever them that are sanctified," and who, in virtue of that one Divine offering, now "liveth for ever to make intercession for His people."

## **DIVISION III:**

CHURCH POWER EXERCISED IN REGARD TO DISCIPLINE



# CHAPTER I:

## NATURE, DESIGN, AND LIMITS OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

THE Church power that is employed in the way of discipline, or that exercise of authority which is implied in inflicting and removing ecclesiastical censures, in judicially admitting to the communion of the Christian society and excluding from it, has been distinguished by the name of the "potestas διακριτικη."

It is not, at this stage of our discussions, necessary to fall back upon the argument which vindicated for the Church a certain ecclesiastical power, distinct in its nature and objects from that belonging to the civil magistrate,—having its source in the gift and appointment of its Divine Head, and having for its general aim the accomplishments of the grand ends for which a Church has been established on the earth. One branch of that power, we have already seen, has reference to doctrine, and embraces those exercises of spiritual authority by which the Church discharges her duty as the teacher and witness for the Word and truth of Christ. A second branch of that power, we have also seen, has reference to ordinances, and comprehends that use of spiritual authority by which the Church, as the organ of Christ for the purpose, maintains and administers His ordinances for the edification of His people. A third branch of this same power remains for our consideration, and consists in that exercise of ecclesiastical authority by which the Church seeks to enforce the observance of Christ's laws by the judicial infliction and removal of His spiritual censures in the case of its members. The limits imposed upon us make it needful to compress our discussion of this subject within a somewhat narrow compass.

The "potestas διακριτικη," or that exercise of Church authority which respects discipline, may be held to be directed to two grand objects,

which are essentially necessary for the order and well-being of the Christian society. In the first place, its aim is to carry into effect the institutions of Christ in regard to the admission and exclusion of members in connection with the Christian society. There are certain principles laid down in His Word which sufficiently indicate the terms of membership which Christ has enacted for His Church, and the character and qualifications of those entitled to be received into the Christian society, or to remain in it as its members. And the first object which that particular branch of Church authority which respects discipline contemplates, is to execute the laws of Christ in the admission to Church membership of those entitled to the privilege, and in the exclusion of those who are not. In the second place, its aim is to carry into effect the instructions of Christ in regard to those who belong to the Church as its members, in the way of securing their obedience to His laws, and of promoting their spiritual edification. There are certain laws which Christ has appointed, not only for the admission and exclusion of members, but also for the regulation of the conduct of those within the Church,—prescribing to them the duties to be done, and the order to be observed by them, as members of the Christian society. And, accordingly, the second object which this branch of Church power contemplates is to promote and secure both the obedience and the edification of the members of the Church, by the restraints of ecclesiastical authority imposed upon them; by the inflictions of the penalties of censure and rebuke, and deprivation of the privileges of the society, when these have been merited; and by the operation of a system of spiritual rewards and punishments, calculated to promote the order and profit of the Christian community. Speaking generally, these are the two grand aims of that exercise of spiritual authority in the Church which relates to discipline. It provides for the execution of the laws of Christ as these have been revealed in connection with, first, the admission of parties into, or their exclusion from, the Christian society; and second, the obedience and edification of Church members.

Such being the general nature and design of that power of discipline claimed by the Church, the question that meets us at the outset of the discussion is, as to the ground on which this claim rests. It will not be difficult to show that the right to exercise such a power is one that belongs to the Christian Church, both by the law of nature, as evinced by reason, and by the law of Christ, as revealed in His Word.

I. The power to regulate the matter of the admission and the exclusion of members, as well as their conduct while they continue members of the society, belongs to the Church by the light of nature itself. It is an inherent right vested in every voluntary association of whatever nature it may be, and necessary to its existence and wellbeing as an orderly society.

The very conditions necessary to the subsistence of an organized body of men, and the order implied in combined operations, obviously require that they shall agree on some fixed principles both of union and action,—a compliance with which forms the terms of their admission into and continuance in the society as members, and a departure from which must entail the forfeiture of the privileges of membership. No society created for a common end, and requiring a common action, could possibly subsist upon the principle of being compelled to admit, or to continue to regard as its members, those who transgressed its regulations, or set themselves in opposition to the ends for which it is established. There must be in every voluntary association a right to impose its own laws on its members,—a power to refuse admission to such as give no guarantee for their conformity with the rules and ends of the society,—and, when no other remedy is sufficient, authority to deprive of its privileges and expel from its fellowship those who perseveringly and systematically depart from the order and obligations of the institution. If a society be a lawful association at all, it must have this right to exercise the power of order and authority over its members which is necessary to the very ends for which it is instituted. The existence of the right as belonging to the Church, in common with every other lawful society of men, is clearly demonstrated from the light of nature itself.

And from the same source it is not difficult to gather a proof, not only of the justice of such a claim, on the part of the Christian society, but also of the limits that are justly appointed to the right. In regulating the order of the society and the conduct of the members, and in exercising the right of admission and expulsion in conformity with its fixed principles, there are two limitations plainly set to the power so used. First, no society has a right of this kind beyond the circle of its own members, or of those who have voluntarily come under the rules and obligations of the society. The right of order and authority exercised by it does not extend to those beyond the association. And second, in enforcing its regulations even upon its own members, it can award, in the case of transgressions, no other kind or amount of penalty than the deprivation of some or all of the rights or advantages which the society itself has conferred. When it has deprived the offender of the privileges he enjoyed in communion with the society, and expelled him from its membership, it has exhausted all its rightful authority and its legitimate power in the way of punishment. And these two limitations, which are plainly set to the powers of any voluntary society over its members, restrict also the exercise by the Christian Church of its powers of discipline. By the very law of nature, applicable to the Christian society as well as any other, it may lawfully assert a right to regulate the admission and expulsion of its members, and their conduct while they continue members within it. But first, the Church has no power of discipline or authority over those who have not sought or adopted its communion; and second, the Church has no penalties in its storehouse of authority beyond the forfeiture it may award to offenders of the privileges which they have received from its communion. And when the sentence of expulsion from these is pronounced, in the case of the last extremity, its authority is then and there exhausted and at an end.

II. The power of discipline is a right conferred on the Church by positive Divine appointment.

The right which the Christian Church, in common with every voluntary and lawful society, has to appoint and enforce its own terms of admission, and to carry out, in the instance of its members, its own internal regulations, by no means comes up to the full idea of the "potestas διακριτικη" claimed and exercised by it. There is a spiritual efficacy in this power of discipline, and there are spiritual results flowing from it, which no mere natural right belonging to any society can confer, and which nothing but the authority and virtue of a Divine institution can give. It binds the conscience with an obligation, and carries with it a supernatural blessing or judgment, which no power or act of any voluntary human society can confer, and which can only be explained on the principle of an authority and virtue bound up in the ordinance by the positive appointment of God. Over and above, then, the mere right which every lawful society must have in the way of authority and regulation in the case of its members, the power of discipline exercised by the Christian Church is one of direct Divine institution. That ecclesiastical discipline is an ordinance of God, may be established by three distinct lines of proof: by the positive appointment of it which we find in Scripture, by the examples recorded of apostolic practice, and by the directions given in regard to the mode of its exercise.

1st, We have the direct institution of Church discipline and ecclesiastical censures by Christ Himself.

I do not stop to inquire into the nature and exercise of this ordinance under the Old Testament Church, as it would require a lengthened discussion in order to do justice to the subject. But this I may say, that nothing seems more certainly susceptible of proof than that, apart from any exercise of civil authority on the side of the state, there was also an exercise of ecclesiastical authority in the Jewish Church, in the way of depriving transgressors of the privileges of the Church, and excluding them from the congregation in Divine worship. The subject is discussed with great learning and force of argument in Gillespie's Aaron's Rod Blossoming. But, passing by the case of the Jewish Church, we have abundant evidence that the

ordinance of discipline was the institution of Christ Himself in the New Testament Church.

There are three occasions more especially on which we find our Lord intimating the grant of such power to His Church. First, on the occasion of the remarkable confession made by Peter, our Saviour declares to him: "I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Next, when speaking of the treatment of offences, our Lord, on another occasion, declares to all the Apostles: "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, then tell it unto the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."<sup>2</sup> A third time, and after His resurrection, we find our Lord conferring on His Apostles the same authority in connection with their commission as Apostles: "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

It is not necessary for our present argument to inquire as to the particular party or parties in the Church to whom this special authority was committed by Christ, and who, in consequence of His grant, are warranted, rather than others, to administer it. This inquiry falls under the important question to be discussed afterwards, of the parties in whom the exercise of Church power

generally is vested. But, postponing this question for the present, it is plain, on an examination and comparison of these statements of Scripture, that our Lord did in them convey to His Church a permanent gift of authority and power in the way of discipline that was long to outlast the ministry of the Apostles. The passages I have quoted are evidently parallel, and each helps to interpret the other. The phrase, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," occurring in the first passage, is parallel to the power of "binding and loosing," spoken of in the second; and each of these two is equivalent to the authority to "remit and retain sins," mentioned in the third passage. The expression, "the kingdom of heaven," made use of in the grant to Peter of "the keys," is, according to a very common New Testament use of the words, to be understood of the visible Church of Christ; and the power of the keys is the power of opening or closing the door of that Church, in the case of parties seeking admission or meriting exclusion. Exactly equivalent to this power of the keys is the authority to bind and to loose; or the authority to bind upon men their sins, so that they shall be shut out from the Church, or to loose them from their sins, so that they shall be entitled to admission. And in the same sense, and to the same effect, are we to understand the third form of expression, used by our Lord to the representatives of His Church when He gave them right to "retain and remit sin,"—language not to be interpreted literally, as a power from Christ to forgive guilt, or to visit it with everlasting condemnation, vested in His Church, but to be understood as conferring authority on the Church only in reference to those external privileges and punishments of transgression, which, as a visible society, it has a title to award and to remove. The three passages in which our Lord commits to the Church this remarkable power are to be interpreted in connection with each other; and while they afford, when rightly understood, no countenance to the idea of a power to pardon sin or absolve from its eternal consequences, they furnish a most satisfactory proof of the authority of the Church to exercise a power of discipline in judicially inflicting and removing ecclesiastical censures in the case of its members.

2d, That the power of discipline is a Divine appointment in the Church, may be gathered also from the distinct intimations that we have in Scripture of the apostolic practice on the subject.

The remarkable case of the incestuous person connected with the Church of Corinth is an example of apostolic practice in the use of judicial discipline that affords an authoritative precedent in the matter. In the first letter addressed to the Corinthian believers, we find distinctly laid down the occasion that demands such an exercise of judicial authority in a Christian Church,—the object or end to be attained by the use of it, both as respects the purity of Church communion and the edification of the offender,—and the authority for such proceedings, as done in the name of Christ. And in the second epistle to the same Church we find the apostle, in reference to the same person, justifying or commending the sentence of excommunication inflicted, declaring the beneficial effect which the punishment had produced on the offender, and instructing the Corinthian Church in the principles on which, in consequence of his repentance, they ought to proceed to absolve and receive him again into fellowship.<sup>2</sup> Another striking example of the practice of the Apostles in this matter is referred to in the First Epistle to Timothy, when Paul speaks of certain persons who had "made shipwreck of the faith," and adds, "of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." Even in the case of the primitive Church, while yet in the furnace of persecution, it was necessary, by the exercise of judicial authority, to purge out the offence and the offender, that the Christian society might be preserved pure.<sup>4</sup>

3d, The authority of discipline as a Divine ordinance in the Church may be very distinctly demonstrated also by the directions given in Scripture for the manner of its exercise.

These directions, often of a merely incidental sort, scattered up and down the pages of Scripture, plainly take for granted the ordinance of discipline as a standing and authoritative institute in the Church.



"Them," says the Apostle Paul, "that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear." "And others," says the Apostle Jude, "save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." These, and various other passages that might be quoted, embodying the inspired instructions of the Apostles as to the manner and spirit in which ecclesiastical discipline was to be exercised, afford the most satisfactory proof of the existence of the practice as a standing ordinance in the Christian Church. Added to the example of the Apostles, and the express appointment and commission of Christ, they furnish very abundant and conclusive evidence that the power of discipline is a Divine institution in the Christian Church.

Such are the grounds on which it may be argued that Christ has given a power of discipline to the office-bearers of the Christian society. "The Lord Jesus," says the Confession of Faith, "as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate. To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word and censures, and to open it unto penitent sinners by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require." But while there is abundant proof from Scripture of the existence of such an authority in the Christian Church, it is no less certain that there are strict and well-defined limits set in the Word of God to its extent and its operations. It is of much importance to advert to the limits appointed to Church power in this department of its exercise.

In the first place, then, the judicial power of the Church is limited by a regard to the authority of Christ as the source of it.

The power of the keys was usually divided by the old theologians into these two,—the key of doctrine, and the key of discipline. The key of doctrine implies the right and authority of the Church, with the Word of God in its hand, to apply its statements regarding sin to the case of the sinner individually,—to employ its threatenings to deter, its warnings to admonish, its authority to restrain the guilty; and also to bring to bear its promises and encouragements for the restoration of the penitent, on repentance, specially addressing and accommodating Scripture declarations to each particular case, according to the nature of the offence and the demerits of the offender. The key of discipline implies the right and authority of the Church to exercise the office of admitting into the communion of the Christian society, and of excluding from it; to judge of the qualifications of candidates for membership; and, in the case of transgressors among its members, to proceed against the offending party by suspension from Church privileges for a time, or by finally cutting him off by the sentence of excommunication. In the instance of the exercise by the Church of the key of doctrine, its right and power are to interpret and apply, according to its understanding of it, the sentence already pronounced by the Word of God upon the offence with which it has to deal; exhibiting before the eyes of the offender, and applying to his case, the judgment of the Scripture as to the future and eternal consequences of his sin. In the instance of the exercise by the Church of the key of discipline, its right and power are, by its own judicial act, to exclude the offender for a time, or permanently, from the outward privileges of the Church.

But beyond this, the Church has no authority and no power. In the case of the key of doctrine, the office and duty of the Church are simply declarative, and no more,—having power to announce what, according to its own understanding of them, are the decisions of the Word of God, as applicable to the case in the way of absolving the repentant, and condemning the impenitent sinner; but having no

power itself, and apart from the Divine sentence, to absolve or condemn. In the case of the key of discipline, the office and duty of the Church are simply ministerial,—having power to admit to or exclude from the outward privileges of the Christian society, according as it believes that Christ in His Word has admitted or excluded; but having no power itself to open or shut the door of the invisible Church, or to give or withhold admission to the favour of God. In these respects, the right of discipline exercised by the Church is limited by the authority of Christ as the source of it. In pronouncing absolution or condemnation, the Church is simply declaring the sentence of Christ in the matter, according to its own interpretation of that sentence; it has no independent or mysterious authority itself to absolve from guilt, or to condemn to future punishment. In excluding from or admitting to the fellowship of the Christian society, the Church is merely acting according to its views of how Christ would in the circumstances act; and the effect of its sentence can carry with it no more than the giving or withdrawing of outward privileges. In either case, the sentence of the Church may be wrong and unwarrantable. In declaring the sentence of absolution or condemnation, the Church may have erred, and interpreted the mind of Christ amiss; and if so, the sentence will carry with it no spiritual blessing or judgment. In the ministerial act of admitting to or cutting off from the outward privileges and membership of the Church, it may have erred also, having misapplied the law of Christ; and if so, the act done, although it may wrongfully give or withhold outward privileges, has no spiritual efficacy or virtue to throw open or to close the door of saving privilege. The authority of Christ in heaven, and His power to give or withhold grace, are not to be set aside by the erroneous act of His Church on earth. The Church makes no Popish or semi-Popish claim to absolve or condemn, to admit to or exclude from grace, independently of Christ.

In the second place, the judicial power of the Church in the way of discipline is limited by the Word of God as the rule of its exercise.

Beyond the warrant of that rule, the Church has no right of discipline, and no authority to enforce it. Unto the Christian Church has been given a provision of outward ordinances and privileges, unspeakably precious even as external means, and no more than means, of grace; and in the enjoyment and use of these, her members have advantages of a very important kind, which those not her members do not possess, and the forfeiture of which infers no light or inconsiderable penalty. Such a penalty, but no more, Scripture gives authority to the Church, in the exercise of its judicial powers, to impose upon offenders. The rights and privileges and advantages which the Church gives when it gives a title to its membership, it can also for cause shown take away. But beyond the forfeiture of the outward privileges which itself conferred, the Church cannot go in the way of inflicting penalties. In this respect, it is strictly limited by the authority of Scripture as its rule. The temporary suspension or the permanent exclusion of the offender from the outward privileges of the Christian society, is the only discipline or judicial punishment competent for the Church to inflict. The arbitrary and unauthorized discipline which the Church of Rome asserts a right to impose,—its outward penances and inflictions, affecting the person and the estate of the victims, its fleshly mortifications, its forfeiture of civil rights and social advantages, its system of punishment and pilgrimage, of bodily austerity and asceticism,—all these and such like impositions, whether voluntary or compulsory, are inconsistent with the Scripture limits of ecclesiastical discipline, and in opposition to the Word of God as its rule.

In the third place, the power of the Church in the way of discipline is limited by the nature of it, as exclusively a spiritual power.

When the instrumentalities of warning, and counsel, and admonition, and rebuke, and censure, as these are enjoined in the Word of God, have been employed, the key of doctrine gives warrant to go no farther. When first suspension for a season from Church privilege and fellowship, and ultimately the sentence of permanent excommunication, have been resorted to, the powers implied in the

key of discipline come to an end. The authority of the Church is purely spiritual, and in these spiritual acts its discipline is exhausted. The theory and practice of the Church of Rome as to the necessity and use of outward satisfactions and bodily mortifications, as a penance rendered for sin, are inconsistent with the nature of discipline as a purely spiritual ordinance. Much more, the gross perversion of the doctrine of excommunication, as directly or indirectly carrying with it civil penalties affecting the person or estate, or even life of the excommunicated party, is plainly opposed to the true and essential character of the institution.

In the fourth place, the power of the Church in the way of discipline is limited by a regard to the liberties and edification of its members.

The exercise of authority by the Church in the way of inflicting and removing ecclesiastical censures, proceeds upon the idea that the parties offending have still a right to be regarded as members of the Christian society, although for a time, it may be, judicially deprived of its privileges, or suspended from its fellowship. It is intended for those who are within the Church, not for them that are without its pale,—for the man that is "called a brother," and not for that other man who has never been "called a brother" at all, or who, in consequence of his excommunication from the Church, is thereafter to be regarded as a "heathen man and a publican." Until the final sentence of excommunication is pronounced, the party offending is to be dealt with, in all the exercises of discipline, as a brother, although, it may be, an erring one; and the procedure of the Church in inflicting censure is to be regulated by a regard to his rights and edification as a brother. Discipline in all its uses, short of the sentence of excommunication, is to be regarded, as respects the party offending, as remedial rather than punitive,—a means adapted by sharp and severe remedies to promote, not the destruction, but the edification of the offender. His rights and best interests as a brother, although a fallen one, set bounds in this way to the exercise of Church discipline, and restrict it to the use of such means of a spiritual kind as shall not hinder but help the good of his soul. A

regard to the liberties and edification of the brother upon whom discipline is exercised, must plainly limit the exercise of an authority which is intended to work "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." "Church censures," says the Confession of Faith, "are necessary for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren; for deterring others from the like offences; for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the Gospel; and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer His covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders. For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the Church are to proceed by admonition, suspension from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season, and by excommunication from the Church, according to the nature of the crime and demerit of the person."

## **PART IV.**

**PARTIES IN WHOM THE RIGHT TO EXERCISE CHURCH POWER  
IS VESTED**

### **CHAPTER I:**

**DIVINE APPOINTMENT OF A FORM OF CHURCH  
GOVERNMENT**

WE now enter upon the fourth and last of the grand departments of our subject, in which, under the general head of the "parties in whom Church power is vested for its ordinary administration," it will be our endeavour to discuss the main points connected with the constitution, government, and office-bearers of the Christian society. The subject is an interesting and important one; and the discussion of it is surrounded with more than ordinary difficulty, in consequence of the very different views and systems of Church polity which have been adopted and maintained in various quarters, with all the advantages of learning and talent on the part of their respective adherents. To do anything like justice to the argument, would require the devotion to it of a space which it is not possible for us now to give. All that we can pretend to attempt is, to give an outline of the general discussion, referring you to other and easily accessible sources of information for the materials to enable you to prosecute the subject in detail.

In proceeding to consider the merits of the several systems of ecclesiastical polity that have been commonly maintained, perhaps the first question which it is natural to ask is, whether or not any authoritative form of Church government has been appointed in Scripture at all. Very opposite opinions on this point have been entertained. Not a few have maintained the doctrine, that no Divine pattern of government for the Christian Church has been exhibited in Scripture, or enjoined upon Christians; and that the Word of God contains no materials sufficient to form a fixed or determinate rule for the order and arrangement of the ecclesiastical society. The alleged silence of Scripture on the point is said to be a fact significant of the mind of Christ, indicating His willingness or intention that the form of government for His Church should be left to the discretion and judgment of its members, and should be adjusted by them to suit the circumstances of the age, or country, or civil government with which they stand connected. According to this theory, there is no scriptural model of Church government set up for the imitation of Christians at all times, nor any particular form of it universally binding. Christianity is a living principle, rather than a fixed

institution; and the religious system of the Gospel is able and intended to assume and adapt itself to the particular shape which the necessities of its outward position may impose, or the development from within of its spiritual principles may favour and suggest. The advocates of this doctrine assert that the Church of Christ, as regards her external constitution and organization, has been left very much at freedom; the inner spiritual life expressing itself in that outward form which best suits the age and country and condition in which she may find herself placed. Upon this view, Christian expediency, guided by a discriminating regard to the advantage and necessities of the Church at the moment, is the only rule to determine its outward organization, and the only directory for Church government.

The theory which denies the existence of a Divine and authoritative form of Church polity, and leaves the whole matter to be regulated by Christian expediency, or merely human arrangement, is one which has found favour with Churchmen inclined either to latitudinarian or Erastian views of the Church; although it has been held by others also. The mode in which the Reformation was conducted in England, and the undue interference by the State with the Church in that country, had a very marked tendency to develop this theory of ecclesiastical government. We find, accordingly, that it was held by very many of the divines of the English Church, more especially shortly after the Reformation. In defending Episcopacy, they did so on the lower ground of expediency, and not on the higher ground of Scripture institution, which was afterwards adopted by the school of Laud, and has remained almost exclusively distinctive of it. Such was the view of Cranmer, Jewel, Whitgift, and many others of the early English theologians. At a later period it was elaborately argued by Stillingfleet in his *Irenicum*. And among ourselves, similar opinions as to the absence of any Divine or authoritative model for the government of the Church have been maintained by Dr. Campbell.

There is another theory, however, very different from that first mentioned, which asserts that the form and arrangements of ecclesiastical government have not been left to be fixed by the



wisdom of man, nor reduced to the level of a question of mere Christian expediency, but have been determined by Divine authority, and are sufficiently exhibited in Scripture. The advocates of this view believe that, in respect of its government and organization, as well as in respect of its doctrine and ordinances, the Church is of God, and not of man; and that Scripture, rightly interpreted and understood, affords sufficient materials for determining what the constitution and order of the Christian society were intended by its Divine Founder to be. In express Scripture precept, in apostolic example, in the precedent of the primitive Churches while under inspired direction, and in general principles embodied in the New Testament, they believe that it is possible to find the main and essential features of a system of Church government which is of Divine authority and universal obligation. They believe that the Word of God embodies the general principles and outline of an ecclesiastical polity, fitted to be an authoritative model for all Churches, capable of adapting itself to the exigencies of all different times and countries, and, notwithstanding, exhibiting a unity of character and arrangement in harmony with the Scripture pattern. Church government, according to this view, is not a product of Christian discretion, nor a development of the Christian consciousness; it has been shaped and settled, not by the wisdom of man, but by that of the Church's Head. It does not rest upon a ground of human expediency, but of Divine appointment.

The parties who maintain the "Jus Divinum," as respects the constitution and government of the Christian society, may indeed differ among themselves as to the extent to which warrant or precedent is to be found in Scripture for the lesser details involved in the order or polity of the Church. In the question of the constitution and government of the Church, just as in the question of the rites and ordinances of the Church, there is room, as respects the details, for that principle embodied in the apostolic canon: "Let all things be done decently and in order." There is a certain discretion granted, not as regards the essentials, but as regards the circumstantial, in the order and arrangements of ecclesiastical polity, for the

introduction and application of the law of nature and right reason, to regulate what is common to the Christian society with any other society, and must therefore fall under such regulation. And men who hold in common the principle that a form of Church government is appointed in Scripture, may differ to some extent as to where the line is to be drawn which shall separate between what is authoritatively fixed in the Word of God, and therefore binding on all believers in every age, and what is not fixed there, but left to the determination and decision of nature and of right reason. The real point in debate, however, between the opposite systems now adverted to is in general terms this: Does the Word of God afford us a model, more or less detailed, of ecclesiastical polity and organization, which it is the duty of Christians at all times and in all circumstances to imitate; or is there no authoritative delineation or exhibition of Church government at all, so that it is left to be regulated entirely by the dictates of human expediency or Christian prudence?

I. The view which denies a Divine and positive warrant for any form of Church government, and leaves the whole question open to the determination of human judgment, according to times and circumstances, can be fairly argued and maintained only upon one or other of two principles. First, it could be asserted upon the assumption that the Church of Christ was no more than a human and voluntary society; the members of which were competent, both as respects authority and as respects knowledge, to appoint their own office-bearers, and regulate the form of the association. Or, secondly, it could be asserted, on the assumption that the Christian Church, although not a mere voluntary society, had its origin in nature; and that the law of nature and right reason gave both the authority and the knowledge to select the administrators of the society, and to determine their place and functions. On either of these two grounds, it might be fairly and logically argued that the form of polity and organization needful for the Church was not a matter for positive appointment in Scripture, but rightly fell to be regulated by considerations of human expediency, and to be ordered by the decisions of human wisdom. That neither of these assumptions is

correct, it is hardly necessary, at this stage of our discussions, to stop to prove at length.

In the first place, it is not true that the Church is simply a voluntary society, the members of which must possess in themselves both the right and the power to frame its constitution, and appoint the administrators of it. The Christian society, as an ordinance Divine and not human, does not fall under the regulation of such a principle. It does not exist by voluntary compact; its authority is not founded on the consent or delegation of the members; they did not create the Christian association at first, nor do its order and organization wait upon their permission or appointment. The source of its life and authority is from without, not from within; and the Church of Christ confers upon its members, but does not receive from them—as in the instance of any mere voluntary association—the privileges peculiar to it as a society. In the case of any voluntary association, its character, its powers, its authority, are delegated and conferred by the members, who have the inherent right, acting themselves or through their organs, to give to it the form and organization that please them. In the case of the Church of Christ, the same thing would hold good were it a voluntary association also. That it is not a voluntary society, but one associated upon a Divine warrant, and constituted by a Divine appointment, is a circumstance which excludes the right and competency of its members to frame its polity or to regulate its arrangements according to their own views of expediency or right.

In the second place, it is not true that the Church is a society wholly originating in nature; or that the law of nature and right reason is sufficient to authorize or enable its members to appoint the form of its constitution, and determine the functions of its office-bearers. If this second assumption were correct, it would afford no small countenance to the idea that the character of its polity and organization was a matter for human wisdom to fix and regulate. If the Church were, like the State, a society founded in nature alone, and arising exclusively out of the natural relations of man as a social

being, there might be some ground for the assertion that the law of nature and right reason was sufficient to warrant and enable men, as in the case of civil government, to determine for themselves its rules and constitution. As the creature of nature, it would fall to be regulated as to its organization by the principles of nature. But if, on the contrary, all that is essential and peculiar to the Christian Church is of Divine, and not natural origin, there are no powers within the compass of nature equal to the task of determining its constitution or the form of its development. No doubt, the duty of men associating together for social worship in society is a duty suggested and required by the dictates of nature; and to this extent it is true that the Church has a foundation in natural principles. And if there had been no peculiar revelation, or if that revelation had not laid anew the foundations of the Christian society in positive Divine appointment, we must have sought in the principles of nature for the form and ordinances of the Church, and been regulated by reason in determining, however imperfectly, the character and functions of the religious society. These principles, had there been nothing else to guide us, must have left the question of the constitution of the Church very much an open one, which might be settled differently in different circumstances. That this supposition, however, is not true,—that the Church of God is not a society wholly or chiefly arising out of the natural relation of man to God,—is a circumstance which forbids the idea that the law of nature or mere reason can determine its character and organization, or that these have been left as a question which it was competent or possible for reason and nature to decide.

II. The theory which denies a Divine warrant for any system of Church government, and hands over the question to be settled by considerations of human expediency, is contradicted by the fact, which can be clearly established from Scripture, that the Church of Christ, in its essential and peculiar character, is a positive institution of God.

This principle is applicable to the Church in all its aspects: to its doctrine, and its ordinances; to its constitution, and its faith; to its inward life, and its outward organization; to the spiritual grace which it imparts, and the external form which it bears. All is equally and alike of positive appointment by God, being, in the strict sense of the terms, a Divine institution, not owing its origin or virtue to man, and not amenable to his views of expediency, or determined by his arrangements. Looking at the Church of Christ as an express and positive ordinance of God, it is clear that man is neither warranted nor competent to judge of its organization.

The very consideration that lies at the foundation of all our conceptions of the Christian Church,—the fact that it is not simply a voluntary society, and not wholly an ordinance derived from nature, but properly an institution of God, of positive appointment in His Word,—seems very plainly to militate against the idea of the competency or the ability of man, left to his own discretion, to determine its character and constitution from considerations of expediency alone. At all events, the presumption is strongly against the notion that Church government is a matter of human arrangement and determination solely; and nothing but a very express and plain declaration of Scripture to that effect would justify us in making such an assertion. Admitting that the Christian Church is, in all its essential parts, a positive institution of Divine origin, and grafted upon man's natural capacity for religion, it may not indeed be a conclusion, necessarily following from this fact, that man has no part in framing the constitution or determining the character of the ordinance. But the onus probandi certainly lies upon those who assert that this task has been actually assigned to him; and nothing but a very direct statement of Scripture, handing over to human wisdom and decision the right and competency to constitute and regulate the polity of the Church of Christ, would justify us in acquiescing in the assertion.

In addition to the positive nature of the institution, there are two considerations of a very cogent nature that seem to fortify the

conclusion that the Church of Christ, as an express institution of God, has not been left to receive its form and organization from the hands of man.

First, the separation between man and God, occasioned by sin, more especially excludes the idea that man is competent, by the aid of reason, to devise or to regulate the constitution of the Church. The terms of a sinner's approach to God in worship, the manner of it, the ordinances to be observed, the forms of religious service, are more peculiarly matters which both his judicial exclusion from intercourse with God in his natural state, and his moral inability to renew that intercourse of himself, render him incompetent to deal with. And to the terms and manner of his restored fellowship with God in acceptable worship, must we add the constitutions and regulations of the worshipping society, as a point more especially beyond the power or competency of a sinner to determine. Neither in regard to the services and ordinances of worship, nor in regard to the constitution and order of the Church, are we justified in saying that these are lawful matters for human arrangement or decision.

Second, not only is the Church set forth in Scripture as a society of positive institution by God, but, in addition to this, it is represented in the very peculiar light of a visible kingdom, of which Christ is the living Head or King. It is not only a kingdom diverse from the kingdoms of the world, but, in addition to this, it is a kingdom in which Christ is personally present, as the Administrator as well as the Founder of it,—the Ruler now, as much as the Originator at first of the spiritual society. Such a personal dispensation by Christ Himself of the ordinances and laws and authority of His visible kingdom, seems very decidedly to shut out the idea that its constitution is a matter of human discretion, and its regulations the result of human arrangement. As the present Head and continual Administrator of the Christian society, Christ has left no room in it for the interference of man as His partner in the work. Man is not the lawgiver of the Christian Church; nor has it been left open to him to

frame its constitution or its form of administration. His place in it is that of minister or servant of Him who is the Head.

Upon such grounds as these, then, we seem warranted in saying that the government of the Church of Christ is not a matter of human arrangement or expediency, but rather is a positive appointment of Christ, and that Scripture will be found a sufficient and authoritative guide in regard to the outward constitution of the Christian society, no less than in regard to its doctrines, its worship, and its ordinances. There are two remarks, however, which it is important to make in connection with this matter, in order to avoid misapprehension.

1st, Although the Word of God contains a sufficient directory for our guidance in regard to the constitution and order of the Christian society, yet we are not to look for a systematic delineation of Church government, or a scientific compendium of ecclesiastical law, in Scripture. A system of Church law, or a model constitution for the Christian society, would have been out of place in the Word of God, and inconsistent with the great principles on which revelation is framed. We have no scientific exhibition of doctrine drawn up in a logical system in Scripture; and just as little have we any scientific digest or institutes of Church law. The Bible was not framed upon the model of a Confession of Faith, nor yet upon the pattern of a code of ecclesiastical jurisprudence. The Church must, in these latter days, seek for her directory of government and law, as well as of faith, not in formal or scientific statements on either subject, but in those general principles which can be educed from Scripture as applicable to the case; in apostolical example, as well as precept; in the precedents afforded by the primitive Churches while under inspired direction; and in the incidental information to be gathered from the New Testament as to the arrangements and institutions of the early believers during the lifetime of the Apostles. It is in entire accordance with the general structure and usage of Scripture that we should be sent for information on the subject to such incidental intimations of the mind of God, rather than to a formal treatise on

ecclesiastical government. And proceeding upon such a principle in the mode of communicating its information, we must be prepared to find in the Bible, in reference to the form and order of the Church, not a little that belonged to primitive times, and is not applicable to ours, some regulations which were called for by the exigencies of early Christianity, but were not intended to be permanent or binding upon all Christians. In the extraordinary circumstances of the early Church, we must be prepared to find something that was extraordinary and peculiar, and only suited to the temporary and incomplete condition of the infant Church. There is some difficulty occasionally in separating between what was extraordinary in the case of the early Christians, and what was ordinary, and fitted and intended to be a precedent for us. But, notwithstanding of this difficulty, there are ample materials to be found in Scripture to constitute a sufficient and authoritative model of Church government binding upon us.

2d, Although the Word of God be a sufficient guide in matters pertaining to the constitution and government of the Christian Church, yet there is a distinction to be drawn between what is of the substance of the ecclesiastical organization, and what is no more than circumstantial. The Scripture was intended to exhibit a model of ecclesiastical arrangement, complete in so far as the Church is a society peculiar and different from other societies; that is to say, in so far as regards its essential structure and form as a Church. But Scripture was not intended to exhibit a pattern of ecclesiastical order, in so far as the Church is a society, identical in its character with other societies, or in so far as regards not its essential, but merely its circumstantial features. What is common in order and polity to the Christian society with any other society is left to be regulated by the light of nature and reason, and is not authoritatively fixed in Scripture. In short, very much the same distinction between what is of the substance, and what belongs to the circumstances of the institution, which we found to be applicable in regard to the matter of Church rites and ceremonies, is also applicable in the case of Church polity and government. Whatever is proper to its essential



and distinctive character as a positive institution of God, and so belongs to those points which separate it from other societies, has been authoritatively determined in Scripture, and is universally binding. Whatever is not essential to it as a positive institution of God, but common to its order and arrangements with those of any other society, is left open to be adjusted by reason, in accordance with its own views of what is "in good form and according to order" (εὐσχημονῶς καὶ κατὰ τάξιν). The three marks laid down by George Gillespie in the parallel case of Church rites and ceremonies may serve also to indicate what, in the matter of Church government, is left to the determination of reason according to its views of Christian expediency. First, it must be a matter belonging not to the substance of ecclesiastical organization, but only to the circumstances of it. Second, it must be a matter not determinable from Scripture; and Third, it must be a matter to be decided in one way or other; and for the decision of which in this particular manner, rather than in a different, a good reason can be assigned. With the help of these tests, it will not often be a difficult matter in practice to say what in the order and arrangements of the ecclesiastical society is, or is not, left free to be determined by human wisdom.

Such, then, are the conclusions in which we seem to be justified in acquiescing with respect to the question, whether or not any authoritative form of Church government has been appointed in Scripture. And if these conclusions are sound, they serve to settle by anticipation another question of no small importance in this discussion, in regard to the standard of appeal by which we are bound to judge of the different forms of Church polity that demand our attention. If the views already indicated are correct, then it unavoidably follows that the Word of God is the standard by which the controversy is to be determined, and not any appeal to the voice of the Church, or the sentiments and opinions of ecclesiastical antiquity. If the form and order of the Christian society be matters of positive appointment by God, then it is plain that in His Word alone can we expect to find the materials for judging as to what that appointment actually is. From the very nature of the case, a positive

institution must have express warrant in the Word of God, else it cannot be authoritative or binding. The evidence of the post-apostolic age, even although it could be proved to be valid and satisfactory in itself in favour of any form of Church government, would not compensate for the absence of the express authority of Scripture. Evidence extra-scriptural, however conclusive it might be, could not supply the want of the positive testimony of the Word of God. Even supposing it could be demonstrated by the testimony of antiquity that a certain form of ecclesiastical polity prevailed in apostolic times, and had even been set up by inspired men, this would not avail, if Scripture withheld its testimony. The fact might be true; but the silence of Scripture would show that it was a fact not intended by God to be a precedent binding upon us. The omission of the fact in the sacred volume, and the silence of the inspired writers, would prove that the form of polity was one lawful, it might be, or required in the circumstances of the apostolic Church, but not meant to be a model for the imitation of subsequent ages. It is most important to understand this aright, as there has been no small misapprehension in regard to it. Very many of the advocates of Episcopacy, for example, have abandoned the scriptural ground altogether, and have endeavoured, by extra-scriptural evidence, to prove that that form of polity prevailed in the apostolic times. We may answer such an argument by calling in question the testimony adduced, and showing, as can be conclusively done, that it is not sufficient to demonstrate the fact asserted of the establishment of Prelacy in apostolic times or by inspired men. But we may answer the argument in a second way, and one no less conclusive. Even admitting for a moment the fact to be as it is asserted,—admitting that examples of diocesan Episcopacy could be proved to have existed, or to have been sanctioned in apostolic times,—the silence of Scripture, and the total absence, to say nothing more, of Scripture evidence in support of it, would nullify the fact as authority for the binding obligation of that form of Church polity upon future ages. It is not only that we must have better and more conclusive evidence for the fact than the corrupted and unsatisfactory testimony of ecclesiastical tradition. But even though the fact were established, we

must, in addition to this, have Scripture authority for the fact, before we can be called upon to regard it as a Divine precedent intended to lay an authoritative obligation upon Christians in subsequent generations.

## **CHAPTER II:**

### **THE EXTRAORDINARY OFFICE-BEARERS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

IN discussing the question of the kind of Church government delineated and appointed in Scripture, it is a matter of some importance to fix the date when the Christian Church was formally organized or set up. It is plain that this is a question of considerable moment in the discussion; for, by a mistake as to the date of its formal establishment, we may be led to confound the extraordinary circumstances of its transition state with the ordinary circumstances of its normal and permanent condition. Now, a very slight consideration will be sufficient to satisfy us that the Christian Church was not properly or formally founded until after our Lord's resurrection from the dead. From the day of His resurrection we date the commencement of Christianity itself, as a fully established and developed system of faith, founded, as it was, upon the truth of that great fact. And from the same epoch we date the formal commencement of the Christian Church, as a society which owed its establishment and formal existence among men to the same event. Our Lord's sojourn on earth was a period of time devoted to the work of preparing for a new dispensation and Church, rather than exhibiting the commencement of it. It was an interval of transition,

in which the foundations of the ancient Church were in course of being removed, rather than a new one established. The members of God's true Church had not yet been summoned to come out of the earlier society, and to enter into the communion of the later. Christ Himself, during all the period of His abode on earth, remained a member of the Jewish Church, waiting on its ordinances, submitting to its distinctive rites, and frequenting the solemnities of the Temple worship. And those who believed on His name during His own lifetime were neither commanded nor encouraged to depart from the established institutions of the ancient Church, or to incorporate themselves into a new fellowship distinct from the former. The worshippers of the Father were still required to worship Him in His house of prayer at Jerusalem; and the day did not arrive which witnessed the formal abolition of the Jewish Church and the public inauguration of the Christian, until the resurrection of Christ openly declared that a new faith had been developed, and a new order of spiritual things begun. From the date of the resurrection of our Lord the Old Testament economy ceased to be binding, and the Old Testament Church was formally at an end. From the same date the foundation of the New Testament Church was laid; and the people of God came under an obligation to join themselves to it as members.

Such plainly being the period when the Church of God ceased to be moulded after the Mosaic type, and came to be shaped after the pattern of the Christian, the inference to be drawn from this consideration is of no small value in our inquiry as to the authoritative precedent for Church government. We must look for that precedent, not during the transition period of the Church, when it was putting off its Jewish features and putting on the Christian, but after that transition had been fairly accomplished, and the Christian society had settled down into its permanent and normal condition. That fixed condition was not attained, indeed, until some time after the resurrection of our Lord. It was the special work which He gave His Apostles to accomplish, to complete in its full and perfect order the Christian society of which He had Himself, after His resurrection, only laid the foundations. And He gave them

extraordinary powers and gifts for that object, commensurate with the extraordinary work to be performed by them. Around the Apostles, as the special instruments for developing and completing both the system of Christian faith and the structure and organization of the Christian Church, their Master made to gather all those gifts and endowments demanded by such an emergency, and sufficient for such a task. They formed no part of the ordinary equipment of the Church of Christ, or the ordinary staff of office-bearers by which its affairs were to be administered. Their use and function ceased when the Church of Christ, through their instrumentality, had been firmly settled and fully organized, and when it had attained to the condition of its ordinary and permanent development.

There was an extraordinary instrumentality necessary to prepare for laying the foundations of the Christian Church; there was also an extraordinary instrumentality necessary, after that, for completing the superstructure. It would be a mistake of no small moment to identify these extraordinary provisions on either occasion, with the ordinary equipment of the Christian Church,—to identify its transition character with its permanent organization. Before the Christian society was formally established, the instrumentality of John the Baptist, the personal ministry of our Lord Himself, the commission granted by Him, first to the twelve, and afterwards to the seventy disciples during his lifetime, were the extraordinary means adopted to usher in that state of things in which the foundation of a Christian Church could be laid. Subsequently to that event, the extraordinary commission and endowments granted to apostles and prophets and evangelists at the outset of Christianity, formed the special instrumentality employed to build up and complete the New Testament Church, and to perfect both its outward and inward organization. Both before and after our Saviour's resurrection, extraordinary and temporary measures were resorted to, suitable to the emergency, first, of laying the foundation; and, secondly, of perfecting the superstructure of the ecclesiastical society. And it is of much importance in the subsequent argument, that we be able to discriminate between what was extraordinary and

temporary, and what was ordinary and permanent, in the condition and equipment of the Christian Church.

That the Christian Church was not, and could not be, founded at all until Christ rose from the grave, is a position which is very generally admitted by opposite parties in this controversy, and cannot, with any show of reason, be denied. And the conclusion resulting from this consideration, namely, that no precedent or model of Church polity is to be sought for in the history of our Lord's personal ministry, or in the commission granted by Him in His lifetime to the twelve or the seventy disciples, is an inference which, although sometimes overlooked in argument, can hardly be deliberately impugned. But that after the resurrection of Christ, and in order to complete and build up the Church then founded, a similar extraordinary instrumentality was employed, and that we are equally forbidden to regard such instrumentality as belonging to the normal condition of the Church, or as furnishing any precedent to rule its ordinary form of polity, are propositions which, by not a few controversialists, are openly contradicted. The extraordinary mission of apostles and evangelists, necessary and adapted to the emergency of a Church to be established, has been often appealed to as the rule or model for the proper and permanent condition of the Christian society. The temporary and exceptional circumstances of a Church passing through the crisis of its birth and infancy have been mistaken for the pattern binding on a Church in its natural and perfect state. In the language of the old divines, the "*Ecclesia constituenda*" has been made to give law to the "*Ecclesia constituta*." It will to a great extent clear the way for our future discussions, if we seek at the outset to separate between the extraordinary and the ordinary office-bearers in the Christian society,—between those adapted to the emergency of its infant condition, and destined to pass away, and those adapted to its permanent and fixed condition, and entitled to a standing place in the external arrangements of Christ for His people.

## SEC. I.

### OFFICE OF APOSTLES

Let us, in the first instance, direct our attention to the case of the Apostles, and inquire whether the office held by them in the earliest times of the Church was extraordinary and temporary, or ordinary and permanent, in the Christian society. It will not be difficult to show that the peculiarities of the apostolic office are such as to prove that the former alternative is the correct one.

I. One peculiarity—perhaps the primary one—of the apostolic office, distinguishing it from other offices in the Christian Church, was, that the Apostles were separated to be the witnesses of our Lord's ministry, and more particularly of His resurrection from the dead.

This is very often referred to, both by our Lord and by the Apostles themselves, as the grand object of their appointment to the office. When our Saviour gave to the eleven their final instructions before He ascended up to heaven, He very distinctly indicated the purpose for which they had been selected and set apart: "And He said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things." The same thing is still more pointedly brought out in the election of Matthias to the place among the Apostles, made vacant by the apostasy of Judas. The purpose of the apostolic office, as furnishing a personal witness for Christ, is put beyond all reasonable controversy by the express language of Peter on that occasion: "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection." The case of Paul, who was not among the number of those who had companied with Christ, and

seen Him in the days of His flesh, although at first sight an exception to the rule, furnishes in reality a strong confirmation of the same conclusion as to the design and peculiarity of the apostolic office. Paul was not qualified to bear testimony to Christ from personal knowledge of Him before and after His resurrection, in the same manner as the other apostles, who had been eye-witnesses, were qualified; but, to fit him for the office to which he was called, the Lord appeared to him on the way to Damascus, and the risen Saviour was seen of him also "as of one born out of due time." We have more than one distinct relation of the conversion and appointment to the apostleship of Paul, in which reference is made to the object and design of his extraordinary call, and the heavenly vision through which it was accomplished. "The God of our fathers," said Ananias to the astonished Saul, "hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldst hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be a witness to all men of what thou hast seen and heard." In the original call granted to the apostle, Christ Himself is represented as thus addressing him: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." Such passages as these can be interpreted in no other way than as a declaration that the supernatural appearance of Christ, when He was seen and heard by Paul, was made in order to remove the disqualification, under which Paul laboured, of having not seen Christ after the flesh; and that the design of the office, to which he was in this extraordinary manner called, was to furnish an eye-witness to the fact of a risen Saviour among men. And the whole character of the life and preaching both of Paul and the other apostles, goes to establish the same conclusion. They constantly felt and declared that their peculiar office or mission was to be witnesses for Christ and His resurrection. "We were eye-witnesses of His majesty," says Peter. "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you," says John. "He was seen of James; then of all the apostles; and last of all, He was seen of me also," says Paul. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses," says the Apostle Peter in the name of his brethren. "And we are witnesses of all that He



did," says the same apostle on another occasion. "Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses, chosen before of God, even unto us."<sup>3</sup> So very express and abundant is the evidence to prove that one peculiarity, perhaps the chief one, which distinguishes apostles from other office-bearers in the Christian Church, was the distinctive qualification—not of course enjoyed by any that came after them—that they were the selected witnesses for Christ and His resurrection.

II. Another peculiarity, marking out the apostolic office from others of an ordinary kind, was the call and commission to it given by Christ Himself.

The twelve were immediately sent forth to their work by Christ, without the intervention of man. Their commission was direct and peculiar, being independent of any earthly authority, and resting immediately on the call of Christ. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you," were the words of our Lord addressed to them,—forming the sole and all-sufficient authority by which they ministered as His Apostles. When the vacancy among the Twelve Apostles had to be filled up by the election of Matthias, the choice was referred directly to God. When yet another was to be added in the person of Saul of Tarsus, the addition was made by an extraordinary call from heaven. Indeed it is a fact of great significance in regard to the nature and design of the apostolic office, that the name which, in the primary meaning, was proper to the Son of God, as The Sent of God, the Apostle of the Father, should have been specially given by Him to the twelve whom He selected as His immediate witnesses and messengers to the world. "And of them He chose twelve," says the narrative of their selection to the office; "whom also He named apostles."<sup>3</sup> In the same sense in which the Son was the Apostle, or The Sent of the Father, so were these twelve the apostles or the sent of Christ. As He came not of Himself, but was commissioned directly by the Father, so they who occupied the foremost place among the office-bearers of His Church were specially commissioned and delegated by Him. In the Gospel by John, when

our Lord speaks of the authority granted Him for His work and office as Mediator, the special description of Himself that He gives more frequently almost than any other, is that He is The Sent of God, or the Apostle of the Father, who had sent Him into the world. And the assignation of that description or title to the twelve by Christ Himself marks very emphatically the peculiar investiture which they, as apostles, received. So nearly resembling the very mission of the Son by the Father was the delegation they received from Christ, that He appropriates to it the same name, and tells them, moreover, in reference to their extraordinary vocation: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth Him that sent me."<sup>5</sup> As regards this direct and extraordinary commission, the Apostles stood alone and without succession in the Christian Church.

III. Another peculiarity of the apostolic office was the supernatural power which they possessed to qualify them for their extraordinary mission.

As the founders of the faith and of the Church of Christ, the Apostles received extraordinary gifts, proportioned to the extraordinary emergency which they were called upon to meet. It was required of them, not only to declare the doctrine of their Master, but to complete for the use of the Church and the world the revelation of truth, which, in regard to many things He had to tell, was left incomplete by our Lord at the close of His personal ministry, because, as He Himself said, "they were not then able to bear it;" and for this purpose it was necessary that the Apostles should receive the extraordinary inspiration of God, to enable them, by word and writing, to fill up the measure of Divine revelation to men. Again, it was required of the Apostles that they should be not only the teachers of infallible truth, but the witnesses to accredit it in the face of an unbelieving world; and for the purpose of enabling them to accredit it, they went forth among men endowed with miraculous powers, "preaching the Word everywhere, with signs following." Further still, it was required of the Apostles that they should publish the Gospel to every creature, so that men of other languages and

nations might be brought into the Church of God; and for this purpose the day of Pentecost beheld them possessed with the extraordinary gift of tongues, so that each one of the strangers out of divers countries "heard them speak in his own language the wonderful works of God." The powers of inspiration, of miracles, and of tongues are spoken of by Paul as "the signs of an apostle" (τὰ σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου),—marking out the authority and the special character of his office. This power was indeed bestowed on others besides the Apostles; although there is no reason to think that others possessed it in the same degree with the Apostles. And even with respect to other believers who possessed and exercised miraculous gifts, there seems to be some ground in Scripture for holding that, in ordinary cases, they received such gifts only through the intervention of the Apostles, and in consequence of the imposition of the Apostles' hands. But whether there be sufficient ground in Scripture for that assertion or not, of this there seems to be no doubt, that it was the peculiar office of apostles, by imposition of hands, to confer supernatural endowments; and that this power of imparting and transmitting to others extraordinary gifts was confined to them alone. Here, then, we have another characteristic of the apostle's office, marking it out as temporary, and not permanent.

IV. Another peculiarity which marked the Apostles, was the universal commission and unlimited authority which were conferred on them as Christ's representatives on earth.

There were no bounds set either to the extent of this commission, as embracing the whole world, or to the measure of their authority, as supreme over all Churches and all office-bearers in the Church. In the very terms of their original appointment we read the universal commission which distinguished them as the apostles of the world, and not of any one nation or Church. We see the same unlimited vocation in the "catholic epistles" which they sent forth, not to one Church, or one society of believers, but to the universal Church of Christ. We have evidence of the same unrestricted ministry in the history of their life and conduct. We see them preaching the Gospel

wherever they found themselves situated, and reaching forth unto the regions beyond, planting Churches and ordaining office-bearers in every city. And so likewise in regard to the supreme and absolute authority which they possessed, not only over some, but over all the Churches of Christ. We see the proof of this authority in the manner in which, both personally and by writing, they assumed the direction and regulated the affairs of the universal Christian Church in all its departments. We see a distinct intimation of it in the power committed to them by our Lord, when, in the terms of their call to the apostleship, they received warrant to bind and to loose on earth and in heaven. And not less distinct is the evidence of a supreme authority exercised by them, when we see them in their writings, and by their personal interference and control, laying down the whole platform of the New Testament Church,—appointing its office-bearers and its form of government, enunciating its maxims of worship, and prescribing the exercises of its discipline, inflicting and removing censures in the case of its members, and authoritatively overruling the procedure in ecclesiastical matters, both of individuals and of Churches. Such a supreme jurisdiction and universal ministry were competent only to apostles, and form another distinguishing characteristic of their office as singular and not permanent in the Church of Christ.

Such marks and distinctions as these we can easily gather from Scripture as belonging to the apostolic office, and separating it broadly from other offices in the Christian Church. And all of them go very directly to show that the office was of a temporary kind, suited to the transitional and incomplete state of the Church of Christ in its infancy, but forming no part of its ordinary or permanent organization. The apostleship was the Divine expedient to meet the emergencies of the Church at its first establishment and outset in the world, and not the method appointed for its ordinary administration; and the peculiarities distinctive of the office, to which I have now referred, could not, from their very nature, be repeated in the case of their successors, or be transmitted as a permanent feature in the Christian Church. They could have no

successors as personal eye-witnesses of a risen Saviour,—as delegates whom His own hands had immediately invested with office,—as the depositaries and dispensers of His supernatural powers,—as the administrators of His own universal commission and infallible and supreme authority in the Christian society. In these respects, the apostolic power was, so to speak, a delegation to them of the same power that Christ Himself exercised when on earth; and, from the nature of the case, and the circumstances of the Church, it could not continue as a permanent ordinance on earth. "It was expedient" that even Christ Himself, the infallible Teacher and the supreme authority in the Christian society, "should go away," and the Church be left to the ordinary ministration of the fallible word and erring authority of men. And for the same reason, the apostolic office, exercising, as it also did, an absolute authority and invested with an infallible power to teach, was likewise inconsistent with the normal state and organization of the Church. It was to cease with the lives of those originally appointed to it, as incompatible with the ordinary and permanent condition of the Church of Christ.

Now there are two objections, and no more than two, that are at all deserving of notice, which have been brought against the argument intended to prove that the office of the apostleship was a temporary one, and that the Apostles had no successors in it.

1st, The case of Matthias has been referred to as favouring the idea of a succession in the apostleship. It has been argued that the act of the eleven in transferring to him the same apostolic power which they had received themselves indicates an intention to perpetuate the office, and furnishes a precedent for the appointment of successors to the Apostles in all subsequent times. The difficulty interposed by this objection to our argument is not a very formidable one, and may be removed by a very slight consideration of the circumstances of the case.

In the first place, the election of Matthias was an extraordinary one for the purpose of supplying the place of Judas, and completing the

number of the apostolic college, and forms no precedent for an ordinary and unlimited succession of apostles in the Church. The number twelve was originally appointed as the full staff of the apostles, the representatives of the Christian Church, in designed reference to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel, as the types of the visible Church of God in former times,—a parallelism which can be made out distinctly from various passages of Scripture. The argument of Peter from the 69th Psalm plainly indicates that there was a necessity that this number should be kept up, and that the vacancy caused by the apostasy and death of Judas should be supplied by the election of another with that special object in view. Both the vacancy and the supply of that vacancy had been matters indicated before in the volume of prophecy as what must take place. "For it is written," says Peter, "in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take. Wherefore," concludes the apostle, "of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection." The default in the number of the apostles, and the necessity of remedying it by another election to the office, were both indicated by the authority of inspiration. The step which the disciples were called to take on this occasion was thus in every respect a special and extraordinary one, necessary in order to the fulfilment of prophecy, and in order to keep up the parallelism between the number of the apostles and the number of the tribes of that nation which typified or represented the visible Church of God in former days, but not furnishing any precedent for a perpetual order of apostles, and an unlimited addition to their numbers. Accordingly, we find that when James, the brother of John, was killed with the sword at the command of Herod, no proposal was ever made to elect another as his successor among the twelve, and so to perpetuate the office of the apostleship.

In the second place, whether we have regard to the part which the disciples took in the appointment of Matthias, or to the appeal made to the intervention of God, it is equally impossible to reconcile the

transaction with the theory of those who hold that it was but one ordinary example out of many of the Apostles conferring the office they themselves enjoyed on another. If we look at the disciples, or ordinary members of the Church, giving forth their lot for the election of Matthias to the office, then they could not confer apostolic powers, as they themselves had not these powers to give. If, on the other hand, we look at the appeal made to God to vouchsafe His intervention in the selection of the apostle, then the case was one extraordinary, and not an ordinary precedent for future ages.

2d, An objection to our general argument, much insisted on by those who hold a succession in the apostolic office, is drawn from the consideration that the name "apostle" in some few cases is applied to others than the persons commonly known under that designation; that it is not restricted in Scripture to the twelve, but is given to different individuals who, it is alleged, succeeded or shared with the twelve in their peculiar office. Now the general fact on which this objection rests is perfectly true. The name "apostle" is applied, in a few instances, to individuals not belonging to the restricted number to whom, as we assert, the office of the apostleship was limited. In one instance in the New Testament it is given to Barnabas. In another instance, also singular, it is applied to certain brethren sent by Paul along with Titus to Corinth, as "the apostles," or, as it is rendered in our translation, "the messengers of the Churches." In a third case—no less standing alone—it is applied to Epaphroditus, who was sent from the Church of Philippi to Rome, to carry money to supply the necessities of Paul, and who is spoken of as "their apostle," or, as in our translation, "their messenger."<sup>3</sup> And in a fourth instance, in the Gospel by John, it is used in a very general manner, as expressive of "one sent:" "The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent—(the apostle)—greater than he that sent him." There are no more than these four cases in the New Testament in which the term "apostle" is applied without doubt to any person beyond the circle of those to whom we believe the original office was given. There are two or three passages, in addition, in which the term may be held as applied in that manner,

but in which it is not necessarily, or without doubt, so employed. Upon the slender foundation of these instances, then, the whole objection rests.

Now in reply I say, first, that the primary sense of the word "apostle," i.e. one sent, or a messenger of whatever kind, is sufficient to explain any and all of the very few cases in which it is applied, not in its technical sense of denoting the special office which, by Divine appointment as we assert, was restricted to the twelve, and in which they had no ordinary successors. It is perfectly natural, and in accordance both with the known laws of language, and with the usage of the New Testament in particular, that a word, which had come to have a distinctively technical sense, should yet in two or three instances appear in its primary and etymological signification. This leads to no misunderstanding in other cases; nor is there the slightest reason that it should do so in this. The fact that the term in question occurs three or four times in the New Testament in its primary and general meaning of messenger, does not in the least interfere with the other fact, that, in its proper and restricted sense, the term was used by our Lord and His followers to denote only the twelve disciples, "whom also He named apostles."

Second, It is very easy, in all these cases quoted, to understand the special occasion on which the name of apostle was extended beyond its technical and general New Testament sense, to apply to the parties mentioned. In the instance of Barnabas, it was given almost immediately after his being set apart by prayer and imposition of hands, along with Paul, to the first mission to the Gentiles. Whether or not this transaction, as recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Acts, was a regular ordination, I do not now stop to inquire. All that is necessary for our present purpose is to notice the very obvious and natural connection between his being set apart solemnly, and sent forth, along with Paul, to the Gentile mission, and his receiving the name, for the time, of the "messenger" or "apostle" of the Church; and it is a fact very significant, that never subsequently, in the New Testament, is he spoken of as an apostle. In the second instance—



that of the brethren sent by Paul along with Titus to Corinth—they received the name of apostles, from their special delegation on that occasion from the one Church to the other; and hence our translators have with perfect correctness rendered it by the general term, "messengers." In the third instance—of Epaphroditus—he was in like manner the special messenger from Philippi to Rome, to carry the bounty of the Church at Philippi to the apostle in his necessity and his bonds in the Roman capital. And in the fourth example, the very same kind of explanation is to be given when, in a general manner, our Lord declares "that the servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent—(or the apostle)—greater than he that sent him."

The circumstance that in a few instances the name of apostle is applied to other men, will not therefore suffice to overturn the general argument, which demonstrates that the office was one that did not pass by succession or transmission to ordinary office-bearers in the Christian Church.

## **SECTION II.**

### **OFFICES OF PROPHETS AND EVANGELISTS**

In handling the subject of the office-bearers, extraordinary and ordinary, appointed for the New Testament Church at the outset, there are two passages of Scripture that may be especially referred to as throwing light upon the question. In the fourth chapter of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul, speaking of the provision made for the Church by the ascended Saviour, says: "And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." In this statement by the apostle we have plainly an intimation of the staff of officers, ordinary and extraordinary, appointed by Christ, for the work of establishing, organizing, building up, and ministering to the Christian Church.

That the enumeration of office-bearers is not complete, appears from the fact that no mention is made of the deacon, of the institution of whose office we have an express account in the Acts of the Apostles, and who is admitted by all parties, Romanist and Protestant, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist, to be an ordinary and standing office-bearer in the ecclesiastical society. In the passage now referred to, however, we have a list of office-bearers, which, although not exhaustive, yet includes the majority of those invested with formal office in the apostolic Church. In the twelfth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, when speaking of "spiritual gifts" in the Church of his day, the same apostle tells us: "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues." And further on in the same chapter we are told: "God hath set some in the Church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" Now in this passage we have an enumeration, not of the offices, but of the gifts that prevailed in the primitive Church. In writing to the Ephesians, the apostle ranks and enumerates the office-bearers according to their formal offices; in writing to the Corinthians, he classifies them according to their special gifts.

There is a most important distinction to be marked between a formal office and a special gift or endowment. One man might receive and exercise many gifts, while at the same time he held and exercised no more than one office in the Church. The different and many gifts—*χαρίσματα*—of miracles, of healing, of tongues, of discernment of spirits, etc., which abounded in the apostolic Church, might in some cases meet in the person of one individual, and be all exercised by him, while at the same time, as a formal office-bearer in the

Christian society, he was invested only with one office. In dealing with the question of the form of polity of the New Testament Church, we must take special care not to confound the different *χαρισματα*, or gifts, enumerated in the Epistle to the Corinthians with the distinct offices enumerated in the Epistle to the Ephesians, or to assume that because the same individual exercised different endowments or powers for the edification of the Church, he therefore is to be held as invested with different offices, ordinary or extraordinary, in the Christian society. It is with the offices, and not with the gifts of the apostolic Church, that we have at present to do,—the former, or the offices, marking out the form or constitution of the ecclesiastical society; the latter, or the gifts, only marking out the endowments conferred on the persons belonging to it.

Referring, then, to the enumeration of office-bearers in the Epistle to the Ephesians, we find that there are five mentioned as pertaining to the apostolic Church. Three of these we believe to have been special and extraordinary, and two to have been ordinary and permanent office-bearers. We have apostles, prophets, evangelists, belonging to the special emergency and need of the Christian Church at the time; and we have pastors and teachers belonging to the ordinary and permanent equipment of the ecclesiastical body. We have already dealt at some length with the question of the extraordinary office of the apostleship: we shall now proceed to consider the offices of prophets and evangelists. There seems to be warrant from Scripture, as in the instance of apostles, to say that these offices were special and extraordinary. Let us, in the first instance, then, direct our attention to the case of the New Testament prophets, as enumerated among the office-bearers of the early Church. There is no great difference of opinion among controversialists in regard to the temporary and exceptional character of their office.

The prophets of the apostolic Church are plainly to be distinguished from the apostles on the one hand, and from the evangelists on the other, among the extraordinary office-bearers, and also from both pastors and teachers among the ordinary office-bearers of the

Christian society. The terms prophecy and prophet, when descriptive of this office, are plainly to be understood in the primary and more enlarged meaning of the words, as referring to an authoritative proclamation of the mind of God, whether in the shape of a revelation of Divine truth generally, or a revelation more especially of future events. There seems to be distinct enough ground for saying that the office of the prophet in the early Church comprehended both the prophecy or declaration of the Divine mind as to future events, and also the prophecy or declaration of the Divine mind as to moral or spiritual truth generally, without reference to the future.

In the first place, the order of prophets in the New Testament Church had the same distinctive power which belonged to their brethren during the ancient dispensation,—that, namely, of foreseeing and predicting the future.

That this was the case, appears plainly both from the promise of Christ given to His disciples before His death, and also from the intimations of the exercise of such a power in the inspired history of the apostolic Church. In His farewell address to His disciples before His passion, our Lord distinctly promised: "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; and He will show you things to come." There is no good ground for asserting that this promise was confined to the apostles alone. They indeed shared more largely than their brethren in the supernatural gifts of that early age of miracle and inspiration, but they did not monopolize them; and in the ample dowry conferred on the Church in the morning of her espousals by her Lord, we are to recognise the gift of prophecy in the restricted meaning of the term, as the prediction of things to come. Of the order of men who enjoyed and exercised this power, we read more than once in the Acts of the Apostles. "And in these days," says the inspired historian in the eleventh chapter of the Acts, "came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them, named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar." In consequence of this prophetic

intimation given of the approaching scarcity, the narrative goes on to tell us: "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."<sup>2</sup> The same prophet, in virtue of his extraordinary gift of prediction, shortly afterwards foretold the imprisonment of the Apostle Paul at Jerusalem, accompanying the prediction—precisely as Old Testament prophets had been wont to do—with the significant action of binding his own hands and feet with the apostle's girdle. Nor did he stand alone in giving intimation to Paul of his approaching sufferings; for the apostle told the elders at Ephesus of manifold Divine forewarnings given him of the same event: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things which shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost in every city witnesseth, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." In short, side by side with the power of working miracles and of speaking with tongues, the gift of prophecy, or insight into the future, was given to the apostolic Church, as a witness to its Divine origin, and an instrument for securing its establishment on earth.

In the second place, the order of prophets in the New Testament Church had the power of declaring the mind of God generally, and without reference to the future, being inspired to preach or proclaim Divine truth, as it was revealed to them, in an extraordinary manner by the Spirit.

They were infallible interpreters of the Old Testament Scriptures and inspired preachers of Divine truth, declaring the Word of God for the conversion of sinners and the profit of the Church. The difference between the prophets and the ordinary pastors or teachers of the early Church was, that the one were inspired preachers of the Gospel, and the other not inspired. The prophesying or preaching of the first was the fruit of immediate extraordinary revelation at the moment; the prophesying or preaching of the second was the fruit of their own unaided study of the Old Testament Scriptures, and personal understanding of Divine truth. That this was the case, is apparent

from the instructions given by the Apostle Paul in the fourteenth chapter of First Corinthians in regard to the use of the supernatural gifts conferred on that Church. "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If anything be revealed (ἀποκαλυφθῆ) to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace." The prophesying or preaching of this order of office-bearers in the primitive Church was identical with the "revelations" given to certain of the early believers for the purpose of edifying the rest.

And it is not difficult to see the foundation laid in the circumstances of the apostolic Church for the necessity and the use of this special class of office-bearers. Our Lord had Himself told His disciples shortly before His death, that He had many things to tell them, which at that moment they were not able to bear. The revelation of His mind and truth was left by Him incomplete when He departed from this world to the Father. It remained incomplete until the canon of Scripture was closed, and the entire revelation of God, as we now have it, was committed to writing. The earliest of the canonical books of the New Testament was not written until some years after the ascension of Christ; and the latest of them was not added until probably a generation had well-nigh passed away after that event. In the interval, the revelation of God remained unfinished; while from the difficulty of transcribing and disseminating in manuscript the copies of the books that partially made up the New Testament volume, before its completion there must have been, in many Churches of the early Christians, a want felt of any authoritative record of the Divine mind and will. The living Word of prophets, inspired by God to declare His truth, was the instrumentality employed by Him to supply that want in the apostolic Church. The Apostles indeed had the same word of revelation that the prophets enjoyed. The prophesying of the Apostles supplied for a time, to the extent to which their personal presence could reach, the want of the written and inspired standard before the canon was closed. But the number of the apostles admitted of no increase, while in the rapid spread and prevalence of early Christianity there were multitudes added to the Church daily of such as should be saved. And hence the

necessity of another order of office-bearers, suited to the extraordinary emergency, and to the transition state of the Christian Church, who should, by means of personal revelation granted to them, and personal prophesyings emitted by them, become the teachers of the early converts, when they had no other adequate source of information and instruction in Divine things. The necessity for such extraordinary instrumentality ceased when the canon of Scripture was closed. The written Word in the hands of the Christian Churches superseded the need of revelations and prophets. Both in their character of foretellers of future events, and in their character of inspired preachers of Divine truth, the order of New Testament prophets was temporary, and did not outlive the apostolic age.

But next let us inquire into the case of the third class of office-bearers mentioned in the list given by the apostle in his Epistle to the Ephesians. In that list we have, first, apostles, who undoubtedly were extraordinary office-bearers; and second, prophets, who were also a temporary order in the Christian Church. After these we find mentioned evangelists; and the question that arises is, whether or not the nature of their office and functions constitutes them fixed and standing officers in the ecclesiastical body. There seems to be reason from Scripture to assert that they, like the apostles and prophets, were extraordinary office-bearers in the primitive Church. The discussion in connection with the order of evangelists is a somewhat important and fundamental one in attempting to determine the form and polity of the Christian society in apostolic times.

Our information in regard to the order of evangelists, and the nature of the duties attached to their office, is mainly to be gathered from what Scripture has enabled us to learn in connection with Timothy and Titus, the fellow-labourers of Paul in his evangelistic journeys. To Timothy the name of evangelist is expressly given, and in such a manner as to prove that it was an office distinct from other offices in the early Church, and that it belonged to him as his peculiar function. And although the same title is nowhere expressly

appropriated to Titus in Scripture, yet the duties he discharged, and the manner in which he is spoken of, leave no doubt that he belonged to the same order, and laboured in the same office as Timothy. There are several others mentioned in the sacred volume that are plainly to be classed in the same rank of ecclesiastical office-bearers, although of their history and labours less is known. But the narrative of the Acts and the Epistles of Paul afford sufficient materials, in the references we find there to Timothy and Titus, for judging of the order of evangelist, separated as it was from the extraordinary offices of apostles and prophets on the one side, and from the permanent and standing office of pastor on the other. It is hardly necessary to say that by evangelists, in the sense of ecclesiastical office-bearers, is not meant the inspired historians of our Lord's life in the Gospels. They are exhibited to us in the Scripture narrative rather as the attendants upon the Apostles in their journeys, and their assistants in planting and establishing the Churches, acting under them as their delegates, and carrying out their instructions. If the contributions of one Church were to be carried to another to supply its more urgent need, it was an evangelist that was selected as the messenger of the Church.<sup>2</sup> If an inspired letter was to be conveyed to the Christian community to whom an apostle had addressed it, an evangelist was the bearer of the precious record. If an apostle had converted many to the faith of Christ in one particular locality, and hastened led on to other labours and triumphs, an evangelist was left behind to organize the infant Church. If, in the absence of an apostle, contentions had arisen, or false doctrine had found entrance within a Christian society which he had founded, the apostolic method of applying a remedy was by the errand of an evangelist.<sup>2</sup> We know from him who was not behind the chiefest of the Apostles, that he counted it as his special mission, "not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel;" or, in other words, that he held it to be a higher department of the apostolic office to convert sinners to Christ, and to edify His people, than to establish and arrange the outward government and ordinances of grace of a standing visible Church. And accordingly, in the ardour of his zeal that Christ might be preached, he himself passed on to declare the Gospel in other regions, "not building on



another man's foundation," and left behind Timothy, or Titus, or some other evangelist, to organize the outward polity of the Church, to which he had been the means of communicating the gift, more precious still, of inward life.<sup>4</sup> As an apostle, Paul felt that he had higher work on hand than the arrangement of the external polity of the Church or the regulation of its outward affairs; and therefore he gave commission to his assistants from time to time, as occasion demanded it, in their capacity of evangelists, to complete the organization of the infant Churches he had planted, to superintend the settlement of regular pastors and office-bearers among them, to rectify the disorders of their discipline, or their departures from sound doctrine, and to do his occasional errands of affection or authority in those Christian societies where his bodily presence was denied. Such, generally, in so far as we can gather from the inspired record, seems to have been the work and duty of the evangelist, as these are more especially delineated in the references to the history of Timothy and Titus. And the question is: Were these evangelists the standing and permanent, or the occasional and extraordinary office-bearers of the Christian Church?

Those controversialists who assert the formal and permanent character of the office vested in the persons of Timothy and Titus, in order to make out this conclusion, endeavour to prove that they sustained a fixed and standing relation, each to a particular Church, as the bishop or overseer of it. It is asserted that Timothy held the permanent position of diocesan bishop in the Church at Ephesus, and that Titus stood in a similar relation to the Church at Crete. The question, then, comes very much to this: Was the office that these evangelists sustained of a special kind, being simply a commission from the Apostles to exercise, at Ephesus and Crete, certain powers given them for a particular purpose? or, Was that office of a permanent kind, implying a fixed and ordinary relationship to these Churches? We shall find in Scripture abundant reason to conclude that the position of Timothy and Titus was not a fixed and permanent one, and that their relation and powers in reference to the Ephesian and Cretan Churches were special and extraordinary.

In entering upon the argument, it is hardly necessary to say that the subscriptions at the close of the apostolic letters addressed to Timothy and Titus, which speak of them as "bishops," are of no authority at all, being, as is now universally admitted, uninspired additions of a much later date than the Epistles. Confining ourselves to Scripture evidence, let us take the case of Timothy first, and inquire into the nature of his connection with the Church at Ephesus.

1st, At the date of Paul's address to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, whom he summoned to meet him at Miletus, mentioned in the twentieth chapter of the Acts, it is evident that Timothy had no place or office in connection with that Church. The absence of all reference to him by Paul, and the whole tenor of the apostle's address to the elders as the proper bishops or overseers of the Church there, sufficiently establish these two points: first, that at that time Timothy was not at Ephesus, having no connection of an official kind with the Church at that place; and second, that there was a Church there fully organized and complete without him.

2d, The first, and indeed the only, express intimation in Scripture of the presence of Timothy at Ephesus, is contained in the first epistle addressed to him by Paul, in a passage which shows that he was present there only for a special purpose, and not in consequence of any fixed connection with the Church of an official kind. It appears that Paul, and Timothy as his attendant, had been labouring at Ephesus together, when the apostle had occasion to leave it for Macedonia. In his parting charge given at Miletus to the elders of Ephesus, Paul had forewarned them: "After my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Whether this warning was given before or after the date of Paul's leaving Timothy at Ephesus, has been disputed, and it is not of material consequence to the argument. It is undoubted, that about that time dangers of false doctrine assailed the Church at Ephesus; and, to counteract the danger, Timothy was left there by the apostle. This was the special reason of Timothy's

presence at Ephesus, and not his fixed relation to the Church there. "As I besought thee," says Paul in his letter to Timothy, "to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do."<sup>2</sup> The object of Timothy's being left by the apostle at Ephesus was not that he might enter upon a permanent connection of an official kind with the Ephesian Church, but simply in order that he might accomplish the specific end of meeting the crisis occasioned by the disorders among the Ephesian converts.

3d, The commission granted to Timothy for this special object was plainly intended to be a temporary, and not a permanent one. The words of the apostle already quoted seem obviously to imply this. "I besought thee (παρεκαλεσα σε) to abide still at Ephesus," is not like the language of an apostle conferring a permanent appointment, or referring to a fixed connection between Timothy and the Church of the Ephesians, but the very opposite, implying, as it clearly does, a mere temporary residence and duty there. It was a commission granted by Paul to Timothy as his delegate for certain specific purposes during his absence; and was to come to an end, either when the apostle once more personally resumed the work at Ephesus, or when the occasion which demanded the intervention of the evangelist had passed away, and he should be sent on a similar errand to other Churches. That Paul had the expectation of returning to Ephesus and relieving Timothy from his special superintendence there, is manifest from such language as we find in the first epistle: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mightest know how to behave thyself in the house of God." "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." That Timothy, after this, actually left Ephesus to undertake other duty, seems capable of proof from the second epistle addressed to him. Writing in that epistle from Rome, Paul enjoins upon Timothy: "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me;" and again: "Do thy diligence to come before winter:"<sup>2</sup> And we

cannot doubt that the command of the apostle was obeyed, and that Timothy actually proceeded to Rome. That his presence at Rome was required, not for any personal attendance on Paul, at that time a prisoner in bonds, but for the service of the Church, is rendered probable, in the first place, by the Christian disinterestedness of the apostle, who would have been the last man to have asked from Timothy the sacrifice of public duty for the sake of his own private and personal gratification. But this is made all but certain by the reason which Paul gives for requesting the presence of Timothy at Rome,—namely, that the other companions of his missionary labours were absent; and also by the request to bring Mark along with him to Rome, because he was profitable for the ministerial work. "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens unto Galatia; Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry." Add to this, that by implication at least, if not by positive assertion, it may be pretty satisfactorily proved that Timothy was not even at Ephesus when the second epistle was addressed to him, summoning him to Rome. In the twelfth verse of the fourth chapter, Paul gives a piece of information not consistent with the idea that Timothy was at Ephesus at the time: "And Tychicus," says the apostle, "have I sent to Ephesus." And the conclusion is confirmed by the subsequent verse, which seems to take for granted that Timothy was actually at that moment at Troas: "The cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee." So strong and clear is the evidence, that when Timothy was left behind by Paul at Ephesus, his stay was no more than temporary, and his connection with the Church there not a permanent office in it, but the reverse.

But let us next take the case of Titus, and inquire whether his commission to Crete gave him a permanent connection with the Church there, or rather was of a special and extraordinary nature. In this instance also, it can be made out no less clearly than in the instance of Timothy, that the purpose of the evangelist's presence in

this particular field of labour, and his actual stay there, were both of a temporary kind.

First, The object of Titus' presence in the Church at Crete was of a special kind, and not requiring or implying a permanent connection with it. The Apostle Paul had himself been labouring there, and had laid the foundation of a Christian society; but, acting upon the general principle, which he seems to have adopted, of preaching the Gospel himself, and handing over to his assistants the task of arranging the ecclesiastical polity of the society he had called into spiritual life, he appoints Titus for this object. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain (καταστησης, constitute, or settle) elders in every city as I appointed thee." The nature of the object to be accomplished implies that the commission was a special and temporary one, involving no fixed or official relationship on the part of Titus to Crete. The evangelist was left in the island to complete the work begun, but left unfinished by the apostle; and this no more involved, on the part of Titus, a permanent connection with the Church of Crete than it did on the part of Paul.

Second, That the stay of Titus in Crete was no more than temporary, and that he soon left it, is sufficiently proved in the same epistle. Paul evidently contemplated, at the time he wrote to Titus, relieving him immediately from his duties at Crete by sending another of the apostle's companions and fellow-labourers in his place; and Titus is told that, on the arrival of this substitute, he was himself forthwith to join Paul: "When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis; for I have determined there to winter." That Titus actually left Crete and joined Paul at Nicopolis, we cannot doubt; and there is no evidence whatever in Scripture that he ever returned to Crete, to resume the duties from which the apostle thus relieved him; on the contrary, our latest information regarding Titus, contained in the Second Epistle to Timothy, which is almost universally held to be the last in date of the Pastoral Epistles, shows him engaged in labour in Dalmatia.<sup>2</sup>

Both as regards Timothy and Titus, then, there seems sufficient ground in Scripture for saying that the commission which they bore in connection with Ephesus and Crete respectively was a special one; that the object of their presence in these Churches involved no fixed or permanent relationship to them; and that their actual residence in these places was but short, and not, so far as we know from Scripture, at any time resumed.

But besides the special lines of proof already referred to with respect to Timothy and Titus, there is one general kind of Scripture evidence of much weight in the argument in support of the extraordinary character of their office as evangelists, and against its involving any standing or permanent connection with any particular Church. I refer to the evidence arising out of the relation which they sustained to the Apostle Paul,—a relation incompatible with the notion of their holding or exercising the functions of any fixed office in any one ecclesiastical society. Timothy and Titus were, in their character as evangelists, the almost constant attendants upon the apostle, and his companions in his missionary journeys,—were at his side, and ready to do his errands among the Churches, when he could not himself be present, or to complete the work which he had begun, but could not personally overtake. In the wide range of duty which his apostolic labours embraced, and in "the burden which came upon him daily, the care of all the Churches," Paul had no means of supplying the necessary limitation of his own exertions, and his own often unavoidable absence from the scene, where guidance and counsel were especially required, except by delegating to others his powers, in so far as the occasion demanded. And there was a little band whose hearts the Lord had touched, and who were drawn to the apostle by the power of that strong personal attachment, and love, and admiration, which the character of Paul was so fitted to call forth among the young, who followed him as the companions of his ministry and labours, and were at hand to bear his special commissions to whatever new quarter called for his interposition, or needed his peculiar care,—his representatives to the Churches in organizing their polity, in rectifying their disorders, in conveying to

them his apostolic instructions, and in carrying out his apostolic decisions.

As the companions or delegates of Paul, we find the names of not a few who seem to have received the office of evangelist under his commission; as, for example, "Tychicus, a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord;" "Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour;" "Mark, who is profitable to me for the ministry;" "Luke, who only is with me." But conspicuous in that little circle of youthful and zealous labourers are Timothy and Titus, both in their personal attendance on the apostle, and in the frequency with which they bore his commission as his representatives to the Churches. We find Timothy the companion of Paul at Rome during his first imprisonment there; we find his name honourably linked to that of the apostle in his letters to the Churches of Corinth, of Thessalonica, of Philippi, and of Colosse, and to Philemon; he is spoken of in the Epistle to the Romans as Paul's fellow-worker at Corinth; we find Paul rejoicing over his recent deliverance from imprisonment in the Epistle to the Hebrews; we see him the joint labourer with Paul in the Church at Ephesus, and left behind with special instructions to complete the work of the apostle, who had departed; and we witness him summoned by the apostle to Rome toward the close of his life, and in the near prospect of his martyrdom. In like manner we find Titus the very frequent attendant on the apostle, and the bearer of his commission to the Church. At Troas, Paul "found no rest in his spirit, because he found not Titus his brother;" at Philippi he was joined with the apostle in his active labours there; to Corinth he was sent on a special mission in connection with the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem; in Crete he was left behind by Paul to complete what the apostle's hands had not been able to overtake; and from Rome we find Paul sending him on a special mission to Dalmatia.<sup>2</sup>

These labourers, ever at Paul's side, and ever ready to carry his instructions to distant Churches, were not, and could not be, attached to any particular Church as holding a fixed and permanent

office among its members. Their office was extraordinary; their commission had its origin and its close in apostolic times; the position of the evangelists, like the positions of the apostle and the prophet, must be reckoned among those provisional arrangements of the primitive Church, which formed the transition to its permanent and settled condition. There is no evidence from Scripture that the office of evangelist was a fixed and standing office in the Christian society; on the contrary, there is every evidence that it was extraordinary and temporary.

## **CHAPTER III:**

### **THE POPISH SYSTEM OF CHURCH POLITY**

THOSE preliminary discussions in which we have dealt with the question of the extraordinary office-bearers in the apostolic Church, have to some extent cleared our way to the main subject before us. In separating between what was characteristic of the period of transition, and what belonged to the permanent state of the early Church, we have taken an important step towards ascertaining its ordinary and normal condition; and besides this, we have been enabled to lay down certain general positions, which will be of use in our subsequent argument. In addressing ourselves to the discussion, there are four leading systems of Church government that present themselves to our view, and claim attention,—the Romanist, the Episcopalian, the Independent, and the Presbyterian. A brief and general review of the principles involved in these systems, and the positions maintained by their adherents, will enable us to discuss the



whole subject of Church government, or the question of the parties by whom Church power is administered. We shall begin by taking into consideration the particular scheme of ecclesiastical polity advocated by the adherents of the Church of Rome.

The doctrine of the Popish Church in regard to the constitution and government of the Christian society, is briefly set forth in the decree of the Council of Florence, A.D. 1438–39,—one of those councils held by Romanists to be œcumenical and authoritative: "Also we decree that the Holy Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff have a primacy over the whole world; and that the Roman Pontiff himself is the successor of St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, and is the true vicar of Christ, and head of the whole Church, and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that to him, in the person of the blessed Peter, our Lord Jesus Christ has committed full power of feeding, ruling, and governing the universal Church."

There are at least three bold and comprehensive positions asserted in this authoritative statement of the views of the Church of Rome as to the form and constitution of the ecclesiastical society. First, it is asserted that Peter was invested by our Lord with such a superiority over the other apostles as to be their official head, and in an exclusive and peculiar sense the depositary of his Master's Divine power and authority over the Church. Second, it is asserted that this primacy of Peter, being not personal but official, was transmitted by him, along with all the powers and prerogatives that belonged to it, to his successors in office,—those successors being the Roman Pontiffs. And third, it is asserted that this ecclesiastical supremacy conferred on Peter, and by him transmitted to his successors at Rome, is of such a nature and amount as to constitute them, in the proper sense of the term, the vicars of Christ, holding and administering vicariously His spiritual authority over the Church,—the Roman Pontiff for the time being as much the head of the ecclesiastical body as the Saviour once was on earth, with full powers to feed, order, and rule the universal Christian society. These three general positions are plainly involved in the decree of the Council of Florence, and are

exemplified in the system of ecclesiastical polity set up and administered in the Romish Church. The subordinate office-bearers in the Popish Church hold their place and authority in dependence upon the sovereign Pontiff, who is invested both with infallible authority and with supreme and unlimited power. He has the right to enact laws binding upon all the members of the Church, to determine controversies of faith without appeal, to impose and remove spiritual judgments at his own pleasure. The functions of the whole college of apostles are vested in the chair of St. Peter at Rome, or rather, the whole delegated power of their Master is conferred on him who is the earthly vicar of Christ; and throughout the Christian Church, and among the whole body of those who have ever been baptized, the opinions, actions, and persons of all are under the control of the Pope, without any limitation affixed to his jurisdiction, or any appeal open from his decision. The remarkable combination of comprehensiveness and unity in this scheme of ecclesiastical autocracy is obvious. From one centre of infallible and universal authority, the order, government, discipline, and doctrine of the entire Church system of Rome are developed. In that centre there sits the vicar of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, with world-wide jurisdiction and unchallengeable infallibility, and the persons, actions, sentiments and beliefs of every member of the Christian society, all the outward authority and inward grace of the universal Church, are in his hands, and subject to his disposal and control. Such are the fruits of the Romish doctrine of the supremacy of the Pope,—the rich inheritance of that primacy alleged to have been left to Peter by our Lord.

There can be little doubt that the system just delineated is the true exhibition of the Popish theory of ecclesiastical polity; it is countenanced by the public confessions of the Church of Rome, as well as by the works of her most eminent theologians. At the same time, considerable difference of opinion prevails among Romanists as to some points in the Romish scheme of Church power. With some, as Thomas Aquinas and Baronius, the supremacy of the Pope involves directly an absolute sovereignty both in spiritual and in

temporal things; while, according to others, as Bellarmine, the Papal supremacy includes a sovereignty in temporal things, not directly, but indirectly. With others still, as Bossuet and the assertors of the Gallican Liberties, it is a supremacy limited to spiritual matters, and allowing of an appeal from the Pope to a General Council. This latter point, indeed, or the question of the inferiority of the Pontiff to a General Council, and of the restriction of his power to spiritual matters, is the main difference between the Ultramontane and Cismontane parties in the Romish communion. But these differences of opinion, found within the bosom of the Church itself, as to what more or less is involved in the supremacy of the Pope, do not affect the general theory of Church government which rests upon that dogma. The structure and administration of the Church as an ecclesiastical system would be the same upon the Romish theory, even taking up the lowest view of the Papal supremacy entertained by any Romanist, even supposing it were shorn of all temporal authority whatsoever, and also made subordinate to a General Council. Let us endeavour to understand what grounds in reason or Scripture are to be found to support the superstructure of such a system of Church polity.

I. There are certain general considerations connected with the unity of the Church which are relied upon by many Romanists, as apart from express Scripture authority, sanctioning this system of ecclesiastical polity. It is the natural, or rather inevitable result of the Romish doctrine of Church unity, as belonging, in its highest character, not to the invisible, but to the visible Church of Christ.

The dogma of the Papal supremacy is so unlike the Scripture representations of the fisherman of Galilee and the thrice fallen apostle, that not a few, more especially of modern defenders of the dogma, have been contented to abandon, or to pass by in silence, the Scripture argument altogether, and to rest the system upon extra-scriptural evidence. The favourite resource of such controversialists is the necessity of the doctrine of the Papal supremacy to maintain and to represent the essential unity of the Christian Church. And in

the Romish sense of unity, the necessity of a visible head and centre of the ecclesiastical system is apparent. The doctrine of the oneness of the Christian society is very strongly and explicitly laid down in Scripture. "There is one body and one spirit," says the apostle in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism." The ordinary figure under which Scripture represents the oneness belonging to the Christian Church is that of the human body with its many members, but its essential unity embracing them all. Romanism adopts this idea, which Scripture suggests, of an organic unity as essential to the Christian society, and transfers it from the invisible to the visible Church; making this oneness to consist, not in the spiritual connection of all its members with an invisible Head in heaven, but in their political or ecclesiastical connection with a visible head on earth. The Papal unity, so far as it exists, is the thorough and perfect realization of the unity attributed in Scripture to the Christian Church; with this difference—and a most fundamental one—that it is a merely outward and ecclesiastical unity, and not an inward and spiritual one. If the unity of the Church could be completely realized according to the Romanist theory of it, we should have a huge, carnal, and political system the exact external counterfeit of the true inward and invisible union which actually belongs to the mystical body of Christ. Under one visible head are arranged, according to their rank and place in the society, both office-bearers and members; all equally connected with the supreme source of authority and order, holding their position from him, and in this connection with a common centre, finding a common connection with each other. The Pope is the centre of unity in the Romish theory of the Church; by his universal and supreme authority binding into one visible corporation the whole members of the Christian Church, and reducing to a certain outward uniformity in faith, and worship, and order, all the parts of the ecclesiastical society. A more perfect and imposing system of external unity than that presented by the Church of Rome the world has not seen; exhibiting as it does a vast corporation with its office-bearers and members alike under subjection to one visible head, and each holding his place in relation to every other in the

body ecclesiastical, in virtue of his subordination to the common source of unity and power. Setting out from the fundamental idea of an organic unity, to be realized, not in an invisible Church, but in a visible ecclesiastical society, it must be admitted that the complete development of that idea is found in the primacy of the Roman Pontiff. This theory is the only one, proceeding on such an assumption, that is consistent with itself, and complete.<sup>2</sup> Any attempt to stop short of one visible society subject to one Head, the only fountain of authority within it, and therefore the only source of order and union, leaves the Church, considered as a visible association, a broken and disjointed thing, made up of a number of independent bodies, differing from each other in forms of government and faith and worship, but not constituting, in the highest sense of the term, one communion and one Church. Absolute organic unity, if it can be attributed to a visible Church, is only realized in the so-called Catholic Church and in the primacy of the Roman Pontiff.

It is on this ground that the dogma of the supremacy of the Pope has, by not a few, been argued and defended. Abandoning, or but faintly appealing to, the evidence which Scripture can be brought to exhibit directly in favour of such a system, they represent the supremacy of the Pope as the necessary result and expression of that organic unity which they believe belongs to the outward or visible Church. Such is the ground taken up, more especially in modern times, by those defenders of the Papal supremacy who belong to the philosophical school of Romanists; as for example, Möhler, De Maistre, and others. With them, the Papal supremacy is essentially the legitimate consummation and development of the unity of the Christian Church.

Now, the fundamental error in such an argument is the assumption with which it sets out. The oneness of the Christian Church is not an ecclesiastical union, but a spiritual one; organic unity belongs to it, not as a visible system, but an invisible. That unity is realized, not in the outward connection of all Christians with one visible head on

earth, but in the inward connection of all Christians with one unseen Head in heaven. The difference between the Romanist and Protestant systems on this subject may be traced back to the fundamental difference in their views of what is the true and normal idea of the Church of Christ. With Romanists, the initial idea of the Church is that of an outward institute; with Protestants, the initial idea of the Church is that of an inward and spiritual influence. With the former, the visible Church is the primary and fundamental conception; with the latter, the invisible Church is the normal conception of the Christian society. And hence the different manner in which they interpret and apply those passages of Scripture which declare the unity or oneness of the Christian Church,—the Romanist asserting a unity which shall be of an outward and visible kind, realized in the ecclesiastical connection of all Christians with an earthly head; the Protestant maintaining a unity of a spiritual kind, realized in the saving connection of all Christians with their glorified Head in heaven. The Romanist theory of the Church, which makes its essence to consist in external characteristics, necessarily leads to the notion of a unity external, and palpable also; no other kind of oneness is consistent with the Church system peculiar to Popery. And that external unity is only realized in a way at once consistent and complete, when it is expressed in the shape of a society, one in outward organization and fellowship, all the members and office-bearers of which hold of the same visible head, and are in subjection to the same central authority.

There seems to be no intermediate system tenable between an organic unity wholly visible, and resulting in one catholic ecclesiastical corporation under subordination to the same supreme head on earth, and an organic unity wholly spiritual, and resulting in one universal spiritual Church in invisible communion with one unseen Head in heaven. The theory of semi-Romanists and Protestant High Churchmen is inconsistent with itself, and incomplete. With them, the Bishop is the fountain of authority and centre of union in the Christian Church; and the primacy of the episcopal office in each diocese is substituted for the primacy of the

Pope in the universal Church. The Bishop, the representative of the apostolic office, or the representative of Christ, within his own diocese, is the bond of life and order and unity in the Christian society. Such is the idea first formally, perhaps, exhibited in the so-called Epistles of Ignatius, and more fully brought out in the writings of Cyprian. But in this shape the theory is manifestly inconsistent and incomplete. The outward unity, resulting from the episcopate within the limits of any one diocese, did not come up to the idea of the unity of the universal Church. From such a theory, there could result nothing beyond the aggregation of many dioceses or communities—each a distinct ecclesiastical corporation, and each independent of any and all the rest—into one combination; connected merely by a similarity of governments, and not by one government,—forming many societies linked together by a fragile tie, but not properly one society and community of Christians. Such a loose and disjointed alliance of independent unities did not, and never could, realize the proper idea of one society and one visible organization. The Pseudo-Ignatian and Cyprianic theory of the Church could only find its complete and consistent development in the Romish doctrine of one visible catholic society and one supreme head, under which all the inferior societies and authorities of a visible Episcopacy might unite. And hence the doctrine of the hierarchy embodied in the theory of Cyprian, grew, and was developed until it found its only consistent and perfect expression in the system of the Church of Rome.

There is a sense, indeed, in which it may be truly said that the visible Church of Christ on earth is one body, however widely scattered and distinct the local societies included under it may be. They are all one, as included not only in the same profession of faith, but also in the same external covenant relation to Christ as their Head. But the higher relation of a saving and invisible spiritual connection with Christ as the Head, belongs only to the invisible Church, and is nowhere expressed or embodied in an outward and palpable form. The external and visible unity of the Church of Rome, resulting as it does in the Popish claims to catholicity, and in the supremacy of its

one head on earth, is inconsistent with the scriptural idea of the unity of the Christian Church in its complete sense; belonging, as this unity does, not to the visible, but to the invisible and mystical body of Christ. That theory of Church unity upon which the Popish idea of the supremacy of the successors of Peter is made by many of its adherents to rest, has no real foundation in the Word of God.

II. There are certain scriptural intimations bearing upon the position of Peter among his brother apostles, which are adduced by Romanists in support of the doctrine of his official primacy. The scriptural evidence appealed to by the advocates of the Papacy on this point is of the very slenderest kind, and certainly wholly insufficient to support the magnificent superstructure of ecclesiastical polity reared upon it.

1st, The precedency of Peter in the college of apostles is argued from his name generally appearing first in any list of them given in Scripture, and from the place he usually occupied as leader or representative of the rest, in speaking or acting on many occasions recorded in the Gospel histories.

Now, in reference to this point, there is a very plain distinction to be drawn between a precedency which is personal and a precedency which is official,—the one pertaining to the man, and the other pertaining to the office held by him. That Peter was in certain respects superior to his brethren in the apostleship, in natural gifts and energy, or in zeal and devotedness in his Master's service, may be readily conceded; and that this superiority marked him out on many occasions as the natural leader or spokesman of the rest, may be no less readily allowed. And this is all that can fairly be argued from the evangelical narrative as belonging to him. But this personal precedency or superiority over the rest is a very different thing from that official superiority claimed for him by the adherents of the Church of Rome, and necessary to their theory. Such a personal precedency of one man over others, is what necessarily arises out of the different characters and endowments possessed by the members



of every society in which men meet and act together, and can no more be transmitted by the individual who enjoys it to another than he can transfer to him his own personal character or qualifications. Peter, on not a few occasions, took the place or lead assigned to him by the rest of the twelve; he stood forward as the leader or spokesman of the Apostles, acting and speaking on behalf of the others. But there is no evidence in Scripture that this personal superiority was ever transmuted into an official superiority, as if, not the man, but the office-bearer, was different from the rest. That the circumstance of Peter's name appearing first in the lists of the apostles given in the Gospels is no evidence of official precedent, is apparent from the fact, that in other passages of Scripture, when Peter and others of the apostles are mentioned, the order of names, as found in the Gospels, is not adhered to, but those of some others of the apostles occur first.

2d, The primacy of Peter among the apostles is very generally made to rest by Romanists upon the words addressed to him by our Lord, as recorded in the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew: "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Now, in reference to this passage, it is not necessary to go into the many different interpretations that have been given of it, all of them excluding the idea of an official primacy granted to Peter by our Lord. Some of these interpretations assert that "the rock" that was to be the foundation of the Church, as declared in this passage, is not meant of Peter, but of Christ Himself. Others of them assert that "the rock" is to be understood of the previous confession made by Peter when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," rather

than of the apostle personally. I cannot help thinking that the natural interpretation of the passage does seem to involve the declaration that, in some sense, and to a certain effect, Peter is to be regarded, in his official character of an apostle, as upholding the superstructure of the Christian Church. The allusion in the passage to the name given to the apostle by our Lord, σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, seems naturally to imply that in a certain sense the Church was to be built upon the apostle, as its support. But while admitting this, it can be easily proved that this declaration to Peter conveyed to him no superiority over the other apostles, and constituted him the foundation of the Christian society in no other sense or way than that in which the other apostles are to be regarded as its foundation also.

In the first place, it is apparent that, in whatever sense Peter was constituted the foundation of the Church, it can only be in that inferior and secondary sense in which such an honour is consistent with the prerogatives of Christ, as the true and proper foundation of the Church. Its Divine Author and Head is the only real rock on which the Christian Church is built; for "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

In the second place, there seems to be sufficient ground for affirming that the declaration and promise made to Peter by our Lord were made to him, not individually, but as the representative, on this occasion, of his brother apostles, and that the privilege conferred through him was conferred on all. The occasion on which our Lord's words were spoken, was one on which, not Peter separately, but all the apostles, had been addressed and appealed to by Christ: "When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" And after their reply, stating the opinion of others, our Saviour renews the question, still addressing, not Peter, but all the apostles: "But whom say ye that I am?" It was in answer to this question that Peter, standing forth as the spokesman of the rest, gave utterance to the confession in their names as well as in his own: "Thou art the Christ,

the Son of the living God." And it is hardly possible to believe that the promise of our Lord, granted in answer to this joint confession, was restricted to Peter, and did not include the other apostles in whose behalf, as much as for himself, he had spoken.

In the third place, the special privilege granted to Peter by our Lord's promise, of becoming the foundation or the founder of the Christian Church in a secondary sense, is a privilege which other express declarations of Scripture, made in the same terms, confer equally upon the other apostles. "Ye are built," says the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians, "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." That new Jerusalem which John saw in the Apocalypse, had, we are told, "twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."<sup>2</sup> In other words, we are expressly taught that, in the same sense in which Peter was the founder of the Church, the other apostles were the founders of it also.

In the fourth place, the power or authority over the Christian society, conveyed by our Lord to Peter on this occasion, is the very power at other times handed over to the rest of the apostles as rulers of the Church. It is plain that the authority implied in the place assigned to Peter as the foundation of the Church is in this passage to be interpreted by the words that follow: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This language is obviously explanatory of the power implied in the office or privilege of being the foundation of the Christian Church, assigned to Peter. Now this very power is, in the chapter next but one following, conveyed in the very same terms to all the apostles, when, in connection with the command to cast out the offender who refused to hear the Church, our Lord says, not to Peter, but to all the apostles: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." And again, a power of the same nature and amount is conferred once

more upon all the apostles, when receiving the authoritative commission from our Lord before His departure: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."<sup>2</sup> So very strong and distinct is the evidence, that the privilege conferred upon Peter in the declaration of our Lord, although addressed to him as the representative of the others, was not intended for him alone, but was a privilege to be shared in equally by all the apostles.

3d, The official superiority of Peter among the apostles is sometimes based by Romanists on the commission given to him by our Lord after the resurrection, to feed the lambs and the sheep of Christ.

It is hardly necessary to deal with this argument. The thrice repeated injunction, "Feed my lambs," "Feed my sheep," so pointedly addressed to Peter, might have reminded him, as it was no doubt intended to remind him, of his threefold denial and fall; but it could hardly by any possibility convey to his mind the idea of superiority over his brethren. The very same injunction to feed the flock of Christ—ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν—is given more than once to the presbyters or bishops of the Church, as part of their ordinary vocation, and implies no distinctive or superior authority. Indeed, the history of Peter after he received this charge, coupled with that of the other apostles and disciples, as it is to be gathered from the Acts and the Epistles, is a sufficient evidence of the interpretation he himself put upon these words, and of the absence of any attempt to claim or exercise official superiority over his brethren. In that history we see him the same ardent and earnest man, ever foremost among his equals, but asserting no official precedence over them, and sometimes frankly confessing his faults and inferiority. In the Acts of the Apostles he appears on the same level with the rest of the disciples in council, and in labours in the cause of the Church. At Antioch he erred in conduct and speech, and was rebuked sharply by Paul, and submitted to the brotherly censure.<sup>2</sup> In his own Epistle to the Christian Jews scattered abroad throughout the world, there is not the slightest trace of the high and paramount authority claimed

for him by Romanists,—a silence on the point not to be accounted for, on the supposition that it actually belonged to him. In the Epistle to the Romans, addressed to the Christians in the very place where it is alleged that he had the seat of his ecclesiastical supremacy, his name and power and office are nowhere mentioned,—an evidence in itself conclusive against the Romish dogma of the primacy of Peter. In short, the whole inspired history of the Church after the ascension of our Lord, alike by its silence and its express assertions, contradicts the theory of Peter's absolute and official superiority to the rest of the apostles.

So much for the first and leading proposition involved in the Popish theory of Church government, namely, that Christ conferred upon Peter an official supremacy over the other apostles and over the Church at large. The absence in Scripture of any evidence for such an assertion, or rather, the positive contradiction which Scripture evidence affords to it, supersedes the necessity of our entering upon a consideration of the two remaining propositions in the Romanist scheme of ecclesiastical polity, founded as they are upon the first. The second assumption implied in the Popish theory, or the assertion that Peter transmitted his official supremacy to his successors, the Roman Pontiffs, is contradicted by these two considerations: first, that the apostolical office, whatever powers or prerogatives belonged to it, was, as we have already seen, extraordinary, and terminated with the apostles themselves; and second, that there is no evidence in Scripture, and nothing but the slenderest possible presumption from ecclesiastical antiquity, to show that Peter was ever at Rome, far less to show that he was bishop of the Church there. The third assumption involved in the Popish theory, or the assertion that the supremacy of Peter was such in nature and amount as to constitute him and his successors in office the true vicars of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth,—ruling with His power and authority over the universal Church, and administering vicariously in the Christian society the absolute supremacy and supernatural infallibility of our Lord,—is contradicted by the whole tenor of Scripture, which tells us that the

office of Christ is peculiar to Himself, and incommunicable, and that He has not handed over His place or His glory to any earthly successor. The theory of the Romish Church involves a daring dishonour to Christ the Head.

## **CHAPTER IV:**

### **THE PRELATIC SYSTEM OF CHURCH POLITY AS OPPOSED TO THE PRESBYTERIAN**

SETTING aside the ecclesiastical theory of the Romish Church, the arguments in favour of which we have already discussed and disposed of, there remain for our consideration three forms of polity, the distinctive peculiarities of which are commonly known under the names of the Episcopalian or Prelatic, the Presbyterian, and the Independent systems. There are certain positions which are common to these three systems of Church government. Beginning with the inferior office, the order of deacon is one recognised under all these three systems as a standing and Divine institution in the Christian Church. Further, the office-bearer known under the name of presbyter or elder, or, from his chief function, pastor, is also acknowledged by the advocates of these three systems to be a standing functionary in the Christian society. There may be, and there are, different views entertained of the duties and powers of these office-bearers by the parties adhering to the different schemes of Church government now referred to. But these two offices, at least, are admitted by all of them to have been Divine appointments, not of a temporary, but of a permanent character, in the ecclesiastical body.

The two orders of presbyters and deacons, acknowledged by all the three parties, are held by Presbyterians and Independents to be the only ranks of standing office-bearers divinely instituted in the Church; while Episcopalians contend that, in addition to these, there is a third order, superior in place and authority to both, and forming part of the permanent arrangements of the ecclesiastical society. In addition to presbyters and deacons, the advocates of Prelacy assert, against the view both of Presbyterians and Independents, that there is an order of bishops or prelates distinct from the former two, and equally of standing authority in the Christian Church. Presbyterians and Independents occupy common ground in combating this distinctive principle of Prelacy, and denying the existence and authority of the order of bishops as apart from elders or presbyters. There are other points in regard to the office of elder or presbyter where the views of Presbyterians and Independents separate. But they agree in repudiating the three orders of office-bearers necessary to the Episcopalian theory, and in denying that there is any Scripture warrant for the office of bishop, in the Prelatic sense of the word, as a distinct and superior ordinance in the Christian society.

In proceeding to discuss the question of Church government as between Presbyterians and Independents on the one side, and Episcopalians on the other, it is of great importance that we keep in view what is essential and peculiar to Episcopacy, and what is not. We have no dispute with Prelatists as to the existence and permanent nature of the office of presbyters in the Church, as an order set apart more especially to minister in the Word and Sacraments. We have no dispute with Prelatists as to the existence and standing character of the office of deacon, subordinate to the presbyter; though we may differ somewhat as to the proper duties that belong to the office. The main and essential distinction between Episcopalians and Presbyterians relates to the order of bishops as separate from and superior to both elders and deacons, and vested with peculiar powers and authority not belonging to either of them. According to the Episcopalian theory as commonly held, the distinction between bishops and presbyters is twofold,—a distinction expressed in the

language of the old divines as comprehending a difference in regard to the "potestas ordinis" and the "potestas jurisdictionis:" in other words, the difference asserted by the Episcopalian theory between the order of bishops and the order of presbyters is exhibited in the right belonging to bishops, and not to presbyters, of ordaining to office in the Church, and further, in the power appertaining to bishops and not to presbyters, of exercising government and administering discipline in the Christian society. This, according to the generally received form of the Episcopalian doctrine, is the proper and essential distinction between the bishop and the presbyter in the Christian Church. The bishop alone has the power of ordination and jurisdiction; the presbyter has no power to ordain or to rule. And the question in debate between Episcopalians and Presbyterians, setting aside what is not essential to the controversy, is simply as to the existence of an order of office-bearers in the Church superior to presbyters, and exclusively possessed of the powers of government and ordination. A bishop supreme in authority and independent in powers within his own diocese, alone having the right of ordination, and ruling singly over the subordinate ranks of the presbyters, deacons, and Church members, embodies, according to the Prelatic theory, the proper ideal of the Episcopal as distinguished from other forms of ecclesiastical polity.

The right of the rulers of the Christian society to meet together regularly in a Church Court for united counsel and action, and to legislate with real authority and effect, not merely for the clergy, but for the whole body of the Church, although in practice it is almost peculiar to Presbyterianism, is yet, in a certain sense, and for certain limited purposes, admitted or claimed by Episcopalians as competent to their system. Prelacy does not altogether deny the lawfulness of the Church acting through a Court made up of office-bearers under the form of a Synod or Council, although it may seldom seem to act upon the admission to much practical effect; still, in so far it may be said to coincide with the system of Presbyterianism as exhibited in her Church Courts. And on the other side, the lawfulness of conceding a certain precedence, not of



permanent office, but as a matter of arrangement and convenience, to certain office-bearers over the rest in the Courts of the Church, or for the sake of more convenient and concentrated ecclesiastical action elsewhere, is not denied by Presbyterians, but, within certain limits, is avowed and acted upon. Presbyterianism does not disown the lawfulness of a temporary or even a constant moderator, appointed over his brethren by their voice, with a view to expediting business or securing order, but having, in virtue of this precedency, no superiority of permanent office or original authority over others. All Presbyterians hold that presbyters met for common action should and must have a president, by whatever name he may be designated. What precise degree of authority should be given to such a president, and what the length and conditions of his tenure of office ought to be, are matters of detail, to be settled by every Church upon principles of Christian expediency and common sense, with a reasonable regard to the exigencies of the time and the lessons of Church history, though, above all, "in accordance with the general rules of the Word, which ought always to be observed." The concession by Episcopalians within certain restricted limits of the existence and powers of Church Courts, and the concession by Presbyterians of the lawfulness of a precedency, not of original rank, but of occasional appointment, are points on which the two systems approximate or practically coincide.<sup>2</sup> But the proper and essential distinction between the two systems is the assertion by Episcopalians, and the denial by Presbyterians, of Scriptural warrant for a third order of ordinary and permanent office-bearers in the Church above presbyters and deacons, having exclusively in their hands the potestas ordinis and the potestas jurisdictionis, and necessary to the existence of a true, or at least of a regularly constituted, Church.

Such being the distinctive character of the Episcopalian system, it is not difficult to understand what the kind of Scripture evidence is that would be relevant and necessary to establish the truth of it. Sufficient proof might be adduced in one or other of two ways. In the first place, it might be shown by Episcopalians that the office of bishop, as

distinct from presbyter, had been actually instituted by Christ or His inspired followers in the New Testament Church, and the Scripture proof for the original institution of the office, without any warrant given us to believe that it was extraordinary or temporary, would be sufficient evidence of the truth of the Prelatic system. The evidence for the formal institution of the order of bishop at first by our Lord or His apostles would settle the controversy. Or, in the second place, in the absence of any evidence for the separate or formal institution of the Prelatic office at first, still if proof could be led from Scripture of the exercise of the peculiar and distinctive powers of the office by a standing order of men, distinct from presbyters in the New Testament Church, such proof would be relevant and sufficient to establish the Scriptural truth of the Episcopalian theory. The evidence for the exercise of proper Prelatic powers by a permanent body of men distinguished from presbyters in Scripture, even although no proof could be brought for the formal institution of the office itself at first, would be enough. By one or other of these two methods, the system of Prelacy might be satisfactorily proved from Scripture. But if no evidence satisfactory or sufficient can be brought to establish the fact of the original institution of the office of diocesan bishop by Christ or His apostles, and further, if, in the absence of that, no evidence can be brought to prove the existence and exercise of the proper powers of the episcopate in the Prelatic sense of the term, by a standing body of office-bearers distinct from presbyters, then the proof for the Episcopalian scheme of Church government completely fails. We believe that Scripture affords ample ground and warrant for meeting, with a decided negative, both the propositions now referred to as the only competent or relevant evidence which would suffice to prove the truth of the Episcopalian pretensions. Scripture evidence denies that any such office as that of diocesan bishop was ever instituted by our Lord or His inspired followers. Scripture evidence denies that the distinctive powers of the office were ever held or exercised by ordinary and permanent office-bearers in the New Testament Church, separate from presbyters. The discussion of these two general propositions will enable us to review

the question of Church government as between Episcopalians and Presbyterians.

## **SECTION I.**

### **NO EVIDENCE IN SCRIPTURE, BUT THE REVERSE, FOR THE APPOINTMENT BY OUR LORD OR HIS APOSTLES OF AN ORDER OF BISHOPS, AS DISTINCT FROM PRESBYTERS**

I. Christ, in instituting the office of apostle, did not institute the office of diocesan bishop.

There is very considerable misapprehension as to this point. It is admitted by all parties that the apostles possessed and exercised the powers and prerogatives which, according to the theory of Episcopalians, properly belong to the office of bishop. And hence, when it is demanded of Episcopalians to point out in Scripture the evidence for the institution of the peculiar office of bishop in the Prelatic sense of the word, they almost all with one consent appeal to the institution of the Apostolate as the evidence for the institution of the Episcopate also. It is admitted, and indeed cannot be denied, that there is no passage in the New Testament which records the institution of the office of diocesan bishop as a separate thing from the office either of the apostles, or of the evangelists, or of the presbyters of the apostolic Church. The Prelatic theory denies that in the institution of the office of presbyter we have any record of the institution of that of bishops; for this would be to confess that they were identical, and not two distinct offices. And therefore Episcopalians, having no record of any separate institution of the order of prelates, are forced to seek for it in the recorded institution of the office, either of apostle or evangelist. The great majority of Episcopalians in the present day assert that in the institution of the apostolic office we have also the institution of the office of diocesan bishop.

Now in this assertion there is a fallacy of a very important kind, and one fatal to the Prelatic argument. It involves the mistake of confounding or identifying the χαρίσματα—certain of the gifts or powers which may belong to a man in an office—with the office itself; and the investiture of an individual with such powers with the appointment of the same individual to the formal office in connection with which they may be found. The supereminent commission with which the Twelve were invested, gave them, besides their peculiar prerogatives, the ordinary powers belonging to the inferior and permanent office-bearers in the Church; as apostles, they could do all that bishops or presbyters or deacons could do in the ecclesiastical society. But the possession of such powers by the apostles did not invest them with the office of bishop or presbyter or deacon, nor make the apostolic office to be identical with all or any one of these. The apostles exercised all the functions and authority of those offices attached to the names of evangelist, and prophet, and bishop, and presbyter, and deacon, and much more. But they were still apostles, and did not cease to be so, even while occasionally discharging some of those inferior functions which were destined to be permanent in the Christian society. In short, the powers that may be exercised in office are not to be identified with the office itself. These powers may be devolved upon a man for a temporary purpose, and on a special occasion, while the man himself has not been invested with the formal office. So it is in ordinary life, and so it is in the Church. The commander of an army may do the work and take the place of a common soldier in it, when some crisis in the battle may call for such a step; but he is not on that account to be reckoned a common soldier. The ruler of the state may in some emergency be called upon to discharge the functions of his own minister; but his office has not on that account been changed from that of a king into that of a statesman. And so it is in the case of the apostleship. The powers occasionally exercised by the Twelve in connection with the departments of labour or authority, usually appropriated to other and inferior functionaries in the Church, did not invest the apostles with the formal and separate office which such persons possessed. In the course of the inspired history we may see apostles serving tables

and ministering to the necessities of the saints; but they do not on that account become deacons. We may see them preaching, ordaining, dispensing Sacraments, exercising ecclesiastical discipline; but that does not make them, in the technical sense of the words, either presbyters or bishops.

The argument, then, of the Episcopalians, when they point to the institution of the apostleship, as also the institution of the Prelatic office, is altogether insufficient and unsound. It proceeds upon the mistaken assumption that the possession and occasional exercise by the apostles of the powers which Prelatists attribute to the Episcopate, is the same thing as the formal possession by the apostles of the office itself. It is no doubt true that, along with other and far higher powers, the apostles did possess both the "potestas ordinationis" and the "potestas jurisdictionis," proper, according to the Prelatic theory, to the office of a bishop. But the possession of such powers, involved as they were in the supereminent and temporary office of the apostleship, is not the same thing as the investiture of the apostles with the office of diocesan bishop.

It is of very great importance in the discussion, that this point should be cleared from all the misapprehensions that prevail among Episcopalian controversialists in regard to it. Our general position is, that the admitted fact of the possession and exercise of Prelatic functions by apostles, in connection with the extraordinary office and powers which they held, is not identical with their investiture with the formal office of prelate or diocesan bishop; and therefore that the institution of the office of the apostleship, which we find in Scripture, is not identical with, and does not imply, the institution of the office of bishop in the Prelatic sense of the world. There are three distinct grounds on which this general proposition may be established.

1st, There is no assertion in the Word of God, and no evidence whatever, to prove that the apostles possessed and exercised the various and different powers that belonged to them in any other character or capacity than as apostles. If there had been any

intimation, direct or indirect, given us, that at different times, and in their different proceedings, the apostles appeared in different capacities, at one time as apostles, at another time as bishops, on a third occasion as presbyters, and on a fourth occasion as deacons, there would have been some ground for the assumption of Episcopalians, that they held not the office of apostle alone, but other offices also, involved in, and necessarily connected with, the apostleship. If it could have been proved from Scripture, that when an apostle exercised the powers of government and ordination, it was in his capacity as a bishop; or that when he ministered in the Word and Sacraments, it was in his character of a presbyter; or that when he carried to Jerusalem, and distributed to the poor saints there, the contributions of the Churches, it was in virtue of his office of a deacon,—then indeed something would have been done in the direction of establishing the Episcopalian theory. But if there be no such evidence in Scripture,—and if, on the contrary, there is reason to believe that these various powers were exercised by the apostles, not in virtue of their special ordination to the separate offices of bishop and presbyter and deacon, but in virtue of the general and supereminent power which belonged to the one and undivided office of apostle,—then everything is against the gratuitous assumption of Prelatists. The total want of any evidence to show that they ever acted in any other capacity than as apostles, or in virtue of any other office than the peculiar one belonging to their order, seems to exclude the hypothesis that in the institution of the Apostolate we have the Scripture institution of the Episcopate also.

2d, The separate and distinct mention in Scripture of the institution of the offices of presbyter and deacon apart from the apostleship, and the absence of any mention of the institution of the office of diocesan bishop apart from the apostleship, seem fairly to exclude the Episcopalian assumption, that in the erection of the apostolic office we have the office of diocesan bishop instituted also. There cannot be a doubt that the powers of the presbyter and of the deacon, as much as the powers of the diocesan bishop, were exercised by the apostles, and connected with their office. And if the circumstance that the

functions of an office were exercised sometimes by the apostles, proves that the office itself belonged to them, and was instituted along with the apostleship, then the same reasoning must apply to the office of presbyter and deacon that applies to the office of diocesan bishop, and we should have in the original institution of the apostleship the institution also of the Presbyterate and Diaconate, as much as the Episcopate. Upon the Prelatic theory consistently carried out, the offices of presbyter and deacon must have their origin and institution in the erection of the apostleship, as well as the office of diocesan bishop. That this is not the case, is sufficiently proved by the express record in Scripture of the institution of both these offices of presbyter and deacon apart from the apostleship. We read of the separate erection both of the Diaconate and the Presbyterate, subsequently to the origin and establishment of the apostolic office. Without such mention of the formal institution of these offices apart from the apostleship, and of the exercise of the powers appropriate to them by two distinct orders of men not apostles, we should have had no Scripture warrant for saying that the Presbyterate and Diaconate were separate offices in the Church at all. And the fact that there is no such mention of the institution of the office of diocesan bishop apart from the apostleship, and no proof—as we shall see by and by—that the proper powers of the office were exercised by any standing staff of separate office-bearers, must, upon the very same principle, be held as depriving of all Scripture warrant the office and order of prelate in the New Testament Church.

3d, The single commission delivered by our Lord to His apostles, proves that it was a single office with which He invested them, and not a plurality of offices involving two, or three, or four distinct and separate orders in His Church. In that one and undivided commission which made them apostles, we have evidence that, whatever were the multitude of separate powers or gifts conferred upon them, their office was one and undivided also. We have not a distinct commission answering to each of the offices alleged to have been conferred,—one for the Diaconate, with power given to them to serve tables; a second for the Presbyterate, with power given to

minister in the Word and ordinances;—a third for the Episcopate, with power conferred on them to ordain and to rule; and a fourth for the Apostolate, with powers embracing those of all the four, and others besides.

That the Twelve were appointed to the apostleship, we know from the commission delivered to them by Christ; but that they had an ordination as bishops, presbyters, and deacons separately, is discountenanced very strongly by the silence of Scripture on the subject. If the Episcopalian theory had been the true one,—if under the one name and the one commission given to them as apostles a congeries of different and separate offices had been included,—we must have had some very express statements of Scripture to counterbalance the evidence to the contrary drawn from the one ordination to their office as apostles. We should require very explicit proof to warrant us in believing that beneath the terms of that single commission were comprehended several distinct offices, one of which—the apostleship—was, by the confession of all parties, extraordinary and temporary; and others of which—the Episcopate, Presbyterate, and Diaconate—were to be ordinary and permanent, and yet separated from each other. There is no principle whatever laid down in the commission itself to enable us to separate between the extraordinary and temporary office admittedly held by them, and the ordinary and standing office alleged to have been included under the same commission, or to separate between these latter among themselves. Episcopalians have no directory for this in the terms of the appointment of the apostles by our Lord at first, but stand indebted wholly to their own arbitrary and gratuitous assumption for the ability to divide the apostolic commission into separate parts and parcels, and to assert that one portion of it, giving the right to ordination and government in the Church, belongs to one office, and another portion of it, giving a right to administer Word and Sacrament, to a second office,—both of them being permanent and ordinary in the Church; and that other portions of the commission still, giving special endowments, belonged to yet another office, which was extraordinary and to be abolished. The very terms of the



commission indeed show that the office to which the apostles were appointed was one and undivided, alike when they entered upon it, and when with their own lives it came to an end.

Upon such grounds as these, then, we are warranted in asserting that in the institution of the apostleship we have no record of the institution of the Episcopal office, in the Prelatic sense of the term.

II. The apostles, in instituting the office of evangelist, did not institute the office of diocesan bishop.

The great majority of Episcopalians in the present day appeal to the establishment of the apostleship as the proper evidence for the institution of the office of diocesan bishop; but some of them—and this was perhaps, on the whole, the favourite argument when the notion of the Divine right of Prelacy was first taken up on Protestant ground by the school of Bancroft and Laud—put the matter in a slightly different shape, and point to the institution of the evangelist's office as the proper origin of the Prelatic. That the evangelists, like the apostles, were possessed of all the powers subsequently attributed to prelates, and, in virtue of their extraordinary office, often acted as prelates might have acted, exercising both the "potestas ordinationis" and the "potestas jurisdictionis" in addition to their extraordinary authority as evangelists, there can be no doubt. In the unsettled and critical state of an infant Church in a heathen land, with few or no regular office-bearers at all, or amid the disorders of false teachers, factions, and heresies arising in a society of young and unstable converts, an ample measure of exceptional and discretionary authority might obviously be needed by the deputies of an apostle. But the very same argument applies to the case of evangelists, when referred to as the source of the Prelatic office, which we have found applicable to the case of apostles when appealed to for the same purpose. It cannot be alleged that the office of evangelist, in its full extent and in all its powers, is identical with what Episcopalians regard as the ordinary office of bishop now. The evangelist was endowed with supereminent

authority and supernatural powers, unknown to the ordinary office-bearers of the Church; and to that extent even Episcopalians will allow that their office was extraordinary, and has ceased. And if it be still alleged that under the extraordinary and temporary office there was included the ordinary and permanent office of prelate,—if it be asserted, as many Episcopalians do assert, that Timothy and Titus, although extraordinary evangelists, were ordinary diocesan bishops too,—and if the institution of the office of prelate is held to be involved implicitly in the institution of the higher office of evangelist,—then the very same process of reasoning, applicable to the case of the apostolic office, when adduced as the source of Episcopacy, is applicable no less to the evangelistic. First, there is no evidence whatever, but the reverse, in the Word of God to prove that evangelists ever acted in the capacity of diocesan bishops, and not in the character or capacity of evangelists. Second, the separate institution of the office of presbyter and deacon, while there is no institution of the office of diocesan bishop apart from that of evangelist, goes to show that the prelate's office is not, like the presbyter's, a separate and standing one in the Church of Christ. Third, the special and single commission given by the apostles to the office of evangelist shows that it was one office, and not two united together under one name. The application of these general propositions will dispose of the argument of those Episcopalians who seek for the institution of the office of prelate in the institution, not of the apostolic, but of the evangelistic office.

III. The circumstance that the terms bishop and presbyter are invariably used in the New Testament as but different titles for the same ecclesiastical office, demonstrates that there was no institution of the office of bishop separate from that of presbyter.

It is not difficult to recognise the reason for the use of the two terms, πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος, as applicable to the same undivided office. The first of these, πρεσβύτερος, was the title appropriated to the office of elder in the Jewish synagogue; and when transferred to the Christian Church to denote a certain class of its office-bearers, it

was employed as the term best understood and most familiar in the case of Churches, the members of which belonged, mainly or exclusively, to the Jewish race. The second of these, ἐπίσκοπος, was a word in general use among the Greeks to denote any kind of overseer; and when transferred to the overseers of the Christian society, it was made use of in the case of Gentile Churches especially, in preference to the other term, carrying with it Jewish associations, not understood by Gentile Christians. The general use in the New Testament of these two words seems to be regulated for the most part, although with some exceptions, by a regard to this principle. But that these words were but different titles of the same official personage, is abundantly proved by a variety of passages in the New Testament. The proof indeed is so strong as to be now acknowledged to be conclusive as to the point by the most candid of the Episcopalian controversialists. It is not necessary to do more than advert briefly to the evidence.

1. In the twentieth chapter of the Acts we are told of Paul, that "from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders—τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους—of the Church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, ... Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost has made you bishops—ἐπισκόπους—to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." It is not possible for any ingenuity—and a good deal has been expended upon this point by some Prelatic writers—to evade the conclusion, that in this passage the two terms are applied indiscriminately to the same persons, as different titles of the one office that they held.

2. In the Epistle to Titus we have similar and equally decisive evidence: "For this cause," says the apostle, "left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders—πρεσβυτέρους—in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a bishop—ἐπίσκοπος—must be blameless, as the steward of God." In this passage we again find the

two terms used interchangeably in reference to the same office. More than this, according to the Episcopalian theory, Titus was, at the date of these instructions to him, bishop of Crete, and yet, in total contradiction to that assumption, we find him in this passage told to ordain a plurality of bishops in every city of his diocese.<sup>2</sup>

3. The language of the Apostle Peter is also decisive as to the use of these terms: "The elders—πρεσβυτέρους—which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder—συμπρεσβύτερος—and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, or doing a bishop's office in it—ἐπισκοποῦντες—not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; not as lording it over the (Lord's) heritage—κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων,—but being ensamples to the flock."

4. By necessary inference, the same fact is established by the opening salutation found in the Epistle to the Philippians: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops—ἐπισκόποις—and deacons." Here, as in other cases, we find the inspired writer mentioning a plurality of bishops in one city. He sends his salutations to them, to the deacons, and to the private members of the Church. He omits and makes no mention of the presbyters,—a fact impossible to reconcile with the Episcopalian theory of the existence of such office-bearers, separate from bishops, at Philippi; and which can only be explained on the Presbyterian view, that they were the same persons, and not distinct and separate office-bearers.

Such is the kind of evidence which is at hand to establish the general fact that the terms bishop and presbyter are employed in the New Testament as titles of the same ecclesiastical office; and it seems impossible to resist the conclusion that Scripture, in speaking thus, and in uniformly applying the two words to the same office, meant us to understand, not two offices, but one.

Looking back upon the whole argument, we seem fairly justified in saying that there is no Scripture evidence whatsoever for the institution of an office of diocesan bishop, as separate from that of a presbyter, in the New Testament. It is a most remarkable fact, and one pregnant with meaning, that we have no account in Scripture of the origin of such an office, or of the ordination of any man to it; and that the advocates of the Episcopalian system are compelled to seek for its first institution in the institution of the apostolic or evangelistic offices. We have seen that there is no evidence, but the reverse, for believing that in the recorded origin of the office of apostle or evangelist we are at liberty to date the desiderated origin of the Prelatic office also. And further, we have seen that the use of the terms bishop and presbyter in the New Testament forbid the supposition that these offices had a separate institution or separate existence in the Church. Even were there no additional proof of the soundness of the Presbyterian theory of Church government as opposed to the Episcopalian, the evidence which has already emerged would be amply sufficient to establish it.<sup>2</sup>

## **SECTION II.**

**NO EVIDENCE IN SCRIPTURE, BUT THE REVERSE, OF THE EXERCISE OF THE POWERS OF A DIOCESAN BISHOP BY ANY DISTINCT AND PERMANENT ORDER OF OFFICE-BEARERS, APART FROM THAT OF PRESBYTERS.**

As has been already stated, there are two ways, and no more than two, in which the doctrine of Episcopacy could be fairly established by Scripture evidence, as against the views of Presbyterians. If it could be proved that the third order of diocesan bishop had been instituted by Christ or His inspired followers as an order distinct from any other in the New Testament Church,—and we had no reason to believe that the office was extraordinary or temporary,—this evidence of its express institution would be decisive of the controversy. Or, failing any evidence for its formal institution, if it

could be proved from Scripture that the distinctive powers belonging to the office were usually possessed and exercised by a distinct and standing order of men in the Church separate from other office-bearers, this, too, would be enough to settle the debate. By either of these methods of proof, the doctrine of Episcopacy might be relevantly and sufficiently established. We have already seen that, by the first method of proof, the advocates of Episcopacy have signally failed to make out their case. They cannot adduce any evidence of a Scripture kind to show where, or when, or by what authority the office of diocesan bishop was first instituted in the New Testament Church, as an office distinct from any other. When the question as to its origin and institution is put to them, they are forced to have recourse to the hypothesis of an implicit and not an explicit institution of the office,—of an origin involved in the origin of the Apostolate, and not distinct, and by itself. In this respect it furnishes a striking contrast to the other two permanent and ordinary offices in the Church. We can tell where and when the office of deacon was instituted; and that not implicitly or constructively, as involved in some other and different office, but formally and separately by itself. In like manner we can point to the origin of the Presbyterate, and to the express and formal ordination of men to that office, apart from any other in the New Testament Church. But of the origin and institution of the alleged third order of office-bearers, and of the ordination of men to the office of diocesan bishop as a formal office, not implied in or identical with any other, we have no mention in Scripture at all. No candid or intelligent controversialist will contend that this is a fact of small significance in the argument. No man would say that if the history of the institution of the offices of deacon and presbyter, and of the ordination of men to these as formal offices, had been blotted out from the page of Scripture, we could have had the same clear and satisfactory evidence for their standing place in the arrangements of the Church as we now have; or that it would have been reckoned a very satisfactory or conclusive argument for the existence of these offices, to have asserted their constructive or implicit institution, as involved in the institution of the apostolic office. And yet this is the assertion to which the advocates of Prelacy

have been compelled to have recourse, in giving an account of the origin of the office of diocesan bishop. The entire absence of all Scripture evidence for its separate institution must be regarded as an argument of very great weight in the discussion.

But this argument will be greatly strengthened, and become absolutely conclusive, if we can add to it the further consideration, that the powers proper to the so-called office of bishop have never been exercised, in so far as Scripture informs us,—and no extra-scriptural evidence, as we have already seen, can be admitted when the question is concerning a Divine right, and not concerning the mere human pedigree of a human institution,—by a standing order of men separate from other office-bearers in the Church, but, on the contrary, have always been exercised by the order of presbyters. It is of much argumentative importance to know that the first method of proof for Episcopacy entirely fails, and that there is no evidence from Scripture, but the reverse, to prove that the office of bishop as a distinct office was ever instituted. But it will add conclusive force to the argument, to show that the second method of proof also fails, and that there is no evidence from Scripture to prove that the distinctive powers assigned by Prelatists to the office of bishop were ever exercised by a standing order of men separate from the other office-bearers in the Church; and that, on the contrary, there is sufficient evidence to prove that they were usually and universally exercised by presbyters. To this branch of the argument we now address ourselves.

The distinctive peculiarity of the system of Episcopacy, as opposed to Presbyterianism, lies in the assertion by Episcopalians of the existence of a third order of office-bearers in the Church, possessed of powers appropriate to themselves, and denied to the rest. These are the "potestas ordinationis," or the right, denied to presbyters, of ordaining to office in the Church; and the "potestas jurisdictionis," or the right, also denied to presbyters, of exercising government and dispensing discipline in the Church. According to the Prelatic theory, as explained by almost all who hold it, the power of ordination and

the power of ruling are peculiar to bishops, and so characteristic of the office that they cannot be separated from it. Where the right to ordain or to rule can be proved to exist, as belonging to any one in the Church, there the office and presence of a bishop are to be recognised; and where these can be proved to be wanting in the case of any office-bearer, there the functions of a presbyter or deacon, but not of a bishop, are to be acknowledged. Now this principle, necessarily implied in any system of Prelacy, properly so called, affords an easy and certain test to enable us to bring to the bar of Scripture the pretensions put forth by its adherents. Is the twofold right of ordination and of government in the Christian Church one which, according to Scripture, rightfully appertains to a distinct class of men, holding ordinary and permanent office in the Church, and separate from presbyters; or does the right of ordination and government form one commonly and statedly exercised by presbyters? It is vain to appeal to the extraordinary power exercised by apostles and evangelists, who unquestionably both ordained and ruled in the New Testament Church. Such powers formed part of the general and supereminent functions that belonged to them in virtue of their respective offices of apostles and evangelists. But these offices were temporary, and not standing, in the Church: they have ceased; the powers connected with them have ceased with the offices themselves; and the right to ordain and to rule does not now remain in the Church, in consequence of the office of apostle or evangelist remaining. If we adopt the Episcopalian theory, the right of ordination and government survives, only because the distinct and separate office of bishops survives, and would cease were that office to be abolished, and none but presbyters remain in the Church. A relevant and sufficient proof, therefore, that the right to ordain and govern belongs usually to presbyters, and is exercised by them in the New Testament Church, is fatal to the Episcopalian theory. Let us in the first place, then, inquire whether the "potestas ordinationis," the right to ordain to office in the New Testament Church, is one exercised by diocesan bishops alone, or whether, on the contrary, it is one commonly exercised by presbyters. And, in the second place, let us inquire whether the "potestas jurisdictionis," the right to rule



and administer discipline, is one belonging to an order separate from that of presbyters, or, on the contrary, appropriate to it. These two questions discussed and settled, will determine whether there is any evidence in Scripture to prove that the distinctive powers or office of a Prelatic bishop were ever exercised by any class of office-bearers separate from presbyters in the New Testament Church.

To begin, then, with the right to ordain, claimed by Episcopalians as one of the exclusive functions belonging to the office of bishop, there is sufficient Scripture evidence to demonstrate that this power was always possessed and exercised by presbyters.

I. The nature of the office conferred upon presbyters implies a right to ordain.

It is admitted on all hands, that presbyters, by Scripture warrant, have authority to preach the Gospel, and to administer the Sacraments. Presbyterians believe that this is the chief work given them to do; Episcopalians believe that it is their only work. Now, a very slight consideration will satisfy us that the very nature of such an office implies the additional authority to ordain, just as the greater must always include the less. Whether we regard the nature of the work performed by presbyters when they minister unto the Lord in Word and Sacrament, or the instructions given to them for the discharge of this duty, or the conduct in reference to this point of the inspired servants of Christ, it cannot fail to appear that the preaching of the Gospel and administering the means of grace form the grand object for which the Church itself, and more especially the office-bearers of the Church, were instituted, and not the work of ordination and government. The right to ordain and govern was a right of an inferior kind, as compared with the right to preach the truth, and to dispense the Sacraments of Christ. The ministerial authority implied in the latter is of a higher order than the ministerial authority implied in the former. That this is the case, is apparent from the terms of the original commission, which gives authority to the Church in express terms to preach the Gospel and

administer the Sacraments to every creature, but makes no explicit mention of the power to ordain or govern, because this was a power implied and included under the authority to dispense the Word and ordinances. It is apparent from the conduct of the apostles, who made it the great work and highest aim of their official life, not to organize the outward polity, but to minister to the inward life of the Church. It is apparent from the very nature of the thing itself, inasmuch as the power of ordination and government is but the means to the higher and nobler end of the ministry of the Gospel. It is apparent from the express statement of the Apostle Paul, who enjoins that "the presbyters who labour in word and doctrine be counted worthy of special honour," as compared with those office-bearers who only "rule." And such being the case, it is impossible to believe that presbyters, who are invested with the higher ministerial authority of ministering in Word and Sacrament, are excluded from the inferior right of ordaining and governing in the Church. The superior function must include the lower, as necessary to carry out the very object for which it has been conferred; nor is it possible to believe with Episcopalians, that presbyters, who are authorized to discharge the highest functions in the Christian Church, are not themselves the highest order of functionaries. The powers of the presbyter being above the powers of any other office-bearer in the Church, as regards the nature of his duties, the office to which these powers are permanently attached must be above any other in the Christian society.

II. We have, in the case of Timothy, an express example of the act of ordination performed by presbyters.

In writing to Timothy on the subject of his ministerial functions, the Apostle Paul tells him, in language which can hardly be misunderstood in its bearing on our present argument: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." In this passage we have the imposition of hands, the recognised Scriptural sign, and invariable accompaniment of ordination, and we have this imposition of hands

performed by the court or council of presbyters.<sup>2</sup> In short, we have all the elements of Presbyterian ordination exhibited in a Scripture example, which it is impossible by any commentary to make more plain or conclusive as a precedent for the right to ordain, as claimed by the Presbyterian theory for elders or presbyters, and denied to them by Prelatists. There are two ways in which Episcopalians have attempted, although in vain, to get rid of the evidence which the ordination of Timothy furnishes against their fundamental dogma that the "potestas ordinationis" is a right which belongs to diocesan bishops alone.

In the first place, it is alleged by some Episcopalians, that although the council of presbyters was present, and consenting to the deed, yet the authoritative act of setting apart Timothy to the office was performed by Paul alone. This explanation of the passage is founded on a text which occurs in Second Timothy, to this effect: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." The two passages of Scripture are held by some to refer to the same investiture with office in the case of Timothy; and the argument of Episcopalians is, that the apostle, in laying on his hands, did authoritatively convey the right, and really ordain; while the presbyters, in laying on their hands, did no more than express their consent to or approbation of the act. Now, in reference to this objection by Episcopalians to the relevancy of the case of Timothy to our argument, I would remark that it takes for granted what is by no means a clear point—namely, that the gift conferred by Paul on his adopted son was the same gift as is spoken of as conveyed with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. It has been maintained by many commentators, and I think with good reason, that the gift conferred by Paul was one of those extraordinary gifts—*χαρίσματα*—of the Holy Ghost, spoken of in the Epistle to the Corinthians, such as "the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith," etc., which were usually bestowed upon evangelists, and conveyed only through the imposition of an apostle's hands, while the gift conferred by the presbytery was in reality the office of the ministry. There are two considerations which countenance this

interpretation. First, there is an observable difference in the apostle's phraseology when speaking of the two gifts,—the one kind of expression being more appropriate to the case of an office occupied by an individual, as when he says: "Neglect not—*μὴ ἀμέλει*—the gift that is in thee, or the office belonging to thee, which was conferred by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery;" the other kind of expression being more appropriate to a personal endowment pertaining to an individual, as when he exhorts him to "stir up—*ἀναζωπυρεῖν*—the gift of God that is in thee by the putting on of my hands. A man may well be called upon "to take heed to," or "not to neglect" his office; he can hardly be exhorted to "stir it up." Second, from the context it is plain that, in referring to the gift given with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, Paul is speaking of Timothy's official authority and duty in the Church. Both in the verses which precede and in those which follow the passage in question, we see the apostle enforcing upon the youthful evangelist various points connected with his public labours in Ephesus: "Be thou an example to the believers in work, in conversation," etc.; "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine; "These things command and teach," etc. And it is in connection with these precepts for his official actings that Paul bids him not neglect the high and responsible office with which he has been graced in the Church, and strengthens the exhortation by reminding him of the solemn ordination by which he was formally set apart to its duties. On the other hand, when the apostle refers to the gift communicated by himself, it is equally clear from the context, that he is speaking of Timothy's personal and private character and duty, not of his official standing. "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and in thy mother Eunice. For that cause I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, etc. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner." This marked difference between the two passages seems decidedly to favour the idea that the first gift was ordination to office in the

Church, while the second had reference to Timothy's personal qualifications and endowments.

But, even granting that the two passages refer to the same transaction, and both speak of Timothy's ordination, as is held by the majority of theologians, it is not difficult to meet the objection of Episcopalians. We know that Paul had the powers which presbyters commonly and permanently exercised, and on no occasion was he more likely to exercise them than in the case of the ordination of "Timothy, his dearly beloved son," to the office of the Gospel ministry. And nothing could be more natural on the part of the apostle, when he was "Paul the aged," and in bonds, or more forcible and affecting, as addressed to the youthful Timothy, than the statement by Paul calling to the remembrance of his spiritual son how he had shared with the presbyters in conferring on him, by imposition of hands, the right and authority of the ministerial office. If the two passages refer to the same transaction, as most theologians, Episcopalian and Presbyterian, believe, then the imposition of hands by Paul, and the imposition of hands by the presbytery, must have substantially the same significance and meaning. To assert an essential difference between the two acts, is purely gratuitous. To affirm that they are so distinct that the one authority conferred the ministerial office, and the other did not, is a mere hypothesis, having no ground whatever to rest upon, and contradicted by the obvious meaning of the passage. And not only so, but the hypothesis will not even serve the purpose of Episcopalians after they have invented it. If, as is necessarily implied in their theory, the ordination of Timothy constituted him, not a presbyter, but a bishop, the fact that the hands of the presbytery concurred in any sense in the act, is inconsistent with the Episcopalian system.

An attempt has been made by some adherents of Prelacy to justify their drawing a distinction between the act of Paul and the act of the presbytery in the ordination of Timothy, rested on the ground that, in the mention of the one of these, or the imposition of the apostle's hands, the preposition  $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}$  is used, while, in the mention of the other

of these, or the imposition of the hands of the presbytery, the preposition μετὰ is used, as descriptive of the connection between those acts and the right Timothy received to the office. It is argued that the preposition διὰ joined with the genitive case always denotes the instrumental cause,—implying in this passage that it was Paul's hands that were the instrument of conferring the title to the ministerial office; and that the preposition μετὰ always denotes a concurrent, but not a causal act,—implying in this passage that the laying on of the hands of the presbytery merely expressed the consent or concurrence of that body in respect of the ordination. It is not needful to enter into the minute and detailed criticism which has been bestowed upon these two Greek particles in order to make out this proposition. It is enough to say that the New Testament usage in regard to these words does not justify the restriction of them to the special meanings upon which Episcopalians would build their argument,—that the preposition διὰ with the genitive does not always imply in Scripture the instrumental cause, and that the preposition μετὰ sometimes does. The meaning of these prepositions is a matter to be determined by the construction and nature of the sentence. It seems impossible, by any such attempt, to get rid of the very explicit and conclusive testimony by this passage of Scripture to the ordinary right of presbyters to ordain.

In the second place, another attempt has been made by the advocates of Episcopacy to avoid the force of this passage, by asserting that the word translated presbytery—πρεσβυτέριον—denotes the office, and not the council of the presbyters. According to this translation of the word, the passage would come to be rendered, "neglect not the gift of the presbyterate which is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of hands." Now, in reference to this rendering, and the bearing of it upon the argument, there are three remarks which may be made. First, the word πρεσβυτέριον occurs only three times in the New Testament, being twice in addition to this example of it in Timothy. In both the other cases it must be understood in the sense of the council or court or body of the elders, and is, in fact, so rendered in our version. In both cases it applies to the college of

elders which made up the Jewish Sanhedrim; and when, in the passage already quoted from Timothy, it is used in reference to the Christian Church, it plainly must have the same meaning of the council, and not the office, of the presbyters. Second, the translation proposed by Episcopalians does violence to the natural construction of the words, making the term πρεσβυτερίου to be connected with the word χαρίσματος, in contradiction to the obvious syntax of the passage. And third, even granting that the word denoted the office, and not the college of presbyters, it would not serve the purpose of the Prelatic argument, inasmuch as it would confer upon Timothy the office of a presbyter instead of the office of a diocesan bishop, as the theory demands. Upon the whole, we are, I think, warranted in saying that there is no possible way, in consistency with the ordinary principles of Scripture exegesis, of avoiding the conclusion, that this passage contains a distinct precedent for the power of ordination being exercised by presbyters.

III. We have another example of the authority to ordain as exercised, not by diocesan bishops, but by presbyters, recorded in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

The narrative is to this effect: "Now there were in the Church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Of the parties mentioned in this extract, we know that Saul and Barnabas had been invested with the extraordinary offices—the one of an apostle, the other of an evangelist—previously to the date of this transaction. Further, of the remainder, we are told that some, although it is not mentioned which of them, held the special and temporary office of prophets in the Church at Antioch. But, setting aside these, it appears that there were others who were simply teachers (διδάσκαλοι) or presbyters in the

Church. We have here, then, all that is necessary to make up a true ordination,—the authoritative designation to an ecclesiastical work and mission, the imposition of hands as the Scriptural sign of the investiture with office, the accompanying religious service of prayer and fasting, and the result, or the going forth of the parties so ordained to the work to which they were appointed; and we have all this done by presbyters, in conjunction with other parties, combining together equally to perform the ordination. And, to crown all, we have this example of presbyters ordaining sanctioned by the Holy Ghost: "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed."

The only objection worthy of notice brought by Episcopalians against this authority for ordination by presbyters, is the fact, admitted by all parties, that the persons ordained, Paul and Barnabas, had, previously to the date of this transaction, held extraordinary offices in the Church,—the one as an apostle, the other as an evangelist. But, admitting this fact, it must be remembered that the extraordinary offices of apostle and evangelist were not the same thing as, and did not include, the formal office of presbyter or minister, although they comprehended the powers usually exercised by the presbyter or minister. We have already had occasion to argue this point at some length. The exercise of the powers of an office does not necessarily imply the possession of the formal office itself, unless when it can be shown that the exercise of such powers permanently and necessarily belongs to the party as his distinctive function. The Apostle Paul and the evangelist Barnabas had, before the date of the ordination recorded in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, exercised the powers of ministers or presbyters in preaching and dispensing ordinances; but these powers were not distinctively the functions that belonged to them as apostle or evangelist. The distinctive and essential peculiarity of the office of apostle or evangelist was not the power of preaching the Gospel which they held in common with other office-bearers; so that it would be a mistake to imagine that because they were, the one an apostle, and the other an evangelist, previously to the date of their ordination to the Gentile mission, they must necessarily have held the formal office of presbyter or minister.



There is no evidence, and no reason to believe, that either of them had been invested with the office previously to this time; and when they were solemnly set apart, therefore, by prayer and imposition of hands to the ministry among the Gentiles, it was an instance of true and regular ordination. The presbyters at Antioch, under the immediate instructions of the Holy Ghost, proceeded by ordination to install them into the formal office of the Presbyterate.

Upon the grounds now indicated, we are prepared to argue that the first of those distinctive powers claimed by Episcopalians for diocesan bishops—the "potestas ordinationis"—was not peculiar to them, but, on the contrary, was commonly and statedly exercised by presbyters. A brief discussion of the Scripture evidence with respect to the second of the distinctive powers claimed by them, will suffice to show that the "potestas jurisdictionis," or the right of government and discipline, did not belong to prelates exclusively, but was enjoyed and exercised by presbyters.

1st, The very nature of the office of presbyter implies authority to govern and rule.

The very same argument applies here as in the case of the right to ordain; and it is unnecessary to repeat it. The power of bearing rule and exercising government and discipline in the Church, is undeniably a lower exercise of ministerial authority than the power to preach the Gospel and administer the seals of the covenant of grace. And yet, by the admission of all parties, presbyters are vested with this highest kind of power as their distinctive function,—a circumstance that renders it very difficult to believe that they are excluded from the lower power of ruling in the Church, or that this lower power is one of the two distinctive peculiarities that mark the highest order of office-bearers in the Church,—that, namely, of diocesan bishop. Even Prelatists have been struck with the contradiction involved in such a doctrine. "Since I look upon the sacramental actions as the highest of sacred performances," says

Bishop Burnet, "I cannot but acknowledge those who are empowered for these must be of the highest office in the Church."

2d, There are a number of passages of Scripture which distinctly ascribe to presbyters the office of ruling and governing in the Christian society.

1. We have Paul, in his address to the presbyters of the Church of Ephesus, expressly charging them with the duty and responsibility of governing the Church in which they had a bishop's office. After summoning the elders of Ephesus to Miletus, the apostle tells them: "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed—ποιμαίνειν—the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." The expression here employed, as descriptive of the kind of charge the presbyters were to take of the Church under them, is one significant of government and authority as well as inspection. The use of the word in Scripture, as well as in profane authors, amply demonstrates this. 2. We find the Apostle Peter laying upon presbyters the very same duty of government in the Church as is referred to by Paul, and in a manner still more express and emphatic, and more directly contradictory of the notion that ruling is the exclusive function of bishops. "The presbyters who are among you I exhort, who am also a presbyter: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof—ἐπισκοποῦντες—not by constraint, but willingly." In addition to employing the same word ποιμαίνω as descriptive of the charge devolving on presbyters, which was employed by Paul, and which includes the idea of coercive authority, Peter here characterizes the work of presbyters in the way of ruling by the very term ἐπισκοποῦντες, which denotes episcopal government claimed for prelates as their exclusive function. No declaration could more decisively demonstrate that bishops and presbyters stand on the same level as to ruling authority in the Church. 3. There is one passage in the First Epistle to Timothy which is especially clear and express as to the government entrusted to the hands of presbyters. In giving directions as to matters in the Church

of Ephesus, the Apostle Paul instructs Timothy in this manner: "Let the presbyters that rule well be counted worthy of double honour." The word here used—προεστῶτες—is undeniably significant of government and ruling authority. Such passages of Scripture as these plainly show that the right to rule was one not confined to diocesan bishops as their exclusive function, but was ordinarily held and exercised by presbyters.

3d, There are many express intimations in Scripture that the power of discipline belonged not to diocesan bishops, but to every particular Church.

The example of the Corinthian Church, and many others that could be referred to, clearly demonstrate this. A case of immorality or public scandal was not a matter to be handed over to the bishop, but to be dealt with by the Churches themselves, or by the body of their office-bearers. So decisive is the testimony of Scripture on this head, that it would be much more easy to argue, with Independents, that the right of discipline belonged to the members of the congregation at large, than to adduce any plausible evidence for its being restricted to the bishop of the diocese. The admitted interference of the apostles authoritatively in the discipline of the primitive Churches, and the oversight taken in the matter by evangelists, are of no avail for the Episcopal argument, unless upon the principle of first begging the question, or of first assuming that the apostles and evangelists were ordinary diocesan bishops. If this is denied, as we have seen that there is good reason for doing, there is not the shadow of proof to show that discipline was the peculiar function of prelates; on the contrary, there is every evidence to prove that it belonged to the ordinary rulers in the Christian society, that is, to the presbyters.

Upon a review, then, of the whole argument, we are led to the conclusion that there is no Scriptural evidence in support of the only two propositions relevant or sufficient to establish the system of Prelacy, or Diocesan Episcopacy. In the first place, there is no evidence whatever to prove that the office of bishop, as a third order

among the office-bearers of the apostolic Church, was ever instituted by Christ or His apostles,—the circumstance of the indiscriminate use by the inspired writers of the terms bishop and presbyter combining with the absence of any express evidence on the point in Scripture to show that no such institution is to be acknowledged. And in the second place, failing any evidence of its original institution, there is no proof that the powers alleged to be distinctive and peculiar to the Episcopate, were ever possessed or exercised commonly and as a permanent function by any except presbyters; and there is ample and decisive proof that they were held and exercised by the latter order of office-bearers in the apostolic Church. Upon the ground of these two general propositions, we have reason to say that Prelacy has no warrant in the Word of God.<sup>2</sup>

## **CHAPTER V:**

### **THE INDEPENDENT SYSTEM OF CHURCH POLITY AS OPPOSED TO THE PRESBYTERIAN**

IF the conclusions to which we have been led by our previous discussions are correct, they have narrowed to a considerable extent the question that still remains for our consideration in connection with the government of the Christian Church. We have been enabled, through our previous argument, to separate between what was extraordinary and what is ordinary in the condition of the ecclesiastical body; assigning to the former department as special

and temporary the offices which we find existing in the primitive Church of the apostle, the evangelist, and the prophet. These belonged, not to the normal, but to the transition state of the Christian Church, and have left behind them no model for general or permanent imitation. Further still, we have found that the office of bishop, in the Prelatic sense of the word, as a third order in the Christian Church, possessed of certain exclusive powers and functions, and separate from the order of presbyter, has no warrant in the Word of God. Setting aside these, we have nothing remaining in the way of fixed and ordinary offices in the Church having any distinct foundation in Scripture, except these two; first, the office signified by the various names, used indiscriminately, of presbyter, bishop, or pastor; and second, the office of deacon. These two orders of office-bearers, as ordinary and permanent appointments in the Christian society, are acknowledged by all parties, whether Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or Independent, whatever difference of opinion may be exhibited, theoretically or practically, in connection with the duties belonging to their offices, or the authority conferred on them. The original institution of these offices in the New Testament Church, the appointment of distinct men to exercise the duties of them, and the separate names, commission, and authority assigned to them, are matters lying so conspicuously and markedly on the surface of Scripture, as to have called forth a very general acknowledgment from all parties of the existence and permanent standing in the Christian Church of two orders of presbyter, or elder, and deacon.

But in addition to the evidence adduced in previous lectures bearing upon the point, there are more especially two passages in the New Testament which serve to demonstrate, not only that the offices of deacon and elder or presbyter are standing offices in the Church, but that they are the only standing and ordinary offices in the Christian society, and that we have no Scriptural warrant for any other. This is a point of much importance in regard to our future discussions, and forms a common ground which the Presbyterian and Independent theories of Church government occupy alike, and from which they

start. We find these two classes of office-bearers mentioned in such circumstances, and in such a manner, as to exclude the possibility of the doctrine which asserts that there were usually and properly more than these two in the apostolic Church. First, in the salutation to the Church at Philippi by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to converts there, we have distinct evidence of two classes of Church officers, and no more than two. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Here we have a letter from an apostle written to the Church at Philippi, and addressed to the office-bearers and the members conjointly. The members are addressed as "all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi," and the office-bearers are addressed as "the bishops and deacons there." It is hardly possible to conceive, that if there had been any other office-bearers besides bishops and deacons in the Church at Philippi, they would have been omitted in the apostolic salutation; and it is just as difficult to conceive that the Church at Philippi, the first fruits of Paul's labours in Europe, over whose spiritual prosperity he so often rejoices, was destitute of any class of office-bearers necessary for or usual in other Churches. The conclusion seems to be irresistible, that the bishop and the deacon were the only office-bearers of an ordinary and permanent kind known in the apostolic Church. Second, in the third chapter of the First Epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul describes at length, for the information and guidance of Timothy in his regulation and ordering of the Church at Ephesus, the qualifications of those who should be appointed to ecclesiastical office. From the first to the eighth verse we have an account of the qualities that ought to characterize a bishop, given with much minuteness and detail. From the eighth to the fifteenth verse we have, with similar particularity, the qualifications of the deacon. And the object of these detailed instructions is stated by the apostle himself to be fully to acquaint Timothy with his duties in organizing the Church where he at that time laboured. "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God." The conclusion to be drawn from this passage points very obviously in the same direction

as did the former one. In instructing Timothy in the qualifications of the ecclesiastical office-bearers, whom he was to appoint over the Church, we have mention of these two, the bishop and deacon, but of no more than these two, on an occasion when it is hardly possible for us to conceive that Paul would not have referred to others, had others been in existence. Short of a formal declaration that there were two, but not more than two, orders of office-bearers in the Christian Church, which was not, in the circumstances, to be expected in regard to a matter that must have been familiarly known to all Christians at the time, it is not easy to conceive stronger or more satisfactory evidence of an indirect kind to establish the point.<sup>2</sup>

While the Presbyterian and Independent systems thus occupy a common ground against Prelacy, in the acknowledgment of the bishop and deacon as the only two office-bearers recognised in the Church, there is a wide and material difference between the two as to the distribution of power between office-bearers and members, and as to the relations of one Christian society or Church to another. It is important to mark the difference between our views as Presbyterians and the Independent scheme on these two points, namely, the distribution of power within the Church, and the relations between the Church or congregation itself and other Churches. The difference is expressed in the ordinary name by which this system of Church order is known—the name of Congregational Independency—referring as it does to the two distinctive peculiarities of the system. There are certain distinctive views which belong to the adherents of that system as Congregationalists, and certain additional peculiarities that belong to them as Independents.

Under the name of Congregationalism are included those principles which lead them to assert for all the members of the Church, as well as for the office-bearers, a share in its rule and administration; so that, to use the language of Dr. Wardlaw, "the government in all its parts is to be administered in the presence, and with the authoritative concurrence, of the Church collectively considered." According to this distribution of power in the Christian society, as

asserted on the Congregational principle, the act of the rulers is null and void without the act of the members consenting with it; the authority of the Church is not deposited for its administration in the hands of office-bearers alone, but is divided between them and the members, in such proportions that the deed of the former is not lawful or binding without the consent of the latter. Both parties must equally sanction the proceeding, before it can be authoritative in the proper sense—the only difference between the rulers and the ruled being, that it is the privilege of those in office, and not of others, in ordinary circumstances, to originate and propose measures for the adoption of the rest, and to execute them after they are adopted. "They propose to the Church whatever they may think conducive to its well-being," says Dr. Davidson, "making any regulations, in harmony with the genius of Christianity, which they may deem desirable for the Church's guidance, but always with the concurrence and sanction of the brethren.... They alone formally pronounce and execute any censure or sentence, in the presence and with the consent of the Church."

Again, under the name of Independency are included those principles which lead the denomination now referred to to assert that each worshipping congregation is a Church, independent of every other congregation,—being with its office-bearers complete within itself, and having no connection with others as parts of one ecclesiastical system, or united under one ecclesiastical government. According to this view, the government of each congregation is a government separate from that of any other; and the visible Church in any country, comprehending, it may be, many congregations, is not one body ecclesiastical, but many bodies distinct from and independent of each other. "The independency," says Dr. Wardlaw, "for whose Scriptural authority we plead, is the independency of each Church in regard to the execution of the laws of Christ, of every other Church, and of all other human power whatsoever than what is lodged in itself. It is the full competency of every distinct Church to manage without appeal its own affairs." Theoretically, these two principles, characteristic of Congregational Independency, are



distinct from each other, so that the one might be found existing without the other. But, practically, they are found united in the case of the ecclesiastical body commonly known under the name of Independents. They constitute the two distinctive peculiarities which separate the system of Independency from the system of Presbyterianism, and in any comparison between the two theories of Church polity, must both be taken into account.

## **SECTION I.**

### **THE CONGREGATIONAL PRINCIPLE AS OPPOSED TO PRESBYTERIANISM**

The principle which we have now to consider is that asserted by Independents when they tell us that the office-bearers of the Church "have no power either to make laws or to apply and execute the laws that exist, independently of the concurrence of their brethren," and that "the government of the ecclesiastical body in all its parts is to be administered in the presence and with the authoritative concurrence of the Church collectively considered." This is the statement of Dr. Wardlaw, and accurately expresses the views of Independents on this point, as maintained by them in opposition to Presbyterianism. It would be a mistake to suppose that Presbyterianism, in maintaining a differ-theory on this point, overlooks or undervalues the importance of the consent of the Christian members of the Church in her authoritative proceedings. The system of Presbyterianism requires that every proper means be employed, in the way of explanation, persuasion, and instruction, to secure the concurrence of the members in the acts and proceedings of the rulers of the Christian society. But Presbyterians do not, like Independents, hold that this consent is a condition upon which the lawfulness of the acts of the office-bearers is suspended, or as much a necessary element in any judgment of the ecclesiastical body as the consent of the rulers themselves. On the contrary, the consent of the members is, upon the Presbyterian theory, a consent added to the authoritative decision of

the office-bearers, not entering into it as an element necessary to its validity, without which it would be neither lawful nor binding. And the question between Presbyterians and Independents is not whether the concurrence of the members of the Church in the acts and proceedings of the office-bearers is desirable, or in a right state of the Christian society will be almost invariably obtained, but whether, in Dr. Wardlaw's words, this concurrence is "authoritative," or the ingredient which, and not the act of the rulers alone, gives authority to the ecclesiastical decision, and without which it would not be binding.

In discussing this question, we shall have recourse to the same method of argument as we used to test the Scripture authority of the Episcopalian theory of Church government; and we shall find it no less applicable to the purpose of testing the proof offered for Independency against Presbyterianism. On the principle of Presbyterians, we assert that there is in the Church a power of government and administration vested in an order of office-bearers, separate from "the Church collectively considered," and "exercised independently of the concurrence of the members." This general proposition may be established in one or other of two ways. First, we may prove from Scripture that Christ or His apostles instituted an office of authority and government in the hands of an order of men, separate from the Church collectively, and independent of the members at large; or, second, we may, without any reference to the express institution of the office, prove that the peculiar powers and authority of such an office have been usually exercised and permanently administered by a distinct body of men, separate from and independent of the Church collectively considered. If we can establish from the Word of God the original institution of such an office of government and administration, separate from and not dependent on the members at large, then this will decide the controversy in favour of Presbyterianism, and against the Independent scheme. Or if we can prove from the Word of God that the distinctive powers of such an office have been exercised commonly and statedly by presbyters and deacons, and not by the

members of the Church, then this too will no less settle the dispute in the same manner. We believe that there are materials in Scripture which give warrant for affirming both these conclusions, and which demonstrate, first, that Christ and His apostles have instituted in the Church an office of government, attached to a peculiar class of men, and not to the members at large; and second, that the distinctive powers belonging to such an office ought always to be exercised by a standing and separate order of office-bearers, and never, unless in wholly exceptional circumstances, by the body of the society.

That an office of government, power, and authority peculiar to some and not common to all in the Church has actually been instituted, we have very express evidence from the multitude and variety of names given in Scripture to a distinctive and separate order, implying the idea of power as belonging to them, and not to others. The presbyters of the New Testament Church are spoken of as rulers, as pastors, as overseers, as stewards, as governments (κυβερνήσεις),—words which all, more or less, include the idea of authority and governing power as distinctive of the office held by them. Indeed this point is so very abundantly and clearly proved from the language of Scripture in regard to it, that the Divine institution of the office of ruler in the Christian Church is not denied, but, on the contrary, acknowledged and maintained by Independents themselves. "That the elders, bishops, or pastors," says Dr. Wardlaw in his work on Congregational Independency, "are ordained in the Churches of Christ to 'have the rule over them,' to be 'over them in the Lord, and admonish them,' to 'feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof,'—we maintain as distinctly, and insist upon as firmly, as our brethren who differ from us." This admission, which, unless at the cost of contradicting the express statements of Scripture, must be made even by Independents, may be fairly and legitimately said to involve a surrender of the whole point in dispute. If it be granted that, by Divine institution, there are rulers in the Church of Christ holding a distinct office from the members, then it is impossible to reconcile this proposition with the principle of Independency, which asserts the necessity of the "authoritative concurrence" of all the Church to

the validity of their acts of rule. The dogma of an authoritative concurrence on the part of the members necessary to the authoritative acts of the office-bearers, amounts just to a partitioning of the office of government in certain proportions between the two parties,—a division of the power of ruling between the office-bearers and the members, in such a manner that there can be no separate office belonging to the one apart from the other. An office of ruling which is dependent for its authority on the consent of other parties, cannot be a separate office at all; and the admission which the very express Scripture evidence on the point compels Independents to make of the existence of such a distinct office in the Church, is fatal to the fundamental principle of their system.

The dogma of Congregationalism, which makes the authoritative acts of the rulers of the Church dependent for their authority on the sanction or consent of the ruled, could be asserted and defended consistently only on the hypothesis that the office of presbyter or ruler was not of Divine appointment at all, but a human arrangement, dependent for its existence on the will of the members, and for its power on the extent of authority delegated to it by their voluntary submission. If the office of ruler did not rest on the basis of Divine institution, but was an office created by the votes of the members of the society, and limited in its powers by the extent of permission they conceded to it, then indeed the principle of Congregationalism might be true with respect to the Christian Church. But in such a case the power of government would reside, as in the instance of voluntary and private societies, in the members at large, and not in the rulers as separate from them; there could be no distinct office of government at all, apart from and independent of the Church in its collective capacity, nor any rulers as an independent order in the Christian society, distinct from the appointment and delegation of the members. Whatever in argument or in theory may be asserted, this is plainly the legitimate issue involved in the principle of Congregationalism. The rulers of the Church admitted in name are denied in effect; and instead of holding an office Divine and independent, are made the mere delegates of the

members of the Church, with authority conditioned by their concurrence, and strictly limited by their commission. Upon the Congregational theory, the office-bearers may have, over and above what other members of the Church may possess, first, a power of advising the Church to adopt certain measures; and second, a power of executing the measure after it is adopted. But so long as it is asserted that their authority is limited by the condition of the members giving or withholding their consent to its acts, they cannot be said to have a power of authority at all, in the proper sense of the word. And this is very much the doctrine which is avowed by Dr. Davidson in his work in defence of Congregational views. In addition to the power of instruction and exhortation conceded to presbyters, Dr. Davidson says that they have the power of "proposing to the Church whatever they may think conducive to its well-being," and further, the power of "formally pronouncing and executing any censure or sentence," but that all that they do must be "always with the concurrence and sanction of the brethren." In these two respects, then, and in these alone, the office-bearers differ from the members as regards rule,—they are the advisers of the Church before any authoritative decision is pronounced by the members, and they are the organs of the Church in executing its decisions after they are pronounced; but beyond this, they have no separate function of ruling. They have no office of proper authority distinct from the body of the members. In short, the Congregational principle is inconsistent with the Divine institution of an office of rule in the hands of an order of Church officers separate from the ordinary members; and the very explicit evidence which we have in the Word of God for the institution of such an office, admitted as it is by Congregationalists themselves, is sufficient to exclude the fundamental dogma peculiar to their ecclesiastical system.

In the undoubted Scripture evidence, then, which we have for the Divine institution of the office of presbyter, as an order distinct from the members of the Church, and including the idea of power or authority as connected with the office,—an evidence not denied by Independents themselves,—we have a fact which is inconsistent with

the fundamental peculiarity of Congregationalism, which implies a partition of authority between the rulers and the ruled. But this evidence is greatly strengthened by the consideration that, included in the general class of presbyter or elder, there is a special kind of presbyter or elder set apart more peculiarly to the exercise of the office of ruling in the Christian Church. The Scriptures seem to point to three sorts of office-bearers, all belonging to the one common order of the eldership, but distinguished from each other by the peculiar functions discharged by them respectively. First, there is the preaching elder, so often spoken of in Scripture under the name of "pastor," and other titles, significant of his distinctive work of preaching the Word and dispensing ordinances. Second, there is the teaching elder, spoken of under the name of "teacher," and apparently to be distinguished from the pastor in Scripture, as more especially devoted to the duty of teaching or explaining and interpreting the truth of God. And third, there is the ruling elder, to be discriminated from both by having it as his peculiar function to administer rule or government in the Church of Christ. Standing upon the same footing, as all belonging to the order of elder, there are these three varieties in the order to be distinguished in Scripture. If, therefore, as Presbyterians hold, there is a class of elders instituted by Christ in His Church who are distinctively devoted to the work of ruling or government, this fact brings out still more forcibly the unscriptural nature of the Congregationalist principle, which divides that government between office-bearers and the members of the Church at large.

It is impossible to do more than merely advert, in the briefest way, to the evidence for the Scriptural institution of the office of ruling elder, as distinguished from those presbyters specially set apart for preaching or teaching. 1. There is a strong presumptive argument in favour of ruling elders, distinct from preaching or teaching elders, from the precedent afforded in the Jewish Church for a similar order in the Christian, founded, as the polity of the New Testament was, upon the model of the Old Testament ecclesiastical government. 2. There seems to be a distinct reference to an office of government in

the enumeration of ecclesiastical offices, given by the Apostle Paul in the twelfth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. These offices apparently fall to be ranged under the two general heads of "prophecy" and "ministry." "Having, then, gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering." Then, under the two heads of prophecy and ministry, the apostle goes on to give the subdivision—first, under the general head of prophecy: "he that teacheth (ὁ διδάσκων), on teaching,"—or the work of the doctor or teaching elder; "he that exhorteth (ὁ παρακαλῶν), on exhortation,"—or the order of pastor or preaching elder; and second, under the general head of ministry or service: "he that giveth or distributeth (ὁ μεταδιδούς), let him do it with simplicity,"—or the order of deacon; "he that ruleth (ὁ προϊστάμενος), with diligence,"—or the order of ruling elder. Such seems to be the meaning of this rather difficult passage, pointing as it does to the ruling elder, as distinct from the teaching or preaching elder. 3. There is another passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, in which likewise allusion is made to the class of ruling elder, as one of the offices in the apostolic Church: "And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments (ἀντιλήψεις, κυβερνήσεις), diversities of tongues." In the catalogue of offices, extraordinary and ordinary, in the apostolic Church, the governments specified among the rest apparently ought to be interpreted as referring to an office of ruling in the Christian society. 4. But the decisive evidence for the office of ruling elder is to be found in the well-known passage in the First Epistle to Timothy: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." A vast deal of minute and laboured criticism has been expended on this passage, in order to make it bear a meaning against its obvious sense. But the very explicit testimony which it bears to two classes of elders, the one of whom ruled exclusively, the other of whom, in addition to ruling, exercised also the ministry of the Word, is so strong and conclusive, that not a few, both among Episcopalians and Independents, have

been led to acknowledge the force of it.<sup>2</sup> Nothing but a very dangerous kind of wresting of the plain meaning of the text will suffice to get rid of such an interpretation of it as carries conclusive evidence in favour of the class of ruling, as separate from preaching and teaching elders. The strong fact, then, of the institution of a distinct class of presbyters for the express purpose of government in the Christian society, in addition to the general order of presbyters, who both preach and rule, serves very greatly to confirm the evidence we have from Scripture against the Congregationalist principle of a distribution of the power of government between office-bearers and members in the Church.

II. It appears from Scripture, that the proper and distinctive exercises of Church power and authority are uniformly and statedly performed by the office-bearers of the Church, and never by the members generally.

Even although we could not have proved the first institution of a separate office of authority and power in the Christian society attached to a distinct order, and not belonging to the Church collectively, yet Scripture evidence of the stated and continual exercise of the peculiar functions of such an office by a particular class, to the invariable exclusion of the members at large, would itself establish the Presbyterian doctrine against the Congregational view. Now such evidence there is in abundance. Church power, in all its various departments, whether exercised about doctrine, ordinances, government, or discipline, is always administered in the New Testament Church by parties in office, and never by the members of the Church generally. That such is the fact, the briefest reference to Scripture will suffice to demonstrate. The titles and names expressive of ecclesiastical authority in Scripture are restricted to a certain class, and not given indiscriminately to all the members of the Christian society; the qualifications necessary for administering Church power are required, not from all, but from a few only; the instructions for the due discharge of its functions are addressed to a limited order, and not to the Church collectively; and the examples in the Word of



God of the performance of the duties attaching to the possession of ecclesiastical authority are always examples of these duties being discharged by men in office, and never by persons without office.

1st, The administration of Church power in connection with doctrine is exhibited in Scripture as always belonging to pastors, and never to the people at large. The chief and highest exercise of Church power, to declare the mind of God from His Word, and to preach the Gospel to sinners, is ever represented as the work of presbyters, and never as the duty of the members of the Church. It may be the right of the members of the Church to elect the pastor to preach the Gospel, but it is not the right, in ordinary circumstances, of the members to preach themselves, or even to ordain to the office of preaching. There is no example that can be quoted from Scripture of the private members of the Church either preaching, in the strict sense of the word, or ordaining preachers. The only instance alleged by Congregationalists in support of their theory, that it is the inherent right of every member to preach the Gospel, is the case of the persecuted disciples of Jerusalem, recorded in the eighth chapter of the Acts, where it is said: "They that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the Word." But in reference to the alleged precedent, it cannot, in the first place, be proved that the scattered disciples who preached were not pastors ordained to the work;<sup>2</sup> and in the second place, although it could be proved that they were private members only, the extraordinary emergency of the Church would both explain and justify the departure from ordinary rule. As Presbyterians, we do not hold that, in an extraordinary crisis or unsettled condition of a Church, necessity may not be laid upon Christians not in office both to preach and to ordain, rather than that the ordinance of the ministry should cease. But we affirm that, in the ordinary and normal condition of the Church, there is no Scripture precedent or warrant for the members of the Church generally exercising this peculiar office, but only for pastors or elders.

2d, The administration of Church power in connection with ordinances is always exhibited in Scripture as belonging to office-

bearers, and never to the members generally. In the case of ordination, it is by the laying on of the hands of those in office before, that office is conferred and transmitted. There is no Scripture example of ordination by the Christian people; and the only attempt to show warrant for the right of the people to ordain, is when Congregationalists confound or identify election with ordination. In the case of the Sacraments, it is by the hands of office-bearers that they are uniformly dispensed in Scripture. There is not the shadow of evidence in the Word of God to prove that private members ever baptized, or dispensed the bread and wine of a Communion Table. The unvarying and stated exercise of this branch of Church power by office-bearers, and the no less unvarying and stated abstinence by members from all actions involving the exercise of it, furnish conclusive evidence that the power belonged to the one, and did not belong to the other.

3d, The administration of Church power in its remaining branch, or in connection with government and discipline, is always represented in Scripture as belonging to persons in office, and not to the members generally. That this is the case, is very satisfactorily demonstrated by those titles expressive of ruling, those instructions for the proper administration of authority, and those qualifications for rightly exercising discipline, which we find so very often in Scripture in connection with the office-bearers, and not with the members of the Church. In these we have distinct Scriptural evidence that the administration of government and discipline formed part of the ordinary work of the former as office-bearers, and was peculiar to their order, and not common to them with all. To office-bearers, and not to members in general, were such directions given as these: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority." To office-bearers, and not to private members, was the commission

given, to bind and to loose, to retain and remit sin, to hold and use the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And the Scripture examples of the actual administration of government and discipline in the apostolic Church are all spoken of with reference to the office-bearers as distinct from the members of the Church.

In opposition to this very strong and abundant evidence, there are three passages of Scripture usually appealed to by Congregationalists in support of their theory, that the power of government and discipline belongs to the members of the Church collectively.

The first passage is in the Gospel by Matthew, where our Lord is giving instruction about dealing with the offences of a brother: "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, tell it to the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." From this passage the Congregationalists argue, that the power of discipline belongs to the Church collectively in its members, and that the offending brother is to be dealt with authoritatively by them, and not by the office-bearers. Now, in regard to this objection, I remark, in the first place, that it takes for granted that the word "Church" must mean a particular congregation, and cannot be understood of the Church as represented by her rulers and office-bearers,—an assumption not borne out by the language of Scripture. But, in the second place—and this is really decisive of the question—the Christian Church not being in existence at the moment when our Lord so spoke, He must have referred, in the expression He used, to some existing mode of ecclesiastical procedure known to the disciples, if He was to speak intelligibly to them at all. That He did allude, in the expression, "tell the Church," to the Jewish Synagogue, seems to be quite undoubted,

—intimating that the procedure with respect to offenders among His disciples was to be similar to what took place among the Jews in their Church courts. The practice of the Synagogue must have been the practice suggested to the disciples by the peculiar language of our Lord; and that practice involved the invariable custom of the Church dealing with offenders through her office-bearers, and not in the meetings of her members generally. The argument from this passage in Matthew, so far from being in favour of Independency, is, on the contrary, conclusive in support of the Presbyterian theory.

The second passage usually referred to by Congregationalists, is in the fifteenth chapter of Acts; but as I shall have occasion to discuss it in the next section, I postpone for the present any consideration of it.

The third passage usually appealed to is in First Corinthians, and refers to the excommunication of the incestuous person in the Church of Corinth: "For I verily," says the apostle, "as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, him that hath done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.... Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." And again, on the repentance of the offender, and after suggesting his restoration, the apostle, in Second Corinthians, says: "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of many."<sup>3</sup> Now, from this passage, Congregationalists argue, first, that inasmuch as the epistle is not addressed to the office-bearers of the Church at Corinth, but to the members at large, the instructions of the apostle to deal with the offender must be understood as addressed to the members also. This argument would imply that every direction in the epistle not specially restricted, must apply equally to all,—a principle of interpretation obviously unsound, and contradicted by the fact of there being a variety of injunctions in this very epistle, although not limited by any express terms, yet plainly requiring to be limited to particular classes by the very nature of the

injunctions themselves. Directions, for example, about prophesying are given, without being expressly limited to those among the members of the Church at Corinth who were prophets, as they absolutely require, from the very nature of the precepts, to be. And so also directions about the administration of discipline are given, without any express limitation of them to those qualified or authorized to administer discipline, although such a limitation is no less required by the nature of the directions given. But, second, from this same passage Congregationalists argue that the sentence was actually executed, not by the office-bearers, but by the members of the Church at large; as appears from the apostle's statements: "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person:" and again: "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of many." Now, in reference to this, it is sufficient to remark that the sentence of excommunication, although pronounced by the authority of the rulers, could be practically carried out only by the aid of all the members of the Church co-operating with the rulers, and withdrawing from the society of the person excommunicated. There was a duty lying upon the members of the Church, to put away from their communion the offending person upon whom the sentence had been pronounced; and this expulsion from the society of the Christian people, following upon the sentence of the rulers, might well be called a punishment inflicted of the many. This principle is quite sufficient to explain the expression of the apostle in the Epistle to the Corinthians, without having recourse to an interpretation at variance with the uniform language of Scripture elsewhere, restricting as it does the power of government and discipline to the office-bearers of the Christian society alone.

Looking back upon the whole argument, we seem to be warranted in laying down these two propositions, subversive as they are of the doctrine peculiar to Congregationalism. First, we have distinct evidence in Scripture for the institution of an office of rule and authority in the hands of office-bearers apart from others, and not an office partitioned or distributed between office-bearers and members. Second, we have distinct evidence in Scripture that the

administration of the powers of this office in all the different departments of their exercise was invariably conducted by Church officers, and not by the members of the ecclesiastical body at large. These two propositions, established, as we believe them to be, from the Word of God, are completely destructive of the fundamental principle implied in the term "Congregationalism."

## **SECTION II.**

### **THE INDEPENDENT PRINCIPLE AS OPPOSED TO PRESBYTERIANISM**

The two distinctive peculiarities of the system of Congregational Independency are marked out in the name by which it has come to be known. The first of these, or the principle of Congregationalism, which maintains that the proper office of ruling in the Christian Church belongs to the members collectively, or is partitioned in some manner between the members and office-bearers, we have already considered at some length, and have been led to reject it as without foundation in Scripture. The second of these peculiarities, or the principle of Independency, remains to be discussed. That principle, as the import of the name suggests, is to this effect, that every congregation, including its office-bearers, has within itself all the powers necessary for accomplishing all the objects of a Church of Christ, irrespective of every other; that it is complete in and by itself, to the exclusion of all connection with other Churches, for the administration of Word and ordinance, government and discipline; and that all association of congregations under one common rule, or subordination to any authority beyond themselves, is inconsistent with the nature of the Church of Christ, and unscriptural. According to this view, the power of ruling in the Christian Church is to be exercised within each particular congregation, apart from every other, and not in the way of the office-bearers of several congregations meeting for the exercise of a common authority over them all, each individual society being absolutely independent and separate from the rest in matters of government, discipline, and order.

This independence and absolute separation of each congregation from every other in the exercise of ecclesiastical authority, asserted by Congregational Independents, is a very natural and indeed

unavoidable consequence of the other distinctive principle maintained by them—namely, that all government is to be exercised by the Church collectively, and not by the office-bearers alone. It is obviously impracticable for two or more different congregations to associate or meet together for the ordinary administration of a common government. If congregations are to meet for ruling in common, it can only be through their office-bearers associating as their representatives for that purpose. And, on the other hand, while the principles of Congregationalism are inconsistent with the idea of association for the exercise of a common government, the principles of Presbyterianism very naturally or unavoidably lead to it. Presbyterians assert that the right of governing is deposited in the hands of the office-bearers of the Christian society, and not in the society itself,—a principle that paves the way for the elders of different congregations meeting together in the discharge of their peculiar functions, and as the representatives of their several Churches, for the exercise of a joint authority over the ecclesiastical societies which they represent. Such meetings of elders or presbyters in greater or smaller numbers, as the case may require or their circumstances permit, may be called Courts, or Councils, or Presbyteries, or Synods, without the name altering or affecting the nature or amount of the ecclesiastical authority competent to them as office-bearers of the Church. If the governing body in a single and separate congregation—whether with Independents you call it the congregational meeting, or whether with Presbyterians you call it the congregational eldership, or consistory, or kirk-session—have a certain power of government within it, the same in nature and amount is the power of government ascribed by Presbyterians to the eldership of many congregations, when they meet for jointly ruling in the affairs of them all. In the meeting of many rulers of different congregations for united counsel and action in the government of them all, there will indeed be certain advantages and an increase in influence and authority gained for their proceedings by the union, not to be found in the case of the eldership of a single congregation. But the kind of authority in both cases is the same. The decision of the congregational eldership, and the decision of the more general



council, met under the name of Presbytery or Synod, are in their binding force precisely the same. Presbyterians demand no other kind of authority for the proceedings of Presbyteries or Synods than Independents ascribe to the decisions of their congregational courts. The only difference is, that in the former case you have a government comprehending many congregations; in the latter case you have a government including no more than one. Setting aside the question of the parties in whom the power of government is lodged, which has already been under our consideration, the real and essential point remaining for discussion as between Presbyterians and Independents is, whether or not it is lawful and right for the governing body of one congregation to unite with the governing body of a second, or third, or fourth, for the purpose of common counsel and joint authority in the exercise of rule over all. Presbyterians hold that there is warrant and precedent for this in the Word of God; Independents hold that it is incompetent and unscriptural.

The right or power of association in the exercise of government in the case of more than one congregation is, then, the grand question in debate between the adherents of Presbyterianism and Congregational Independency. Other things are mere matters of arrangement not essential to the question. The number, for example, of rulers, more or fewer, who may meet together in one body for the joint exercise of counsel and government in matters affecting the interests of congregations, is a point of detail in no way fundamental to the argument. Whether these associations or courts shall be local, or provincial, or national, or œcumenical, is also apart from the essence of the controversy, and must be determined by considerations of expediency, or a regard to the circumstances of congregations, or of the Church generally. Further still, if it is lawful or Scriptural for the governing bodies of different neighbouring congregations to associate for common counsel and the exercise of a joint rule, this necessarily implies that the members and rulers of each of these congregations singly are subject to the authority of the whole representative convention. In other words, such an association implies the subordination of each congregation, and the rulers of

each congregation, to the common and more general authority of the higher courts. The principle of subordination, and the right of appeal from the rulers of one congregation to the rulers of many, are involved in the general principle, that it is competent and Scriptural for the governing parties of the Church to associate together beyond the limits of an individual congregation, for the exercise of ecclesiastical authority and power in common. The warrant for Church courts, made up of the office-bearers of several congregations for the purpose of joint government, carries with it the warrant also for the subordination both of individuals and of narrower associations to the more general conventions of rulers.

To a certain extent, the lawfulness of ecclesiastical Councils or Synods has been admitted even by Independents. More especially, the Independents of former times were accustomed to acknowledge the propriety, or even necessity, of the association of the office-bearers of different Churches, with a power of advice, if not of authority, as respects individual congregations. And although modern Independents have considerably narrowed the concessions made by their predecessors, yet many of them do not profess to deny the lawfulness of ecclesiastical Councils for at least consultation on the affairs of the Church, and of one congregation, through its office-bearers, asking advice or aid from the office-bearers of another in matters of difficulty or common concernment. But the real question in debate between the adherents of Independency and those of Presbyterianism is as to the right of elders or presbyters associating together from different congregations, not only for the purpose of mutual consultation and advice, but for the exercise of a common government. If such a right can be established from Scripture, the proof is decisive in favour of Presbyterianism, and against the Independent theory.

I. The lawfulness of association among the office-bearers of the Church for the exercise of common government, may be argued from the unity of the visible Church.

I do not say that this consideration would of itself be decisive of the question, but it affords a very strong presumptive evidence in favour of the right of association for the purposes of government in the Church, in so far as circumstances make it practicable. That there is a kind of oneness which belongs to the visible Church in consequence of the outward covenant relationship in which it stands to Christ, that there is a seen and external communion kept up by all the members of the visible Church through means of the observance of the same outward ordinances, and the enjoyment of the same outward provision of means of grace, is a point which we have had occasion to consider and demonstrate at a previous stage in our discussions. The man who is admitted into the Christian society by the administration of a Baptism common to all branches of it, becomes, in virtue of his participation in the ordinance, not so much a member of the local congregation or Church where he worships, as a member of the catholic Church at large, having a right of membership throughout the whole. The man who is ordained to the office of a pastor or minister in any local Church, becomes, in virtue of his ordination, a minister of the visible Church throughout the whole world, qualified and entitled to preach the Gospel, not merely within the bounds of the single congregation over which he is so set as overseer, but also in any other congregation where Providence may order his lot. And upon the very same grounds we are prepared to argue, that an office-bearer, set apart not only to preach but to rule in any individual congregation, has his office of ruling not confined to that congregation alone, but is qualified and entitled to rule throughout the Church universal, wherever circumstances may permit, or the edification of the body of Christ may demand it. Every Christian pastor has a certain relation to the whole body of believers, qualifying and authorizing him to preach the Word of God wherever throughout the visible Church he may for a time have his abode, and making him a minister of the Gospel, not amidst his own flock alone, but amidst the members of other congregations. And the office of ruling, to which he was admitted at his ordination as a presbyter, is co-extensive with the office of preaching that belongs to him. As one entitled to govern as well as to preach, he has a certain relation, not

only to the particular congregation where he ordinarily rules, but also to the whole visible Church, and is qualified and authorized to use his gifts in that way wherever he may have a call to act, and wherever the edification of the members of the Church can be promoted by it.

This is plainly the proper theory of the unity that belongs to the visible Church of Christ. No doubt, circumstances may prevent, and do prevent, that unity from being practically realized. The separation of congregations and Churches by distance of place and difference of language—and, worse than that, their separation caused by differences of doctrine and government and worship—may make it impossible for such a system of visible unity to be completely exhibited in actual fact. But notwithstanding of this, it is unquestionable that the principles of visible unity upon which Christ constituted and modelled His Church at first have laid the foundation for the association of rulers and office-bearers for the exercise of authority in common, and seem fairly to require that association in so far as in the circumstances of the Church it is practicable, or for edification. Although it may be impossible to carry out the plan of an actual communion in government among the office-bearers of the Church to the whole extent of the visible society of Christians, yet this is no reason why it should not be carried out to any extent or realized at all. A pastor is something more than a pastor within his own congregation alone; and a ruler in the Church is something more than a ruler to his own flock alone. In both capacities, they sustain such a relation to the Church universal as to lay the foundations for union or association among the office-bearers of the Church throughout different congregations for joint action, mutual consultation, and common ruling. And the unity of the visible Church seems to carry with it the warrant for such communion in counsel and government to the whole extent to which the circumstances of particular congregations, or the advantage of the Church at large, may permit or demand. Unless there were some express prohibition to be found in Scripture directed against the lawfulness of such association for government, the principles of unity

established in the Church of Christ seem both to countenance and require it.

II. The lawfulness of association among the office-bearers throughout the Church for the purpose of common government, may be argued from the examples in Scripture of such union among the rulers of neighbouring congregations.

One of the fundamental positions laid down by Independents is, that the word "Church"—ἐκκλησία—is never found in the New Testament save in two significations,—first, as denoting the whole mystical body of Christ, made up of true believers throughout the world; and second, as denoting a single congregation of Christians, who could all assemble together for worship in one place. On the other hand, while not denying that the word ἐκκλησία occurs in these two sense, Presbyterians are prepared to prove that it is frequently used in Scripture to denote a combination of more than one congregation, united together under a common government, administered by one body of elders associated for the purpose. The difference between the adherents of Independency and of Presbytery on this point is a vital and fundamental one, involving the whole merits of the controversy. If it could be proved that the word "Church" in the New Testament always means either the whole body of believers throughout the world, or else a single congregation consisting only of such a number of members as could ordinarily assemble in one place for the exercise of worship, government, and discipline, and that never on any occasion is it used to denote several congregations, united or represented by their office-bearers, then this proof would, without actually settling the controversy in favour of Independency, furnish a very strong argument on its behalf. If, on the other hand, there is evidence that the word is repeatedly employed to denote several congregations, united under and represented by an association of office-bearers, or a Presbytery, then the proof is decisive in favour of Presbyterian views. This latter proposition, I believe, there are sufficient materials in Scripture to establish. We do not deny that the word "Church" sometimes signifies only a single congregation

meeting in one place. We do not deny that the word "Churches," in the plural, is often employed to denote congregations of Christians scattered over an extensive district of country, and remote from each other; as, for example, when we hear of the Churches of Asia, or of Syria, or of Macedonia, or of Galatia, which very probably possessed separate and distinct governing bodies. But we assert that very often the word Church in the singular signifies more than one congregation, united in no other way than as represented and governed by one body of rulers; as, for example, when we read of "the Church of Jerusalem," or "of Antioch," or "of Corinth," in which cities we are prepared to prove that there were different congregations, and one common government. The use of the word Church in this sense I have had occasion to refer to at an earlier stage in our inquiries. But this point is so important, and so decisive of the debate between Independents and Presbyterians, that I must deal with it briefly once more. There are two parts, then, in the general proposition now laid down, and which it is our object to establish. First, the word Church is frequently employed in Scripture to denote two or more congregations connected together; and second, the different congregations, so included under the word, were united under one common government.

With regard to the first part of the proposition, or that two or more congregations are often spoken of under the one general name of a Church, we have the proof of it in the instance of the Church of Jerusalem, the first established, and the model of all the apostolic Churches. The Christians worshipping there are uniformly spoken of as one Church in the New Testament; and yet that there was a plurality of congregations at Jerusalem, may be demonstrated from a variety of circumstances mentioned in Scripture.

1. That the Church at Jerusalem was made up of different congregations, meeting for worship in different places, is evinced by the vast multitude of converts very soon gathered there by the labours of the apostles. We are not informed of the number of converts to the faith which existed at the period of our Lord's

ascension, and previously to the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Besides the one hundred and twenty disciples who met in the upper room at Jerusalem, we know that on one particular occasion, Christ, after His resurrection, was seen of "above five hundred brethren at once." To these were speedily added on the day of Pentecost three thousand souls, converted by a single sermon, and at one time. After this vast ingathering of converts, it is recorded that "the Lord added daily to the Church such as should be saved." Again, on the occasion of a sermon by Peter, it is said: "Many of them who heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand." There is no reason for thinking that in this statement are comprehended the previously mentioned three thousand, converted on the day of Pentecost; the two numbers must therefore be added together in forming an estimate of the membership of the Church of Jerusalem at this early period in its history. Besides, as men are especially and exclusively mentioned (ἀριθμὸς τῶν ἀνδρῶν) according to a very common method of Scripture computation, a large addition is further to be made on account of the female converts. Subsequently to this date, we are told that "believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." Further still, it is declared, "the Word of God increased, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."<sup>5</sup> It is utterly impossible, upon any rational theory of interpretation, to maintain that the many thousands of converts thus particularly mentioned in Scripture, as added to the Church at Jerusalem, could have found it practicable to meet together as one worshipping assembly. They constituted, when taken together, a multitude which could not assemble in one congregation for ordinary worship, but must of necessity have constituted several congregations; especially when we consider that the accommodation which they could procure for that purpose was, in all likelihood, nothing better than an upper chamber, with the door shut and barred for fear of the Jews. It may be right to take into account to a certain extent the resort of strangers to Jerusalem at the time of the feast of Pentecost; and on this ground a slight deduction may be made from the number mentioned as converted and joined to

the Church. Another deduction of equally small amount may require to be made for the dispersion of disciples arising from the persecution after Stephen's death, although it seems to be pretty certain that it was against the office-bearers in the Christian society alone that the violence of the persecutors was especially directed on this occasion, and that, accordingly, it was not the members of the Church at large, but their office-bearers, that were "all scattered abroad, except the apostles." But after making every reasonable deduction from the numbers of converts on any such grounds, those remaining at Jerusalem constituted a multitude which no single place of meeting could have held, and which could not at any time, but especially in the circumstances of the early believers, have stately met together in one assembly for public worship. And years afterwards, when the Church at Jerusalem must have settled down into its normal condition as to numbers, exhibiting only a gradual increase from day to day, we find the Apostle James speaking of it to Paul as comprehending many myriads of converts. "Thou seest, brother, how many myriads—πόσσι μυριάδες—of Jews there are which believe." With such numbers, it is utterly impossible that there could have been no more than a single worshipping assembly at Jerusalem.

2. The very same conclusion which asserts a plurality of congregations at Jerusalem, is established by the fact of the great number of ministers and office-bearers who for a space of many years can be proved to have had the seat of their ministry at Jerusalem. It is believed by most interpreters of Scripture, that the seventy disciples whom Christ Himself commissioned to preach the Gospel, laboured for a period of time at Jerusalem. But apart from this, we know that for several years the twelve apostles were together in that city occupied in the ministry of the Word. At an early period in their ministry, we find them setting apart seven deacons to discharge that department of Church service which their higher duties prevented them from overtaking. In the eleventh chapter of the Acts we have mention made of elders or presbyters, in addition to the apostles, as forming part of the ordinary staff of Church officers



at Jerusalem. In the same chapter we learn that, over and above apostles and presbyters, there were also prophets exercising their peculiar office of revelation and exposition of Divine truth among the believers there. And from an examination and comparison of different parts of the narrative in the Acts, it appears that apostles and presbyters and prophets had their ordinary residence at Jerusalem for a series of years, busily engaged in the work of preaching the Gospel, and ministering in Word and ordinance. It is utterly impossible to believe that twelve apostles, a plurality of presbyters, and a number of inspired prophets, besides the seven deacons, could for years restrict themselves to Jerusalem, and all for the purpose of labouring in a single congregation that could stately assemble in one place for worship. There must have been at Jerusalem such a number of office-bearers of different sorts as entirely to exclude the possibility of there being no more than one congregation under their ministerial care.

Other arguments, such as the diversity of language among the dwellers at Jerusalem, might easily be adduced to show that it is impossible to believe that there existed in that city but one congregation of converts, worshipping regularly in one place of meeting. And if the first part of our proposition be established, which asserts that, under the name of "the Church at Jerusalem," there was in fact a plurality of congregations, the second part of it, or that which asserts that these different congregations were united under one common government, may be demonstrated very briefly. The single name under which the several distinct and separate congregations at Jerusalem are spoken of as "the Church" there, is of itself sufficient to prove that they had a common bond of union in their subordination to one ecclesiastical government or polity. There is no other explanation that can account for it. This view of the matter is confirmed by the fact that the office-bearers in the Jewish capital are uniformly spoken of, not as the elders or deacons of this or that congregation belonging to Jerusalem, but as the elders and deacons of the Church there. When Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem with a contribution to the poor saints there, it is said to be

sent to the elders by the hands of the messengers from Antioch. In the sixth chapter of Acts we find the apostles associating together as rulers of the Church for the ordination of deacons at Jerusalem. In the fifteenth chapter we again read of the apostles and elders met together in a Church assembly or court for the regulation of certain ecclesiastical affairs. From first to last, in the accounts we have of the Christians at Jerusalem, divided as they undoubtedly were into many congregations, we still read of one Church, of one body of office-bearers, of one set of apostles and presbyters ruling and ordering the common concerns of all. So very clear and conclusive is the evidence to prove that the different congregations at Jerusalem were united under one ecclesiastical management, and subject to one ordinary government.

It would not be difficult to enlarge to almost any extent the argument which demonstrates that in the New Testament the word Church is frequently used to denote a number of different congregations, united and represented by one Presbytery or body of office-bearers. Upon grounds to a great extent similar, it might be argued, as that in the case of Jerusalem, so also this was exemplified in the Church of Corinth, of Antioch, and of Ephesus. The multitude of converts which can be proved to have existed in these cities, and the great number of office-bearers which were attached to them, demonstrate that these Churches did not consist of single congregations, but of many. And this fact is decisive of the argument between Presbyterians and Independents.

III. We have a very conclusive proof of the lawfulness of Presbyterial association among the rulers of the Church, not merely in the case of the elders of closely neighbouring congregations, but on a larger scale, in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts. The Synod or Council assembled at Jerusalem for deciding the controversy which troubled the apostolic Church about the obligation of the Mosaic law on Gentile converts, is a precedent for the union of the office-bearers of the Church for the purpose of government, which very clearly establishes the lawfulness and authority of Church courts.

Notwithstanding of the declared opinion of Paul and Barnabas, certain Judaizing teachers at Antioch had insisted that, except the Gentile converts kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved. In consequence of the dissensions and dispeace caused at Antioch by these doctrines, the Church there deputed Paul and Barnabas and certain others to take the decision of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem on the point in dispute. We have reason from the subsequent narrative to believe that, besides Paul and Barnabas and other deputies from Antioch, there were also representatives from the Churches of Syria and Cilicia, commissioned to go up to Jerusalem on the same errand. Even without the presence of the parties last mentioned, however, any ecclesiastical assembly or synod in which the whole body of the twelve was included might fairly be held, in virtue of their extraordinary and world-wide commission and authority, as representing the universal Church. On the arrival of the deputies in Jerusalem, "the apostles and elders," as we are told, "came together for to consider of this matter." After considerable consultation, and, as it would appear, some difference of opinion on the subject, they gave forth their judgment, and commissioned certain members of the Council to carry the decision to the Churches of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Now, in this narrative we have all the elements necessary to make up the idea of a supreme ecclesiastical court, with authority over not only the members and office-bearers within the local bounds of the congregations represented, but also the Presbyteries or inferior Church courts included in the same limits. First, we have the reference of a question of doctrine and duty by the Presbytery of Antioch to a Council or Synod at Jerusalem; for that the Church of Antioch consisted of various congregations under one Presbytery, can be sufficiently proved in the same manner as in the instance of Jerusalem. Second, we have deputies sent from the Churches of Antioch, and also, it would seem, from Syria and Cilicia, to take part in the Council. Third, we have these representatives or commissioners meeting with the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and, after due deliberation and discussion, ministerially declaring the law of Christ on the question in debate, and issuing a decree on the point, not only to the Christians of Jerusalem, but to the brethren

in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. The precedent recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, gives warrant for more than the association in a joint government of the office-bearers of neighbouring congregations,—it proves, in addition, the lawfulness of a subordination of courts in the Christian Church.

Now, there are three different ways in which attempts have been made by Independents to rid themselves of the evidence for Church courts afforded by this example. To these it may be right very briefly to advert.

1st, It is asserted by some Independents, as, for example, by Dr. Wardlaw, that the reference from Antioch was one made to inspired authority at Jerusalem, and not an example of reference to an ordinary and uninspired convention of Church officers; and in support of this view, they appeal to the language of the letter addressed by the Synod to other Churches: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden."

Now, in answer to this objection, it may be remarked, in the first place, that the language of the letter is the very language appropriate to the case of men who were not decreeing anything by their own authority, but ministerially declaring and interpreting the mind of the Holy Ghost as expressed in Scripture, to the effect that no ceremonial observance of the Mosaic law was necessary to salvation. In giving forth their own decision, they were only making the Holy Ghost to speak upon the point, and to decide the controversy. In the second place, that it could not have been an appeal from the Church at Antioch to the inspired authority of the apostles at Jerusalem, is demonstrated by the fact, that the reference was made, not to the apostles alone, but to "the apostles and elders," on the question. In the third place, the same conclusion is established by the consideration, that if the apostles acted on this occasion by inspiration as apostles, it is impossible to account for the decision of Paul himself, who was "not behind the very chiefest" of them, not having been accepted at Antioch as conclusive of the controversy. In

the fourth place, that the apostles in this matter did not act as inspired men, but simply as men endowed with the functions and powers of elders in the Church, is proved by the fact of their joining together with the elders and brethren in the Synod at Jerusalem for consultation on the point, and by the "much disputing" which, we are told, preceded the final deliverance of the assembled office-bearers. These considerations sufficiently disprove the idea that the question in dispute at Antioch was referred to the decision of inspiration.

2d, It is asserted by some Independents, that the Synod at Jerusalem was an example of one Church asking advice of another, and not of any authoritative power exercised by a council of office-bearers over the members of the Christian society.

Now, that the very opposite of this is the case, may be easily evinced. First, the very terms of the decision itself indicate authority, and not merely advice, as implied in it: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." And second, the conduct of Paul and Silas in regard to the decision, and the manner in which they enforced it, sufficiently prove the light in which they regarded it: "And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem."

3d, It is asserted by another class of Independents, that the members of the Church were present and aiding in the decision which was decreed by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and that, but for their concurrence in it, it would not have been authoritative. This assertion is grounded on the expressions, "the whole Church," and "the brethren," employed by the inspired historian, as well as the words "apostles and elders," in reference to the parties present at or sharing in the proceedings of the Council.

Now, in regard to this objection, it may be remarked, in the first place, that the appeal or reference from the Church at Antioch was made, not to the members of the Church, but, as is distinctly stated,

to "the apostles and elders" at Jerusalem. In the second place, the decision of the Council, when pronounced and transmitted to the other Churches, is expressly called the "decrees that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem." In the third place, the use of the phrase "brethren" does not by any means imply that the persons so spoken of were no more than private members of the Church; on the contrary, there seems reason to believe that it referred to official brotherhood, and to persons who were brethren in the office of ruling the Church. In the fourth place, when it is said, in reference to the arrangement of sending messengers with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch with the letter of the Council, that "it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole Church, to send chosen men," even although we should concede—which it is not at all necessary to do—that "the whole Church" refers to the private members, yet this concession would not prove the assertion of Independents. That the members of the Church were present as auditors in the Council of Jerusalem during the consideration of the question, and that they unanimously concurred in the decision come to, is a very probable circumstance. And the expression of this concurrence in the language of the inspired narrative, when, it is said, it pleased the whole Church along with the apostles and elders, is not in the least inconsistent with the other fact, so distinctly proved, both by direct statement and by implication, that the decision was "the decree of the apostles and elders," enacted by their authority as office-bearers in the Church.

Such is the evidence afforded by the history of the Synod at Jerusalem for the lawfulness and right of association among the office-bearers of the Church, for determining controversies of faith and matters of government. There are other passages of Scripture which give warrant for the same thing, although furnishing no example so detailed and particular of Synodical association. We have an example of Presbyterial action in the sixth chapter of the Acts, when we are told that the whole college of the apostles—not one or other acting singly and apart, but all the Twelve as a court of office-bearers associated together—took steps for the ordination of deacons in the Church at Jerusalem. We have another example of Presbyterial

action in the thirteenth chapter of Acts, when we are told that in the Church at Antioch the office-bearers united together with prayer and fasting, and the imposition of hands, to ordain Paul and Barnabas to the mission among the Gentiles.<sup>3</sup> We have another example of Presbyterial action in the twenty-first chapter of Acts, where it is stated that, on his return from his labours among the Gentiles, Paul went up to Jerusalem, and in a meeting of the presbyters of the Church there, rehearsed what God had wrought among the Gentiles through his ministry, and that they, as a Church court, instructed the apostle to comply with certain Jewish purifications, in order to accommodate himself to the feelings and prejudices of the Jewish converts. In these and other instances we have distinct Scripture warrant for the lawfulness of Presbyterial association, and sufficient proof that the scheme of Independency is irreconcilable with apostolic practice.<sup>5</sup>

Looking back upon the whole argument, and upon the positions which we have been led to adopt in the course of it, we see at last the Presbyterian platform rising to our view in all its Scriptural simplicity and authority. Step by step has the discussion been narrowed, until at length we are shut up to that scheme of Church polity, the form and principles of which we see exemplified in the constitution of the Church to which we belong. It is not in the arrogant claims of the Romish Church on behalf of her supreme Pontiff to single and uncontrolled dominion over the whole body of the faithful, that we recognise the form of that primitive Church in which Peter was an elder among fellow-elders; it is not in the pretensions of a third order of diocesan bishops, with exclusive right to ordain and to rule, that we acknowledge the successors of the Presbytery at Jerusalem or Antioch; it is not in the Church system—or, rather, no Church system—of Congregational Independency, that we see an approach to the model exhibited for our imitation in the apostolic Church,—but in the fashion and principles of a Church which recognises no pontiff and no hierarchy, but a college of elders equal in honour and in place, owning among themselves only the aristocracy of genius and of piety, of learning and of zeal, in which

they shall have rule and leadership whom God has graced with the birthright of high gifts and the better heritage of His Spirit; which asserts an authority without a lordship over God's heritage, and makes the office-bearers, not the slaves of the members, nor yet the members the slaves of the office-bearers in the Christian society,—in a Church which unites Scriptural order with the Scriptural freedom, and where Christian liberty is sheltered beneath the shadow of Christ's Crown, do we willingly acknowledge the successor of the Church of the New Testament age.

At this point, and with the form and constitution of the Free Church of Scotland full in view, do we terminate our labours, feeling that we have done something in the course of the studies of the session, if we have traced in any measure to their source in the Word of God those Church principles which are embodied and exhibited in the Christian communion to which we belong. It has been my part to exhibit from Scripture the theory of the apostolic Church. It will be your part very soon, standing as you do on the threshold of professional life, to reduce to practice that theory, and, in accordance with the principles which you have heard expounded from this Chair, to discharge the high and responsible functions of office-bearers in the Christian Church. To your hands will be committed in no small degree the delicate and arduous task of fashioning and forming the Church principles which may hold sway over the thoughts and actings of a coming generation, and that, too, at a time in the history of the world when interests, civil and religious, so deeply momentous, largely depend upon the direction and development which these principles may receive. I shall enjoy more than my reward if I have been instrumental in enabling any of you to understand better than before the Scriptural authority and value of those principles which characterize our own Church, or if I may hope that, through the teaching of this Chair, you have in any small degree been better prepared to enter upon the duties that now await you as its guides and office-bearers.



"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good."

## **APPENDIX**

### **APPENDIX A, Vol. I. p. 48**

EXTRACT FROM SPEECH ON THE UNION QUESTION, JAN. 9,  
1867

BEARING OF SCRIPTURE PRINCIPLES ON THE LAWFULNESS  
AND DUTY OF UNION BETWEEN SEPARATE CHURCHES

I SAY that it is high time for the Assembly and the Church to consider what are the general principles which ought to rule the question of Union or Not Union—looking both to the stage negotiations have reached, and to the course of argument which in some quarters has been adopted in this matter. Both within our Church and outside of it, the cause of Union has in some quarters been too much represented as in some way or other antagonistic to the cause of strict principle, and the one of these pitted against the other, as if the friends of Union were arranged against the friends of

sound constitutional views. This has been apparent in various quarters in which discussions have taken place; it is apparent in the spirit and language in which the motion before us has been conceived and expressed. It is Union versus the principles of the Church; or the principles of the Church versus Union. The Assembly are pointedly warned not to sacrifice one jot or tittle of the distinctive testimony of the Church in their zeal for Christian Union. This certainly is not the standpoint from which to look at the question; it is not the point of view from which the real status quæstionis can be understood. On the contrary, it is a misstatement at the very outset of the matter in debate. It is not Union versus the distinctive principles of the Free Church; it is Union as one of the distinctive principles of the Free Church. The doctrine and the duty of Christian Union are to be found among the fundamental articles and obligations which the Free Church, and indeed every Christian Church, embodies in its religious profession. Do those who are so fond of setting forth the distinctive principles of the Church, as standing out in opposition to union, remember that there is a chapter in the Confession of Faith, entitled, "Of the Communion of Saints?" I believe that every principle necessary to justify, in point of argument, the present position of the negotiating Churches, may be found embodied in that chapter. The great doctrine of the Union of Christian men, and of Christian societies or Churches, is there set forth as being at the root of all true ideas of the kingdom of Christ, and constituting, not so much the distinctive principle of any one Church, as the fundamental principle of all Churches. We are too apt to shape our ideas and arguments on this matter according to the narrow views and feelings forced upon us by our position as separate and detached Churches. But we must take a wider view of the matter, and endeavour to look at it from a higher position. There are historical traditions and practices, there are men and deeds of other days, that are dear to our memories and hearts. But the Church of Christ is older than the Church of Scotland; and the principles of the Church of Christ rise higher than our traditions. If we would learn the question of Christian Union aright, we must go to the fountain-head, and learn what Scripture says on the point.

In the chapter on the Communion of Saints, the Confession itself may be our guide, when it traces up the union of Christian men with each other to their primary union with their common Saviour "by His Spirit and by faith." Because Christians are one with Christ, they are one with each other; the reality of this inward union they are bound to acknowledge by outward fellowship and communion; "they are united to each other in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man." So much for the doctrine and the duty of union and co-operation between individual Christians. But in the next paragraph, the Confession deals with the union of Christians in a society or a Church communion. "Saints, by profession, are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification." The great and mysterious fact of the union to Christ of every Christian man issues, in the first place, in the doctrine and duty of the communion and co-operation of Christians with Christians; and then it is still more perfectly realized and developed, in the second place, in their union into a visible society, which we call the Church. This, according to the Westminster Confession, is the fundamental idea of Church Union. Nothing but the want of opportunity in the providence of God is set forth as a valid reason or ground for separation among Christians,—a want of opportunity, such as distance of place, or difference of language, or other hindrances that make union practically impossible or unworkable. For the Confession goes on to say: "which communion, as God giveth opportunity, is to be extended to all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus."

"As God giveth opportunity," this is the only limitation set to the doctrine of Christian Union—the only qualification put on the performance of the duty. Where God giveth opportunity, there a Christian man should acknowledge another Christian man, and unite with him in all good works. Where God giveth opportunity, there a Christian society or Church should acknowledge another Church,

and unite with it in the worship of God and Christian fellowship. It is a great misapprehension, then, of the whole question at issue, to set Christian principle against Christian union, or to argue as if the one conflicted with the other. The union of all Christian men and Christian Churches, so far as God giveth opportunity, is a doctrine not antagonistic to the distinctive principles of the Free Church, but one of its fundamental articles, common to it with every true Church of Christ. It is a doctrine to be held, and a duty to be prosecuted at all times, and by all Churches; and if in any particular instances, separation, and not union, is advocated, most certainly the onus probandi rests upon those who defend or seek to perpetuate separation. Union, and not division, is a Christian axiom, lying at the very root of all our ideas of a Christian Church; and neither individual Christians nor Churches can acquit themselves of sin in their separation from other Christians or Churches where Providence offereth opportunity for union, unless upon one or other of those grounds, either—first, that it is impossible to acknowledge them as Christian men or Churches; or, secondly, that while acknowledging them as such, it is impossible to work together with them without sin. One or other of these two reasons will alone justify separation, where opportunity of union is given; less than one or other of these reasons will not exempt from sin the man or the Church that chooses division rather than oneness in Christ Jesus.

Take the case of individual Christians. What are the Scriptural principles which ought to determine the lawfulness or unlawfulness, the duty or the reverse, of Christian fellowship between them? The question that meets me at the outset is this: "Am I warranted and bound to own such and such a man as a Christian brother, and so award to him the recognition and rights of brotherhood?" I can judge of this only by having regard to his religious profession and character. If in his profession I recognise the fundamental articles of a Christian's faith, and in his conduct a conformity to the main obligations of a Christian's duty, I do wrong to him and wrong to Christ's command if I refuse to acknowledge him as a brother, entitled to all the rights and privileges which such acknowledgment

of his Christianity implies. Non-fundamental defects—minor shortcomings in creed or conduct—will not exempt me from this duty of confessing him before men as a Christian brother. But this is not all. Acknowledgment of him as a Christian man lays upon me the obligation of acting towards him, and acting with him, as a Christian man. If he be a Christian, I am bound to seek to co-operate with him in all those duties and undertakings and aims which, as Christians, we have in common. And now the second question meets me: "Are those methods and principles, according to which alone we can meet and work together, lawful and Scriptural; or does the co-operation necessitate sacrifice of conscience or sin on either side?" If we can act in unison without compromise of principle on either side, if we can work together without anything wrong in the way or manner of working, co-operation becomes not only lawful, but also an imperative duty. Where God offereth opportunity, nothing but an allegation that there is something sinful in the mode or necessities of the union, is a sufficient absolution from the duty laid upon Christian men to join in the work of Christ. The teaching of reason and Scripture are at one on this point. Even in secular matters, union is strength, when those who work together are agreed as to the way and rules of working. In Christian efforts and objects, union is a duty, in so far as there is nothing unlawful in the manner or principle of co-operation. The command of Scripture is plain: "Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things."

Take the case, not of Christian men individually, but of Christian societies or Churches. The very same principles and tests apply to Churches as to individual Christians. First comes the question of acknowledgment; second comes the question of union and co-operation. As in the instance of the individual Christian, so in the instance of a Church; the question at the outset is: Are we bound to recognise such and such a body of professing religionists as a Church of Christ, yea or nay? And this question is solved very much in the same way as it is solved in reference to the Christian man. If in fundamentals the creed and the practice of a religious society are in

accordance with the Word of God, we are not only justified, but bound to acknowledge that society to be a Church of Christ. The Westminster Confession lays down the simple and catholic doctrine, that "the profession of the true religion" is the one test of a Christian Church. It tells us that "the visible Church of Christ consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children." By the possession of this one feature, a Church of Christ is known; and however far in matters non-fundamental it may come short of our standard of belief and practice,—however much it may differ from us in non-essential points of creed, or government, or worship,—we are bound to recognise and to deal with it as a Christian Church, and not a synagogue of Satan. The Westminster divines discard the many notes of the Church usually laid down by Romish controversialists, the object of which is simply to enable them to build up the better the exclusive pretensions of the Church of Rome, and to unchurch all other religious denominations. The one note of the true Church, according to the Confession of Faith, is the profession of the true religion. And when we witness that feature in the case of any religious society, we are not only warranted, but bound in duty to confess such society to be one branch of the true Church of the Saviour.

But we cannot in duty stop here. The acknowledgment of any religious society as a living branch of the living Vine lays upon us instantly the duty of treating it as a Church of Christ. When God giveth opportunity, the recognition of any religious body as a Church of Christ, without doubt, lays upon us a *primâ facie* obligation to go forward to union and co-operation, unless it can be made out that union and co-operation are impossible without sin on one side or other. And now comes the second question that meets us in the case of union for common objects between individual Christians, and which equally meets us in the case of union for common objects between Churches: Are the methods of co-operation which such union implies,—are the principles and ways of joint working which are involved in it, lawful or unlawful, scriptural or unscriptural? Can the Churches, and the members and office-bearers of the Churches,

work together in union without the sacrifice of conscience or principle on either side? This is the only question that remains to be answered, in order to determine the matter of duty as to union in those cases where Providence offereth opportunity, and where Churches equally recognise each other as Churches of Christ. If the way and mode of that joint action which union necessitates be in themselves lawful, the union itself must not only be lawful, but a duty; if there is nothing required by such incorporation in the shape of unscriptural sacrifice, either as to belief or practice, then there is nothing to stand in the way of that duty which we owe to the one body of Christ—the duty, namely, of joining ourselves to those who are His members as well as we. If, on the other hand, the necessities of action in common which the union of Churches implies should impose on either party a compromise of creed or duty amounting to what is wrong, then the separation between them, although itself implying sin on one side or other, cannot be lawfully healed by means of a union which would bring along with it other sin. The controversy about union can only be settled by the settlement of this question. Where the first point must be taken for granted, where the Churches, as in the present instance, recognise each other as equally branches of the one Church of the Redeemer, and when this acknowledgment *primâ facie* involves in it the fundamental duty of showing their oneness in Christ by the visible realization of it, nothing can be a lawful or Scriptural bar to union, except the actual proof that the administration of doctrine, worship, and government by Churches in common would impose upon ministers or members the necessity of doing what was unlawful and unscriptural. Less than this cannot stand in the way of the positive obligation lying upon Churches of Christ to confess, and to act on the confession, that those who are one with Christ are also one with each other. Considerations of expediency, of feeling, of advantage on one side or other, cannot be listened to when, first of all, a question of duty must be heard. It is time that we were studying the Word of God and the standards of our Church, in order to ascertain the great principles which must rule and decide this question of duty.

So far as I have been enabled to understand the question, these are the general principles which, sooner or later, must, in their application to the case in hand, determine the duty of union between the negotiating Churches. We are justified in taking for granted, on all hands, the mutual acknowledgment, cordially made and responded to, that the religious bodies now contemplating union are true Churches of Christ, living branches of the one living Vine, living members of the one living body of which Christ is the Head. The only question that can be raised is the second of those to which I have adverted,—namely, whether, admitting them to be true Churches of Christ, there is, or is not, in a common action on the part of these Churches, in such a joint administration of doctrine, worship, and government, as the contemplated union implies, anything that would lay upon you as a minister, or myself as a member, a necessity of doing what we believed to be unlawful and wrong? If union implies such a necessity, it is a sin; if union imposes no such necessity, it is a Scriptural duty. This is really the hinge of the controversy about union. I may admit a religious society to be a true Church of Christ. But that religious society may be acting upon principles, and necessitating its office-bearers and members, so long as they are in communion with it, to act on principles which involve what is unscriptural and wrong. Notwithstanding of its grievous defections and shortcomings, I cannot refuse to acknowledge that the Established Church of Scotland is a Church of Christ. But I would not be a minister of that Church, because, by my tenure of office as a minister, I should feel that I gave my consent to its Erastian compact with the State, and was bound, in consequence, to do and sanction things which to me would appear to be sin. I believe that the Church of England is a Church of Christ; but I could not be a minister of that Church, because my position as such would compel me to own a creed that is wide enough to cover both Romanism and Rationalism, and to act under a form of government which I do not find in the Word of God. I believe that the Congregational body is a true Church of Christ, and I honour it as sound in the great truths of the Gospel. But I would not be a minister of that Church, because, as such, I should be forced to act upon principles of Church government, which



to me, as a Presbyterian, cannot be made to consist with those Church principles which I recognise in Scripture. In all these cases, it is not because they are not Churches of Christ that I refuse to unite with them, but because union would put me in a position in which I should be compelled to acknowledge or to do what, with my views, I felt to be unscriptural and wrong. Would any such acknowledgment or action, to which my conscience could not consent, be forced upon me in consequence of union being realized between the negotiating Churches? Would a common administration of Word and ordinance, of worship and government, upon the grounds and according to the principles contemplated in the union, force me to own doctrines I could not conscientiously own, or to act in a way that I felt to be unlawful? This is really the question on which the matter of duty depends.... There are no more than two ways in which a Church can meet and refuse the call of duty that summons them to union with another Church, and demands that they shall show publicly their oneness in Christ by actually being one among themselves. If, first, a Christian Church can say that the party to whom they are called upon to join themselves is not itself a Christian Church, then indeed the summons falls to the ground. This is an answer to the call to union which no one in the present instance will venture to prefer. Or, secondly, if a Christian Church can say, if it can show that union for the joint administration of Word and Sacrament, of government, worship, and discipline, in a Church, lays upon ministers and members the necessity of some compromise of truth, or some surrender of duty, then this too would furnish a sufficient answer, and union, however desirable, would cease to be lawful or Scriptural. And the question substantially comes to this: Can such an allegation be truly pleaded? Is there, in the first place, any compromise of truth, any sacrifice of the doctrines we believe and hold, any denial of one article of our faith, demanded or expected in the event of the union that is contemplated? Or is there, in the second place, under the restraint of such union, any obligation or necessity laid upon us to adopt a line of practical conduct other than we would take without union, or to act in a way unscriptural, and by a rule we would not sanction, if we continued as a separate Church?

Take the first alternative alleged, that union necessitates or implies a compromise or surrender of some truth or doctrine which we at present hold. Is this the case? The only article of belief, the only doctrine, so far as I know, on which the Churches differ, is the one point of the lawfulness or duty in certain circumstances of the civil magistrate endowing the Church out of the national resources. In regard to this one point there is a difference, and a conspicuous one, between the negotiating Churches, and one which no protracted efforts at negotiation will ever get over. But I speak not rashly nor unadvisedly when I say that I find no express mention of the doctrine in the Confession of Faith; and no formal obligation by my subscription to it has laid upon me the duty to receive and profess the doctrine. The formula which I sign at ordination and licence does not bind me to this article of belief; if by some strange reversal of all my opinions I should come to repudiate the doctrine, I could not be libelled for my disbelief. My adherence to the Claim of Right and Deed of Demission is expressly guarded and limited to an approval of the general principles contained in these documents as to the spiritual independence of the Church; and I might hold, honestly and truly, all the articles of the Confession of Faith, and at the same time hold the unlawfulness of State endowment, and my position would not infer any departure from my allegiance to the Church. I believe it would pass the skill of my friend Dr. Guthrie, even though assisted by Dr. Begg, to frame out of the standards of our Church, to which we have sworn allegiance, a libel that would convict me of heresy in repudiating State endowment. I frankly admit that it is a natural inference from the principles laid down in the Confession as to the duty of the civil magistrate about religion; but it is no more than an inference, and constructive heresy will not do in a libel for deposition. The strongest proof that the Church of Scotland holds the doctrine of the lawfulness of endowments, as a proper inference from the doctrine of the duty of the civil magistrate, is the fact that she received them. The reception of the endowment was the practical testimony to her opinion of the soundness of the inference. But the fact that the Free Church has ceased to receive the endowment, is the best of all proofs that the inference is not a necessary or

indestructible, an essential and unchangeable, part of her principles. Much has been said as to the desirableness and undesirableness of open questions in reference to this particular doctrine. My answer to all that sort of reasoning is, that the doctrine of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of endowments is already an open question. It is no part of our terms of ministerial communion. It is no condition of admission to office; no man could be libelled for affirming or denying it.

Take the other alternative alleged, that union necessitates or implies a course of conduct, a practical line of action, different from what we would, in our separate state, adopt, and in itself unscriptural and unlawful. This idea can only refer to the practical working of the contemplated union in connection with State endowments. Of course, no union could fetter my freedom to believe, as I have always believed, the lawfulness of such endowments in certain circumstances. No union such as is proposed could require the surrender or compromise of such a belief, either as held by individual ministers and members, or as an inference drawn by them from the public profession of the Church, according to their understanding of what may be deduced from it. But I frankly admit that union with a Church which denies the lawfulness of endowments—not making the denial a term of communion, but the doctrine being actually held by the great majority of her ministers and people—would, not constitutionally, but practically, go to limit my freedom of action on the point within the united Church. Constitutionally we would be free to accept of endowments, acting upon our belief in their lawfulness, but practically we would have our freedom limited under the obligation of the Christian duty of not laying a stumblingblock in the way of a brother. "I will not eat meat while the world standeth, if it make my brother to offend," said the apostle, even at the very moment that he also said that the eating of meat was lawful according to his conscience, and indifferent to him. And so, if the contemplated union should take place, the acceptance of endowments might still, in certain circumstances, be a matter lawful to my conscience, but, under the law that forbids me to offend

the conscience of a brother, I would feel myself practically forbidden to accept of them. It can never be a duty in all circumstances to avail ourselves of a right, or to exercise a privilege which we believe to be perfectly Scriptural and innocent in itself. On the contrary, it may be a duty for the sake of a Christian brother to forbear.

But it is useless arguing this point as a question of casuistry, however much, as I believe, the argument would go to show that, in a united Church, it can be no sin, whatever a man's belief in favour of the lawfulness of endowments may be, to refuse to act upon it. No man that looks at the signs of the political heavens but must see, that amid all the changes there, one thing rises unchangeable above them all, and that is, the certainty that, until the coming of those better days when the princes of this world shall be taught from on high to bring their honour and glory to the Church of the Redeemer, State endowment will never come except when offered as the price of Church subjection,—offered upon terms confessed on all hands to be unlawful. Let the morrow take care for the things of itself,—let the future, if ever it should bring with it the offer of State endowments on terms that are not sinful, decide the question for itself. The present only is ours; and present duty cannot be determined by future possibilities.

And that duty, the duty of Christian union, if it is not negated by the allegation of truth surrendered, or practical action in the cause of Christ prevented by the union, is surely recommended by many considerations of a very urgent kind. The memory of the past, the dangers of the present, the hopes of the future, all point in the same direction. We can never forget that the three bodies now negotiating for union are offshoots from the same stock, and descended from the same parentage; and that each more than another still desires proudly to trace back its lineage to that common ancestry when they had no distinctive existence as religious bodies, but when all that separates them now was merged in the higher unity of the one Reformed Church of Scotland. Can we not forget the interval that has since elapsed, and remember only what we once were? The image of

the common parent is too deeply impressed upon the features of the children to permit us to forget that they are kindred, and were cradled in the same home. The Church of the Reformation with its struggles against Popery, the Church of the Covenant with its struggles against Erastianism, are reproduced in none but those very Churches that, with the secret instinct of a hidden brotherhood, are now drawing together and awakening to the consciousness that they are children of the same womb. The divisions of the past, as well as its agreements, may serve to bind us closer now. If it was against the unscriptural grievance of patronage that the Seceders and Relief entered their protest when they separated from the Establishment, that is a protest in which we shall cordially join with them now. If it was against the toleration of deadly error in the Church of Scotland that they testified when they went out from among us, this is a testimony which we shall gladly display because of the truth. If it was against the laxity of discipline that they contended in vain when they abandoned its pale, this is a contention in which we shall not fail to join them. If it was from the tyranny of Erastianism in the Church that they found no escape except by secession, this, too, is a freedom for which we have paid a great price. The separations, as well as the agreements of the past, have paved a way for union now. Add to this the dangers of the present and the hopes of the future, and they point to the like result. If there is to be safety for the divided bands of the Church of God amid the double assault of Romanism and Rationalism, it can only be when the ranks are closed and joined against the common foe; for the only rational hope that we can have of a coming day of triumph to the Church, in the face of the many influences opposed, is in the strength that union would confer. There is much in the past, there is quite as much in the aspect of the present and the signs of the future, that may well teach the duty of Christian union. And if across the divisions and separations of more than a hundred years, hearts long alienated shall be brought near, there will be found in them the pulse of kindred blood. If the dispersed of Israel shall be once more gathered, and the stick of Ephraim shall be joined to the stick of Judah, we may perhaps

experience the fulfilment of the promise: "They shall be one in mine hand."

## **APPENDIX B, Vol. I. p. 136**

LETTER ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE CONFESSION OF FAITH  
ANENT RECOGNITION AND ENDOWMENT OF THE CHURCH BY  
THE STATE

7 CLARENDON CRESCENT, EDINBURGH,

16th March 1868.

To ———

MY DEAR SIR,—I have been unwell, and an invalid off my public work, for some short time; and this must be my excuse for the delay in answering your letter, and the brief and hurried way in which I answer now.

I cannot go into detail, and can, without doing so, only advert to the general principles that underlie the difficulties you allude to in your letter. There are two misunderstandings—and hardly anything more than misunderstandings—about words, round which the whole controversy (regarding union between the non-Established Churches in Scotland) at present revolves. First, as to the meaning of civil establishments; and second, as to the meaning of distinctive principles.

I. The expression "civil establishments" may be used in two senses materially different, as denoting either a Church or profession of religion recognised and set up as the national profession without pecuniary endowment; or a Church or profession recognised and set up as national with pecuniary endowment. The distinction is not fanciful, nor fabricated for the occasion of the argument. A Church may be endowed without being established (in the sound or restricted sense of the word), as is Irish Presbyterianism with its Regium Donum. A Church may be established (in the same restricted sense) without being endowed, as are some of our colonial bishoprics, supported by voluntary contributions. Admit this distinction, and mark how the history of the controversy has never brought it out,—although it was always a real distinction,—to any practical effect until the present day, and you will see both the nature of the misunderstanding and its origin. Voluntaries use, and have been accustomed to use, the word "civil or national establishment" in its wider sense, as including civil or national endowment. We, although accustomed before to do the same, according to the use and wont of our Church as at all times in the past endowed, have now been taught, as a lesson of Disruption times, to use the word in its narrower sense, although claiming in neither sense to be established. Now, which is the proper or strict theological meaning? Take the Confession as the test. There is no such expression as civil or national establishment in it. But there is in it the general doctrine, in very express terms, that the civil magistrate ought to know, recognise, and obey the Word of God in all matters connected with religion and the Church, wherever it is in his power, or expedient for religion and the Church, to do so. We know that it is not in his power, and that it would not be expedient, in many cases, to exercise his right or duty to endow. Is there nothing intentional in the omission of the doctrine of endowment, while the doctrine of recognition is so pointedly brought in? We have the general principle of the duty of the nation and magistrate to recognise religion and the Church. And why? Because it is, as I believe, at all times and in all circumstances incumbent on him to do so. We have not the special application of the principle in reference to pecuniary support. And why? Because in

many cases it is not his duty, and in others not in his power, to endow. Does not this show the sense in which the compilers of the Confession understood the expression "civil establishment," as something different from the national recognition of a Church, if the expression even came into their heads? And although during two hundred years the two things have been conjoined in the actual history of this Church, and the words have been identified in our experience, yet ought we not now to unlearn the past, and even to confess that endowment is not necessary to establishment, taken in its stricter and proper meaning, and that the controversy about the word ought not to put us wrong as to the true meaning of the Confession.

Take analogous cases in the Confession,—such as the Sabbath. The general principle is laid down, but not the application. The duty of the Sabbath being imposed by lawful authority, is enforced in all cases. But what lawful authority? The Confession does not make the application of the doctrine to the State. The lawful authority imposing it may be the Church, or the master, or the parent. Our Articles of Agreement go beyond the Confession there. (By the way, is not the Sabbath a strict case of an institution of a religious kind being established, but not endowed,—an example of the difference we plead for? It has been established by the State as a national religious day; but not endowed, as it might have been, in addition, by the appointment of paid guardians or teachers of the duty of Sabbath observance.)

Take the case of an oath. The lawfulness of oaths is affirmed. The lawfulness of imposing oaths by competent authority is laid down. The duty of observing oaths is asserted; but no mention of the State being competent to impose them. This is an inference left to be drawn. Here, again, our Articles go beyond the Confession.

Take the case of marriage. Its competency and obligations are set forth in general principles, requiring it to be contracted and observed in conformity with the Word of God; but no mention of the duty of



the State or its right in the question. Here also our Articles go beyond the Confession.

In all these cases one course is followed,—the Confession lays down the general principle or doctrine, and wisely leaves the application to be made out according to times and circumstances, making the one binding, the other not. Does not all this prove that the doctrine of the Confession on the duty of magistrates and States to religion involves, and intentionally involves, nothing more than the general principle of a duty to own and favour it, and leaves open the many and varied applications of the doctrine, which must differ in different cases, and be open to different opinions by different men? To my mind it clearly proves that the meaning of "civil establishments," in the stricter sense, and not in the looser, favoured by our practice of many years, is the meaning of the doctrine of the Confession, where, without mention of the word, the obligation of rulers to religion and the Church is laid down. Because a man condemns "civil establishments" in the wide sense as including endowments, have we a right to say he runs counter to the Confession? I am willing to admit that the difference in the use and understanding of the expression "civil establishments" still remains between us and some Voluntaries, and gives rise to an apparent ambiguity of expression, but not to the effect of a real difference of meaning. It crops out in one case when the phrase is used in their Distinctive Articles. But a proper exegesis of the passage can explain it, and no wise man would found a charge of difference of things upon a difference of words. Ask one of the old Westminster divines in what sense the phrase "civil establishment" expresses the doctrine laid down in the Confession, and neither falls short of nor goes beyond it, and he would at once answer: In the restricted sense of recognition without endowment.

II. But there is another misunderstanding in connection with the expression "distinctive principles," as if Unionists were willing to surrender something essential to a Church, or at least to our Church. "A distinctive principle" may mean either what is distinctive of the Church, in the sense of being a principle essential to office or

membership within it, or, without being necessary to office or membership, what distinguishes it from other Churches. It is in the former sense alone that it can be truly or properly surnamed distinctive, or, in other words, fundamental. The lawfulness of endowment is no term of office, and hence not, properly speaking, distinctive. Nothing, indeed, but what is laid upon me by oath of office can be such, or, in other words, nothing but what I have engaged to believe as doctrine, and to observe as practice, by the conditions of entrance. The doctrine is limited by the bounds of the Confession; the practice restricted by the obligations of the Formula,—embracing, over and above the doctrine of the Confession, the Directory for Presbyterian government and uniformity of worship. There is much beyond this that, in a loose and popular sense of the word, may be called distinctive of our Church. An Act of Assembly, or a series of Acts, may be called distinctive, but they are not binding on the conscience of one who differs from them; they are the testimony, for the time being, of the majority, and may be reversed. The history of the Church is distinctive of it in a certain way; but with what exceptions do we receive it, and how few could say Amen to every tittle! Antimillenarianism is distinctive; but we don't libel Dr. ——. The parochial system for hundreds of years was distinctive, and many an Act of Assembly made it imperative as to its provisions; and Dr. Chalmers used to lecture on it as, along with endowment, the distinguishing superiority of the Church of Scotland over Dissent; but we have abandoned both, and no man can rightfully assert that we have abandoned anything essential to our Church. The Confession and the Formula,—these are the tests. Open questions, from the very necessity of the case, must be in every Christian society or Church. Whatever is outside the Confession and Formula must be open. Where no libel would be possible or relevant, there is an open question. The declamation we hear as to the abandonment of distinctive principles is a mere misunderstanding as to the meaning of words. Dr. Duncan used to say that the question of Supralapsarianism or Sublapsarianism being the doctrine of the Confession, depended on the position of a comma in one of its sections; and as the points are not binding upon the parties who

subscribe, I suppose this remains, as it was I believe intended to be, an open question.

I have written three times as much as I intended in answer to your request. I think you ought to find most, if not all, your difficulties implicitly, if not expressly, touched upon in what I have said.—Yours, etc.,

JAMES BANNERMAN.

-----

[ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT AND DISTINCTIVE ARTICLES OF THE NEGOTIATING CHURCHES, referred to above, as respects the Civil Magistrate

## **I. ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT**

I. That civil government is an ordinance of God for His own glory and the public good; that to the Lord Jesus Christ is given all power in heaven and on earth, and that all men in their several places and relations, and therefore civil magistrates in theirs, are under obligations to submit themselves to Christ, and to regulate their conduct by His Word.

II. That the civil magistrate ought himself to embrace and profess the religion of Christ; and though his office is civil and not spiritual, yet, like other Christians in their places and relations, he ought, acting in his public capacity as a magistrate, to further the interests of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ among his subjects, in every way consistent with its spirit and enactments; and that he ought to be ruled by it in the making of laws, the administration of justice, the swearing of oaths, and other matters of civil jurisdiction.

III. That while the civil magistrate, in legislating as to matters within his own province, may and ought, for his own guidance, to judge

what is agreeable to the Word of God, yet, inasmuch as he has no authority in spiritual things, and as in these the employment of force is opposed to the spirit and precepts of Christianity, which disclaim and prohibit all persecution, it is not within his province authoritatively to prescribe to his subjects, or to impose upon them, a creed or form of worship, or to interfere with that government which the Lord Jesus Christ has appointed in His Church in the hands of Church officers, or to invade any of the rights and liberties which Christ has conferred on His Church, and which all powers on earth ought to hold sacred,—it being the exclusive prerogative of the Lord Jesus to rule in matters of faith and worship.

IV. That marriage, the Sabbath, and the appointment of days of national humiliation and thanksgiving, are practical instances to which these principles apply. (1.) In regard to marriage, the civil magistrate may and ought to frame his marriage laws according to the rule of the Divine Word. (2.) In regard to the Sabbath, the civil magistrate, recognising its perpetual obligation according to the rule of the Divine Word, especially as contained in the original institution of the Sabbath, in the Fourth Commandment, and in the teaching and example of our Lord and His apostles, and its inestimable value in many ways to human society, may and ought, in his administration, to respect its sacred character, to legislate in the matter of its outward observance, and to protect the people in the enjoyment of the privilege of resting from their week-day occupations, and devoting the day to the public and private exercises of Divine worship. (3.) The civil magistrate may, and on suitable occasions ought to, appoint days on which his subjects shall be invited to engage in acts of humiliation or of thanksgiving, but without authoritatively prescribing or enforcing any special form of religious service, or otherwise interposing his authority beyond securing to them the opportunity of exercising their free discretion for these purposes.

V. That the Church and the State, being ordinances of God, distinct from each other, are capable of existing without either of them

intruding into the proper province of the other, and ought not so to intrude. Erastian supremacy of the State over the Church, and Antichristian domination of the Church over the State, ought to be condemned; and all schemes of connection involving or tending to either, are therefore to be avoided. The Church has a spiritual authority over such of the subjects and rulers of earthly kingdoms as are in her communion; and the civil powers have the same secular authority over the members and office-bearers of the Church as over the rest of their subjects. The Church has no power over earthly kingdoms in their collective capacity, nor have they any power over her as a Church. But, although thus distinct, the Church and the State owe mutual duties to each other, and, acting within their respective spheres, may be signally subservient to each other's welfare.

VI. That the Church cannot lawfully surrender or compromise her spiritual independence for any worldly consideration or advantage whatsoever. And further, the Church must ever maintain the essential and perpetual obligation which Christ has laid on all His people to support and extend His Church by free-will offerings.

## II. DISTINCTIVE ARTICLES

Free Church and English Presbyterian Church Committees.

"As an act of national homage to Christ, the civil magistrate ought, when necessary and expedient, to afford aid from the national resources to the cause of Christ, provided always, that in doing so, while reserving full control over his own gift, he abstain from all authoritative interference in the internal government of the Church. But it must always be a question to be judged of according to times and circumstances, whether or not such aid ought to be given by the civil magistrate, as well as whether or not it ought to be accepted; and the question must, in every instance, be decided by each of the two parties judging for itself on its own responsibility."

United Presbyterian Church Committee.

"That it is not competent to the civil magistrate to give legislative sanction to any creed in the way of setting up a civil establishment of religion, nor is it within his province to provide for the expense of the ministrations of religion out of the national resources; that Jesus Christ, as the sole King and Head of His Church, has enjoined upon His people to provide for maintaining and extending it by freewill offerings; that this being the ordinance of Christ, it excludes State aid for these purposes, and that adherence to it is the true safeguard of the Church's independence. Moreover, though uniformity of opinion with respect to civil establishments of religion is not a term of communion in the United Presbyterian Church, yet the views on this subject held and universally acted upon, are opposed to these institutions."

Reformed Presbyterian Church Committee.

"1. That while friendly alliance ought always to be kept in view as the normal relation of the Church and the State, the question whether, or to what extent, the realization of it, in any given case, ought to be attempted, cannot lawfully or safely be determined without taking into account the circumstances, character, and attainments of both, particularly the degree of unity which the Church has attained, and the extent to which the State has become Christian.

"2. That while the Church is bound to uphold civil government, founded on right principles, and directed to its appropriate ends, nevertheless, as a public witness for the truth and claims of Christ, it ought to testify against whatever is immoral in the civil constitution, or iniquitous in public policy.

"3. That when the civil magistrate sets himself in habitual opposition to, and abuses his power for the overturning of religion and the national liberties, he thereby forfeits his right to conscientious

allegiance, especially in countries where religion and liberty have been placed under the protection of a righteous constitution.

"4. That while it is not lawful for the magistrate to grant aid to the Church from national resources merely from motives of political expediency, it is competent to the Church to accept aid from these resources, provided that the terms on which it is given do not involve the Church in approbation of what may be evil in the constitution of the State; but the national resources cannot lawfully be employed for the support of truth and error indiscriminately."

### III. STATEMENTS AS TO THE RELATION OF THE SEVERAL NEGOTIATING CHURCHES TO THE EXISTING CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT IN SCOTLAND

By the Free Church and English Presbyterian Church Committees.

"It follows, from the preceding articles, that any branch of the Christian Church consenting to be in alliance with the State, and to accept its aid, upon the condition of being subject to the authoritative control of the State or its courts in spiritual matters, or continuing in such connection with the State as involves such subjection, must be held to be so far unfaithful to the Lord Jesus Christ as King and Head of His Church. And upon this ground, in accordance with the history and the constitutional principles of the Church of Scotland, a protest is to be maintained against the present Establishment in Scotland."

By the United Presbyterian Church Committee.

"That the United Presbyterian Church, without requiring from her members any approval of the steps of procedure adopted by their fathers, or interfering with the rights of private judgment in reference to them, are united in regarding as still valid the reasons on which they have hitherto maintained their state of secession and separation from the judicatories of the Established Church of Scotland,—as expressed in the authorized documents of the respective bodies of which the United Presbyterian Church is

formed,—and in maintaining the lawfulness and obligation of separation from ecclesiastical bodies in which dangerous error is tolerated, or the discipline of the Church, or the rights of her ministry or members are disregarded."

By the Reformed Presbyterian Church Committee.

"That the Reformed Presbyterian Church, while not requiring of her members an approval of every step taken by their fathers, yet holds that they had valid reasons for declining to acquiesce in the Revolution Settlement. Accordingly, not merely from the character of the Government as illustrated in its assumption of supremacy over the Church, and its patronage of other ecclesiastical systems, by which dangerous errors are taught and propagated, but from the express terms of the Settlement by which the Scottish Church was established, involving, as they did, a departure in several important particulars from the covenanted Reformation, and a consequent breach of covenant, the Reformed Presbyterian Church is united in regarding as still valid the grounds on which it has hitherto continued in a state of separation from the present Church Establishment in Scotland."

## **APPENDIX C, Vol. I. p. 148**

### **NOTE ON THE HISTORY OF VOLUNTARYISM**

The theory now commonly known as Voluntaryism—though the name is by no means a very happily chosen or appropriate one—did



not make its appearance in any definite shape before the period of the Reformation, although views of a kindred sort were propounded by some of the Donatists in the fifth century. In Protestant Christendom, doctrines which would now be described as Voluntary were first broached by the Anabaptists in Germany in the sixteenth century. They were taken up largely by the Socinians, the party known as the Libertines in England and Holland, and by many of the sectaries during the Commonwealth. These views were of course contradicted by the positions maintained by all the Reformed Churches with respect to the duty of the civil magistrate to further in all lawful ways the interests of true religion and of the Church of Christ. In England, Voluntaryism was strongly opposed not only by Presbyterians and Episcopalians, but also by Dr. Owen and other eminent Independent writers, as being the opposite extreme from the Erastianism and persecuting tendencies with which they were then called to contend.<sup>2</sup> The former theory, however, gained ground among the Independents after the Restoration, and still prevails very generally in that body, as in most other denominations of English Nonconformists. In Scotland, in the eighteenth century, Glass and others propounded Voluntary doctrines. They had not, however, much success among Presbyterians until, in the beginning of the present century, they were taken up by the Seceders. The Voluntary theory has never been embodied in the public standards of any Christian Church.

The history of Voluntaryism in our own country is a somewhat remarkable one. In 1733 the Secessionists came out on the very highest Establishment principles, believing that they carried these principles with them in a higher and purer form than that in which they were held in the Established Church of Scotland, and seceding on the ground of the abandonment of these principles, along with other acts of defection by that Church. The immediate occasion of the first Secession, as the younger Dr. M'Crie remarks in his *Life of his father*, was the tyrannical and unjustifiable conduct of the Moderate party which had now risen to power in the Church Courts, and more especially their enforcing of the obnoxious and

unconstitutional law of patronage; but the real object of Ebenezer Erskine and his associates was to assert and vindicate the ancient constitutional principles of the Scottish Church. "The Original Seceders identified themselves with the Church of Scotland as she existed in her purer days, particularly during the period of the second Reformation, between 1638 and 1650. On this era, distinguished as that of the Solemn League and Covenant, they took up their ground, and planted the banner of their testimony. They not only espoused the principles of the Covenanters during that period, and of the great body of them during the bloody persecution which followed, but were themselves Covenanters, being the only religious body in the country who renewed the national Covenants in a bond suited to their circumstances, and thus practically recognised their obligation as national deeds on posterity. In short, they appeared as a part of the Church of Scotland, adhering to her reformed constitution, testifying against the injuries it had received, seeking the redress of these, and pleading for the revival of a Reformation attained according to the Word of God in a former period, approved by every authority in the land, and ratified by solemn vows to the Most High."

From this account it will be seen that the characteristic feature of the profession made by Seceders,—that, indeed, which distinguished it from the profession of the Relief, and similar bodies,—was its nationality. To say that they were friendly to the principle of national religion, is to say nothing; this was, in fact, the discriminating principle of their association. The whole scheme of reformation for which they contended was in its form national. The moment this principle was abandoned, the main design of the Secession, as an ecclesiastical movement, was lost sight of; when the opposite principle was embraced, that design was reversed.

The first symptoms of hostility to Church Establishments as such began to show themselves among the descendants of the Original Seceders towards the end of the eighteenth century, at a time when the influences of the French Revolution were telling powerfully in

many quarters, and wild views of liberty were afloat in the country. Voluntary sentiments took shape gradually in the Secession Church. They came to a head in the early years of the present century. In 1804 the Associate Synod erected into a term of communion a new "Narrative and Testimony," in which their old position as regards national religion and the lawfulness of Church Establishments was abandoned, and those who dissented from it were forbidden, "either from the pulpit or the press, to impugn or oppose the principles stated by the Synod." In 1806, because of their opposition to this change, Dr. M'Crie, Professor Bruce of Whitburn, and Mr. Aitken of Kirriemuir, were deposed from the office of the ministry in the Secession Church. This called forth Dr. M'Crie's Statement of the Difference between the Profession of the Reformed Church of Scotland as adopted by Seceders, and the Profession contained in the new Testimony and other Acts lately adopted by the General Associate Synod, particularly on the Power of Civil Magistrates respecting Religion, National Reformation, National Churches, and National Covenants,—a work which may be regarded as, on the whole, the most masterly discussion of the question of civil establishments in existence.

The expulsion of Dr. M'Crie, and those who along with him formed the Constitutional Presbytery, or "Old Light" body, removed all check on the spread of the principles, against which they had protested in the Secession Church. Voluntaryism grew apace among Scottish Nonconformists, until at length Wardlaw, Marshall, and others took up the position, that "persecution was involved in the very principle of an establishment," and that "the State, as such, had nothing to do with religion." A notable point in the controversy, excited by these doctrines, is marked by the lectures on Church Establishments, delivered by Dr. Chalmers in the Hanover Square Rooms, London, in the spring of 1838. They were replied to, on the Voluntary side, by Dr. Wardlaw, who read a series of counter lectures on the same subject in London next year, at the request of the "Three Denominations of Protestant Dissenters in London."

A very general recoil has taken place of late among the adherents of the Voluntary theory, from the extreme views put forth by some of its most eminent defenders respecting the civil magistrate's relation to religion and the Church. Dr. Lindsay Alexander, for example, in his biography of Wardlaw, dissents from his position on this question in a very marked way. "What Dr. Wardlaw has written on the subject of the civil magistrate's office in relation to religion," he says, referring to his lectures in reply to Dr. Chalmers, "is by no means equal to the other parts of this volume. The conclusion at which he arrives is the extreme one of Voluntaryism—viz. that 'the true and legitimate province of the magistrate in regard to religion is to have no province at all,'—a conclusion so startling and unwelcome that it had need to be founded on very cogent reasons to command our assent. On what grounds, then, has Dr. Wardlaw rested this conclusion? In the first instance, on the assertion that Scripture has confined the magistrate's functions within the sphere of civil matters. But has not the lecturer stumbled here at the very threshold? If the magistrate have no province in regard to religion at all, with what consistency can he be appealed to the Bible, the standard of religious truth and duty, to determine what his proper province is? Or, if he may be summoned legitimately, as a magistrate, to learn his functions from the Bible, how can it be justly said that he has nothing whatever, as a magistrate, to do with religion?

"But, waiving this, let us come to the question, What saith the Bible in regard to the functions of the civil magistrate? On this point Dr. Wardlaw is far from being explicit. He asserts the incompetency of the civil magistrate to decide for his subjects what is religious truth, and constantly affirms that all that is properly religious lies between God and the conscience. I presume that no modern advocate of civil establishments of religion will deny or question either of these positions. All he will plead for is, that the magistrate may lawfully, for the great ends of civil government, provide the means of religiously educating the people—a claim which neither interferes between the conscience of the people and God, nor assumes to determine for the people what is truth in religion. It would not be fair

to represent men of Dr. Chalmers's way of thinking on this subject, as if they contended for the right of magistrates to compel men to believe, or pretend to believe, a given set of dogmas, when all they assert is the right of the magistrate to make provision for the religious instruction of the community, leaving it free to all to accept that instruction or not, as they please. On this point, I frankly confess I cannot see how the negative can be maintained, as an abstract general proposition, without reducing the functions of the civil magistrate to those of a mere policeman, set up to enforce the will of the majority. If governments are to proceed on the recognition of moral distinctions, if they are bound to enact only what is consistent with moral truth, if, above all, they are to receive and obey the Bible, and recognise its declarations in their enactments, then they not only have a province in regard to religion, but it very greatly concerns them that their subjects should be instructed in those principles which can alone enable them to appreciate aright such legislation. Moreover, if government is to be regarded in the light of a trust reposed in the hands of the magistrate for the welfare of the community—not merely their protection from robbery and wrong, but their welfare in the healthy development of all their faculties of social improvement—it is surely most unreasonable absolutely to forbid the magistrate to use the only means by which such a result can be certainly attained. Of all tyranny, the most exorbitant is that which ties a man to an end, but refuses to him the means by which alone that can be reached—not only commanding him to make bricks without supplying him with straw, but forbidding him to use the straw even when he has managed to procure it. Of this worse than Egyptian tyranny are those, theoretically, guilty, who would bind the magistrate to secure the order and well-being of the community, and yet forbid him, under any circumstances, to provide that education by which alone this end can be effectually secured.

"It is usual with those who take the extreme views adopted by Dr. Wardlaw, to lay stress on the question, Who is to determine what is to be taught for religious truth to the community? There is, no doubt, a difficulty here; but it is one which surely has been immensely

exaggerated, both theoretically and practically. In this country the omniscience of Parliament is as much a principle of government as its omnipotence,—in the modified sense, of course, in which alone such language can be used of any human institution. We proceed continually on the assumption that there is nothing on which Parliament may not arrive at full and accurate knowledge. On all questions of science, of art, of business, of diplomacy, of warfare,—on questions of medicine and metallurgy, of engineering and education, of manufacture and painting,—on every subject, in short, that concerns the welfare of the community, Parliament is continually called to pronounce decisions involving the assumption of all but infallible capacity for determining the truth. It will not be easy to show why a body, in whose powers of ascertaining truth in all other departments of knowledge the community implicitly confides, should be pronounced helplessly incompetent in the department of theological truth. It is no doubt possible that Parliament may err in the opinions it may authorize to be taught to the people; but the probability of this is not so great as to render it incompetent for Parliament to make the attempt; and if liberty be left to all who choose to dissent from the opinions taught by the Government teachers, every freedom seems to be secured to the community, which, on grounds of general policy, can be required.

"The only secure and consistent line of argument on this subject seems to be that of those who admit that the magistrate, as such, has to do with religion; who, on the ground of this, summon him to the Bible, that he may learn there what true religion is, and what he may legitimately do in regard to its interests; who admit his obligations to provide for the moral and religious education of the community; but who stipulate that, as in this the Bible is his authority, so he shall scrupulously refrain from infringing upon any of its prescriptions, or on any of the rights conferred by it on the people of Christ, in the scheme and apparatus of religious education he sets to work."

It is evident that there is a very marked and important difference between these views as to the province of the civil magistrate

regarding religion, and those which deny him any province at all in that respect, even although Dr. Wardlaw's distinguished biographer still objects to Church Establishments on various grounds. The majority of modern Voluntaries seem in substance to hold Dr. Alexander's position,—a position very much sounder, and in many respects more tenable, than that of Dr. Wardlaw, but one which can hardly be said to be logically compatible with Voluntaryism at all.

## APPENDIX D, Vol. I. p. 171

### EXTRACTS FROM ARTICLE ON CHURCH AND STATE

'Connection between Civil and Religious Liberty—Things Civil and Spiritual known to English Law—Civil Interests affected by Spiritual Proceedings—Remedy in Cases of Civil Wrong—Independence of the Church not founded on Contract.'—North British Review, No. lxiv. 6.

[After referring to the three great types, to one or other of which all existing or past examples of the connection between Church and State may be ultimately reduced,—the Ultramontane, the Erastian, and that which exhibits "a co-ordination of powers with a mutual subordination of persons,"—the author proceeds:—]

The notion of the identity of the spiritual and temporal powers, or at least the practical denial of their separate and essential independence, has been exemplified in various ways. In times before the introduction of Christianity, and in our own day among nations where Christianity is unknown, we very commonly see the king and the priest to be one and the same person; and because usually he is much more of the king than the priest, and because the civil element throughout the nation is more largely developed than the religious, the temporal power lords it over the spiritual. But a similar result may be brought about in a Christian nation by a process somewhat different. Among a professedly Christian people, where the subjects of the commonwealth are, to a large extent, numerically identical with the members of the Church, and where the laws of the State are more or less borrowed from Christianity, there is a danger that the real difference between Church and State may be overlooked, from the idea that they are merged into each other, and that the two are become virtually one.



[The theories of Hooker, Arnold, and Warburton are then referred to as exemplifying this, and alike proceeding on the fundamental assumption, "that it is possible, without destroying the proper idea of the Church on the one hand, or of the State on the other, more or less to identify them in their nature, functions, authority, or objects; as if it were competent for the State to do the work of the Church, or the Church to do the work of the State."—See above, vol. i. pp. 107–111.]

Nor is the fundamental idea different when the opposite extreme is asserted, and the State is subordinated to the Church. The Romanist theory of the supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal, whether advocated in the shape of a direct authority or an indirect, ultimately rests upon the same doctrine, that they are one and not distinct powers, at least in respect of the sphere that they occupy, and the jurisdiction they possess. The superiority claimed by the Church over the State is a superiority in authority employed about the same matters, and dealing with the same persons or things; it is the assertion of a right on the part of the spiritual body to control the civil magistrate in civil functions in the same way, or to the same effect, that he himself exercises control over his inferior agents in the State; and it can be logically defended on no other supposition than the pretence that the Church originally possesses, or subsequently acquires, an office and jurisdiction the same in kind as those which the State exercises in temporal concerns. To the extent, then, that such supremacy is asserted by the Church, it is a claim to the possession of the same sort of power that belongs to the State, but in higher degree than the State enjoys it,—the spiritual society thus taking to itself the office of the political, and borrowing its character when converting spiritual sentences into civil penalties, or giving to excommunication the force and effect of a temporal punishment. It is not necessary, on this theory, that the Church, as supreme over all persons and causes, should employ the same agency for doing its temporal behests as for doing its religious duties; it may commission civil officers for the one description of work, and ecclesiastical officers for the other; it may have its orders of secular agents distinct from its orders of religious servants. But they are servants equally of

the same master. The duties they perform are done in the name of the one authority that holds in its hand both the spiritual and the temporal supremacy; and the departments in which they labour, whether in sacred or secular offices, are not essentially separate or distinct, but are merged together under the unity of one common and ultimate jurisdiction. The doctrine of the subordination of the State to the Church, and the opposite extreme of the subordination of the Church to the State, alike proceed on the idea that their peculiar powers and functions may be accounted of the same kind, or in reality identified.

But, can this theory of the essential identity or sameness of Church and State, in their nature and functions, find countenance or support in Scripture principle, or reason, or experience? or is it not expressly and conclusively disowned by them all? Is it possible, on the one hand, without the sacrifice to that extent of the true idea of a Church, to conceive of it borrowing or usurping the compulsory powers that belong to the State, and employing them for the purpose of establishing a particular religious creed, or enforcing the order of Divine worship, or giving to its spiritual decisions command over the conscience and heart? or is it possible, on the other hand, without the sacrifice to that extent of the true idea of a civil government, to imagine it clothing itself with the character of a Church, and using the spiritual machinery of persuasion and instruction and admonition, in order to punish crime and protect property, or to enforce the national arrangements for internal taxation, or for defence against foreign attack? Do the objects contemplated by a Christian Church admit of their being accomplished and secured by any power or authority similar to that which is proper to the State? or do ends which the State has in view suggest or allow the use of authority identical with that which the Church employs, to tell with effect on the understanding and consciences of men in their relation to spiritual things?

We are advocating no narrow theory of civil government, as if it had nothing to do with anything beyond the secular relations of life, and

had no interest or office in what concerns man in a higher capacity. We believe that there can be no sound view of political government which restricts it to the care of man's body and bodily wants, and does not assign to it a wider sphere, as charged in a certain sense with the advancement of human well-being, in its moral as well as its material interests. But still there can be no doubt that the State was instituted, in the first instance, for other purposes than that of promoting the Christian and spiritual good of its subjects; and that however much the acts of government, if wisely shaped, may be fitted, and even intended, indirectly to advance that object, yet, in its first and essential character, it is an ordinance for civil, and not for religious objects. As little would we assert that it is necessary to regard the spiritual society as strictly limited to the one object of seeking the Christian well-being of its members, and as sublimely indifferent to all that affects their temporal or social condition. There are blessings even belonging to this life which the Church can scatter in its way, even while we hold that the first and distinctive object for which it was established is to declare to men the promise of the life that is to come. In the case of the State, it may indirectly, and by the use of its proper power as a State, promote to no inconsiderable extent those moral and religious ends which it is the Church's distinctive duty to work out; but still political government is a civil institute, and not a spiritual. In the case of the Church, it may, by the indirect influence which it puts forth upon society, become the right hand of the civil magistrate in repressing wrong, and the best instrument for advancing the temporal prosperity of the State; but still it is a spiritual ordinance, and not a civil. It is impossible for the State to do the work of the Church; nor is this its primary object. It is equally impossible for the Church to do the work of the State; nor can this be alleged to be its design, except in a very secondary and subordinate sense.

In arguing for the original and essential distinction between Church and State in their primary character and functions, we do not feel at all embarrassed in our argument by the position, which we believe to be defensible on grounds both of reason and Scripture, that there

can, and ought to be, a friendly connection between the two. It were beside our present purpose to enter upon the question of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of civil establishments of religion. But this much we may say, that no intelligent advocate of the lawfulness of such connection will ever seek to rest his argument on the denial of the original and essential independence of Church and State, or the possibility of a partial surrender of it on either side. On the contrary, the Scriptural alliance of the spiritual and civil powers is possible, only because they are originally and unalterably different. If the Church and State could properly be identified or merged into each other, there could be no such thing as an alliance, rightly so called. It is because they are different in their primary characters, in the provinces that they occupy, in the powers which they administer, in the membership that belongs to them, that they can unite without confusion, and be allied without danger to each other. To use a form of words, better known in the controversies of other days than of our own, there is much which the civil magistrate may do "circa sacra," without involving him in the charge of interfering "in sacris,"—much that he may do, when in friendly alliance with the ecclesiastical society, to promote its spiritual objects, while he is in no way departing from his own sphere as the minister of the State, or assuming the character or powers that belong to the Church. But to whatever extent the State may go in thus aiding the objects and furthering the views of the Church, any alliance between them, when contracted on Scriptural terms, presupposes that the parties to it are, in the first instance, independent and distinct. It is founded on the idea that the two societies that enter into connection are alike possessed previously of powers of separate existence and action,—each complete within itself for its own purposes and objects, and sovereign in the ordering of its affairs; and each capable of acting apart as well as in concert, and only consenting to be allied on terms that do not compromise, but rather acknowledge, their independence. The advocates of civil establishments of religion, so far from being called upon by the necessity of their argument to admit the essential identity of Church and State, can never truly or rightly state it without laying down the proposition that the two are

fundamentally and unchangeably unlike. It is only two societies self-acting and self-governed between whom it is possible that an alliance should be entered into at all; and it is only two societies having powers unlike, occupying departments unlike, and dealing with matters unlike, between whom it is possible that an alliance should be entered into safely.

The doctrine, then, that the State is bound to promote the general well-being of man, moral as well as material, and that the Church cannot be indifferent, amid the higher interests committed to it, of his civil and social rights, does by no means involve the conclusion of the sameness in nature and function of the civil and spiritual powers. Neither does the further doctrine of the lawfulness of some kind of alliance between the two imply, that in entering into connection, any one of them abandons its own personal or corporate identity, and becomes lost in the other.

But what is the light that Scripture casts on this sameness or diversity of Church and State? Does it afford any justification of the theory, that the Church is nothing other than the State acting in the matter of religion, or the State nothing other than the instrument of the Church, ruling in civil as well as spiritual affairs? Is there any warrant from such a quarter for saying that the Church is no more than one department or organ of the State, limited to a special class of State duties and objects, or that the State is but one amid the orders of ecclesiastical servants, to do the bidding of the Church with a view to Church ends? On the contrary, we have Scriptural authority for asserting that the Church and the State differ in all that can make them two societies, and not one, being fundamentally and unalterably distinct even in a Christian community, and in the case of a friendly alliance. They differ in their origin, in their membership, in their powers, and in the matters with which they have to deal.

They differ in their origin,—a truth illustrated historically, in the fact that civil government, in one form or other, has always existed, whether the Christian Church was known or unknown, and has been

acknowledged to be valid and lawful among all nations, whether Christian or not; and a truth founded on the general principle, that the one is an ordinance of nature, and the other an ordination of grace,—the one the appointment of God as the universal Sovereign, the other the appointment of God as Mediator, or the special Ruler and Head of His own people. Whether the community be Christianized or not, civil government is a natural ordinance, not dependent for its power or validity on the religion of ruler or subject, and not more binding in a nation of Christians than in one ignorant of Christianity; and hence it is that "difference of religion does not make void the magistrate's office,"—presenting in this respect a contrast to the ruling power in the Christian Church, which is only binding within the circle of those who have voluntarily submitted themselves as professing Christians to its jurisdiction.

They differ in respect of their members,—a fact exemplified most palpably in the case of a State ignorant of Christianity, or hostile to it; where the Christian Church consists of a society of individuals, perhaps small in number in comparison with the rest of the nation,—persecuted by the magistrate, or, at best, only tolerated as a necessary evil, detached from the general community, and acting apart; but not less really true in the instance of a Christianized State, within whose borders all, or nearly all, conform to a profession of the national faith. Even in those cases in which the Church becomes co-extensive with the commonwealth—and the two may be regarded as almost numerically one—the distinction between the citizen and the Christian, the member of the Church and the subject of the State, is never lost, and cannot be disregarded. The conditions of membership in the two societies are fundamentally unlike. A man may be an outlaw from civil society, or suffer for treason to the State, who is yet welcomed to the privileges of the Church, and revered not only as a member, but as a martyr here; and a man excommunicated by the spiritual powers may suffer no loss in his rights as a citizen. It is not in his character as a subject of the commonwealth, but in his capacity as a professing Christian, that a man becomes a member of the spiritual association; and his rights

then give him no title to political privileges, and no protection from the consequences of the legal forfeiture of the status and immunities of civil life. Two societies constituted upon conditions of membership so dissimilar, cannot themselves be alike, but must remain essentially distinct, even when approaching most nearly to numerical identity.

They differ in respect of the powers they possess and employ to effect their objects. Here, too, there is a contrast between them that admits of no reconciliation. To the civil government belongs the power of the sword, or the prerogative of capital punishment, involving in it a right to employ all those lesser penalties affecting the person or property or temporal rights of men which are included under the greater, and which in their varied measure and severity are all necessary, and not more than sufficient, to secure the order and peace and well-being of civil life. To the religious society belong, on the contrary, the weapons of a warfare, not carnal but spiritual,—the armoury supplied by truth and right, the obligations of conscience, and the fear of God,—the power that is found in a sense of duty to be done, and wrong to be avoided,—the influence that springs from spiritual instruction and persuasion and censure,—the force that there is in the doctrine of a world to come,—the command over the understanding and hearts of men that is given by speaking to them in the name of Heaven, even under the limitation of speaking nothing but what Heaven has revealed,—the mighty authority to bind and loose the springs of life and action in the human heart, by appealing to its feelings in the word of an ambassador for Christ, even while rendering to all the liberty which the Bereans claimed of asking at His own Word, whether these things be so or not. Powers so different and so strongly contrasted cannot reside in the same governing body, without neutralizing each other. The one ends where the other begins; the same hand at the same moment cannot grasp the twofold prerogative; the Church, without the sacrifice of its character and influence as a Church, cannot arrogate the powers of the State, and the State, without foregoing to that extent its position and action as a State, cannot enter upon the functions of the Church.

They differ in regard to the matters with which they have to deal. Here, likewise, there is a separation between the body spiritual and the body political, which forbids approximation. The objects immediately and directly contemplated by the State, in the proper exercise of its coercive authority, terminate in the present life, and are bounded by that earthly range which fences the territory of the civil ruler when he deals with the administration of justice between man and man, the preservation of peace and social order, the advancement of public morals, the security of person and property and temporal right. Whatever indirectly a Christian government may feel to be within the sphere of its duty or power when looking upward to higher interests, it is plain that its first and distinctive office is to make men good subjects, and not saints; and with that view, to employ all the civil aids and instruments that secure such an end. On the other hand, the direct and immediate object of the Church is the salvation of souls,—the making of men not so much good citizens as true Christians; and with this aim, it has to deal, not with the lives and properties, but with the understanding and consciences of its members, to minister to the inward rather than to the outward man, to regulate the motions and springs of human actions within, and to turn and sway the heart out of which are the issues of obedience and life. The truth of God, and the conscience of man, the claims of Divine law, and the responsibilities of human guilt, the ruin by sin, and the salvation of the soul by grace,—these are the things with which the Christian Church is primarily conversant; and not any of those questions of civil or pecuniary right, in the determination of which the magistrate of the State is competent to sit as a judge or a divider. The subject-matter in the one case is spiritual, involved in man's relation to God; in the other case it is temporal, belonging to his relation as a citizen or member of the commonwealth.

Such, without doubt, are the grounds in Scripture principles for the necessity of drawing a line of distinction, broad and deep, between Church and State, and for refusing to regard them as either originally one, or as capable of being subsequently identified. The admission of such a total distinctness, when intelligently made and consistently



carried out to its logical consequences, reaches much farther than to a condemnation of the extreme views on either side, that would assert that the Church is no more than the religious department of the State, or the State nothing other than the civil servant holding office from the Church. There may be a very general acknowledgment of the Scripture principles, which forbid us to regard the spiritual and temporal societies as the same in themselves, or in the duties to be discharged by them; while, at the same time, the independent power in each, to regulate its own proceedings, to apply its own rules, and to govern its own members, exempt from all foreign control, may not be held as involved in the acknowledgment. And yet the separation between Church and State so strongly asserted in Scripture can be nothing more than nominal and illusory, if it admits of the one party to any extent, however inconsiderable, occupying the province of the other, and stretching forth its hand to control its neighbour's affairs within its neighbour's borders. The distinction between them as to powers and functions must be very much a distinction without a difference, if the authority of the Church is to any visible effect a valid authority with the servants and in the proceedings of the State, or if the commands of the State can carry lawful force and obligations, in however small a degree, with the members of the Church, in the arrangement of spiritual concerns. A line of demarcation between the territory of the spiritual and the temporal is no line at all, if it can be crossed at any point by either party, for the purpose of taking possession of ground fenced off by such boundary, for the exclusive occupation of the other.

There can be no doubt that the principle so plainly laid down in Scripture, of the entire separation between the religious and political societies as to the nature of their powers, and as to the subject-matter of their administrations, legitimately and inevitably carries with it the conclusion, not only that each is complete within itself for its own work and its own objects, but also that each is independent of any control not lodged within itself, and brought to bear from any foreign quarter upon its internal arrangements. To assert that the

spiritual rulers can competently exercise power in the department of the State, in the way of depriving kings of their civil estate, and absolving subjects from their civil allegiance, of visiting men, by means of its sentences, with civil pains or the forfeiture of civil rights, is nothing else than to allege that the authority of the Church is of the same kind as that which belongs to the State, and that it rightly deals, not with different, but with identical matters. To assert, on the other hand, that the civil magistrate must have the right of effective interference in the affairs of the Church, in the way of keeping ecclesiastical courts and officers within the line of their duty, and reversing and controlling their proceedings, is, in like manner, nothing else than to affirm that the power of the State is of the same nature with that which the Church administers, and that it belongs to it to judge in the same subject-matter in which the Church is appointed to judge. An exemption on the part of the State from spiritual control in the management of its own affairs, is necessarily implied in the very proposition that the authority which would interfere is spiritual, and that the matter interfered with is not. An exemption, in like manner, on the part of the Church from civil control in managing its own affairs and governing its own members, is necessarily involved in the very idea that the authority pretending to regulate the Church's duties is civil, and that these duties are not.

But the argument may be slightly varied. We have said that, admitting the primary and indelible distinction between them, it is impossible for the Church to assume authority over any department of the State, and, vice versâ, impossible for the State to assume authority over any department of the Church; because this, in either case, would amount to an assertion that in so far their powers were not different, but are one and the same. But with no less truth it may be argued, that if it were possible to do so, if it were possible for the civil power to surrender more or less of its proper responsibilities, and for the Church to assume them, or for the Church to abandon certain classes of its obligations, and for the civil magistrate to take them up, the result would only be, that to that extent they would deny their own character, and divest themselves of the peculiar

functions which make them what they are,—as the one the public ordinance of God for temporal, and the other His public ordinance for spiritual good. By the sacrifice of its proper functions, and the consignment of them into the hands of the spiritual rulers, the State would to that extent forfeit its character as a State, and assume the mongrel form of a politico-ecclesiastical corporation. And no less, by divesting itself of its distinctive responsibilities and duties, and by abandoning them to the civil magistrate, the Church would in so far renounce its claim to be accounted a Church, and be contented to take up the equivocal place and character of a semi-religious and semi-political society. It may be a question of casuistry, not easily answered, at what time in the process by which its essential features are lost or obliterated through the sacrifice, one after another, of its powers of life and action, the Church and the State must cease to be regarded as such. The living man may suffer the amputation of limb after limb, and the paralysis of member after member, from the hand of the surgeon, or by disease, and live on still; but however long the process may be protracted, and the result delayed, in the end it is fatal. And so it is with the body politic or spiritual. The "States of the Church," in their unhappy position of incorporation with the Romish See, would hardly come up to any true definition of the ordinance of civil government. And there are Churches secularized under the control of an Erastian supremacy which can hardly be called the body of Christ.

We have dealt with the question as on the footing of the Scriptural distinction drawn between Church and State. But this distinction rests on no positive appointment of Scripture, but on a deeper foundation, apart from Scripture altogether, and forces itself upon our notice and convictions independently of any arbitrary definition to be found in the Word of God,—of the ordinance of the Christian Church on the one hand, or of civil government on the other. The argument, then, for the essential difference and mutual independence of the spiritual and temporal powers may be placed on a wider basis, and bring out in a manner more unequivocal still the freedom from foreign control, which necessarily belongs to each

when dealing with its own matters, and ministering within its proper walk of duty. The lines traced deeply and indelibly between the spiritual and the civil element in human life, and which divide into two classes, not to be confounded, what belongs to God and what belongs to Cæsar, appertain to the very constitution of things. They have been drawn as they are drawn by the hand of nature; and Christianity does no more than adopt, as it found, them,—adding the sanction of revealed authority to the light of nature, and giving clearer expression and fuller effect to a distinction known before. The independence of Church and State is no pet theory of divines, drawn from an artificial system of theology. The difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world—between the sacred and secular element in human affairs—is not due to Christianity at all, although it stands in bolder relief, and carries with it a more unmistakeable obligation in the teachings of Christianity. But the difference itself is founded in nature; and the universal and undying belief in the distinction, is the instruction of natural religion, even to the most untutored heart. There are but two elements necessary to develop this thought in every mind—namely, a God and a conscience; a belief in a supreme moral Governor over us, and in our responsibility to Him. The man who knows these two truths, even though he should know little more, knows that his relations to that mysterious Being are distinct from his relations to his fellow-men; that his obligations to God belong to a different order, and involve a different authority from any implied in what is due to his superiors on earth, and that the civil allegiance owing to the ruler of the people is not the spiritual service to be offered to the Ruler of all. Such a man may know nothing of the theory of a visible Church, and of its relations with the State; he may know nothing even of Christianity, or of any teaching beyond that of nature; he may know nothing of what revelation has declared as to the ordinances or manner of Church worship; but he knows that he cannot render to God what it is sufficient to render to Cæsar, and that things spiritual are not the same as things civil. What is this truth, except the very truth which Christianity has developed into the doctrine of a visible Church, in its faith and worship and government, distinct from the kingdoms of

men, and independent of their control? The essential elements of the distinction are recognised by every human conscience, even though unenlightened by revelation; the disregard of the distinction, and in consequence the subordination to man of man's relations to God, is felt to be a violation of its rights; and with nothing short of the emancipation of the spiritual element from the fetters of human control can these rights be vindicated. We must go much deeper down than Christianity before we can understand the foundation and warrant of the distinction so universally, in one shape or other, acknowledged even by nations ignorant of the Bible. There are truths that have their root and the source of their authority in the eternal relations between the creature and the Creator. And this is one of them. Christianity teaches it; but it is older than Christianity. It is the truth that grows up unbidden and irresistible in every human heart that knows that there is a God, and knows that man's relations to Him are more than man's relations to his king.

It is not needful, then, to turn over the pages of polemical theology of other days, in order that we may see the meaning and be able to defend the doctrine of "the two kings and the two kingdoms," which the Bible would set up within every Christian commonwealth,—each having subjects and jurisdiction, and each sovereign and free. The elements of such a theology are found wherever natural religion teaches that there is a God who claims to be the ruler of the human conscience, and to be the only ruler there, even although the man taught darkly and imperfectly in this school should know religion only as a personal thing between his soul and his Maker, and should never have felt its influence or understood its commands, calling him to unite himself to others in a society gathered out of the community at large, and uniting together apart for the purpose of joint or Church worship. There is a mighty interval between the complete doctrine of a visible Church under Christ its Head, as taught in Scripture, and the rudimentary doctrine of natural religion, which, out of the fundamental relationship of man to his Creator, educes the necessity and duty of worship; but yet there underlies both the same essential idea of the difference between what is due to the Divine Being and

what is due to the civil superior. In vindicating, then, that distinction, and the consequences involved in it, we can afford to dispense with all those articles of theology, controversial or controverted, by which divines, drawing from Scripture their weapons of defence, have sought to explain and vindicate it. We can dispense with much, if not all, that Scripture has taught as to a rightly organized and fully constituted Church, standing in well-defined relationship to Christ as Head, and contrasted in bold relief with the kingdoms of the world. It is not necessary to summon to our aid the doctrine of the Headship of Christ—the keystone of any right Scripture theory of a Christian Church. It is not necessary to recall the distinction between the Church and the civil power, as the one is founded in grace and the other in nature. It is not necessary to call to our help the difference between the two societies in respect of the conditions of membership in each. All these are Scripture doctrines that directly and conclusively bear on the question of the essential distinction between Church and State, and the inalienable independence that is the prerogative of each. But, passing these, let us seize upon the one idea that underlies them all—the relation of nature as well as of Scripture—the dogma that all Churches take for granted, and which all, whether belonging to Churches or not, believe to be true—the dogma that "God alone is Lord of the conscience," and that into that domain the king cannot enter; and we have in this single truth all that is necessary to enable us to draw the line between what belongs to God and what belongs to Cæsar, and to justify the claim for Churches and for individuals of exemption in spiritual things from civil control. That doctrine can stand firm upon the foundation of natural religion and the universal beliefs of mankind, apart altogether from the authority which it justly claims as a truth of Scripture, and from any confirmation it may receive from the Scripture definition of a Christian Church. And that doctrine, rightly understood and applied, is sufficient to vindicate for Christian societies, not less certainly or less largely than for Christian men, freedom in all that pertains to God from the commandments and authority of the State.

For, after all, is not the doctrine of the independence of the Church in matters spiritual but another form of the ancient doctrine of liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment? And is not the claim on behalf of the Christian society to be free as regards its creed, its worship, and its order, nothing more than a demand for toleration? Upon what grounds and within what limits do we claim liberty of conscience at the hands of the civil magistrate in the case of individuals? We claim it because there is one department of human duty and obligation in which man is primarily responsible to God, and cannot therefore, in the same sense, and at the same moment, be responsible to human authority. We claim it because in these matters his obedience is forestalled, and himself the servant by prior right of another Master; and seeing that he cannot serve two masters in the same walk of duty, and that he must be at liberty to obey God, he ought to be made free from foreign interference or control. Beneath the shelter of his previous responsibility to his Maker, liberty of conscience is secured to the meanest citizen of the commonwealth, not because it is a civil right due to him as a citizen, but because it is a more sacred right due to him as the moral and accountable creature of God. Within the sanctuary set apart for worship and for duty to his Creator he can stand erect before the face of earthly rulers, because the representative of earthly rule may not there intrude; another has taken the seat of authority, and a higher obligation decides the question of obedience; and because he is acknowledged to be, in the first instance, the servant of God, the ministers of the State cannot bind him to their service, but rather must loose him and let him go. This is the ground on which we argue for liberty and right to every man to inquire and believe and act in spiritual matters as his own conscience, and not another's, shall dictate,—a claim acknowledged on all hands to be good and effectual in the case of individuals against civil authority, which by coercive power cannot, and likewise against ecclesiastical authority, when by instruction and persuasion it may not, succeed in changing his conscientious convictions. And is there one word in the plea which does not apply with equal relevancy and undiminished force to the case of Churches as well as individuals? Can the argument be

regarded as good for each man, taken apart and by himself, in his claims to liberty of conscience, and as not equally good in the case of men joined together in a Christian society, and acting not in their private capacity as individuals, but in their public and official character as members or officers of a Church? In this latter capacity no less than in the former, as Church members no less than private men, they have to deal with God; in their conjunct or public proceedings the element of conscience is equally brought in; the Church, in all departments of its duty and actings, has especially, or rather exclusively, to do with those spiritual matters in which its rulers and members are primarily responsible to God, and not to man. And if conscience is a plea which not only ennobles the exercise of private judgment in the humblest individual, but casts over it the shield of right and law to protect it against the encroachments of human power, is it not also an argument sufficient to vindicate the claims of a Christian society to be allowed to frame its own creed, and administer its own worship, and regulate its own spiritual order, without in these articles being subject to State control?

Were the Christian society dealing with questions of mere expediency, in which an unlimited discretion were allowed, and in which conscience, strictly speaking, had no share, it might be otherwise. Were there no law to which ecclesiastical courts and officers were amenable beyond their own will,—were their rules and decisions to be considered right and wrong in no higher sense than the resolutions of a farmer's club, or the regulations of a society for mutual improvement in sacred music, or the prospectus and by-laws of a copartnership for the manufacture of lucifer matches,—were their judgments not matters of conscience, and their acts not done in the name of God, it might comparatively be a small matter of complaint that some authority foreign to the Christian society claimed right to review and reverse them. But in no aspect of them can the Church and the Church's acts be regarded as set loose from the authority of conscience, and not under law to Him who is its Lord. On the contrary, if we take the Scripture account of the matter, we shall be constrained to confess that, in its three great departments of



doctrine, worship, and discipline, the Church is brought into a nearer relationship of responsibility to God than any other society can be; and that its organs for spiritual action and duty are, in a higher sense of the words, God's ministers, than can possibly be affirmed of the agent or officers of any civil corporation in civil affairs, or of private individuals in the duties of private life. In doctrine, the Church can teach nothing but what God has taught, and as He has taught it; in worship, it can administer no ordinances but those He has appointed, and as He has appointed them; in discipline, it can bind and loose only in His name, and by His authority. There is no room left, then, for the interference of its own or that of others in any of its matters. Its office is simply ministerial, and nothing more, charged as it is with the duty, first of ascertaining, and then of carrying into effect, the will of another. In nothing that the Christian society does in the way of teaching truth, or administering the ordinances of worship, or exercising discipline, is there any place allowed for a capricious power; it is tied up straitly, in all the conduct of its affairs, to the necessity of following out its own conscientious belief of what is the commandment given to it to walk by in the particular matter with which it is appointed to deal. In every case, the Church is bound to carry into effect the law of its Head, and not its own; and the demand for liberty to do so, without interference or constraint from without, is simply a demand to be allowed to perform its duty to God as His law has declared, and conscience has interpreted it, and nothing more.

But we may take a lower position than the Scriptural one, in reference to the Church's duty, and yet the argument remain substantially the same. It is not necessary for us to enter upon the debateable ground of the extent to which Scripture may be regarded as furnishing a law for the proceedings of the Church in all its departments of duty,—in questions, for example, of government and worship and discipline, as well as in questions of doctrine. We can afford to dispense with the help derived from what we may regard as the complete and accurate Bible view of a Church of Christ. We believe that there is no principle that is consistent with itself, or

justified by the Word of God, except the Puritan principle, that nothing is lawful within the Christian society but what, directly or indirectly, is contained in Scripture; and that Scripture, in its precepts or principles or precedents, furnishes a full and authoritative directory for all that the Church, in its distinctive character as a Church, is called upon or commanded to do in any one department of duty. It is easy to see how such a doctrine exhibits the courts and office-bearers of the Church, in the very peculiar light of the ministers of God, commissioned and required to carry into effect His written Word, in all that they do in spiritual things; and that therefore, in claiming immunity from civil control in such matters, they are only claiming freedom, in their official character, to administer His law. But it is not necessary for the argument, to press this view. We can agree to waive it. We can dispense with all positions in regard to which Christian Churches, or even Christian men, may be found to differ. It is enough for our purpose that we are allowed to stand on that common ground occupied by all—namely, that the territory of the Church is a spiritual territory, and its duties spiritual duties; that the administrators of the Christian society have to deal with those things of God in which pre-eminently the element of conscience prevails, and that in these matters their responsibility is, in the first instance, to God, and only in a secondary and inferior sense to man. The plea of conscience is a plea competent to every Church, in the same way as to every individual, when the question is one between the soul and God; and the argument is effectual against the claims of authority of all, except of Him. It is not necessary for us to ask, in the case of such a Church, whether, according to our standard, its doctrine is orthodox, or its worship uncorrupted, or its discipline pure, before we concede to it the benefit which the plea of conscience carries with it, any more than we require to ask whether an individual holds Scriptural views, before we accord to him the right of private judgment and the advantage of toleration. Conscience may err in the case of the society as well as in the case of the individual; and yet an erring conscience is to be dealt with reverently, because it has rights as against a fellow-creature, although it may have no rights as against God. Whatever may be

their standing as to Scriptural purity and attainment, Churches, unless they have renounced their spiritual character, and become mere secular copartneries, are entitled to plead that they deal in their proceedings with matters of conscience; and their demand to be let alone by the civil magistrate, in their ecclesiastical duties, is like the claim of the individual for his religious life,—a demand for nothing more than spiritual freedom.

The plea of spiritual independence as regards the Church, and the plea of liberty of conscience as regards the individual, must stand or fall together. They are but two forms of one and the same principle, and they ultimately rest on the same foundation. Grant the right of private judgment to the individual; throw around his exercises of conscience, in regard to religious truth and worship and service, the fence of toleration; and we cannot conjecture even a plausible reason for denying to him the same privilege when, as a Church member, he forms one of a religious society, constituted for the performance of the same spiritual duties. The difference between his private and official character can make no difference, in the eye of right reason, for a difference in the treatment of him by the State. The, in one sense accidental, circumstance of his acting in concert with others in a religious association, can give the civil magistrate no right of interference or control which he did not possess before. Nay, is not union into society of a spiritual kind similar to a Church,—a necessity arising out of the fact of the toleration by the State of individuals holding the same religious faith, observing the same religious worship, and performing the same religious duties,—more especially when one of the articles of the faith in which they are tolerated is just the belief of the duty of joining together as a society, for the social and public worship of God? It is impossible not to see that the right of toleration for the one involves in it the equal right of toleration for the other; and if a society for the worship and service of God is to exist at all, it must of necessity have all those powers and rights which are found to be necessary for the existence of every other society. It must have some principles of order for the regulation of its affairs; it must have some kind of organs to express its views and to

conduct its proceedings; it must have the power of admitting and excluding members. Laws, officers, and authority over its own members are essential to the existence of the Christian Church, even as they are essential to the existence of any organized society; and without them, no orderly community could be constituted, or at least continue to act. It is not necessary to fall back on the Scripture command, which makes the joint or public confession of God a duty, and not a matter of option, to Christians. It is not necessary to have recourse to the Bible for the appointment of government and rulers and discipline in the Christian society. All these things arise out of the very notion of a number of men holding the same views of religious doctrine, worship, and duty, and knit together among themselves, and separated from the rest of the nation by their common profession. And the toleration of all these things by the State is involved in the fact of toleration of religious men at all; the right to the free possession and use of them by a Church, apart from civil interference, as well as the existence of a Church itself, rests on the same footing as does the liberty of conscience for the individual; and the denial of the one would lead to the denial of the other also.

The intimate and indeed inseparable connection between liberty of conscience in the case of the individual, and the spiritual independence of Churches, can be more than established by reasoning; it can be illustrated historically. There may be a difference of opinion as to whether the idea of religious liberty, as applied to the individual in all the walks of spiritual life and activity, has preceded, in point of time, and practically wrought out, the idea of the same liberty, as applicable to Churches and societies; or whether the reverse of the process is true, and the spiritual independence claimed by the Church has been the harbinger and origin of individual freedom. If we take counsel of theory alone, we may be ready to conclude, that the urgent craving for personal rights in religious matters dictated by conscience, may have given rise to the desire of the same privileges in ecclesiastical societies, and have, step by step, developed itself in all the relations in which man is found, and made itself to be felt in his public and official, no less than in his private

and individual capacity. But if we examine the history of human progress and civilisation, we shall find that the opposite view perhaps approximates more nearly to the truth, and that the separation of the spiritual from the temporal society, and the doctrine of the entire freedom and independence of each within its own sphere, have been the bulwark of the right of private judgment, and the great instrument for developing the principle and practically extending the blessings of liberty of conscience. So at least the philosophic statesman, who has written the history of European civilisation, has interpreted its lessons. Unlike to many in the present day, who can see nothing in the principle of the spiritual freedom of the Church but an approach to the Popish tenet of the subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical powers, Guizot can recognise in it one of the prime agents in the introduction and progress of liberty and right in modern Europe. Speaking of the violence to which the Church, as well as society at large, was exposed from the barbarians after the fall of the Roman empire, he continues: "For her defence she proclaimed a principle formerly laid down under the empire, although more vaguely: this was the separation of the spiritual from the temporal power, and their reciprocal independence. It was by the aid of this principle that the Church lived freely in connection with the barbarians. She maintained that force could not act upon the system of creeds, hopes, and religious promises—that the spiritual and the temporal world were entirely distinct. You may at once see the salutary consequence resulting from this principle. Independently of its temporal utility to the Church, it had this inestimable effect of bringing about, on the foundation of right, the separation of powers, and of controlling them by means of each other. Moreover, in maintaining the independence of the intellectual world, as a general thing, in its whole extent, the Church prepared the way for the independence of the individual intellectual world—the independence of thought. The Church said that the system of religious creeds could not fall under the yoke of force; and each individual was led to apply to his own case the language of the Church. The principle of free inquiry, of liberty of individual thought,

is exactly the same as that of the independence of general spiritual authority with regard to temporal power."

And so has it ever been found to be in practice. The two ideas have advanced or declined together. Liberty of personal thought and action claimed by the member of the commonwealth in opposition to arbitrary power in the State, and liberty of spiritual thought and life claimed by the Church as against the same, may be separated in theory, but can never be far apart in the world, not of speculation, but of fact. The right of private judgment belonging to the citizen can only be seen in its true value and sacredness, when seen to rest on the same foundation of conscience, which gives force and holiness to the Church's demand for freedom in all that belongs to the relations between itself and God. The plea of liberty of conscience, on the part of the subject of the State, can never be asserted as it ought to be, unless it be demanded as that same liberty to serve God, in virtue of man's prior responsibility to Him, which the Church, in its claims of spiritual independence, does nothing more than seek to vindicate for itself. Both pleas rest beneath the same shield; and the security of both is found in the primary and inalienable right of individuals and societies, of private men and public Churches alike, to be exempted from the authority of the State, in order that they may be free to obey God. And hence the love of civil liberty in the breasts of a people has never burned so ardently as when it has been kindled at the altar. Nations and individuals have been free from the yoke of arbitrary power, and have prized their freedom, very much in proportion as religious liberty has flourished along with it; and where the sacredness of the latter has not been felt, and its claims have been practically disregarded, there the former has never extensively, or for any length of time, prevailed. The history of the long contentings for freedom to the Church, both in England and Scotland, pointedly illustrates this truth. Though no friend to the Puritans, and pretending no sympathy with their religious tenets, Hallam, in his Constitutional History, has felt constrained to acknowledge that their struggles and sacrifices in behalf of spiritual independence kept alive the flame of political freedom, at a time when the cause was almost

lost in England, and that the Puritan controversy has left its permanent mark on our national polity, in the principles of right and liberty which it impressed. And the same thing may be said with equal, if not greater truth, of the fiercer struggle through which religious freedom was won in Scotland. The actors in that struggle were unable to separate between the two ideas of religious and civil independence; their controversy with the House of Stuart, begun and carried on in the name of spiritual liberty, in reality embraced not less the cause of political freedom; their love to each, springing from the same root of reverence for conscience, became one passion in their hearts; and while they were ready to give all for a free Church, they were prepared to sacrifice only a little less for a free State. "Take away the liberties of assemblies," said Knox, "and take away the liberty of the evangel." But with a kindred and equal ardour, Knox was the foremost to stand up in behalf of the nation's freedom, and not to fear the face of man. And so it was with his successors in the contest. Their banner that they bore in their hands, while there was inscribed upon it, "For Christ's Crown and Covenant," was equally an expression of their hatred of civil misrule. While others conspired or mourned for national liberty in secret, they publicly displayed the symbol which declared that "all that is past is not forgotten, and all that is in peril is not lost." And that sign, seen upon the mountains of Scotland, from across the sea, told to William that the hour for the Revolution had come.

Nor, in advocating the doctrine of the virtually fundamental sameness of the right of private judgment in individuals, and of the right of spiritual independence in Churches, and of their equal claim to civil recognition, are we giving a broader meaning or more extensive application to the principle than the common law of this country warrants. That law takes under its protection the principle of conscience, as a principle available in matters of worship and duty due to God, equally and in common to religious bodies and to religious men. It acknowledges the distinction between things secular and things sacred, and the right of complete independence in the latter, both in the case of societies and in that of individuals, and

in the same measure in both. Mr. Hallam has referred to the famous case of the Corporation of London against Evans, decided by Lord Mansfield in 1767, as the case which has finally settled the law of toleration for this country, and fixed its limits and application; and to the opinion delivered on the occasion by that eminent lawyer, as giving articulate and lasting expression to the principles of the British constitution on the point. In the course of his speech, Lord Mansfield lays down the position, in which all constitutional lawyers will concur, that "it cannot be shown from the principles of natural and revealed religion, that, independent of positive law, temporal punishments ought to be inflicted for mere opinions with respect to particular modes of worship;" and that, whatever may have been the number or severity of the statutes previously directed against religious views or practices differing from those of the Established Church, "the case is quite altered since the Act of Toleration," so that, "by that Act the Dissenters are freed, not only from the pains and penalties of the laws therein particularly specified, but from all ecclesiastical censures, and from all penalty and punishment whatsoever, on account of their nonconformity, which is allowed and protected by this Act, and is therefore, in the eye of the law, no longer a crime." And not only does the Act of Toleration refuse to construe as a crime, and to interfere with as such "mere opinions" or "modes of worship," but it lends to them positive sanction, as known to the constitution, and known to be as lawful in the eye of the constitution as the opinions or modes of worship of the Established Church. "The Toleration Act renders that which was illegal before, now legal; the Dissenters' way of worship is permitted and allowed by this Act; it is not only exempted from punishment, but rendered innocent and lawful; it is established, it is put under the protection, and not merely the connivance of the law. In case those who are appointed by law to register Dissenting places of worship refuse on any pretence to do it, we must, upon application, send a mandamus to compel them."

Two things are plain from this judicial opinion of Lord Mansfield. First, it is plain that religious bodies, or Churches, stand upon precisely the same footing as individuals with respect to toleration by



the State, the law knowing no difference between the two cases. The frequent use of the expression, "modes of worship," "places of worship," and so on, applicable only to societies, in addition to the expression "opinions," applicable to individuals as well, sufficiently establishes this. And second, it is no less plain that toleration, in the view of Lord Mansfield, extends, not only to that one department of the Church's affairs which comprehends doctrine, or, as his expression is, "opinions," but also to the departments of worship and order, or, as he words it, the "Dissenters' way of worship." This latter point indeed is manifest from the consideration that, in Lord Mansfield's day, three-fourths of the Dissenters neither asked nor needed toleration for their doctrines, which were identical with those of the Established Church, but only for their worship, government, and discipline, in which they differed. Here, then, we have a judicial recognition by this great constitutional lawyer of the justice of the claim put forth by Churches of all classes and denominations, that they may be tolerated in the same way as individuals in all that belongs to faith, worship, and ecclesiastical order; and that what they shall, in obedience to conscience, do in this department of duty, shall not be considered as unlawful, or interfered with in any way, or declared null and void, because alleged to be so by the civil tribunals.

But the principle on which he founds his interpretation of the Toleration Act is fully as instructive as the interpretation itself. All positive statutes imposing penalties in respect of religious opinions or modes of worship being removed out of the way by the Act of Toleration, it is necessary, in order to interpret the right and limits of free opinion, to fall back on those original principles of right and wrong anterior to positive statute, and everywhere the same,—the universal practice and common jurisprudence of nations known as common law. "The eternal principles of natural religion," says Lord Mansfield, "are part of the common law; the essential principles of revealed religion are part of the common law." So far from it being true, as is sometimes alleged by the warm assertors of the prerogative of the State, that it knows no difference between things temporal and things sacred, between religious societies and civil

corporations, between Churches and trading copartneries, between the province that belongs to God and that which belongs to Cæsar, that, according to this eminent authority, the distinction is itself embodied in the common law of England, inasmuch as the principles of natural religion, of which the distinction forms a part, are so embodied; nay, if we are disposed to go beyond what natural religion may teach of the distinction, and take the fundamental principles of the Bible as our key to the understanding of it, we should not travel beyond the limits of the British constitution, or place our plea beyond its ken, for the essential principles of revealed as well as of natural religion, according to the dictum of Lord Mansfield, are part of the common law. It is impossible, then, to argue that the distinction for which we contend cannot be respected in the proceedings of the civil magistrate, because, however it may be known to theologians, it is not known to him. It is impossible to allege that, in the eye of the law, Churches have no other character than have civil societies, and that the spiritual duties about which the former are conversant have no other privilege than belongs to the matters of temporal interest or right with which the latter have to deal. The magistrate of this country knows all that natural religion teaches, for its principles form part and parcel of his own law. He knows much even that revelation teaches, for its essential principles are no less embodied in the constitution of the State. And when we speak of God and man's relation to God, of conscience and the things of conscience, and say that, in regard to these, individuals and societies are not under law to the State, because previously under law to the Creator, we are using no language strange to the constitution, and which is not strictly and expressly sanctioned by the common law of the land, as a plea applicable for the purposes of toleration to all religious denominations and parties. A toleration founded on such principles of natural religion as the constitution makes part of itself, embraces all bodies of men associated together for the worship of God, whether Christian or not Christian,—not being confined to those societies who claim an authority flowing from Christ as Head, and who are constituted on the model of that Church delineated in His Word. And without repudiating the principles of the

constitution, and running counter to common law, such societies must have freedom in all that concerns their faith, their worship, and their discipline, to act as their own conscience dictates, apart from civil interference, unless one or other of two things can be made out, —either, first, that the act done by the society is not *bonâ fide* a spiritual act; or, second, that the society itself avows principles and favours practices so hostile to the order and well-being of the State, that it cannot be tolerated at all.

Either case may possibly occur. A Church favoured by its spiritual character may indulge in proceedings not spiritual. Under pretence of declaring for its own purposes what is Scriptural and unscriptural in doctrine, it may gratify private feeling by branding a man as a heretic. Concealed by the cloak of a zealous discharge of the duty of Divine worship, it may hold secret meetings for civil, if not treasonable purposes. Under colour of discipline, it may maliciously and wrongfully stain a man's character, and injure both his reputation and his interests in society. In such cases, the Church can no longer plead its character as a spiritual body, or its right to toleration, as a bar against the interference of the civil magistrate in the way of reviewing its proceedings and granting redress; for this simple reason, that its proceedings have changed their character, and have ceased to be spiritual.

Or a body of religionists, without, in a certain sense of the words, losing their spiritual character, may hold opinions and inculcate practices hostile to public morals or the well-being of the community: their creed, like that of the Jesuits, may embody articles subversive of the distinctions of right and wrong; or their religious observances, like those of the Mormons, may be fatal to the order and happiness of social life; and conscience, familiarized to the evil, may teach its members that they are doing God service. In such extreme cases it must become a question with the rulers of the State, whether it is possible to extend to them the benefits of toleration at all, or whether it is not rather necessary to fall back on the last resort of nations as of Churches, to expel from among them the offending

members. The limits of toleration is a question for rulers, which it is as difficult to solve as the parallel question for the people, of the limits of obedience. But if the right of resistance is one which the people should seldom remember, and which princes should never forget, the right of refusing toleration is also one which Churches cannot question, even although the State ought to be slow in seeking an occasion to exercise it. But short of those extreme cases of so-called religious societies, which by their teaching or by their practice compel the State, in self-defence, to deny to them the right of toleration altogether, there can be no justification for the interference of the civil power with spiritual societies when dealing with spiritual affairs. If the freedom of any Church in Divine worship and discipline ought not to be permitted apart from civil control, the only consistent alternative to assert is, that such a Church ought not to be tolerated at all. The State may consistently put it beyond the pale of the Act of Toleration, if its character or practice so demand; but the State cannot consistently tolerate a Church, and at the same time repudiate it in the exercise of its essential and distinctive functions.

Taking the law as it has been authoritatively interpreted and settled by the decision of Lord Mansfield, there are two points to be inquired into before the civil ruler is at liberty to interfere with alleged wrongs done by a religious body in name of a Church.

He may properly ask: Is this a Church coming within the meaning and intention of the State, when, after full consideration of what was safe for itself, or right for its people, it framed the Act which defined what bodies ought and what ought not to be so accounted, and therefore to be recognised and tolerated, or the reverse? It were absurd to allege that any number of men calling themselves a Church, and claiming its privileges, are entitled, without inquiry, to be held to be such. In the provisions of the Act of William and Mary, the State reserves to itself the means and the power of deciding this question as to each individual case, by enacting that every religious body or place of worship that may seek to avail itself of the benefits

of toleration shall be duly registered by parties appointed by law for the purpose, and that the doors of such place of worship shall be open to the State or its servants. Such provisions were obviously designed to furnish to the State those means of information with respect to the character and proceedings of the body tolerated, as might enable it to decide for its own purposes whether the privilege should be continued or withdrawn. Independently, indeed, of positive statute, it seems to be implied in the very nature of the State, as the ordinance of God for the security and advancement of the temporal well-being of its subjects, that it has a right to make itself acquainted with the character of any society of whatever kind within its borders; and for that end is entitled to be present at its meetings, and to be cognisant of its transactions. Secret societies are, in their very nature, dangerous and unconstitutional; and upon this ground, were there no other, a public declaration of the faith taught, and the order observed, and the rights claimed by every religious body, such as creeds and confessions of faith furnish in the case of Churches, might be defended as in fact necessary and indispensable, in one shape or other, for the information of the State and the protection of the community. But in whatever way or form the information may be obtained, the civil magistrate has a right to know and be satisfied that the Church which claims toleration at his hands is in truth what it imports to be,—a spiritual society in reality, and not in pretence.

But there is a second question which he may ask, and it is this: Are the proceedings of the Church brought under his notice properly to be referred to the class of spiritual things, and is the subject-matter of them such as to place them beyond the cognisance of a civil tribunal? To answer this further question, it may be necessary for him to inquire, not only into the character of the body whose proceedings they are, but also into the occasion, the circumstances, and the nature of the proceedings themselves, lest, through haste, or passion, or deliberate wrong intention, they should cover what is in reality, not a spiritual, but a civil wrong. We put aside as simply childish the argument, that because the Church or its officers may unintentionally commit a wrong in proceedings which are yet truly

spiritual, therefore the wrong ought to be redressed by the civil courts—as if the fact that the former are not infallible were any reason for asking redress from other parties as little infallible as themselves. In all cases of courts or judges of last resort there must be the probability of occasional wrong, and the certainty of no attainable human redress. But when, under the colourable pretence of religious duty, the Church or its officers are actuated by malice in what they do in their spiritual proceedings, or when, without any malice or wrong intention, the act done is, in its proper nature and effects, a civil injury, then the civil tribunal may be called upon and warranted to interfere, upon the plain ground, that the malice in the one case, and the nature of the act in the other, properly bring it within the range of its jurisdiction. To ascertain whether it is so or not, the magistrate is entitled to demand, and the Church is bound to give, all such information as to the history and circumstances of its proceedings as may be necessary to enable him to construe them aright; and the demand, and the obedience to it, cannot be regarded as implying supremacy in the one party, or subordination in the other, as respects spiritual jurisdiction.

These two cases, in which the State may warrantably deny to professedly religious bodies freedom in their proceedings, do not form properly any exception to the doctrine of the full toleration that is to be granted in spiritual matters to societies as much as to individuals, inasmuch as in both cases the subject-matter with which the State has to deal has ceased to be spiritual,—either the society, by its doctrines and practices, having forfeited its character as a Church, and become a conspiracy against the safety and good of the nation, or the action done, from its motives or its nature, being truly civil. And they are cases that must be of very infrequent occurrence. It must be in very rare cases that the State shall be called upon to judge whether a professedly religious society is a Church, constituted for the worship of God, and not rather a conspiracy against law and order. And the instances can hardly be more frequent in which a spiritual society—under the check both of public opinion from without, and a sense of duty within to at least as great an extent, if

not to a greater, than in the case of a civil court, and in which a member continues under its jurisdiction only by his own voluntary act—can be betrayed into the wilful perpetration of a civil injury. Looking at the restraints under which they act, such trespasses into a province not their own must be still more rare than the parallel and opposite error, of the encroachment by civil courts upon matters spiritual. But however this may be, it can be no denial of spiritual freedom, that a professedly religious society that has become a mere copartnership for treason or immorality, should be dealt with as Jesuit colleges and Mormon churches have been dealt with, or that the incongruous offence of a civil injury done by spiritual authorities, should, like the excommunication by the Pope, deposing princes and absolving subjects from allegiance, be placed under the ban of the law.

Beyond these two exceptional cases, the right to toleration for religious opinion, recognised in common law, covers the whole territory that the independence of Churches requires. No plea that the religious opinions of an individual are in themselves false and unfounded, will set aside his legal right to adopt and hold them, if his conscience so teaches him; and, in like manner, no plea that the proceedings or deliverance of a Church are in substance and upon the merits wrong, will warrant the interference of civil authority, if the Church is acting within its own province, and in re ecclesiasticâ.

As little can the right of the civil courts to review or reverse such proceedings be argued on the ground that the Church, although acting within its own sphere of spiritual duty, has acted informally by departing from or violating its own rules of procedure. Of course it cannot be imagined, and is not to be assumed, that a Church will be brought to confess to having acted in any case contrary to its own laws; so that the fact on which the argument is founded must always be a disputed one, and would ultimately come to be a question as to whether the civil court or the Church knows its own laws best. But, independently of this, the plea of informality of procedure, and of a departure from right rule, as a reason for calling in the interference

of the civil courts in spiritual matters, plainly amounts to a denial of toleration altogether. Take the case of the individual, and what would be said of the consistency or the justice of the State if it professed to accord to him full freedom in regard to religious opinions, conscientiously arrived at, and yet this freedom was actually granted only when his inquiries were conducted according to rules and methods approved by the civil court, and his liberty of conscience was to be denied when any departure from such rules could be established against him? Would the argument be listened to for a moment, which should assert that a man had violated the right forms of reasoning by reasoning wrong, or had violated the compact with the State on which the privilege of free inquiry was granted to him, by conducting his inquiries after his own erroneous fashion, and that therefore the privilege must be withdrawn? Is it not, on the contrary, essential to the very idea of toleration, that, arrive at his conclusions by what road or method he may—though it should be in defiance of all logic, and by a system of fallacies disowned by every logician from Aristotle to Archbishop Whately—he is free to adopt and hold them still? And so it is with religious societies. To concede to them independence in spiritual matters, only on the condition of their deliverances being reached in accordance with their own rules, as those rules are interpreted by others,—to grant them freedom in regulating their proceedings and pronouncing their sentences, only in the event of the forms by which they walk approving themselves to the minds of other parties as regular and appropriate,—is practically the same thing as refusing them the privilege altogether.

Forms, no doubt, are in many instances the safeguards of justice, and in all kinds of judicial procedure have been found more or less necessary to secure its equal and convenient administration. But in order to gain that end, they must be varied and adapted to the nature and the case of the subjects and tribunals, spiritual or civil, in connection with which they are used and applied. The same forms of process will not be equally adapted to both; but, on the contrary, what may be found admirably fitted to promote the ends of practical order and justice and truth in the one, may be wholly unsuited to the



other, and, in fact, productive of results very much the reverse. If the ends of justice, then, are to be easily and effectually attained, or indeed attained at all, it must be within the power and duty of each court of independent authority and action to frame, interpret, and apply the rules that are to regulate its own procedure, as, in fact, the only party competent to vary and adapt them to the purposes contemplated; and any interference from without would only tend to defeat the object in view. But more than this. It is plain that a power to set aside or cancel spiritual decisions on the ground of irregularity in form, amounts, in so far as regards the practical results, to a power to set them aside on the merits. It gives to the party in whom such power may be vested the command of the result.

Forms of procedure, and rules for ordering the course of dealing with questions brought before judges for judgment, are so intimately and extensively intermingled with the grounds and elements of the judgment, that it is impossible to separate between them; and while this consideration is enough to show that it must, from the very nature of the case, be the right of the tribunal who has to decide upon the merits to decide also upon the forms of the cause, it no less demonstrates the impossibility of giving to any party jurisdiction over the latter, without surrendering at the same time a practical power over the former. Perhaps it were too much to assert that forms of process and rules for the order of business even in a spiritual court are to be held in their proper character to be spiritual; but it is not too much to assert, that in so far as they are necessary and conducive to the attainments of justice, they are essential means towards spiritual ends; and as a right to accomplish the end must always imply a right to employ the means by which it is to be accomplished, the Church's title to judge in spiritual matters without civil control, must involve a title to freely regulate and interpret and apply its own forms for that object.

The Church whose misfortune it is to have the law of its courts or officers, to a large extent, identical with the law of civil tribunals, and to be amenable to their decision in applying it to spiritual things,

must be fettered and helpless in the discharge of its proper functions, and liable to be checkmated at every step. In the exercise of its power to declare for its own purposes and members what is Scriptural and unscriptural in doctrine, it may pronounce a man to be a heretic, and, acting on the apostolic rule, may, after a first and second admonition, reject him from its communion, and then be liable to the injury and humiliation of having him restored to office, because of some alleged technical informality in its proceedings, which was no informality at all in its own judgment, or as affecting either the evidence or the amount of guilt, but was only fancied to be so by a civil tribunal, judging by a standard applicable to civil affairs. Or, in the exercise of the powers of discipline, it may cut off some wicked person for public and gross immorality; and because the notice of citation to the offender to answer for his offence was, in the judgment of a civil judge, twenty-four hours shorter than it ought to have been, the Church may be compelled, under the coercion of civil penalties, to receive him back again. The doctrine, that informality of procedure in the conduct of spiritual matters by a spiritual body may make void its authority, when a civil court shall differ from it in opinion as to what is regular or not, is fundamentally subversive of its independence. If it be right and necessary for the State to acknowledge the freedom of religious bodies in judging of the merits of spiritual causes, it must be no less right and necessary for the State to acknowledge the same freedom in judging of the forms, just because the greater includes the less.

Nor, in asserting the incompetency of the civil courts, consistently with the principles of toleration, to declare to be illegal, and to set aside spiritual decisions, on the ground either of the merits or alleged irregularity of procedure, are we forgetful of the close connection that such decisions may have, or rather perhaps must have, with civil interests. The spiritual and the civil element are so nearly and strangely linked together in every department of human affairs, that perhaps it were not possible to name a single proceeding of any man that might not, in some of its aspects or consequences, be regarded as civil, and in others of them as spiritual. The very same

fact may thus properly come under the cognisance of both the spiritual and civil courts, according to the view in which it is dealt with. But shall we, because of this close and constant connection between spiritual and civil interests, say that there is no real distinction to be recognised between them, and that both may be regulated and disposed of by one common governing authority residing in the civil ruler or his servants? Not so. The great fact made public to the universe, of the twofold ordinance of God in His Church and in the State—the one to rule the spiritual, and the other to rule the temporal world of human life—is His answer to the question, and His standing assertion of the distinction between the things that belong to Himself, and the things that belong to Cæsar. The universal belief of mankind, whether Christian or heathen, that the duties within the domain of conscience, and that pertain to the relations of the creature with the Creator, are more than the obligations of civil life, is the testimony of humanity to the same effect. And the law of toleration embodying the distinction is a decision of the same import, pronounced by the common jurisprudence of nations. Civil interests may oftentimes be affected by spiritual acts, and, reversing the proposition, spiritual interests may often be affected by acts, in themselves civil; but even when most closely connected, there is a fundamental and indelible distinction between the two. It cannot be said, therefore, that in the performance of spiritual duties, which may in their consequences very nearly affect the temporal interests of men, Churches are to be held as dealing with those interests, and judging of patrimonial rights; or as thereby trespassing beyond their own province, and making their decisions justly amenable to civil review. There can hardly be any proceeding of a religious society, however purely spiritual the act may be, that may not in this way affect the civil interests of parties concerned. But it must not be alleged, on that account, that the proceeding is not spiritual, but civil, and subject to the cognisance of civil tribunals. When the ecclesiastical authorities are pronouncing a man to be guilty of heresy according to the standard which they and he have both consented to abide by, they are not pronouncing any sentence as to his pecuniary interests, although these, as a consequence of the

proceeding, may be nearly and greatly affected by it. When the same authorities remove a man from an office in the ministry for public immorality, they are dealing with a question in re ecclesiasticâ, and not pretending to judge of his civil right to the emoluments that happen to be connected with the office, although these may be forfeited in consequence. Such indirect and consequential connection between the spiritual act and the civil interests affected by it, does not change the nature or true meaning of the Church's proceedings, nor subject them to civil supervision or control. Could the opposite be truly alleged, it would really amount to the assertion, that no Church can exist in freedom and exercise discipline at all.

Still there are civil results which follow from spiritual proceedings. These proceedings themselves may properly be within the competency of the parties who are responsible for them; they may not, consistently with the principles of toleration, be liable to the review of the civil courts, so as to be declared by them to be illegal; they may be beyond the reach of any authority, not lodged within the Church, to cancel or set aside. But the consequences of these may affect the pecuniary interests or the character and worldly reputation of the parties concerned. Is there no redress, if from any cause these proceedings are wrong? if, from haste or misapprehension, or the involuntary infirmity that marks all human transactions, the ecclesiastical decision is erroneous, and leads by consequence, more or less near, to civil injury? In so far as regards the civil consequences, the party affected by them may obtain redress in one or other of two ways, corresponding to the character of the injury that he has sustained.

First, There may be, and in the case of office-bearers there commonly are, certain pecuniary interests or civil advantages connected with the possession of office or membership in a religious society, and made dependent upon such possession; and as civil courts are the proper guardians of property and other temporal interests, and spiritual courts are not, it must belong to the former, and not to the latter, to consider and judge of the conditions on which such civil

privileges are held, and to award them to the party who can make good his legal claim to the possession of them. The same methods competent to any other of the subjects of the State to vindicate his right to patrimonial advantages, are also competent to the members of the Church in respect of pecuniary interests affected by spiritual decisions. In exercising, in these cases, their undoubted powers of jurisdiction, civil courts may be called upon to judge of spiritual acts and sentences in so far as these are conditions on which pecuniary interests depend, and to determine whether in this light they do or do not carry with them civil effects. They may be called upon to say whether the proceedings of Church courts are good, not as spiritual sentences, but good as legal conditions of temporal rights. To deny them such a prerogative, would be to deny them their full and proper jurisdiction. But it is not necessary, in order to explicate that jurisdiction, that they should have a title to judge of spiritual acts for any other purpose or to any other effect: the power to do so—to declare them to be illegal, and to set them aside as null and void—does not belong to courts of the State, and is not required in order to give effect to their proper decisions; the reduction or cancelling of the spiritual sentence is no part of the process, as means to an end, by which redress, in cases of injury to patrimonial interests, is to be afforded; and without taking upon them the incongruous and incompetent task of judging what is Scriptural or unscriptural in doctrine, and what is right or wrong in discipline, the civil courts can do all that is necessary to judge and determine in regard to the civil interests that may be affected by ecclesiastical proceedings.

Or, second, apart from pecuniary interests, a man may be affected in his public character, and injury done both to his feelings and his worldly standing, in consequence of the erroneous proceedings of spiritual judges. And as the courts of the State are the guardians of a man's character as well as of any other of his civil rights, they must have the power, no less than in the former case, of granting redress when character is maliciously injured. The same powers in a civil court that would secure for a man compensation for a malignant and unfounded slander perpetrated by a private party, will no less avail

for that purpose, although the wrong should be inflicted by a spiritual court in the course of spiritual proceedings. The element of malice, if proved to be present in the doings of a religious body, will take the case out of the protection of the ordinary privilege granted to tolerated Churches in their proper discipline; for it, strictly speaking, changes the character of the transaction, and makes it to be a civil offence, instead of an act of ecclesiastical discipline. But even in this case, when granting to the party injured civil reparation, it is not necessary or competent for the civil court to deal with the ecclesiastical proceedings in their spiritual character, or to judge of their merit or demerit in that respect.

Still more, it is *ultra vires* for the courts of the State to deal with these proceedings when no malice is alleged, and when all that is asserted amounts to this, that by the proper discipline of a Church, acting within its line of duty, the feelings or character of the party interested have suffered. If the power of discipline is to remain with religious bodies at all,—if the simple privilege not denied to any voluntary or private society, however humble, is to be conceded to religious societies, of saying who shall and who shall not be their members and office-bearers,—it is plain that this power cannot be exercised, without in many cases bearing with painful effect upon the feelings and reputation and public standing of those subjected to it. But such indirect and incidental consequences cannot properly be made a ground of action in a civil court, without subjecting the whole spiritual territory of the Church to civil control. In exercising the right of admitting and excluding members and enforcing the terms of membership and office, the Church is acting strictly within the province of its religious duty; and although private individuals can plead no privilege of being exempted from responsibility in what they do if it affect the character of another, yet this is a privilege which must of necessity belong to Churches, if they are to be tolerated in the exercise of discipline at all. In the case of private and voluntary societies, indeed, the right of fixing and enforcing at their will their terms of membership is exercised to an almost unlimited extent, free from any legal responsibility for the consequences which

admission or exclusion may infer. A fashionable club, admission to which is a passport to the highest society, may black-ball at its pleasure any man without the risk of an action of damages. A scientific society, whose membership confers fame, does not hold itself legally responsible for the injury to feeling and reputation inflicted by the rejection of a candidate for its honours. A banking copartnership may refuse to discount a merchant's bills, and ruin his credit in the market-place, without being held accountable at law. A man may be expelled from the Stock Exchange, and in consequence become a bankrupt in means as well as reputation, and yet may have no redress in a civil court. And if freedom almost unlimited is exercised in this way every day by private societies not privileged by law, much more must a similar freedom be granted to Christian Churches, which, if tolerated at all, must be tolerated in all that is necessary to their duty as Churches.

The law, then, is open; and competent methods of redress are at hand for all who can plead that their civil rights or patrimonial interests have been affected by spiritual proceedings in the way of unjust loss of income or malicious injury to character. But beyond these two classes of cases, raising, as they undoubtedly do, questions civil, and rightly liable to civil review by the courts of the State, this control can properly reach no further; and even in these cases, the spiritual proceedings of the Church cannot be set aside or interfered with, even at the moment that redress for civil wrong arising out of them may be liberally and justly awarded.

The question of the spiritual independence of civil control claimed by religious societies has sometimes been represented as a case of contract between the Church on the one hand, and its office-bearers and members on the other, and as if the terms of the contract necessarily expressed and defined the extent and limits of the Church's freedom. Upon this view, the liberty conceded to spiritual societies is no more than a liberty for the members to unite together under engagement to each other, and to lay down their own rules for the regulation of their affairs, while the power reserved to the civil

courts is a power to judge of the precise nature and conditions of the contract thus entered into in the same way as of any other, and to allow freedom to the Church in its spiritual proceedings, so long as these are in accordance with the terms of the contract, and no further and no longer than they are so. We believe that this is a defective and erroneous view of the question. It would allow of any office-bearer or member, cut off by the discipline of the Church, calling in the intervention of the civil courts in every case in which a breach of contract could be alleged; and it would justify the civil courts, upon the grounds of such an allegation, in at once proceeding to review or reverse the spiritual sentences complained of. It is carefully to be noted, that it is not the form of the obligation, whether arising out of contract or otherwise, but the nature of it as spiritual, which prohibits the office-bearers or members of the Church from appealing against its authority to that of the tribunals of the State. And it is no less carefully to be noted, that it is not because the liberty of the Church may or may not be embodied in the shape of a contract between itself and its own office-bearers and members, but because of the subject-matter in which that liberty is claimed, that the civil courts are forbidden to interfere. It is the nature of the matters as spiritual, and not civil—as requiring to be dealt with by spiritual and not civil authority—that protects the Church in the exclusive jurisdiction claimed in regard to them, and bars the servants of the State from intervention. The accident that in some cases there may be a written, or at least formal, obligation that may be construed as a contract come under by its office-bearers, on their admission to office, to submit to the spiritual authority of the Church in all Church matters, is not the proper ground on which exemption from civil control for these matters may be asserted. Without such contract, the authority of the Church in these things would be equally valid, and the exclusion of the State would be equally absolute. It is the spiritual nature of the proceedings, and not the contract expressed or implied, that gives the authority; it is the same reason that necessitates the exclusion. Whether the proceedings of the Church within its own peculiar province are protected by express and formal contract between itself and its members or not, they are equally removed



from the rightful cognisance of the civil tribunals. The deep and everlasting distinction between the things of conscience and the things of the commonwealth is what gives lawful authority to the Church to deal with the former, and not with the latter, and to the servants of the State to deal with the latter, and not with the former; and there is no contract needed either to warrant or protect the freedom of each party from the encroachments of the other. If a contract do exist in any shape that makes it to be a formal or substantial engagement between contracting parties, it must depend upon the nature of it, as spiritual or civil, whether the tribunals of the State are at liberty to judge of its conditions and enforce its terms or not. If it is exclusively spiritual, and having nothing to do with civil matters, the civil courts can have no power to deal with it, or to redress alleged breaches of its conditions. If it be a civil contract, or one of mixed nature, partly civil and partly spiritual, and embracing matters belonging in some measure to the one class, and in some measure to the other, the courts of the State may, to the extent of its properly civil character, be called upon to judge of it.

The obligations under which the Church comes to its own office-bearers and members, and they equally to the Church, which have been called, perhaps improperly, a contract, may embrace matters exclusively spiritual, or embrace matters partly spiritual and partly civil. The authority of the civil tribunals will be different in its bearing on these two cases. The engagement between the Church and the ordinary and private members of the Church is in common cases wholly spiritual, embracing no pecuniary or civil right at all,—implying as it does the duty of the Church to minister to them in doctrine and sacrament, and their duty to be obedient to the Church in word and discipline. Than this nothing can be conceived as a more purely spiritual engagement, or, if it is to be so called, contract; and with obedience to the terms of it, or disobedience to them, the courts of the State can have nothing to do. The engagement between the Church on the one hand, and the office-bearers of the Church on the other, may be spiritual likewise. It may amount to nothing more than an obligation on the part of the Church to give them its commission

and authority to preach the Gospel and dispense the ordinances of Christ in some particular congregation, leaving it to the State or to the congregation to give the pecuniary support, and an obligation on the part of the ministers so commissioned to subject themselves to the government, discipline, and authority of the Church. In such a case, the "contract" is wholly a spiritual one, of the nature and conditions and fulfilment of which the Church courts, and not the civil, must be the judges. Whatever relates to the pecuniary rights of the party ordained to the office of the ministry, and discharging its duties, is a question between him and the State in the case of a Church endowed by the State, or between him and the congregation, in the case of many non-Established Churches whose ministers derive their support from their flocks.

There may indeed be an engagement between the Church and its office-bearers embracing more than spiritual matters, and of a mixed nature. There may be an engagement in which the Church, in return for the spiritual services of its ministers, comes under an obligation to pay them a certain pecuniary remuneration, drawn out of a common fund under its charge, and contributed for that purpose, in addition to granting them the benefits of its spiritual authority and commission for their work. In this case, exemplified in some non-Established Churches, the contract is partly spiritual and partly civil, comprehending matters that plainly belong to each category. In so far as regards the spiritual matters of the contract—the spiritual commission granted by the Church on the one side, and the spiritual services to be rendered by the minister in return—these are the things which, from their very nature, the civil courts have no jurisdiction in, and no power to enforce, and the Church alone has. In so far as regards the pecuniary arrangements of the contract, and the breach or fulfilment of its terms in respect of them, the civil courts alone are competent to enforce the conditions in the case of a violation of them by either party. But although the contract in this instance may in a certain sense be regarded as a mixed one, giving to the contracting parties certain temporal rights, as well as laying upon them spiritual duties, yet the line of demarcation between the two is

plain, and not to be overpassed from either side; the Church, as trustee of certain funds committed to its charge, for the payment of its ministers, may in that character be a civil party, subject to civil control, in the discharge of its pecuniary engagements, while the same Church, as a spiritual body, requiring certain spiritual duties from its ministers, and giving to them its ordination, is altogether free; and the State has no more the right or the ability, in such a case, to attempt to enforce the purely religious engagements between the parties, or to punish the violation of them, than the Church has the right or power to dispose of the temporal rights.

A sort of mixed obligation of this kind, securing certain pecuniary rights or advantages, on condition of a certain spiritual act being done, or a certain spiritual profession being maintained, is not unknown in our legislation, and serves to make plain the distinction between the two. Under the Test and Corporation Acts, now happily repealed, it was unlawful for any man to hold any municipal office who had not, within a year preceding the time of his election, taken the Sacrament, according to the rites of the Church of England. Intolerant as the spirit of the Act was, and unscrupulous as were the courts at the time, it was not in the contemplation of the one or the other, that in the event of some municipal magistrate failing to comply with this condition, it was possible for the civil tribunals to enforce equally the one branch of the alternative as the other, and to compel a man to take the bread and wine of the Communion Table as easily or competently as they could compel him to demit his civil office. Although the holding of office according to the statute implied that a spiritual act was to be performed, yet the illegal disregard of this obligation did not give to the civil courts the power to compel the performance of the spiritual act, but only left them the power of enforcing the civil penalty. In like manner, the holding of the office of Lord Chancellor of England, according to the Emancipation Act, is, in our own day, fettered with the condition that the holder of it make profession of the Protestant faith. If the present eminent lawyer who fills the position were to go over to the Roman Catholic Church, the law, notwithstanding the statutory connection between the office and

the spiritual character, would never contemplate the possibility of enforcing, by means of civil authority, his return to a purer religious profession, although it might contemplate the application of its power and authority to the depriving him of his official position. Or, to take a case still more similar in its character to the one under review: A domestic chaplain, hired on the condition of ministering to a family according to the faith and rites of the Established Church, might abjure its doctrine, and yet insist on retaining his salary. In such a case, the aggrieved employer would find it hard to persuade the civil courts to send the offender to prison to unlearn his heterodoxy, although quite easy to induce them to lend their proper authority to deprive him of his salary. The argument is not different with respect to the contract which may be alleged to exist between some non-Established Churches and their ministers, in which the Church gives ordination and pecuniary support as the condition, on its part, of certain spiritual services being rendered on theirs. The civil courts have power to enforce the civil element in the obligation, but not the spiritual: they might, on the one hand, protect the Church in withholding the pecuniary payment, if, in their estimation, the religious duties had not been performed, but they could not compel the performance of these duties; or, on the other hand, they might authorize the minister, when deposed, to exact the payment, if they believed the duties to have been performed, but could not compel the Church to renew or continue the ordination.

It is the line drawn by the finger of God between things spiritual and things civil that must ever limit the power of the Church on the one side, and that of the State on the other. The landmarks between were not set up and adjusted by contract, but of old had their foundations laid deep in the nature of things. Make light of the distinction, and practically disregard it, and there is no length to which this may not lead in the way of spiritual domination on the part of the Church in the concerns of civil life, or Erastian encroachment on the part of the State in the province of religious right and duty. If a power of any kind, direct or indirect, is conceded to the Church of disposing to the smallest extent of temporal matters, there can be no limit set to its

encroachments: it may pervade every department of the State with its tyranny, and subject all in turn to its control, creeping like a palsy over a nation's heart, and extinguishing all that is valuable in the civil liberty, the individual independence, and the manly energies of a people. Or if a power, however small, of rightful authority in spiritual things is acknowledged to belong to the State, it will soon come to make itself to be felt as the weightiest and least tolerable part of its sovereignty. If the liberties of religious bodies in the way of discipline or government are denied to them, and handed over to the civil magistrate, it is a concession which can plead for itself no argument not equally available for dealing in the same way with their doctrine: their conscience, when once fettered in its religious actings, can show no cause why it should be free in religious opinions; and with the independence of its courts and officers, the sound faith and the living piety, and the active power for spiritual good of the Church, must die out also. These are not the deductions of reason only, but the lessons of history as well, and lessons which the nations that have not been taught them from the past are learning at the present day. Between the extreme which makes the State to be the slave of the Church, and that other extreme which makes the Church to be the slave of the State, there is no position that is safe or consistent with sound principle, except that which asserts their mutual and equal independence.

## **APPENDIX E, Vol. I. p. 215**

## RELATIVE OBLIGATION OF SCRIPTURE PRECEPT, EXAMPLE, AND PRINCIPLE

Are Scripture examples as binding as Scripture precepts? Do instances of apostolic practice carry with them the same authority as express apostolic enactments? Do general principles fairly established from Scripture lay the same obligation on the conscience of Christian men, in every case to which they legitimately apply, as an explicit command with respect to the same case would have done? The point brought before us is an important one. If these questions are to be answered in the negative, it is obvious that the strength of the argument in favour of the observance of the Lord's day, in behalf of the Presbyterian form of Church government, in support of the lawfulness and duty of infant baptism, of female communion, etc., will, to say the least of it, be greatly shaken.

By many writers in the present day it is denied that a distinct Scripture proof of the practice of inspired men can in any case be an absolutely binding precedent for our imitation. "Let it be supposed," says Mr. Litton, "that it had been distinctly recorded in Scripture that Episcopacy, like the presbyterate and diaconate, proceeded from the apostles: could we, even then, at once infer that it is of Divine institution, and a matter of perpetual obligation?" Mr. Litton holds, that while the latter two offices are proved to be of apostolic appointment by Scripture evidence, the former, or the office of bishop as distinct from presbyter, cannot be established from Scripture, but only by the testimony of ecclesiastical antiquity. But he does not on that account consider the presbyterate and diaconate, although not rashly or capriciously to be done away with, to be of Divine right: "He would be a bold man who should maintain that it is a matter of indifference whether or not we adhere in regulations of polity to Scriptural precedent. Nevertheless, the remarkable circumstance is to be borne in mind, that not one of the appointments of the apostles in matters of polity have been transmitted to us in Scripture in the form of legislative enactments, but simply as recorded facts. For example, the inspired history

informs us, that, as a matter of fact, the apostles ordained elders for every Church; but no law upon the subject, purporting to emanate from the apostles, can be found in Scripture. To their appointments the apostles append no imperative declarations, making them immutably binding upon the Church. Let their mode of proceeding in this respect be compared with the mode in which the law of Moses was delivered, and the difference between the two cases will be apparent. The Mosaic appointments were not only recorded, but commanded; the apostolic regulations are recorded, but not made matter of law; the apostles do not absolutely bind the Church of every age to follow the precedents which they set." Mr. Litton then goes on to take a distinction between revealed doctrines and revealed or recorded facts and regulations. The former, or the doctrines, carry with them their own sanction, and are of lasting obligation on the conscience. The latter, or the regulations, are not perpetually binding, unless there be some express statement to that effect in Scripture. The apostolic appointments were no doubt the best for the existing circumstances. But these might change; and a power of discretion was left with the Church to suit its arrangements to the conditions of the emergency in which it found itself placed.

Now, in reply to these statements by Mr Litton—and his position is one very commonly taken, especially in the Church of England—it is to be observed, that Scripture commands, Scripture examples, and Scripture principles, all rest as regards their authority on precisely the same basis, and are subject to precisely the same limitations as respects the demand they make on our obedience. All Scripture commands are not binding on us now, any more than all Scripture examples are binding. It is not the legislative form or the want of it; it is not the use of the Imperative mood in the one case and of the Indicative in the other that makes the difference. A principle of eternal obligation may be conveyed to us with equal clearness and force in a passage which says, "Thus you are to act," and in a passage which simply tells us, "Thus inspired and apostolic men acted." The latter mode of revealing truth and duty may be said to be characteristic of the New Testament—the former of the old; but we

are equally bound to recognise and reverence and obey the mind of God, in whichever way He may choose to make it known to us. What we learn in both cases alike is just this: Thus and thus the Spirit of God commanded certain men to act in certain circumstances. We learn no more in the case of the precept than in the case of the example. The one is as binding upon us as the other, provided we be in like circumstances. The real point of importance in both instances is the expression of the mind and will of God conveyed to us; and the true test of its permanent obligation upon us is simply this: Was this command—whether it reaches us in the form in which it was perhaps first given, or whether it is embodied in the obedience which followed—founded on moral grounds, common to all men at all times, in all circumstances, or on local and temporary grounds, peculiar to certain men in certain circumstances, at some given time? If the grounds or reasons on which it rests be of the former sort, it is as binding on us now as on those who first obeyed it; if of the latter, it is not binding on us at all, except in so far as our circumstances may be akin to those in which it was originally uttered.

The Ten Commandments stand surrounded by the civil and ceremonial precepts of the Jewish law. The latter are abolished, "save in so far as the general equity thereof may require;" the former remain binding for ever, not because of the enactive form in which they are couched, but because of the nature of the duty enjoined. The passover and the other sacred feasts, so solemnly pressed upon the obedience of Israel of old, are not obligatory on the nation in the present day, just because the grounds on which these institutions rested were of a local and temporary kind, and the circumstances of the Jews then are not the circumstances of the Jews now.

Take the case of the decree passed by the Council of Jerusalem, that the Gentile converts to Christianity should abstain from meats offered to idols, from things strangled, and from blood. The apostles and presbyters met in synod gave commandment, and the Holy Ghost gave commandment to this effect; but the command is not binding upon us now, simply because it rested on grounds peculiar to



the age and country in which it was given, and our circumstances are in this respect essentially different from those of the early Church. But the general principle of which this decree was a particular and local application is still of universal obligation,—namely, that no man has a right so to use his Christian liberty as needlessly to offend the consciences of his brethren: "Let all things be done unto edification," and "Let all your things be done with charity."

Take the case of the Lord's Supper. There we have both example and precept combined. We have the record of what our Lord did, and the record of His command to do as He had done, in remembrance of Him and of His death. The ordinance itself is of perpetual and universal obligation in the Christian Church; but some of the features of its first celebration are not so. The partakers in the Sacrament at its original institution were men only. But females are not to be excluded from the communion table on that account. The ordinance was celebrated in the evening, and in a private house; but neither the time nor the place can be regarded as furnishing a binding precedent for us. The elements of the Supper were the unleavened bread and the paschal cup of thanksgiving employed by the Jews; and for the use of these might be pleaded both the example of Christ and His express command: "This do." But neither do these peculiar observances rest on moral grounds common to all times, and therefore they are not universally binding.

Many other instances might be given. The Apostle Paul's instructions with respect to marriage given to the Corinthians are a case in point. It was good, he told them, in his judgment, for a man not to marry; but his reason was founded on "the present distress" (διὰ τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην), and his wish that they should be "without fretting anxiety" (ἀμερίμνους). So of the community of goods in the early Church at Jerusalem, etc.

Revealed doctrines, to recur to the distinction which Mr. Litton seeks to establish, generally commend themselves at once to our minds and consciences as founded on moral grounds of universal

application, and therefore permanently binding. But this is by no means always the case. The Council of Jerusalem laid down the doctrine, as "a necessary thing," that it was the duty of Gentile Christians to abstain from blood, etc., just as decidedly as they enunciated their command upon the subject. But neither the doctrine nor the precept rested on grounds common to all men at all times, and therefore neither are universally obligatory.

Scripture precepts, then, whether doctrinal or practical, Scripture examples, and Scripture principles, all rest on the same foundation of authority, and are to be interpreted and obeyed according to the same rule. As regards all of them alike, the same exception is to be made with respect to points which can be already shown to depend on the peculiar circumstances of a given age or country. But with this single necessary deduction or limitation, the practice of apostles, as recorded in Scripture, is just as obligatory as any of their precepts handed down to us in the Acts or the Epistles, and for precisely the same reason, that both alike embody the will of Christ to His Church. It does not in the slightest degree take from the binding force of any information regarding the constitution, government, worship, and discipline of the Christian society given us in the New Testament, that part of it may reach us in the shape of apostolic commands, and part of it in the shape of apostolic actions. In fact, there is much about what may be said to be the characteristics of the Gospel dispensation which makes it likely, *primâ facie*, that under it, Christians, as in the manhood of the Church, should be called to guide themselves quite as much by what the apostles did in executing their Master's commission, as by what they said, and that general principles should be given us, from which we were trusted and intended to draw the right inferences. The evidence relevant and sufficient to establish the general form of government and administration, which our Lord designed His Church on earth to adopt, will certainly not meet us in Scripture in scientific shape and system, any more than the evidence of Christian doctrine does. But whatever indications of the mind and will of Christ in any department of the Church's work and duty we do find in the Word of

God, whether in the form of direct statement, or positive command, or general principle, or ordinary apostolic practice, we are alike bound reverently and thankfully to accept and to act upon them.

## **APPENDIX F, Vol. I. p. 312**

### SCRIPTURE CONSEQUENCES

"The whole counsel of God," says the Confession of Faith, "concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or, by good and necessary consequence, may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added,—whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men."

A right understanding of the truths contained in this weighty sentence may be said to form the basis of all sound and Scriptural Theology, and of all lawful and orthodox Confessions of Faith. The challenge has been thrown down again and again by heretics in all ages: "Give us an express text of Scripture contradicting our views, and asserting yours. We refuse to submit to mere human inferences in place of Scripture statement."

It was on this ground that the Arians of the fourth century built their favourite and most plausible arguments against the Nicene definition of the  $\delta\mu\omicron\upsilon\beta\omicron\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$ . It was on this ground that the Macedonians denied the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, and the Apollinarians and Monophysites the true and distinct humanity of Christ. In like

manner, after the Reformation, the Socinian party opposed all the leading doctrines held by the Protestant Churches, on the score of their being based on Scripture consequences, and not on Scripture texts. In fact, in almost every case in which any show of reverence for the Word of God has been preserved at all, the errors of false teachers—from Unitarianism to transubstantiation—have been covered by an appeal to the letter of Scripture, while the real sense and meaning of it have been evaded or denied.

The importance of the question may be illustrated by an example. Take the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." What conclusions may be drawn "by good and necessary consequence" from these words? In the first place, this, that God and nature are essentially distinct and different, as against the various forms of Pantheism. In the second place,—although the passage does not fix the antiquity of the present order of things upon the earth, and does not hinder us from believing, if the fact should be established by other evidence, that an indefinite series of ages may have elapsed between the events recorded in the first verse of this chapter and those recorded in the second,—yet these words prove that, at some far-off date in the past eternity, matter had its beginning, that God only is from everlasting to everlasting, and that the eternity of matter is a fiction of the Materialists. In the third place, these words teach us that matter was at the first created out of nothing by God, as against the various theories of Emanation. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

Again, take such verses as, "The Word was made flesh," "The man Christ Jesus." From these words of Scripture we learn, "by good and necessary consequence," first, that our Lord Jesus Christ had a true body, as against the speculations of the early Gnostics; second, that He had a reasonable soul and a human will, as against the Monothelites; and third, that He united in His person a Divine and a human nature, as against the Socinians.

The chief grounds on which the authority of Scripture consequences depend are the following:—

I. These consequences are really contained in Scripture, and therefore they are "good." They are contained, not in the words of the inspired writers, but in the relations of these words to each other, and in the meaning conveyed by the statement as a whole; and therefore they are equally of Divine origin with the letter of Scripture, and equally binding upon us as an expression of the mind of God. He is not bound to one way only of conveying His will to us. Many important purposes may be served in the case of His moral and intelligent creatures by the discipline involved in an indirect as well as a direct communication of His messages to them. And we are equally bound to give heed to and obey the will and the truth of God, in whatever shape and way they reach us in His Word.

It is no valid objection to this, that an act or process of fallible human reason is employed in drawing consequences from the Scripture words, and that therefore the conclusion arrived at must be a merely human and fallible one. For, 1st, The consequences referred to are not only "good," but "necessary consequences." They might be the former without being the latter. But in order that a Scripture consequence shall come up to the definition of our Confession, it must not only be "good,"—that is to say, really contained in Scripture, really a part of Divine truth revealed there,—but "necessary" as well; that is to say, one which forces itself upon any reasonable and unprejudiced mind as inevitable, plainly contained in the statements of the Word of God, not needing to be established by any remote process of refined argument. 2d, The very same act or process of the fallible human understanding is involved in any interpretation or intelligent reading of Scripture whatsoever. The objection, therefore, if admitted, would equally avail to disprove the Divine authority and obligation of every recorded communication of truth from the mind of God to the mind of man. 3d, Scripture and merely human writings differ in this very essential respect, that the consequences to be lawfully drawn from God's words were all

foreseen and intended by Him; the consequences which might be fairly enough drawn from the words of men are very often not foreseen and not intended by them. In the former case, therefore, "good and necessary consequences" are as fully expressive of the mind of the Author of Scripture, and as binding upon us, as any direct statements of His could be. In the latter case, it may neither be safe nor warrantable to argue as to the personal intention of the writer from inferences really contained in his words, and fairly deduced from them.

II. Scripture evidence respecting the procedure of our Lord and His inspired followers very distinctly warrants the principle and practice of drawing consequences from the Word of God, as of equal authority with express Scripture statements. "Do ye not err," said our Lord to the Sadducees, "not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God?... As touching the dead, that they rise, have ye not read in the book of Moses, in the chapter on the bush, how God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err." In this passage, our Saviour's argument for the doctrine of the resurrection consists of an indirect inference from the words of God to Moses,—an inference the force of which it may be fairly said to require a certain amount of thought and spiritual insight fully to perceive. Yet the Sadducees are charged by Christ with sin, with a culpable ignorance of the Scriptures (μη εἰδότες τὰς γραφάς), because they had failed to draw that consequence from the words addressed to Moses, and, on the ground of it, to accept the doctrine of the resurrection as one just as really and authoritatively taught in the Old Testament, as if it had been propounded there in express terms.

Again, when our Lord was reasoning with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, who were dismayed at the crucifixion of the Messiah, and uncertain of the fact of His resurrection, He said to them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not (οὐχὶ ἔδει) Christ to have suffered these things,

and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Here, again, we find Christ blaming men for not having drawn certain consequences from Scripture statements, and accepted the conclusions thus arrived at as equally binding on their faith and conscience with direct and explicit Divine announcements.

So also, to refer to one other illustration of this truth, all through the Epistle to the Hebrews we see with what freedom and effect the apostle uses the privilege of drawing inferences from the inspired language of the Old Testament, and founding upon these as equally decisive in his argument, and equally of Divine authority with express Scripture statements. "From this we may learn," says Dr. Owen, referring to an instance of this sort in Heb. 1:5, "that it is lawful to draw consequences from Scripture assertions; and such consequences, rightly deduced, are infallibly true, and *de fide*. Thus, from the name given unto Christ, the apostle deduceth by just consequence His exaltation and pre-eminence above angels. Nothing will rightly follow from truth but what is so also, and that of the same nature with the truth from whence it is derived. So that whatever by just consequence is drawn from the Word of God, is itself also the Word of God, and truth infallible. And to deprive the Church of this liberty in the interpretation of the Word, is to deprive it of the chiefest benefit intended by it. This is that on which the whole ordinance of preaching is founded; which makes that which is derived out of the Word to have the power, authority, and efficacy of the Word accompanying it. Thus, though it be the proper work and effect of the Word of God to quicken, regenerate, sanctify, and purify the elect—and the Word primarily and directly is only that which is written in the Scriptures—yet we find all these effects produced in and by the preaching of the Word, when perhaps not one sentence of the Scripture is verbatim repeated. And the reason hereof is, because whatsoever is directly deduced and delivered according to the mind and appointment of God from the Word, is the Word of God, and

hath the power, authority, and efficacy of the Word accompanying it."

## **APPENDIX G, Vol. I. p. 389**

### THE BOOK OF COMMON ORDER

The earliest edition of this work bears the title: *The Forme of Prayers and Ministration of the Sacraments, etc., used in the Englishe Congregation at Geneva*, and approved by the famous and godly learned man, John Calvyn. Geneva 1556. It was first drawn up about a year before that date by John Knox, Whittingham, Gilby, Fox, and Cole for the use of the English congregation at Frankfurt, where some purer form of service than that furnished by the English Book of Common Prayer was then desired. "Our agreement," says Knox,—referring, however, to a form of service somewhat altered from its original shape, in deference to the feelings and associations of some of the English brethren,—"was signified to the congregation, accepted, and allowed by the same to take place to the last day of April; and then, if any contention should arise, that the matter should be referred to the determination of five learned men (Calvin, Musculus, Peter Martyr, Bullinger, and Viret), as a writing made upon this agreement doth testify. Herewith all men seemed to be pleased; no man did speak against it; thanks were given to God, the Lord's Supper was ministered, the Order by us appointed was used, well liked by many, and by none reprov'd; till some of those who after came amongst us, before they desired to be admitted of the Church, did begin to break the Order, whereof they were by the



seniors and others admonished, but no amendment appeared. For they were admonished not to murmur aloud when the minister prayed; but they would not give place, but quarrelled, and said, 'They would do as they had done in England, and their Church should have an English face.' The Lord grant it to have the face of Christ's Church, which is the only matter that I sought, God is my record; and therefore I would have had it agreeable in outward rites and ceremonies with Christian Churches reformed."

The form of service drawn up by Knox and the other office-bearers in the congregation at Frankfurt was adopted, in its original shape, shortly after in the English Church at Geneva, in which both he and Whittingham were for some time pastors. It seems to have been almost immediately received into general use in Scotland, being probably introduced here by Knox himself during his visit to this country in the autumn of 1555; for we find the First Book of Discipline, framed in 1560, speaking familiarly of "our Book of Common Order," "the Book of our Common Order, callit the Order of Geneva," as a work already of recognised standing, and generally employed in the Church.

The need for some such authorized guide and model for the use of Churches suddenly called upon, in a time of great social and political disorder, and amid prevailing ignorance, both to organize their ecclesiastical polity and to settle their form of worship, must be obvious to every one in the slightest degree familiar with the history of the period. The congregations in Scotland, as in all the other countries of Europe, under the sway of Roman Catholicism, had been wont to look on at the mass, independently celebrated by the priests in an unknown tongue, much as they might have looked on at a play, only with less understanding of the meaning of the performance. The Bible had long been a sealed book in Scotland. Ignorance of Divine things characterized all classes of the community to an almost incredible extent. They did not know what God's worship ought to be, or on what principles it should be conducted. Those from among whom the office-bearers of the Church must be drawn, for the most

part needed instruction and guidance as to their duties, quite as much as the great body of the membership as to theirs. Accordingly, the aim of John Knox and others, who drew up this work and introduced it into our country, was that it should be a Book of Church Order—a guide to ministers, elders, deacons, and members in their respective duties and functions; and for this purpose every position advanced has the proofs of it from Scripture attached at the foot of the page. "We," say the authors of the preface to the book, "not as the greatest clerks of all, but as the least able of many, do present unto you which desire the increase of God's glory, and the pure simplicity of His Word, a Form and Order of a reformed Church limite within the compass of God's Word, which our Saviour hath left unto us as only sufficient to govern all our actions by; so that whatsoever is added to this Word by man's device, seem it never so good, holy, or beautiful, yet before our God, who is jealous, and cannot admit any companion or counsellor, it is evil, wicked, and abominable.... The which considerations, dear brethren, when we weighed with reverent fear and humbleness, and also knowing that negligence in reforming that religion which was begun in England was not the least cause of God's rod laid upon us, having now obtained, by the mercifull Providence of our heavenly Father, a free Church for all our nation in this most worthy city of Geneva, we presented to the judgment of the famous man, John Calvin, and others learned in these parts, the Order which we minded to use in our Church, who approving it as sufficient for a Christian congregation, we put the same in execution, nothing doubting but all godly men shall be much edified thereby."

The first chapter in the Book of Common Order treats of the ministers or pastors of the Christian Church, the qualifications needed for the office, the duties to be discharged by them, the proper manner of their election, examination, and induction into office—all being supported by Scriptural proof. In chap. ii. are discussed the office, duties, qualifications, and election of ruling elders. Chap. iii. takes up the subject of deacons, the requisites for the office, and the duties properly belonging to it—very different from those discharged

by the deacons of the Romish Church. Chap. iv. defines the nature and duties of the teaching elder, or doctor, as set apart more especially for the exposition of the Word of God, and urges strongly the need of general as well as theological education throughout the country. "Because men cannot so well profit in that knowledge (of Divine things) except they be first instructed in the tongues and humane sciences—for now God worketh not commonlie by miracles—it is necessary that seed be sown for the time to come, to the intent that the Church be not left barren and waste to our posteritie, and that Schools also be erected and Colleges maintained with just and sufficient stipends, wherein youth may be trained in the knowledge and fear of God, that in their ripe age they may prove worthie members of our Lord Jesus Christ, whether it be to rule in civil policie or to serve in the spiritual ministrie, or else to live in godly reverence and subjection." It is well known to every reader of the history of Scotland how the efforts of our Church to carry into full effect the noble design of our Reformers in this respect were withstood and frustrated by the avarice of the nobility, the despotism of the Court, and the confusions and persecutions which accompanied the repeated and long-continued attempts to force the Prelatic system upon the nation. Chap. v. states the object of "the weekly Assembly of the Ministers, Elders, and Deacons;" in other words, the regular meeting of the Presbytery or Kirk-session and Deacons' Court. Chap. vi. describes a sort of congregational fellowship meeting for the exposition of Scripture and orderly discussion of some Scriptural subject; and chap. vii. deals at some length with the question of "The Order of the Ecclesiastical Discipline."

Next follows "The Order of Public Worship," showing what are the legitimate parts of the public services, and how each is severally to be conducted, giving a sort of outline or skeleton of the order of worship, with examples of forms of prayer and benediction, confessions of sin, and intercessions, which, "or such like," the minister is to use. Then come the "Order of Baptism," and the "Manner of the Administration of the Lord's Supper," in which the

nature and design of the two Sacraments are explained, and the manner in which they are to be dispensed is appointed. Here also examples of suitable exhortations and thanksgivings are supplied; and the officiating minister is directed to "use either the words following, or like in effect." In like manner are given a form of marriage, directions for the visitation of the sick, and, lastly, for the burial of the dead. On the very same principle are constructed two little works which form a sort of supplement to the Book of Common Order: "The Ordour and Doctrine of the General Fast, appointed by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, halden at Edinburgh the 25th day of December 1565: set down by John Knox and John Craig at the appointment of the Assemblie; The Ordour of Excommunication and of Public Repentance used in the Church of Scotland, and commanded to be printed by the General Assemblie of the same (drawn up by Knox), 1569."

It must be perfectly clear to any man who reads the Book of Common Order with any attention, that to call it a Liturgy in the strict and technical sense of that term, is a mere misuse of words. It was intended to furnish to a community, in general ignorance on the whole subject, a model or outline of what a New Testament Church ought to be, as respects its office-bearers, its congregational Church Courts, its membership, discipline, ordinances, and modes of worship. No fixed and unalterable forms of prayer are prescribed or imposed. On the contrary, the true and Scriptural principle of Church worship, as propounded by Calvin, and afterwards embodied in the standards of our Church, is laid down in the Preface to the Book of Common Order; and all unauthorized ceremonies, especially when interfering with the liberties of Christ's people, are emphatically denounced. Even where a model or example of public prayer is given, the use of it is only allowed or recommended, not commanded. Thus, for instance: "The minister useth one of these two confessions, or like in effect, exhorting the people diligently to examine themselves, following in their hearts the tenor of his words." "The minister, after sermon, useth this prayer following, or such like." "It shall not be necessary for the minister daily to repeat all

these things before mentioned, but beginning with some manner of confession, to proceed to the sermon; which ended, he either useth the 'Prayer for all Estates' before mentioned, or else prayeth as the Spirit of God shall move his heart, framing the same according to the time and manner which he hath entreated of," etc. "The minister, exhorting the people to pray, saith in this manner, or such like." "Certain psalms and certain histories are to be distinctly read (which are then specified as being for a particular occasion of public fasting); exhortation to be conceived thereupon, and prayers likewise, as God shall instruct and inspire the minister or reader." "This ordour may be enlarged or contracted as the wisdom of the discreet minister shall think expedient; for we rather show the way to the ignorant than prescribe order to the learned, that cannot be amended."

It is one proof among many of the sound judgment and insight into Scriptural principles which marked the fathers of our Church, that even in an age when the standard of ministerial acquirements was at first so low, and the means of a thorough training for the ecclesiastical office were so hard to be obtained, they yet carefully refrained from imposing a stated Liturgy on the Church; and while giving models of prayer, and forms which might be employed where desirable, left it to the Presbyteries and other Church Courts to prescribe the use of forms in any individual cases, as circumstances, in their view of them, might demand.

## IMPOSITION OF HANDS IN ORDINATION

The laying on of hands, or the action which usually accompanies ordination, is no essential part of it. Ordination essentially consists in the solemn setting apart of a man to the regular discharge of certain ecclesiastical functions, and his formal investiture with office by the Church in the name of Christ. The act of the Church in thus ordaining to office is not rendered null and void by the absence of the accessory or accompaniment of the laying on of hands by the parties who conduct the ordination. For, in the first place, there is no Scriptural warrant for believing that the imposition of hands in the New Testament Church conveyed any supernatural gift or grace, except when the action was performed by an apostle for that purpose. There is no evidence whatever, but the reverse, for the assertion, that in the ordinary case of a man's being ordained to office by fasting and prayer, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, as we know was the custom in the apostolic Church, any supernatural gifts were communicated by the action or gesture now referred to. Far less is there any ground for maintaining that the special promises of grace and blessing connected with the entrance upon the ministerial office, and with the subsequent discharge of its duties, are made to depend, in all ages and in every case, upon this ceremony of the laying on of hands. And, in the second place, imposition of hands in ordination is no significant part of the institution, no teaching sign like the water in Baptism, or the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. On this ground the Reformers and their successors used to prove against the Romanists, that Orders could not lawfully be reckoned among the Sacraments. They pointed out that, with respect to all the five spurious Sacraments of the Romish Church, there was no significant and Divinely instituted sign answering to the thing signified, as in the case of the two genuine Sacraments of the New Testament.

In the apostolic Church, indeed, imposition of hands seems always to have accompanied ordination to office in the Church; and their recorded practice in this respect gives sufficient warrant for our

following their example, as has been done in almost all the Protestant Churches. We lay on hands in ordaining to ecclesiastical office very much as we raise our hands in public benediction in the Church. It is a suitable and Scriptural accompaniment of our then and there imploring the Divine blessing on the person ordained, and of his solemn designation to office and consecration to the work of the Lord, which all take place at that time. But it does not enter as an essential part into the ordination, as if that would be invalidated by the absence of the imposition of hands.

In the First Book of Discipline, drawn up in 1560, after stating that ordinary vocation to the pastoral office involves three things,—election by the people, examination "before men of soundest judgment" in the ministry, and admission by the Presbytery in the presence and with the consent of the congregation,—the authors of the work proceed: "We judge it expedient that the admission of ministers be in open audience, and that some special minister make a sermon touching the duty and office of ministers, touching their manners, conversation, and life; as also touching the obedience which the Church oweth to their ministers. Commandment should be given as well to the minister as to the people, both being present; to wit, that he with all careful diligence attend upon the flock of Christ Jesus, over which he is appointed pastor; that he walk in the presence of God so sincerely that the graces of the Holy Spirit may be multiplied unto him, and in the presence of men so soberly and uprightly, that his life may confirm in the eyes of men that which by tongue and word he persuaded unto others. The people should be exhorted to reverence and honour their ministers chosen, as the servants and ambassadors of the Lord Jesus, obeying the commandments which they pronounce from God's Word, even as they would obey God Himself... Other ceremony than the public approbation of the people, and the declaration of the chief minister, that the person there presented is appointed to serve the Church, we cannot approve; for albeit the apostles used imposition of hands, yet seeing the miracle is ceased, the using of the ceremony we judge not necessary." This opinion with regard to the imposition of hands in

ordination—which is, however, by no means expressed in a very decided manner—was evidently founded, in the minds of the authors of the First Book of Discipline, mainly on the flagrant abuse of the rite in the Church of Rome,—where it was considered to be a sign and condition of the invariable communication of the supernatural grace and "character" of the priesthood,—but partly also, perhaps, on a failure to distinguish clearly between those cases in the New Testament in which laying on of hands was connected with the miraculous gifts and endowments conveyed to others by the apostles, and those in which the action simply accompanied an ordinary investiture with office in the Church.

In the Second Book of Discipline, which was drawn up in 1578, with much more deliberation and care than there had been an opportunity of bestowing upon the First, we have the following statements on this point: "Ordination is the separation and sanctifying of the person appointed to God and His Kirk, after he be weil tryit and fund qualifiet. The ceremonies of ordination are, fasting, earnest prayer, and imposition of hands of the eldership."

"Although," says George Gillespie, "(1) I hold the imposition of the hands of the presbytery to be no Sacrament, nor efficacious and operative for giving of the Holy Ghost, as the laying on of the apostles' hands was; nor (2) necessary to ordination, necessitate medii vel finis, as if ordination were void, and no ordination without it, or as if they who were not ordained with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery were therefore to be thought unordained or unministeriated; although, likewise, (3) I do not hold the laying on of hands to be the substantial act or part of ordination, which I have before proved to be essential to the calling of a minister, but only the ritual part in ordination; and although (4) I hold the laying on of hands to be a rite whereunto we ought to be very sparing to ascribe mysterious significations, wherein some have gone too far, and taken too much liberty; yet I hold, with the generality of Protestant writers, and with the best Reformed Churches, that the laying on of hands is to be still retained in ordination. I hold also, that this laying on of



hands is an ordinance of the New Testament,—and so our dissenting brethren of the Independent way hold also,—and that it is necessary, by the necessity of precept and institution, and in point of duty. 'For although there is no certain precept extant concerning the laying on of hands, yet because we see the apostles did always use it, their so accurate observing of it ought to be unto us instead of a precept,'—saith Calvin, *Instit. lib. iv. cap. iii. 16*. For the example of the apostles or apostolic Churches in approved things, which have a standing reason, are binding, and instead of institutions. The laying on of the hands of the apostles, in so far as the Holy Ghost was given thereby, was extraordinary, and ceased with themselves; yet in so far as the apostles, yea, and the presbytery too, laid on hands in their ordaining of ministers, there is a standing reason why we should do in like manner; the laying on of hands being a rite properly belonging to the praying over those whom we bless in the name of the Lord, as is manifest by those examples of laying on of hands, in Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, and in Christ's blessing and praying over the little children.

"Looking thus upon laying on of hands, first, as a rite in blessing and prayer over, second, as a rite for public designation and solemn setting apart of such a person, and if you will, third, as a rite of giving up, dedicating, and offering unto the Lord,—of which use of laying on of hands there are divers examples in the books of Moses,—in these respects, and under these considerations, we use laying on of hands in ordination, and ought to do so in regard of the primitive pattern."5

## **APPENDIX I, Vol. II. pp. 278, 294**

## NOTES ON THE LITERATURE OF THE SUBJECT OF THIS TREATISE

The following works are worthy of being consulted in connection with the various departments of our subject. I mention them in order, according to the different divisions and heads under which we have been led to arrange the topics discussed. And, in the first place, I name two works of primary importance and value, both of which cover, to a certain extent, almost the whole ground which we are called upon to traverse: the Fourth Book of Calvin's 'Institutes,' taken along with his 'Tracts on the Sacraments,' and the Third Part of Turretin's 'Institutio Theologiæ Elencticæ.'

I. The Fourth Book of Calvin's 'Institutes' is entitled, 'De externis Mediis vel Adminiculis, quibus Deus in Christi Societatem nos invitat, et in eâ retinet.' It consists of three parts: 1. 'De Ecclesiâ;' 2. 'De Sacramentis;' 3. 'De Politicâ Administratione.' Under the 1st head, or the Church, we have four divisions, each comprising several chapters. First, the Notes of the Church; second, the Government of the Church, and more especially, the corruptions of and departures from its primitive constitution under the Papacy; third, the Power of the Church as to matters of faith, legislation, and jurisdiction; fourth, the Discipline of the Church in its uses and abuses. Under the 2d head, the Sacraments, we have three divisions. First, the Nature and Import of the Sacraments in general; second, Baptism, as administered to infants and adults, and the Lord's Supper, with a discussion of the Romish corruptions of both ordinances; third, the five spurious Sacraments of the Popish system. Under the 3d head, or Political Administration, the subject of civil government is considered under its various aspects, more especially as regards the relation between the State or the Magistrate and the Church.

Two general deficiencies, arising from the circumstances of the writer, may be observed in Calvin's masterly, and in some respects unrivalled, work. In the first place, it is very largely a polemic against Popery; and, secondly, more modern theories of the Church, such as

the Independent and the High Church Episcopalian, are of course not discussed, since they had not yet been propounded among the Reformed Churches.

II. Calvin's 'Tracts on the Sacrament' comprise:

(1.) A short Treatise on the Lord's Supper, 1540.

(2.) The 'Consensus Tigurinus,' or Mutual Consent regarding the Sacraments between the Churches of Zurich and Geneva, 1549.

(3.) Exposition of the Heads of Agreement, 1554.

(4.) Second Defence of the Pious and Orthodox Faith concerning the Sacraments, in answer to Westphal, 1556.

(5.) Last Admonition to Westphal, 1557.

(6.) The true Partaking of the Flesh and Blood of Christ in the Holy Supper, in reply to Heshusius, 1560.

(7.) The best Method of obtaining Concord on the Sacraments, 1560.

III. The Third Part of Turretin's 'Institutio Theologicæ Elencticæ' may be divided into four heads:

(1.) The Nature of the Church, loc. xviii. qu. i.–xv.

(2.) The Government of the Church, qu. xvi.–xxviii.

(3.) The Power of the Church, qu. xxix.–xxxiv.

(4.) The Sacraments, loc. xix.

Under (1) we have such subjects discussed as the Scriptural definition of the Church, its membership, unity, invisibility, perpetuity, infallibility, the true notes of the Church, etc. Under (2) we have a discussion of such points as the Scriptural form of Church

government, the primacy of the Pope, whether there ought to be any distinction between bishops and presbyters, the necessity of the ministerial office, the call to it, the call of the first Reformers, the immunities of the clergy, etc. Under (3) are considered such questions as, what kind and amount of power belongs to the Church, whether that power is distinct from the civil, how exercised about matters of faith and creeds and confessions, whether the Church has the power of making new laws, properly so called, ecclesiastical discipline and excommunication, the origin and authority of Councils, the power of the civil magistrate *circa sacra*. Under (4) the subject of the Sacraments is taken up very fully, and handled with masterly power and clearness. Beginning with the general nature of the New Testament Sacraments, the author discusses their nature, necessity; the sacramental sign, word, union between the sign and thing signified; the intention of the minister, the "character" alleged to be communicated by some of the Popish Sacraments, the efficacy of Sacraments, the difference between those of the Old and those of the New Testament. Then, coming on to particular Sacraments, Turretin takes up the subject of Baptism, its nature, necessity, by whom administered, the baptismal formula, Romish Baptism, the efficacy of Baptism, and on what grounds it is to be administered to infants. Next, the topics connected with the Lord's Supper are discussed,—the nature and design of the ordinance, the consecration of the elements, the breaking of bread, communion under both kinds, the sacramental words, transubstantiation, the real presence, the sacrifice of the mass, the five false Sacraments of the Romish Church.

One or other of these two books I strongly recommend for careful study in connection with our whole subject. If choice must be made between the two, Turretin is, on the whole, to be preferred, as furnishing the more complete, scientific, and thoroughly well considered discussion of the various departments of the doctrine of the Church. The best edition of his works is the Edinburgh one, published in 1847. I may also refer you to the third volume of Principal Hill's 'Lectures on Divinity,' where the subjects of the

Sacraments, Church government, Church power as to doctrine, ordinances, and discipline, are ably, though more briefly treated. Some of the works next to be mentioned profess also to deal more or less with the general subject, as well as with particular branches of it. It may, however, be more convenient to arrange them under the different divisions of the course, although the classification may be of a somewhat rough and general sort.

## PART I.—NATURE OF THE CHURCH

Under this head may be named:

Mastricht, 'Theologia Theoretico-practica,' Trajecti ad Rhenum, 1715. A work of much ability and learning. The seventh book takes up the doctrine of the Church under the following divisions: 1. The Nature of the Church; 2. The Ministers of the Church; 3. The Sacraments; 4. Discipline and Government.

Field, 'Of the Church, five bookes,' 2d ed. Oxford 1628.—This is a learned, able, and comprehensive book, and has always been regarded as a standard work in the Church of England. Book i. treats of the Name, Nature, and Definition of the Church; Book ii. of the Notes of the Church; Book iii. discusses which is the true Church as tested by those notes; Book iv. the Privileges of the Church; Book v. the different degrees, orders, and callings of those to whom the government of the Church is committed.

Mestrezat, 'Traitté de l'Eglise,' Genève 1649. A valuable work, by a minister of the French Reformed Church at Charenton.

Bishop Jewel's 'Apology for the Church of England,' and his 'Defence of the Apology.' Jewel was perhaps the first really great theologian of the Reformed Church of England. His works now referred to, deal of course with the doctrinal as well as the ecclesiastical points in dispute between Protestants and Romanists.

Hooker, 'Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity,' eight books, 'Works,' Oxford 1845.—This famous work of Hooker's was written to meet the objections of the Puritans to the defective reformation of the English Church. It exhibits very great ability, eloquence, and learning; but it is by no means fair in the representation often given of the views of opponents, nor happy in the ground which it adopts in its defence of the existing state of ecclesiastical matters in England. Hooker does not attempt to vindicate the Prelacy of the Church of England against the Scriptural arguments of his Presbyterian opponents on the ground of any Divine right supposed to attach to it. He maintains, on the contrary, that no universally binding form of government has been appointed for the Christian Church at all, and seeks to defend the royal supremacy in the English Establishment, and the consequences which have resulted from its exercise, on the footing of the king's being "the highest uncommanded commander," who in a Christian country has proper jurisdiction within the Church, as really but another department of the commonwealth.

Palmer, 'Treatise on the Church of Christ,' Lond. 1838.—The author belongs to the extreme High Church party in the English Establishment, but to that section of it which still seeks to vindicate a position against the Church of Rome with its own weapons. The literature of the subject is very fully given in the way of reference and quotation.

Archbishop Whately, 'The Kingdom of Christ,' 4th ed. Lond. 1845.—This is a very able, candid, and valuable work. Its chief defect is that of regarding the Church too exclusively from the merely human point of view. The author does not hold the Divine appointment of any one form of Church government; although, as regards the New Testament Church, he gives up almost all the Episcopalian, and adopts many of the Presbyterian positions. Hence he seeks to prove that all the powers and privileges of the Church may be traced up to the powers and privileges inherent in a mere human and voluntary society. His arguments are very generally sound and valuable so far as they go; but he stops short too soon. The characteristics of Dr.

Whately's mind eminently fitted him for dealing with the Tractarian system. Those parts of his work which take up the theory of Apostolical Succession and some kindred points are especially able and effective.

Maurice, 'The Kingdom of Christ,' 2d ed. Lond. 1842.—This work is greatly inferior to Archbishop Whately's in clearness, vigour, and accuracy of statement; but it agrees with it in contemplating the Church almost exclusively from the human standpoint.

'Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici; or, The Divine Right of Church Government asserted and evidenced by the Holy Scriptures. By sundry Ministers of Christ within the City of London.' Lond. 1646.—This work contains an extremely able, thorough, and satisfactory discussion of most of the points relating to the nature of Church government as a Divine institution, and to the power or authority of the Church, its seat and exercise. Several of the authors of this treatise were members of the Westminster Assembly.

Claude, 'Défense de la Réformation contre le livre [par Pierre Nicole], intitulé Préjugés légitimes contre les Calvinistes,' Amsterdam 1683.—This celebrated book was written by Claude, minister of the French Protestant Church at Charenton. It contains a masterly discussion of the topics, doctrinal and historical, which naturally arise out of a thorough answer to the favourite question of Romanists to Protestants: "Where was your Church before Luther?" The fourth part is especially worthy of careful study. An English translation of this work was published in London in the year 1683, under the title, 'An Historical Defence of the Reformation, in answer to a book intituled "Just Prejudices against the Calvinists" ...; translated by T. B. M. A.'

Ayton, 'The Original Constitution of the Christian Church,' Edin. 1730.—This is an able and valuable work. Its author was minister of our Church at Alyth.

Killen, 'The Ancient Church: its History, Doctrine, Worship, and Constitution, traced for the first three hundred years.' Lond. 1859.

Litton, 'The Church of Christ in its Idea, Attributes, and Ministry,' Lond. 1851. In this very interesting and able work, the author brings out with great effect some of the fundamental differences between the Protestant theory of the Church on the one hand, and that of Romanists and semi-Romanists on the other. Mr. Litton, like most other moderate English Churchmen, builds his main arguments in support of Prelacy on expediency and ancient ecclesiastical custom. The Scripture argument in its behalf he very frankly gives up, admitting that there is no evidence in the New Testament that any other order of office-bearers was established in the Christian society by our Lord or His inspired followers besides those of presbyters or bishops and deacons, and that the analogy of the Jewish synagogue upon which the Christian Church was founded, while it furnishes the model of the Presbyterian system, fails us with respect to the Prelatic.

Principal Cunningham, 'Historical Theology,' vol. i. ch. i. xiii., 'Works,' Edin. 1863, vol. ii. pp. 9–42, 390–412. 'Discussions on Church Principles,' ch. vi. viii., 'Works,' vol. iv. pp. 164–234. Of the standing and value of the writings of Principal Cunningham, it is unnecessary that I should say anything.

Jonathan Edwards, 'Inquiry concerning the Qualifications for Communion,' 'Works,' vol. i. Lond. 1834, pp. 434–531.—This treatise is well worthy of consultation in connection with the subject of the membership of the visible Church.

Knox, 'Answer to a Letter written by James Tyrie, a Scottish Jesuit,' 1572, 'Works,' Laing's ed. vol. vi. pp. 486–512.—This was John Knox's latest work, and deals with great vigour with the question of the visible and invisible Church.



M'Crie, 'Statement,' Edin. 1807.—This work comprises about the ablest discussion of the questions of national religion, the relation of Church and State, etc., with which I am acquainted. See also the same author's 'Discourses on the Unity of the Church,' Edin. 1821.

As specimens of works on the Church by divines of the Church of Rome, I name four,—the authors of the first two being representatives of the more rigid and traditional class of Romanists, while those of the second two belong to the modern and philosophic school. Bellarmine, 'De Ecclesia Disputationes,' tom. ii. Ingolstadii 1605. Perrone, 'Prælectiones Theologicæ,' tom. ii. Parisiis 1842. Möhler, 'Symbolism,' Robertson's Transl. 2d ed. Lond. 1847, vol. i. pp. 286–361, vol. ii. pp. 1–148. [Symbolik, 6te Ausgabe, Mainz. 1843.] De Maistre, 'The Pope,' Dawson's Transl. Lond. 1850.—Möhler is by far the ablest of modern defenders of the Church of Rome. His work is an admirable specimen of what can be done by a thoroughly efficient and dextrous controversialist in the way of omission, modification, plausible explanation, and defence, to maintain the cause of the Papacy. To any one wishing an excuse for going over to Rome, this is a book to be strongly recommended. [The best answer to Möhler is probably Nitzsch's 'Protestantische Beantwortung der Symbolik Dr. Möhler's,' which first appeared in the 'Studien und Kritiken,' and was afterwards published separately at Hamburg, 1835. For further specimens of the views of modern Romanists of the more Ultramontane school, regarding the Church among other subjects, see 'Essays on Religion and Literature by various writers,' edited by Dr. Manning, 1st series, Lond. 1865; 2d series, Lond. 1867.]

## PART II.—POWER OF THE CHURCH

Voetius, 'Politica Ecclesiastica,' Amstelodami 1663–1676, in four volumes.—Gisbert Voets or Voetius was Professor of Theology and Oriental Languages at Utrecht. He was a man of extraordinary learning, of very great ability, and of the highest standing among the theologians of the Church of Holland, who at that time were among

the first in Europe. This work of his is an exceedingly important one, displaying immense theological research, as well as intellectual power. It discusses, in a very able, elaborate, and exhaustive way, almost all the points connected with the power of the Church and the matters about which that power is exercised, as well as the question of Church government, which is taken up very fully in the third volume. The period was one fruitful to an unparalleled extent in works on Church polity, the sphere of the civil magistrate, etc.; and nowhere are references to the contemporary literature and to the controversies in England and the Continent given more abundantly than in Voetius.

Apollonii, 'Jus Magistratis circa Sacra; sive, Tractatus Theologicus de Jure Magistratûs circa Res Ecclesiasticas,' Medioburgi Zelandorum 1642.—Apollonii, or Apollonius, as in this country he is more commonly called, was a minister of the Dutch Church at Middelburg, in Holland, and contemporary with Voetius. This work of his displays very high ability, sound judgment, and mastery over his subject. It has always been regarded as a standard in the Erastian controversy. Another valuable treatise by the same author, which deals with the question of Church power among other topics, was addressed to the Westminster Assembly. It is entitled 'Consideratio quarundam Controversiarum ad Regimen Ecclesiæ Dei spectantium, quæ in Angliæ Regno hodie agitantur,' Lond. 1644. An English translation of it was published in London in the following year: 'A Consideration of certaine Controversies,' etc.

George Gillespie, 'Aaron's Rod Blossoming; or, The Divine Ordinances of Church Government Vindicated.' Lond. 1846.—This famous treatise is unquestionably the most able, learned, systematic, and complete work on the Erastian controversy in existence. It deserves, and will repay, the most careful study. The author's 'Treatise of Miscellany Questions,' Edin. 1639, is also an exceedingly important and useful book, discussing a wide range of topics connected with ecclesiastical theology. The whole of Gillespie's works, along with a memoir of his life, are included in the first two

volumes of the 'Presbyterian Armoury,' edited by Dr. Hetherington, Edin. 1846.

Samuel Rutherford, 'The Divine Right of Church Government and Excommunication,' Lond. 1846. 'The Due Right of Presbyteries; or, A Peaceable Plea for the Government of the Church of Scotland,' Lond. 1644. These works take up kindred topics with those discussed by Gillespie; the last-named deals especially with the Independent theory of Church power. They are valuable and learned, but somewhat wanting in the clearness and method which characterize all Gillespie's productions.

Cunningham, 'Works,' vol. ii. ch. ii., vol. iv. ch. iii.—vi. ix. x.

### PART III.—MATTERS IN REGARD TO WHICH CHURCH POWER IS EXERCISED

#### DIV. I.—Church Power exercised in regard to Doctrine

Whitaker, 'Disputation on Holy Scripture against the Papists, especially Bellarmine and Stapleton,' Parker Soc. ed. Cambridge 1849.

Tillotson, 'The Rule of Faith' (in reply to Sergeant), Lond. 1666.

Chillingworth, 'The Religion of Protestants,' 4th ed. Lond. 1674.

Goode, 'The Divine Rule of Faith and Practice,' Lond. 1842.—This treatise was written with a special view to the Tractarian heresies. It is a very elaborate, able, and useful book, and has deservedly become a standard on the subject with which it deals.

Newman, 'Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine,' 2d ed. Lond. 1846.—This remarkable and interesting book was written by Mr. Newman on the eve of his joining the Church of Rome. It embodies an ingenious method—which, if not absolutely new, is at least put in a novel and effective shape—of meeting the Protestant

doctrine of the sufficiency and sole supremacy of Scripture as the rule of faith, and our objections on that ground to the corruptions of the Romish Church. Newman's 'Essay' was answered with much ability by Professor Archer Butler, in his 'Letters on the Development of Christian Doctrine,' which first appeared in the pages of the 'Irish Ecclesiastical Journal,' but were published separately in Dublin in 1850. Professor Butler does not confine himself to a reply to Newman's theory, but takes up many points connected with the general question of progress in theology, and the place of creeds and confessions. Compare also Principal Cunningham's review of Newman's 'Essay' in his 'Discussions on Church Principles,' ch. ii., 'Works,' vol. iv. pp. 35–77.

Dunlop, 'The Uses of Creeds and Confessions of Faith.'—The production of this very useful work, along with the larger compilation to which it was originally attached, forms but one of the many services for which the Church of Scotland stands indebted to the illustrious family to which the author belonged,—services, of which not the least memorable or important have been rendered in our own day. The little treatise now referred to was written by Professor Dunlop of Edinburgh, son of the well-known Principal Dunlop of Glasgow, who lived at the end of the seventeenth century. It first appeared in the shape of a Preface to a very valuable 'Collection of Confessions of Faith, Catechisms, Directories, Books of Discipline, etc., of Public Authority in the Church of Scotland,' Edin. 1719,—a book which has now become somewhat scarce and high priced. Dunlop's Preface was republished a few years ago in a separate form, under the editorship of my respected friend and colleague, Dr. James Buchanan. [Lond. 1857. Cf. Blackburne, 'The Confessional: A Full and Free Inquiry into the Right of Establishing Confessions of Faith in Protestant Churches,' 1767; Wardlaw, 'Systematic Theology,' Edin. 1856, vol. i. pp. 46–74. Dr. Wardlaw admits the abstract lawfulness of creeds and confessions, both as public testimonies to truth, and as tests of fitness for membership and office in the Church; but he objects to them on the ground of practical expediency, p. 55 f.]

## DIV. II.—Church Power exercised in regard to Ordinances

'Jus Divinum Ministerii Evangelici; or, The Divine Right of the Gospel Ministry.' Published by the Provincial Assembly of London, Lond. 1654. A very able and useful work, dealing especially with the views of the Independents and sectaries of the day. In the Second Part of it, 'Jus Divinum Ministerii Anglicani; or, The Divine Right of the Ministry of England,' the argument from Scripture and antiquity in favour of the Presbyterian system of Church polity is taken up.

Gillespie, 'Dispute against the English-Popish Ceremonies obtruded upon the Church of Scotland,' Edin. 1637.—This was Gillespie's first work, and it may be truly said to have settled the controversy which called it forth, so far as argument was concerned. No answer to it was ever attempted by the Prelatic party; and no answer was possible. It displays singular acuteness, learning, and force of reasoning; and the thoroughness of the discussion is as remarkable as the power with which it is conducted.

Ames, 'Suit against Human Ceremonies in Divine Worship,' 1633. By the celebrated author of the 'Medulla SS. Theologiæ,' and of 'Bellarminus Enervatus.'

Bradshaw, 'Several Treatises of Worship and Ceremonies,' Lond. 1660.—This is a collection of pamphlets written during the Puritan controversy.

Owen, 'A Discourse concerning Liturgies, and their Imposition,' Works, Goold's ed. vol. xv.; giving the Scriptural argument against the Imposition of Liturgies as well as of other humanly devised elements in Divine worship, with great clearness and force. Along with this work may be named one by Clarkson, Owen's colleague in the ministry: 'A Discourse concerning Liturgies,' Lond. 1689. It is published also, together with some valuable works against Diocesan Episcopacy, in Clarkson's 'Select Works,' published by the Wycliffe Society, Lond. 1846, pp. 247–374. In this treatise the argument

against Liturgies, from their non-existence in the early Church, and from the history of their gradual introduction and prevalence afterwards, is given with very great learning and effect.

Robinson, 'A Review of the Case of Liturgies and their Imposition,' Lond. 1710.

Sir Peter King (afterwards Lord Chancellor), 'An Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the Primitive Church,' Lond. 1691.

Riddle, 'Manual of Christian Antiquities; or, An Account of the Constitution, Ministers, Worship, Discipline, and Customs of the Ancient Church,' 2d ed. Lond. 1843.

Seaman, 'Vindication of the Judgment of the Reformed Churches concerning Ordination, and Laying on of Hands,' Lond. 1647.

Courayer, 'Dissertation on the Validity of the Ordinations of the English, and of the Succession of the Bishops of the Anglican Church,' Oxford 1844.—This work is translated from the French. It contains a very elaborate, but by no means very satisfactory or conclusive argument in favour of the validity—from a Roman Catholic point of view—of the Orders of the English Church. [The singularity of a Romanist coming forward to defend a position denounced by the general voice of his Church is lessened by the consideration that Courayer, at the time of writing this book, was unsound on various articles of Roman Catholic belief, besides those involved in the 'Gallican Liberties' (see e.g. pp. 148, 150, 219 ff.). Before the close of his life he seems to have fallen into very serious doctrinal errors on many points, pp. lviii.—lxi.]

Calderwood, 'Altare Damascenum,' Lugduni Batavorum 1708. This is a very learned, able, and comprehensive work. Chap. ix. deals at great length with the question of humanly invented and imposed ceremonies in the worship of God, with special reference to the controversies on that subject in Scotland and England in the early

part of the seventeenth century. See also, by the same author, 'The Perth Assembly,' 1619; 'Re-Examination of the Five Articles of Perth,' 1636. [As specimens of works by divines of the Lutheran Church on Ordination, the Ministerial Office, etc., may be named, Gerhard, 'Loci Theologici,' xxiii., 'De Ministerio Ecclesiastico,' ed. Preuss, tom. vi.; Harless, 'Kirche und Amt nach lutherischer Lehre,' Stuttgart 1853; Köstlin, 'Luther's Lehre von der Kirche,' Stuttgart 1853, §§ 2–4, 6, etc.; Nitzsch, 'Praktische Theologie, Gottesdienst,' 2te Aufl., Bonn 1863.]

On the important subject of the Sacraments, the following books are worthy of consultation:

Calvin's 'Tracts on the Sacraments,' and Turretin, loc. xix., as before mentioned. Bellarmine, in his 'Disputationes,' tom. iii. Ingolstadii 1605, gives a very full and exact statement of the Romish doctrine on the subject.

Archbishop Tillotson, 'On Transubstantiation.'

Waterland, 'Review of the Doctrine of the Eucharist, as laid down in Scripture and Antiquity,' Cambridge 1737.

Bishop Cosin, 'History of Popish Transubstantiation,' Lond. 1676.

Hospinian, 'Historia Sacramentaria,' Tiguri 1602.

Johnson, 'The Unbloody Sacrifice and Altar Unveiled and Supported,' Lond. 1724.—This work was republished by the Tractarian party at Oxford in 1847.

Hoadly (successively Bishop of Bangor, Hereford, Salisbury, and Winchester), 'Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,' 2d ed. Lond. 1735. The view of the ordinance advocated by Hoadly is, in substance, that of the Socinian body.

One of the most recent defences of the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation, and that by a plausible and dextrous, if not very profound controversialist, is to be found in Cardinal Wiseman's 'Lectures on the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist,' published in 1836. The same subject was discussed by him in the second volume of his 'Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church,' which also appeared in 1836. His arguments were replied to by Dr. Turton, then Regius Professor of Divinity in Cambridge, and Dean of Peterborough, in his 'Roman Catholic Doctrine of the Eucharist Considered,' Camb. 1837. Dr. Wiseman responded by 'A Reply to Dr. Turton's Roman Catholic Doctrine of the Eucharist Considered,' Lond. 1839; to which Dr. Turton again rejoined in some 'Observations on the Rev. Dr. Wiseman's Reply,' Camb. 1839. The controversy was also taken up by Mr. Stanley Faber, in a work entitled 'Christ's Discourse at Capernaum fatal to the Doctrine of Transubstantiation,' Lond. 1840.

Wilberforce, 'The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist,' 3d ed. Lond. 1854. —The writer advocates the extreme High Church view of the Sacrament; but his book displays a good deal both of learning and ingenuity. The doctrines propounded on this subject by Wilberforce, Pusey, and others of the Tractarian party, were met and refuted with great ability and success by Mr. Goode, afterwards Dean of Ripon, in a very valuable work, 'The Nature of Christ's Presence in the Eucharist; or, the True Doctrine of the Real Presence Vindicated,' Lond. 1856. I would also strongly recommend, in this connection, an admirable essay by Dr. Hodge of Princeton upon 'The Doctrine of the Reformed Church on the Lord's Supper,' which is published among his 'Essays and Reviews,' New York 1857. See also Dr. Cunningham's discussion of the subject, 'Works,' vol. i. pp. 225–291, vol. ii. pp. 201–207, vol. iii. pp. 121–143.

Dr. Halley's work on 'The Sacraments,' published as the Congregational Lecture for 1844, marks an era in the history of the English Independents as regards the views which it advocated with



respect to indiscriminate Baptism,—views which had been spreading widely for some time among the denomination to which the writer belonged, but which, when publicly maintained by him as their representative, took many by surprise. Apart from this, however, the book is an important and valuable one for its often very effective refutation of the High Church doctrines of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as well as for the great ability and general scholarship displayed throughout it. [Dr. Halley defended his position as to indiscriminate Baptism against Dr. Wardlaw and other critics, in a work entitled 'Baptism, the Designation of the Catechumens, not the Symbol of the Members of the Christian Church,' Lond. 1847.]

Goode, 'Doctrine of the Church of England as to the Effects of Baptism in the case of Infants,' 2d ed. Lond. 1850. The main object of the author is to vindicate the position and teaching of the evangelical party with respect to Baptism, from the standards of the English Church. With this in view, Mr. Goode proves most conclusively, as indeed had been done before by Hickman, Toplady, and others, that the Reformers of the Church of England, and those who drew up her Articles, were Calvinists in doctrine. Having established this point, he then argues from it, that they, as Calvinists, could not have consistently held the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and therefore could not have meant to teach it in the Baptismal Service or the Church Catechism; and therefore that he and other evangelical members of the Church of England who do not believe in baptismal regeneration, need have no scruple in using these formularies and interpreting their expressions about the effects of Baptism in a sound sense,—a kind of argument which, in the case of a Church notoriously founded on a compromise, is not perhaps very conclusive. In itself, however, like all the writings of this author, the book displays much learning, talent, and soundness of view.

Booth, 'Pædobaptism Examined,' Lond. 1829, in three volumes, first published in 1787.—This work used to be the standard among Antipædobaptists, before the appearance of Dr. Carson's writings on the subject. It was replied to with great ability by Dr. Williams, in his

'Antipædobaptism Examined,' Shrewsbury 1789. Dr. Williams was a theologian of high standing. He is the author of an 'Essay on the Equity of Divine Government and the Sovereignty of Divine Grace,' and of a 'Defence of Modern Calvinism,' in reply to Bishop Tomline, both of which are very valuable books.

Wardlaw, 'Dissertation on the Scriptural Authority, Nature, and Uses of Infant Baptism,' 3d ed. Glasg. 1846.—This is an acute and masterly discussion of the question of Infant Baptism. In an Appendix, the author controverts the views of Dr. Halley and the English Independents as to indiscriminate Baptism.

Carson, 'Baptism in its Mode and Subjects,' Lond. 1844.—This is the ablest book which has appeared in recent times on the Antipædobaptist side. Among other replies to it, may be mentioned that by Professor Wilson of Belfast: 'Infant Baptism a Scriptural Service,' Lond. 1848.

Beecher, 'Baptism with reference to its Import and Modes,' New York 1849. A singularly clear, logical, and scholarly discussion of the Scriptural meaning of the word 'Baptism,' and the modes in which the rite may be lawfully performed. [Cf. Princeton Essays, 2d Series, Ess. xvi.] With respect to the practice of the early post-apostolic Church as to Infant Baptism, see Wall, 'History of Infant Baptism,' 3d ed. Lond. 1720. It is a very thorough and reliable book.

Cunningham, 'Works,' vol. iii. pp. 144–154.

[Among the numerous works on the Sacraments by German theologians, both of the Reformed and the Lutheran Churches, may be mentioned: Ebrard, 'Dogma vom heiligen Abendmahl,' Frankf. 1845; Jul. Müller, 'Lutheri et Calvinii sententiæ de sacrâ Coenâ,' Halis 1851; Harnack, 'der christliche Gemeindegottesdienst im apostolischen und altkatholischen Zeitalter,' Erlangen 1854; Höfling, 'das Sakrament der Taufe,' Erlangen 1846; Kahnis, 'die Lehre vom Abendmahl,' Leipzig 1851. The two last named are very learned and

elaborate works, written from the High Lutheran confessional standpoint.]

#### DIV. III.—Church Power exercised in regard to Discipline

Durham, 'Treatise concerning Scandal,' Glasg. 1740; see esp. Part ii. This is a very excellent and useful work. There is a great deal of practical Christian wisdom and sound judgment shown, both in the principles which the writer lays down with respect to the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline, and the applications which he makes of them. [Compare the same author's 'Commentary on the Revelation,' Glasg. 1788, pp. 179–190.]

Voetius, 'Politica Ecclesiastica,' tom. iii. lib. iv. Tract ii.–iv., Amstel. 1676.

'Book of Common Order,' ch. vii. Dunlop's Collection, vol. ii. pp. 413–417. [This chapter is little else than an abridged translation of Calvin, 'Instit.' lib. iv. cap. xii. Besides the works referred to on pp. 190, 199 of this vol., see Wilson, 'The Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ,' Edin. 1859, pp. 349–431; 'Essay on Sacerdotal Absolution,' Princeton Essays, 1st Series, No. xv.]

#### PART IV.—THE PARTIES IN WHOM THE RIGHT TO EXERCISE CHURCH POWER IS VESTED

The question of Church government did not come up for any very formal and detailed discussion until the Reformation, the monarchical system of ecclesiastical polity which had grown up in Europe along with the Papacy being generally acquiesced in, save among the Vaudois, and in a few other such exceptional cases. "We have, however," as Dr. Cunningham has remarked, "a pretty full and formal statement of the argument in favour of the two systems of Episcopacy and Presbytery as early as the fourth century, of the Scriptural argument in favour of Presbytery by Jerome, usually regarded as the most learned of the Fathers, and of the argument in favour of Prelacy by Epiphanius in reply to Aerius. And it may be

worth while to observe in passing, that Jerome's Scriptural argument for Presbytery is still generally regarded by Presbyterians as a conclusive and unanswerable defence of their cause; while the earliest defence of Prelacy by Epiphanius has been admitted by some of the ablest defenders of Prelacy—such as Cardinal Bellarmine, De Dominis, Archbishop of Spalatro, and Hooker—to be weak and unsatisfactory, though they have not, I think, been able to devise anything that was greatly superior to it."

Calvin, 'Inst.' lib. iv. cap. iii.–v.

Turretin, loc. xviii. qu. xvi.–xxi.

Beza, 'Responsio ad Tractationem de Ministrorum Evangelii Gradibus ab Hadriano Saraviâ editam,' 1592; 'De diversis Ministrorum Gradibus contra Saraviam,' Genevæ 1594.

Bucer, 'Dissertatio de Gubernatione Ecclesiæ,' Middelburgi Zelandorum 1618.

Voetius, 'Politica Ecclesiastica,' tom. iii. lib. ii. Tract ii.–iv., lib. iv. Tract i.–iii.

Salmasius, 'De Primatu Papæ,' Lugdun. Batav. 1645.—This is a standard book for the views of the Fathers on the subject of the Papal supremacy.

Salmasius, 'De Episcopis et Presbyteris,' Lugdun. Batav. 1641, published under the assumed name of 'Walo Messalinus.'

Blondel, 'Apologia pro sententia Hieronymi de Episcopis et Presbyteris;' taking up especially the argument from antiquity with extraordinary learning, and in great detail.

Vitringa, 'De Synagogâ Vetere.' A book of immense learning and research, the object being to prove that the government of the synagogue was the model on which that of the Church was founded.

The main fault of the work is a tendency to strain likenesses in matters of detail; its general design is very successfully accomplished. As regards the remarkable unanimity with which all the leading Reformers arrived at from Scripture, and maintained in their writings the essential principles of Presbyterianism, see, besides the treatises on Church government of several of them already referred to: Dr. Cunningham's 'Works,' vol. iii. pp. 514–533; Miller, 'Letters concerning the Constitution and Order of the Christian Ministry,' 2d ed. Philadelphia 1830, pp. 351–406. [See also Luther, 'sämtliche Schriften,' ed. Walch, Th. xiv. pp. 139 f., 362 ff., Th. xix. pp. 877–886, etc.; Melanchthon, 'Opera,' in the 'Corpus Reformatorum,' vol. xxi. Brunsvigiæ 1854, pp. 834 ff., 1100, vol. xxii. pp. 515–524, etc.]

A rather curious illustration of the difficulty of getting any show of authority from the Reformers in favour of Prelacy, even by the method of isolated quotation, may be seen in Dr. Wordsworth's 'Theophilus Anglicanus,' a book which has gone through many editions, and is commonly used as a text-book for students. The author has collected together (ed. 1863, p. 105 f.) most of the passages handed down by Anglican tradition from the days of Bancroft and Durel, with a view to prove that the Reformers were forced into Presbyterianism against their real convictions of the Scriptural authority of Prelacy. I take those which he has thought worthy of being printed at full length; two or three more, given in reference, are even less relevant. The first is the well-known passage from Melanchthon's 'Apology for the Augsburg Confession' (art. vii. 24), in which he states: "We are exceedingly anxious to preserve the ecclesiastical polity and the orders in the Church, although appointed by human authority. For we know that this Church polity was established by the Fathers in the way that the ancient Canons describe, with a good and useful design." He then goes on to throw the responsibility of the dissolution of this established order of things upon the Romish party, seeing that the other side were willing to yield the bishops their jurisdiction, "if only they would cease to rage against our Churches." Melanchthon was at this time almost

overwhelmed by a sense of the dangers that threatened to crush the Protestant cause altogether. His very interesting correspondence with Luther, who was unable to be present at the Diet, shows him willing to give up almost anything, if only the light of the Gospel might be spared them. He constantly appeals to Luther to tell him what further concessions he might make to the Romanists. This passage accordingly shows his willingness to yield the bishops their place and jurisdiction, both being regarded simply as of human appointment, for the sake of peace; just as, a few years after this, when signing a decided declaration of the Scripture authority of Presbyterianism drawn up by Luther (art. Schmalc. De Potest. et Jurisd. Episc.), he added to his signature a statement that, the Gospel safe, he would, "propter pacem et communem tranquillitatem," concede—not only to the bishops but—to the Pope himself, his present supremacy over the Church, "jure humano." This particular concession of his in the Apology exposed him, as he tell us, to reproaches from many of his friends; and even Luther, with all his wish to spare Melancthon's sensitiveness to blame from himself, wrote to him: "I have received your Apology, and wonder what you mean by wishing to know what and how much you may yield to the Papists. For my part, I hold that there is only too much yielded to them already in the Apology. (Für meine Person ist ihnen allzuviel nachgegeben in der Apologia.)" Walch, Th. xvi. p. 1070. Cf. pp. 1101, 1695, 1756, 1794, etc.

The defects of the German Reformation on several points—e.g. the place given to the civil power in Church affairs—arose from a failure on the part of the leading Reformers to insist in practice upon the Scriptural principles clearly perceived in theory. Eight years at least before the Diet of Augsburg, Luther had discovered that no order of Church office-bearers above presbyters had any warrant in Scripture, and announced his convictions on the point to the world with his usual emphasis, anticipating Beza's distinction between "a Divine, a human, and a Satanical Episcopacy." "Es soll Jedermann wissen," he says in a work written against the Pope and "the order of bishops, falsely so called," "dass die Bischöffe, die jetzt über viele Städte

regieren, nicht christliche Bischöffe nach gottlicher Ordnung sind, sondern aus teuflischer Ordnung und menschlichem Frevel, sind auch gewisslich des Teufels Boten und Statthalter. Das will ich redlich und wohl beweisen, dass weder sie selbst, noch Jemand soll leugnen können." He then proceeds to prove the Divine authority of the Presbyterian system by the usual Scripture arguments. Walch, Th. xix. p. 877, etc.

After the extract from Melancthon's Apology, Dr. Wordsworth gives three short and wholly detached sentences from Calvin, and one from Beza. The first is from Calvin's letter to Cardinal Sadolet in 1539: "Disciplinam, qualem habuit vetus Ecclesia nobis deesse non diffitemur; sed cujus erit æquitatis nos eversæ disciplinæ ab iis accusari, qui [et] eam soli penitus sustulerunt, [et quum postliminio reducere conaremur nobis hactenus obstiterunt?"] Now, any one who had read the context could not fail to be aware that this passage has nothing whatever to do with Church government, strictly so-called. "Disciplina" has just its ordinary meaning, as distinct from "regimen," and refers to that famous system of Church censures which Calvin was then striving to establish at Geneva—that same "godly discipline of the primitive Church," in short, for the restoration of which the Church of England still utters an annual longing in the Communion Service. The Genevese Reformer had not yet succeeded in his attempt; he was, in fact, in banishment at that very moment, because of the opposition encountered in it. He could not but admit, therefore, that as yet "the discipline of the ancient Church is wanting to us." It was not until about two years after this that he could write to Myconius: "Nunc habemus quaecunque presbyterorum judicium, et formam disciplinæ, qualem ferebat temporum infirmitas." If Dr. Wordsworth had given the last clause of the sentence quoted, the true meaning of the first would have been suggested. He has not done so. On the contrary, he has put a full stop after "sustulerunt," and printed immediately after it another short sentence—which does not even occur in the letter to Sadolet—beginning with "Episcopatus," without the slightest break or indication that that is not the next word in the original. The

impression left on the mind of the reader is, of course, that the "discipline" referred to was Episcopacy.

The Prelatic value of the other three sentences is simply this, that they happen to contain the word "Episcopus" or "Episcopate." They contain nothing which any Presbyterian in the present day would not heartily agree to, understanding the words, as Calvin and Beza did, in their Scriptural sense. "In that I call those who rule the Churches," says Calvin, when formally discussing the subject, "bishops, presbyters, pastors, and ministers indifferently, I do so according to the usage of Scripture, which employs these terms as synonymous, giving the title of bishop to all who discharge the ministry of the Word" (Inst. lib. iv. cap. iii. 8). And this is the evidence by which the authors of the '*Ordonnances ecclésiastiques de Genève*' and the '*De Triplici Episcopatu*' are to be proved favourers of Prelacy!

'Vindication of the Presbyterian Government and Ministry.' By the Provincial Assembly of London. Lond. 1649. 'Reasons presented by the Dissenting Brethren against certain Propositions concerning Presbyterian Government, with the Answers of the Assembly of Divines to the reasons of Dissent,' Lond. 1648. The representatives of Independency in the Westminster Assembly, although few in number, were men of much ability and learning. We have here the arguments urged by them in behalf of the Independent theory of the Church, with a careful and thorough answer to these by the divines who drew up the standards of our Church.

Alexander Henderson, '*The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland*,' 1641.

Gillespie, '*Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland*,' Edin. 1641; especially full and valuable in connection with the office and duties of the ruling elder.

Rutherford, '*The Due Right of Presbyteries; or, a Peaceable Plea for the Government of the Church of Scotland*,' Lond. 1644.—This is a



very learned and elaborate treatise, chiefly directed against the views of the Independents. By the same author is, 'A peaceable and temperate Plea for Paul's Presbyterie in Scotland,' Lond. 1642; also dealing mainly with the Independent theory. Principal Baillie's 'Dissuasive from the Errors of the Times,' Lond. 1645, discusses, likewise, the principles of the Independents among those of the other sects of the day. A second part or continuation of the 'Dissuasive' appeared in 1647, taking up the special subject of 'Anabaptism.'

Calderwood, 'Altare Damascenum.'—A sort of first sketch or outline of this celebrated and important work was published by the author in 1621. It is in English; and the title-page—as is the case with many other of Calderwood's works—exhibits neither the author's name nor the place of publication, this being a precaution very necessary in his case, in order to avoid the persecuting measures of the Court and the Prelatic party in Scotland. The title of the little volume referred to is, 'The Altar of Damascus, or the Pattern of the English Hierarchie and Church Policie obruded upon the Church of Scotland,'—the allusion being to the incident recorded in 2 Kings 16:10, 11. The first edition of the work in its completed form appeared in Latin in 1623, and immediately established the fame of the writer in the theological world, both at home and abroad. It is constantly quoted as an authority by Voetius and other eminent Continental divines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It contains an exceedingly elaborate, able, and learned discussion of all the main points relating to Church government and worship then in dispute between Prelatists and Presbyterians, beginning with the royal supremacy in the Church of England.

In 1640, Bishop Hall, the author of the 'Contemplations,' at the request of Archbishop Laud, wrote a book called 'Episcopacie by Divine Right, asserted by J. H.,' Lond. 1640. In the same year, seeing that applications were being largely made to Parliament for the abolition of Diocesan Episcopacy, and the establishment of the Presbyterian system in its place, Bishop Hall came forward again to oppose this movement in a work published anonymously: 'An

Humble Remonstrance to the High Court of Parliament by a dutiful Son of the Church.' This called forth a very able treatise, 'An Answer to a Book entitled "An Humble Remonstrance," in which the Parity of Bishops and Presbyters in Scripture is demonstrated, the occasion of their Imparity in Antiquity discovered, the Disparity of the ancient and our modern Bishops manifested, the Antiquity of Ruling Elders in the Church vindicated, and the Prelatical Church bounded. By Smectymnuus.' 1641. This work was reprinted from the 5th ed. in Edinburgh, 1708. The authors were five eminent ministers of the Puritan party: Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen, and William Spurstowe, whose united initials make up the word Smectymnuus. Bishop Hall replied in a 'Defence of the Humble Remonstrance against the frivolous and false exceptions of Smectymnuus, wherein the right of Leiturgie and Episcopacie is clearly vindicated from the vain cavils and challenges of the Answerer,' Lond. 1641. In reply to this appeared 'A Vindication of the Answer to the Humble Remonstrance from the unjust imputations of frivolousness and falsehood, wherein the cause of Liturgy and Episcopacy is further debated,' by the same Smectymnuus, Lond. 1641. Bishop Hall rejoined in 'A short Answer to the tedious Vindication of Smectymnuus,' Lond. 1641. The controversy was also taken up by Milton in his 'Animadversions upon the Remonstrant's Defence against Smectymnuus,' Lond. 1641, and 'An Apology for Smectymnuus,' Lond. 1642. These works of Milton's, as well as two others which he published about the same time, 'Of Reformation in England,' and 'The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty,' are very vigorously written, often highly eloquent, and thoroughly Presbyterian in principle.

With respect to the views of the earlier generation of English Puritans, I may refer you to the works of one of their ablest representatives, Thomas Cartwright: 'A full and plaine Declaration of Ecclesiastical Discipline out of the Word of God, and of the declining of the Church of England from the same,' 1574. This was drawn up originally in Latin by Travers, but further elaborated and translated by Cartwright. 'A Replie to an Answere made of M. Doctor Whitgifte

againste the Admonition to the Parliament.' 'Second Replie agaynst Maister Doctor Whitgifte's Second Answer touching the Church Discipline.' 1575. The second part of this appeared in 1577. See also 'A Defence of the Ecclesiastical Discipline ordayned of God to be used in His Church, 1588' (in reply to Bridges).

One of the most learned and elaborate works on the opposite side is that of Bilson, 'The Perpetual Government of Christ's Church,' Oxf. 1842, first published in 1593. It is still commonly regarded as a standard authority in the Church of England.

Dodwell, 'Separation of Churches from Episcopal Government, as practised by the present Nonconformists, proved schismatical,' 1679. —The author was an extreme and consistent High Churchman. He was replied to by Baxter, in 'A Treatise of Episcopacy,' Lond. 1681; and by an eminent Lutheran divine, Buddeus, in his 'Exercitatio de Origine et Potestate Episcoporum,' Jenæ 1705. As among the ablest writers on the same side with Dodwell, may be further named, Cave, 'Dissertation concerning the Government of the Ancient Church,' Lond. 1683; and Thorndike, 'Two Discourses; the one of the primitive Government of the Churches, the other of the Service of God at the Assemblies of the Church,' Cambridge 1650.

Stillingfleet, in his 'Irenicum,' 2d ed. 1662, abandoned the attempt to prove a Jus Divinum for Diocesan Episcopacy, as the school of Laud had sought to do, resting his argument for it solely on considerations of expediency, and urging the Nonconformists to union on the ground that no form of Church polity had been specially appointed in Scripture. His book is a remarkably able, and in many respects a very fair and candid one.

Baxter, 'Five Disputations of Church Government and Worship,' Lond. 1659.

Owen, 'An Inquiry into the Original Nature, Institution, Power, Order, and Communion of Evangelical Churches,' 'Works,' Goold's

ed. vol. xv.; 'True Nature of a Gospel Church,' vol. xvi. The first of these two treatises appeared in 1681, in answer to an attack on the Nonconformist position by Stillingfleet, in his 'Unreasonableness of Separation;' the second of them was published in 1689, a few years after the death of the author. These two works, exhibiting as they do the matured opinions on Church government of the greatest English theologian of that age, are exceedingly interesting and important. Like all the writings of Owen, they display great force of argument, and much learning, wielded by sound judgment. In them the writer maintains very powerfully all the great leading principles of Presbyterianism, the Scripture authority for the office of ruling elder, courts of review, etc. It would be well if the position of modern Independents on the question of Church polity were no further removed from our own than that which is marked by the illustrious name of Owen.

I have already referred to the works of Owen's colleague, David Clarkson, on the subject of Presbyterianism and Prelacy. They are especially able and valuable in connection with the argument for the Presbyterian system, which is to be drawn from the views and practice of the early post-apostolic Church. See Clarkson's 'Select Works,' Wycliffe Soc. ed. Lond. 1846. As useful books in the same department of the discussion, I may mention further, Chauncy's 'Complete View of Episcopacy, as exhibited from the Fathers of the Christian Church until the close of the Second Century,' Boston 1721; Boyse's 'Clear Account of the Ancient Episcopacy, proving it to have been Parochial, and not Diocesan,' Lond. 1712; and Lauder of Mordentoun's 'Ancient Bishops, considered both with respect to the extent of their Jurisdiction and the nature of their Power, in answer to Mr. Chillingworth and others,' Edin. 1707.

Principal Rule, 'The Good Old Way Defended,' Edin. 1697 (in reply to Monro and Sage, two Episcopalian writers of the day); 'A Vindication of the Church of Scotland,' 1691. The author published also a 'Second Vindication,' and finally a 'Defence of the Vindication,' in 1694.

Anderson, 'A Defence of the Church Government, Faith, Worship, and Spirit of the Presbyterians,' Edin. 1820.—This work was first published in 1714. The author was minister of our Church at Dumbarton, and took part to a considerable extent in the controversies of the time. This treatise of his is a remarkably acute and vigorously written book. I would also strongly recommend the works on this subject of a contemporary of Anderson and Rule's, Professor Jameson of Glasgow, especially his 'Cyprianus Isotimus,' Edin. 1705; and his 'Sum of the Episcopal Controversy,' Edin. 1712. Several very able treatises on Church government were also published about the same time by Principal Forrester of St. Mary's College, St. Andrews; such as, 'Rectius Instruendum,' in 1684, 'The Hierarchical Bishop's Claim to a Divine Right, tried at the Scripture bar,' in 1699, 'A Review and Consideration of two late Pamphlets,' and 'Causa Episcopatus hierarchici lucifuga' (in reply to Sage), in 1706.

To come down to more recent works on Church government, I may mention Dr. Mitchell of Kemnay's 'Presbyterian Letters,' Lond. 1809, addressed to Dr. Skinner, a bishop of the Scotch Episcopal body at Aberdeen, who had attacked some of the statements in Dr. Campbell's 'Lectures on Ecclesiastical History,' when published after the author's death. Both Dr. Campbell and his vindicator, in defending Presbyterianism, agree in so far with Mr. Litton and others, that they hold that apostolic practice, even when proved in favour of one particular form of Church polity, will not avail to establish a *Jus Divinum*, and that a proved and fundamental departure from apostolic precedent does not affect the inherent lawfulness of any system of ecclesiastical government.

Dr. Brown of Langton, 'The exclusive Claims of Puseyite Episcopalians to the Christian Ministry Indefensible; with an Inquiry into the Divine Right of Episcopacy and the Apostolical Succession:' in a series of Letters to Dr. Pusey. Edin. 1842. This is an able, learned, and useful book. Along with it I may name two treatises by an American divine, Dr. Smyth of Charleston: 'The Prelatical

Doctrine of Apostolical Succession Examined,' Boston 1841; and 'Presbytery, not Prelacy, the Scriptural and Primitive Polity,' Boston 1843. Both of these works are especially valuable for the great collection which they furnish of literary material and references bearing on the subjects discussed.

Mason of New York, 'The claims of Diocesan Episcopacy Refuted,' Lond. 1838.

King, 'Exposition and Defence of the Presbyterian Form of Church Government,' Edin. 1853. This is a very useful little volume, comprising in small space a good statement of the main arguments in favour of Presbyterianism as against both Independency and Prelacy. The same may be said of the 'Manual of Presbytery,' 2d ed. Edin. 1847, by Dr. Miller of Princeton, and Dr. Lorimer of Glasgow.

I next name two very excellent works of somewhat wider range, which discuss with much ability the main points in dispute, both as to government and worship, between Presbyterians and Episcopalians. Both of them were published by ministers of the Synod of Ulster: 'Presbyterianism Defended,' Glasg. 1839, and the 'Plea of Presbytery,' 3d ed. Belfast 1843.

With respect more especially to the Independent controversy, the following books may be referred to: A work by Professor Wood of St. Andrews in answer to Lockyer, who was the first to introduce the Independent theory into Scotland, under the quaint title of 'A Little Stone, pretended to be out of the Mountain, tried, and found to be a Counterfeit; or, an Examination and Refutation of Mr. Lockyer's Lecture preached at Edinburgh, anno 1651,' Edin. 1654.

Whytock, 'Vindication of Presbytery; with Twelve Essays on the Church,' Edin. 1843.—The author was minister of the Associate Congregation, Dalkeith, and died in 1805, shortly before the deposition of his friend Dr. M'Crie, whose views he shared, from office in the Secession Church.

Brown (of Gartmore, and afterwards of Langton), 'Vindication of the Presbyterian Form of Church Government, as professed in the Standards of the Church of Scotland,' Edin. 1805.—This is a very acute, vigorous, and thorough discussion of the points at issue between Presbyterians and Independents.

Dr. Cunningham, 'Works,' vol. ii. pp. 43–64, vol. iii. pp. 545–556.

As expressing the views of modern Independents may be named, Wardlaw, 'Congregational Independency,' Glasg. 1848; and Davidson, 'Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament,' Lond. 1848.

-----

## MONERGISM BOOKS

The Church of Christ, by James Bannerman, Copyright © 2020

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions April 2020 Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068