

aspect; but there is no great difficulty in drawing a clear line of demarcation between Presbyterian and Popish principles upon this subject, and preserving in theory at least,—though experience seems to indicate that the practice is not quite so easy,—both to the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, their own proper province, and their own separate jurisdiction. The civil magistrate,—meaning thereby, the supreme civil power, in whomsoever vested,—has assuredly all that he is entitled to, when he has absolute control, under God, and without the intervention of any human authority claiming jurisdiction in the matter, over the persons and the property of all men, ecclesiastics equally with the rest of his subjects. The consciences of men and the church of Christ are not subject to his jurisdiction; over them he not only is not entitled, but is not at liberty, to claim or to exercise any authoritative control. “God alone,” says our 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 or worship.” The conscience,—that is, the convictions which men entertain as to what they ought to believe and do in all matters of religion and morality,—is subject to God alone, and to be guided only by His word. The church of Christ, the other great province excluded from the jurisdiction of the civil power, is to a large extent comprehended under the general head of conscience, where there is no room for the authoritative interference of any human power, civil or ecclesiastical, inasmuch as men’s duties as office-bearers and members of the church should be regulated only by the word of God, and their own conscientious convictions as to what His mind and will is. But the church of Christ is also a visible society, which has outward and visible business to administer, and in which certain visible and outward processes must be continually going on; such, for instance, as the admission of men to office and to membership, and the retaining them in, or removing them from, the outward privileges attaching to these positions. Where such processes are going on, there must be some provision for determining the questions which are certain to arise; and from the very nature of the case, the decision of them must necessarily assume something more or less of a judicial or forensic character. And the whole controversy virtually comes to this: Are these questions, and questions such as these,—which must arise wherever a church of Christ exists

and is in full operation, and the decision of which is necessary in the transaction of its ordinary business as a visible society,—to be determined by the word of God, or by the law of the land? Are they to be ultimately decided, so far as human power can decide them, by ecclesiastical office-bearers or by civil functionaries? No particular doctrine as to the spiritual effects of ordination and admission to ordinances, on the one hand; or of deposition and excommunication, upon the other, at all affects this question. They are viewed here and in this connection simply as an act of outward jurisdiction *in foro exteriori*; and the question is, By what standard and by what parties are these points to be ultimately decided? And here there is really no medium between, on the one hand, assigning to the church as a distinct independent society,—or, upon Presbyterian principles, to ecclesiastical office-bearers,—a right of regulating its own affairs, managing all its own necessary business according to the word of God; and, on the other, depriving it of all judicial or forensic authority even in these matters, except what is derived from the State, and subject to civil control,—thus reducing it to the level of a corporation, which ordinarily indeed, and when no dispute arises, may be allowed to manage its own affairs according to its own rules, but from whose decisions there is always open an appeal to the ordinary civil tribunals as to a higher authority.

While these principles, when fully acted on, secure to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities their own separate provinces, and their own independent jurisdiction according to the word of God, the rights of conscience are secured within the church itself by an honest and faithful adherence to the great scriptural principle which, in the Church of Rome and in the canon law, is trampled under foot,—viz., that church power is not lordly, but only ministerial; that ecclesiastical office-bearers, even within their own province, have no right to be making laws or pronouncing decisions, merely according to their own judgment and discretion, but that they should do nothing in these matters except what the word of God requires them to do in the discharge of the necessary duties of their place, and are bound to do it all according to the standard which Christ has prescribed, their decisions being entitled to respect and obedience only if consonant to the word of God; and all men, civil rulers and private individuals, being not only entitled, but bound, to judge for themselves, with a view to the

regulation of their own conduct, and upon their own responsibility, whether they are so or not.

The substance of the whole matter is this: The conscience of men, as comprehending all that they are bound to believe and to do in matters of religion and morality, whether as concerning things civil or things ecclesiastical, is subject to God alone, no human power having any jurisdiction or authoritative control over it. The province of the civil magistrate comprehends the persons and the properties of his subjects; over these in the case of all his subjects, and even although in particular cases they may be mixed up with ecclesiastical matters, he has supreme jurisdiction, being subject to God only, and not to any human power. The province of the ecclesiastical authorities is the administration of the ordinary necessary business of the church as a distinct visible society, the regulation and execution, according to the word of God, of the functions that must be discharged, and of the work that must be done, wherever Christ has an organized church in full operation,—consisting chiefly, in all ordinary circumstances, of admitting to, and excluding from, the possession of office and the enjoyment of outward privileges in that society. And as neither the civil nor the ecclesiastical authorities have any direct jurisdiction within the other's province, so neither is entitled indirectly to extend its authority beyond its own. The power of the civil magistrate is lordly; in other words, God, his only superior, not having prescribed a constitution and laws for states, civil rulers have a large measure of discretion in regulating national affairs as may seem most expedient, and may thus, if they choose, attach certain civil consequences to ecclesiastical decisions. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction, besides being restricted to ecclesiastical matters,—*i. e.*, to those things which constitute the ordinary necessary business of Christ's visible church,—is, even in regard to these things, purely ministerial; there is no room for discretion, it *must* be regulated solely by the word. And this principle, when fairly and honestly acted upon, and not employed—as it has always been in the Romish Church—as a pretence for unwarranted usurpations upon the civil power, or depriving it of its just rights, necessarily excludes all compromise,—all deference whatever to civil interference as affecting either directly or indirectly the settlement of ecclesiastical questions, the admission of men to office or to ordinances in the church of Christ.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### WITNESSES FOR THE TRUTH DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

THERE is a subject, partly historical and partly doctrinal, that has occupied a good deal of attention in the controversy between Protestants and the Church of Rome, to which it may be proper, at this point, to advert. We refer to the opposition made by individuals or churches, during the middle ages, to the Church of Rome; or the inconsistency between their doctrines and those of modern Papists, and the use or application made of this, either in evidence or in argument. The general subject, thus stated, comprehends a considerable number of important topics which have been discussed with great fulness of detail, but to which we can only very briefly refer.

Papists have been accustomed to assert that the doctrines now held by them have been all along maintained by the great body of the church, in unbroken succession, from the time of the apostles downwards; and they have laboured to show that whenever any man or body of men adopted any opposite doctrines, they were in consequence condemned and rejected by the church in general as heretics, or, at least, schismatics. Upon the ground of an allegation to this effect, they found a claim in behalf of the Church of Rome to be regarded as the one church of Christ, with which He has been ever present since He ascended up on high, preserving it from all error, and maintaining it as the pillar and ground of the truth; while, on the same ground, they adduce it as an argument against Protestantism, that it had no existence before the time of Luther, who broke in upon the cordial harmony with which, it is said, the whole Christian world was then, and had for many ages been, receiving the doctrine and submitting to the authority of the Roman Church.

We have said enough, formerly, to show how futile is the claim put forth by the Church of Rome to apostolicity, as imply-

ing the maintenance of the doctrine of the apostles handed down in unbroken succession from their time; and how utterly unknown, for several centuries, was the notion that the Church of Rome was the catholic church of Christ, or that it was necessary to be in communion with the Bishop of Rome in order to be regarded as a part of the catholic church. Protestants do not admit, of course, that there is any necessity to point out and ascertain the time and circumstances in which any particular doctrine or practice was first introduced into the church, in order to prove that it did not descend from apostolic times. We are warned in Scripture that heresies would come in privily, that the tares would be sown while men slept; and it is a fundamental principle of Protestantism, which, when once established upon its own proper evidence, must never be rejected or forgotten, that it is by the Bible alone that we can certainly determine what is true and what is false in religion; and that there is not, and cannot be, any obligation to receive anything as apostolic, unless it be either contained in, or deducible from, the apostolic writings. Still, though it is *ex abundanti*, Protestant writers have undertaken to show, and have shown, the origin and growth of many of the peculiarities of Popery,—have brought out fully the time and circumstances in which they were invented; and even in cases in which there may not be sufficient historical materials to enable them to do this with exactness and certainty, they have, at least, been able to fix upon a particular period at which they have found that some specific doctrine now held by the Church of Rome was not generally believed by the Christian church, and thus to cut off its connection with the apostolic age. It is true that some of the germs or rudiments of modern Popery can be traced further back in the history of the church, than some of those Protestant writers who have been largely imbued with veneration for antiquity, especially among Episcopalians, have been willing to allow. But it is certain that very scanty traces of any of them can be found during the first three centuries, that most of them were then not held by the church in general, and that many of them were the inventions of a later period.

As Papists lay much stress upon the consideration, that if any innovation in doctrine and practice had been introduced it would have met with opposition, and that this opposition would have excited attention, and thereby have produced some historical

memorials, by which it might be shown to be an innovation; some Protestant writers, though denying the soundness of this general principle as a certain test or standard, have made it a specific object to trace minutely in the history of the church, as far as there are materials for doing so, the opposition made at the time to all the innovations and growing pretensions of the Popes. There is one important and valuable work which is directed specifically to this object, and follows throughout this simple plan, embodying, in the prosecution of it, a great deal of important historical information. I mean the celebrated Mornay du Plessis' work, entitled "*Mysterium iniquitatis, seu historia Papatus.*" The leading object of this work is stated in the title to be to show "*quibus gradibus ad id fastigii enisus sit (Papatus), quamque acriter omni tempore ubique a piis contra intercessum.*" The work contains a history of the innovations introduced by the Romish Church, and of the claims or pretensions to authority and supremacy advanced by the Popes from the controversy about Easter in the second century, till the time of the Reformation; followed by an account of the opposition which each met with, and the difficulties that had to be overcome, before it was generally received or submitted to. Much of this, however, belongs to an earlier period in the history of the church, which we have already considered. We have to do now only with the period which succeeded the general adoption of some of the peculiarities of modern Popery, and the subjugation of almost all the Western Church to the Bishops of Rome.

Many Protestant writers have placed the commencement of the reign of antichrist about the beginning of the seventh century, and have fixed upon this era, on the ground that though some of the principal corruptions of modern Popery had not then received the sanction of the church, yet that many of them were generally prevalent, though not in all cases very fully developed; and that about that time claims to supremacy over the whole church were put forth by the Popes, and were in the Western Church pretty generally acknowledged and submitted to. It is certain that, from this period till the Reformation, the Western Church was almost wholly under the control of the Bishops of Rome, and that those who dissented from their doctrines, and set themselves in opposition to their supremacy, were treated by them, and by all who acknowledged their sway, as heretics and schismatics. Popish

writers dwell with great complacency upon this period in the history of the church, when nearly all the Western Church submitted to the Popes, and when any opposition to their impositions and exactions was visited not only with spiritual censures, but also frequently with civil pains and penalties, and sometimes with exterminating persecutions. Protestants think that in the Church of Rome, during this dark and dreary period, they can see, in the light of Scripture, plain traces, both in the doctrines taught and in the practices adopted, of the predicted apostasy, of the great antichrist, the man of sin and son of perdition. And, of course, the proof of *this* from Scripture is quite a sufficient answer to all the presumptions which the Papists found upon the general prevalence of their system of doctrine and polity for a long period antecedent to the Reformation, and upon the alleged non-existence of Protestantism before the time of Luther. Still they have also contended that a careful investigation of the history and literature of that period affords many materials of a more specific kind for attacking Popery and for defending Protestantism.

The leading positions which Protestant writers have maintained and established upon this subject are these,—first, that down till the period of the Reformation there continued to exist in the formularies, symbolical books, and other standard works of public authority or in general use in the Church of Rome, traces of a more ancient system of doctrine and discipline different from what now obtains in that communion, and thus affording testimonies against the innovations which she has introduced; and that down till the time of Luther there is a series of writers, who, though living and dying in the communion of the Church of Rome, differed in some points of doctrine from modern Papists, and agreed with Protestants;—evidence being thus afforded, that the modern Romish profession, established and made perpetual and unchangeable by the Council of Trent after the Reformation, had not been universally adopted *in all its parts*, or at least was not obligatory, when Luther appeared; and, secondly, that those who, from the time when the Roman Church gained an ascendancy over the West, were generally stigmatized and persecuted as heretics and schismatics, held to a large extent Protestant doctrines; and that though, upon Protestant principles, their claim to be regarded as witnesses for the truth must be decided in every instance by ascertaining the accordance of their views with the

word of God, yet that, even independently of this, there is much about their general character and history which affords strong presumptions at least that they were right, and the Church of Rome wrong,—and that, consequently, the scriptural doctrines of Protestants have been held and advocated even in the darkest and most corrupt times.

As an instance of what is commonly adduced in support of the first part of the first of these two positions, I may refer to the well-known and interesting fact, that in the Council of Trent a proposal was made that some things in the Pontifical,—or the authorized directory for ordination, as it might be called,—should be omitted, since they manifestly countenanced the right of the people to a real voice and influence in the appointment of their pastors, in accordance with the unquestionable practice of the primitive church, and thus only afforded a handle to heretics,—*i.e.*, to the Reformers,—who had restored the primitive usage, which of course had been long abandoned in the Church of Rome. I may also refer to the curious and important fact, that even the canon of the mass, as it is called, or the authorized service for celebrating mass, and which the Council of Trent forbade any under pain of anathema to charge with containing any errors, does, while it unquestionably exhibits many gross errors, contain also some statements handed down from purer and more ancient times, which cannot be easily reconciled with some of the modern Popish doctrines upon the subject. With respect to the second part of the first position,—*viz.*, that there was a series of writers in the communion of the Church of Rome down till the period of Reformation, who did not believe in all the modern Popish doctrines, and who, in opposition to these, held some one or more of the doctrines generally taught by Protestants,—the evidence of it could be exhibited only by a series of quotations; and this would require much more space than can be allotted to it. I can therefore only say in general, that a good deal that is curious and very decidedly opposed to the common Popish allegations as to their unvarying unity and harmony,—though, as is the case in most disputes, the settlement of which depends upon an examination of the exact meaning of a number of quotations, leading into some intricate and perplexed discussions,—has been produced by Protestant writers; and mention some of the authors where a collection of these materials may be found.

Among the fullest repositories of materials of this sort in our language are Bishop Morton's "Catholike Appeale for Protestants, out of the confessions of the Romane Doctors," and the appendix to the third book of Field's work on "The Church." But the fullest and most complete work upon this subject is the "Confessio Catholica" of John Gerhard, a celebrated and very learned divine of the Lutheran church. The appendix to the third book of Field on the church is directed to the object of establishing the following bold and startling position: "That the Latin or Western Church, in which the Pope tyrannized, was, and continued, a true, orthodox, and Protestant church; and that the devisers and maintainers of Romish errors and superstitious abuses were only a faction in the same, at the time when Luther, not without the applause of all good men, published his propositions against the profane abuses of Papal indulgences." This general position is monstrously extravagant, and palpably inconsistent with notorious facts. It is too much for any man calling himself a Protestant to maintain that the Church of Rome was a true orthodox Protestant church when Luther appeared,—after one œcumenical council—the second of Nice—had established image-worship; another—the fourth great Lateran—had established transubstantiation, and the absolute necessity of auricular confession to the forgiveness of all mortal sins; and, thirdly, the Council of Florence in 1439 had established purgatory, and the supremacy of the Pope over the whole church of Christ. It is, indeed, a position of some importance,—which many Protestants have laboured to prove, and have proved,—that the system of modern Popery, with all its high pretensions to apostolicity and universality, was not fully completed in all its points till the Council of Trent; that there are several doctrines which, by the decrees of that council, are made imperatively binding upon all the adherents of the Church of Rome, the belief of which had not been previously exacted, and with respect to which different opinions,—some of them substantially Protestant,—were actually professed and tolerated within the Romish communion. This is true, and has been proved. It is of some importance in the Popish controversy, when viewed in connection with the ordinary Popish allegations and pretensions. But it is a very different thing to say that, up till the commencement of the Reformation, the Latin or Western Church was orthodox and Protestant. Field, who was

a man of great learning, has produced much curious and valuable matter that *does* establish the first of these positions, but he has certainly not established the position he undertook to prove.

It is not surprising that this part of Field's work is high in favour with the Tractarians. Field's position is in full harmony with their views; and, could it be made out, would free them from some of the difficulties which they feel in defending, upon their High Church principles, their non-connection with the Church of Rome. The difficulty which, before some of them joined the Church of Rome, they had,—and which those of them who have not yet found it convenient to follow out their principles to their legitimate consequences, and to leave the Church of England, still have,—is to defend the Reformation, and the position of the members of the Reformed churches, from the charge of schism, since the Church of Rome had, they admit, a true apostolical succession, a legitimate authority, and taught at that time no very serious error. Some of them laboured to prove that the Reformers did not leave the Church of Rome, but were expelled from it, and were therefore not responsible for their state of separation. This, however, was not very satisfactory, since the Reformers, by the views which they *embraced*, afforded fair ground to the Church of Rome, *if it was possessed of legitimate authority, and had the same profession as it now has*, to expel them. But if, as Field labours to show, what is now the Church of Rome, so far as doctrinal profession is concerned, was, at the time when Luther appeared, but a mere faction within it,—which afterwards, indeed, acquired an ascendancy at the Council of Trent,—then the Reformers did not leave a church at all, or depart from a settled and legitimate communion, but merely adhered to, or rather themselves constituted and continued to be, the soundest portion of an existing orthodox church.

It is proper to mention that Field is not in general, and upon other topics, a supporter of High Church principles. He holds very moderate and reasonable views upon the subject of the distinction of bishops and presbyters, and would not have scrupled to concur in Archbishop Usher's Reduction of Episcopacy; and he maintains and proves that non-intrusion was the doctrine and practice of the primitive church. It is also fair to Field to state that the appendix to his third book, which has chiefly procured for him the favour of Tractarians, and has thereby led to a recent

republication of his work, which had become very scarce, was not published till after his death; and that suspicions have been entertained that it was not written by him, but got up under the influence of Archbishop Laud.\*

*Sec. I.—Perpetuity and Visibility of the Church.*

The second position which we mentioned as maintained by Protestant writers,—viz., that among these individuals and bodies of men who, from the rise of antichrist to the Reformation, were stigmatized and persecuted by the Church of Rome as heretics and schismatics, there was a series or succession of persons who held in the main scriptural Protestant principles, and are therefore to be regarded as witnesses for the truth,—leads into a still wider, and, in some respects, more intricate field of discussion. Many topics coming under this general head have been controverted between Protestants and Papists, which, as historical questions, are involved in very considerable doubts and difficulties, and are also interwoven with some doctrinal questions of importance concerning the succession, the perpetuity, and visibility of the church, viewed in connection with Christ's promises. The common Popish allegations upon this subject are these,—that for many centuries before Luther's time, the Church of Rome was, as it were, in possession of the world, as the one catholic church of Christ, and that Protestantism had no existence until it was invented in the beginning of the sixteenth century. They further contend, as a doctrinal or scriptural principle, that Christ has promised, and of course has secured, that He will always have on earth, in unbroken and perpetual succession, a visible organized church, maintaining His truth; and that the application of this scriptural or doctrinal principle excludes all claim upon the part of Protestants to be regarded as churches of Christ, and establishes the claim of the Church of Rome as the only catholic church.

I had occasion formerly to explain the import and bearing of Christ's promises, viewed in connection with the history of the

\* Baillie's "Ladensium Autocata-crisis," p. 103. Baxter's Safe Religion, p. 373. Baillie states this sus-  
picion, while Baxter fully approves of what is ascribed to Field.

church, and will not now dwell upon this subject as a doctrinal question, but rather advert briefly to some of the historical questions which have been discussed in connection with it. The claim set up by the Church of Rome of being, as it were, in possession of the world as the one catholic church of Christ for many centuries before the Reformation, is refuted by plain and palpable facts, and especially by the existence of the Greek Church, and other churches in the eastern part of the world. The Greek Church stands, at least, upon a level with the Latin Church with respect to an unbroken visible succession of functionaries and ordinances, to which Papists and other High Churchmen attach so much importance. The Greek has, at least, as good a claim as the Latin Church to a regular visible succession of office-bearers, and of outward organization, from the time of the apostles to the Reformation, and indeed to the present day; and if she is to be deprived of her position and status as a portion of the catholic church of Christ, upon Popish or High Church principles, it can be only by establishing against her the charge of heresy or schism. Accordingly, Popish controversialists have adduced these charges against her, while some Protestant writers have laboured to show that, at least upon Popish principles, the charge cannot be established. If Scripture be adopted as the standard, some very serious errors, in matters both of doctrine and practice, can be established against the Greek Church; but not quite so serious an amount of error as can be established, by the same standard, against the Church of Rome. And if we are to be guided in this matter by some general regard to the views and practice of the early church, then it is quite certain that the Greek Church is more conformed to the primitive standard than the Roman. Indeed, the Greek Church may be said to have retained in her public profession, with a considerable measure of accuracy, and still to possess, what was reckoned orthodoxy in the fourth and fifth centuries, with the exception of adopting the decrees of the infamous second Council of Nice. And even in regard to this subject, her guilt is less than that of the Church of Rome, as she does not require from her subjects the maintenance of any particular views, or the adoption of any particular practices, in regard to the worship of images or pictures. Whether tried, then, by the standard of Scripture or of the early church, the Greek Church is far less corrupt than the Latin; and, except upon the assumption that the Bishops of Rome

are, *jure divino*, the monarchs of the whole church, and warranted to exclude from its pale, as they think proper, is better entitled than the Popish to be regarded as a portion of the catholic church of Christ. The main ground on which the Papists charge the Greek Church with heresy, is their denial of the eternal procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son as well as from the Father; and on this point Protestants generally agree with Papists in thinking the Greek Church to be in error. But they usually maintain that this error is not such a heresy as to invalidate any claim she might otherwise have to be regarded as a portion of the catholic church. The fact that the Latins have excommunicated the Greeks, is no sufficient proof that the latter are schismatics.

On these grounds, it is manifest that the claim set up by the Roman Church to be regarded as having been virtually in possession of the Christian world for many centuries before the Reformation, as the whole catholic church of Christ, is altogether destitute of foundation. Whatever claims of this kind may be put forth by the Roman Church, may, with at least equal plausibility, be advanced by the Greek Church. The existence of the Greek Church, possessed of an unbroken visible succession of functionaries and of outward organization from the apostles' times, has been employed with good effect by Protestant writers in their discussions with Papists about the succession and perpetuity of the church, though it cannot be said, in this application of it, to rise above the dignity of an *argumentum ad hominem*. It exposes the claim which the Papists are accustomed to adduce in opposition to the Protestants, to the possession of the world as the catholic church antecedent to the Reformation. And it has somewhat affected the way in which the discussion of the general topic of an unbroken visible succession, as an alleged mark of the true church, has been conducted. Some Papists, anxious to avoid a strict investigation into the subject of the purity and apostolicity of doctrine,—the *only thing of fundamental importance* in estimating the character and claims of any professed church,—have been disposed to make an unbroken visible succession of outward organization from the apostles' times a sufficient proof by itself of purity and orthodoxy, and of a title to all the alleged rights of the catholic church, or a portion of it. But the case of the Greek Church, adduced in argument by the Protestants, com-

elled them to abandon this extreme view, and to content themselves with maintaining that an unbroken visible succession is but a *sine qua non* of a well-founded claim to orthodoxy and legitimate authority; the want of which disproves the claim, but the possession of which is not of itself sufficient to establish it. The Reformers did not admit the necessity of an outward visible succession even for this limited object, and uniformly maintained that it was quite enough at any time for any professing church to prove, by any competent means,—first, that it held the doctrine taught, and maintained the discipline established, by Christ and His apostles; and, secondly, that it had not presumptuously and contemptuously departed from the external arrangements which had the sanction of Scripture. This is one of the leading general principles on which the defence of the Reformation is founded; but we are not called upon to discuss it further.

Protestants, however, while resting their defence of the Reformation upon this important general principle, have taken some pains to bring out historically the succession and perpetuity of Protestant, as opposed to Popish, doctrine. It is an important and interesting object to trace the history of doctrine and practice in the visible church, independently of any strictly argumentative or controversial purpose to which the result of the investigation may be applied. It is an act of justice to vindicate the character of those whom the apostate Church of Rome stigmatized and persecuted as heretics and schismatics; and in investigating their character and doctrines, Protestant writers have brought out much that is fitted to expose Popish taunts and objections, and to afford some confirmation to Protestant truth. This is the object aimed at, and these are the principal topics involved, in the investigation of the history and opinions of those men who, during the middle ages, were excommunicated and persecuted by the Church of Rome as heretics and schismatics, but who have been generally regarded by Protestants as witnesses for the truth,—as maintaining and preserving, amid abounding corruption and iniquity, the succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine. Most of the facts and arguments connected with this subject have been brought to bear upon the history of the Waldenses and the Albigenses, and especially of the former (for they should not be confounded with each other); some Protestant writers having been of opinion that

the history of the Waldenses could be traced, and that they could be proved to have preserved the succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine and practice, uncorrupted by the great prevailing apostasy, from the fourth century till the Reformation; and all of them holding that the Waldenses present a much fuller and more continuous exhibition of a profession of Protestant anti-Popish doctrine during the middle ages than any other single people with whose history we are acquainted. Mosheim complains that the history of these topics has never been written with perfect impartiality, and perhaps the complaint is not altogether destitute of foundation. The historical facts of the case, and the application of the different and opposite views of Protestants and Papists concerning the doctrine of the succession, perpetuity, and visibility of the church of Christ, are so closely interwoven with each other, that there is more than ordinary difficulty in maintaining perfect impartiality in the historical investigation, even on the part of those who are in the main in the right. It must also be admitted that some Protestant writers have taken higher ground themselves, and made larger concessions to Papists, on the general subject of an unbroken visible succession of doctrine than the word of God and the promises of Christ required; and have thus felt themselves constrained to undertake to establish more by historical evidence than the facts of the case can be shown to warrant.

*Sec. II.—Waldenses and Albigenses.*

From a regard to various useful and important objects, Protestant writers have justly considered it a matter of much importance to trace the succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine, both within and without the pale of the Roman Church, during the dark and dreary period of the middle ages. They have, accordingly, established a succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine, in opposition to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, chiefly through Claude, Bishop of Turin, the Paulicians, the Cathari, the Albigenses, the Waldenses, Wickliffe, John Huss, Jerome of Prague, the Bohemian Brethren, and other witnesses for the truth, down till the period of the Reformation. Several works have been prepared by Protestant writers, embodying the testimonies of these witnesses for the truth, in opposition to the doctrines, practices, and claims of the Bishops of Rome. Perhaps the most

complete work devoted to this single object is the "Catalogus Testium Veritatis," by Flacius Illyricus, the principal author of the Centuries of Magdeburg, the first great work on ecclesiastical history. His testimonies, however, extend over a much wider space of time than that with which we are at present concerned, as he begins, in adducing his witnesses against the Papacy, with the apostle Peter, and brings forward thereafter a great deal of curious matter from a great variety of authors spread over nearly fifteen hundred years.

There are very considerable difficulties in ascertaining accurately the doctrinal views of some of these alleged witnesses for the truth during the middle ages, as in most cases we have scarcely any means of knowing what they believed and taught, except from Popish writers, their enemies and persecutors; and we may be pretty confident that the men who murdered them would not scruple to calumniate them. Still there is enough to satisfy us that those individuals and bodies of men whom we have mentioned were not only zealous opponents of the Papacy, were not only innocent of the charges which Popish writers have adduced against them, but that they held, in the main, the great principles of scriptural Protestant truth, and manifested by their lives and by their deaths,—inflicted by the Church of Rome, and endured by them just because of their faithful adherence to these principles,—that they feared God, that they loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they enjoyed the guidance and support of the Holy Spirit.

Some Protestant writers have been of opinion that Christ's promises necessarily imply that there must always be a visible organized church on earth, preserving in unbroken succession the substance of apostolic doctrine. Of course those who take this view of the import of our Lord's promises concede that they are bound,—if they still mean honestly to maintain the Protestant cause instead of betraying it, as the Tractarians do,—to produce some visible church distinct from the Church of Rome, which has preserved from apostolic times the succession of apostolic doctrine. This concession is attended with considerable responsibility, for it is not easy to make out clearly and satisfactorily by historical evidence the condition which it imposes. The Greek Church certainly contrasts favourably in some respects with the Roman, and, so far as its public profession is concerned, is far from being to the same extent corrupted. But while Protestant



writers formerly have not scrupled to employ the Greek Church against the Romanists, on the footing of an *argumentum ad hominem*, and have done so with good effect, they have not in general thought it warrantable or safe to found upon it in this argument directly and in their own name, as it were, and *ex veritate rei*, chiefly because of its adoption of the decrees of the second Council of Nice in regard to image-worship. Accordingly, those Protestants who have conceded the necessity, in order to the fulfilment of Christ's promises, of the constant existence on earth of some one visible church, holding in unbroken succession the substance of apostolic Protestant doctrine, have usually produced the Waldenses and Albigenses, as fully satisfying the conditions of the argument on the ground on which *they* are disposed to maintain it. Of course they are bound to prove that these bodies have subsisted as churches from a period antecedent to the rise of antichrist, down to the period of the Reformation, preserving during all this time the succession of the substance of apostolic Protestant doctrine in opposition to Popery; and thus connecting the early church, before it had become grossly corrupt in point of doctrine, with the era of the Reformers. This is rather an arduous task, and it is not by any means certain that the fact alleged has ever been thoroughly established by satisfactory historical evidence. When Papists have succeeded in getting any Protestant writers to concede the necessity of an unbroken succession of apostolic doctrine, maintained by a visible church, and find that the case which they generally select is that of the Waldenses and Albigenses, they then bend their whole strength to prove that the condition is not fulfilled in the actual history of these bodies; and it cannot be reasonably disputed that they have contrived to involve the subject, as a question of historical evidence, in very considerable difficulties.

Protestant writers have certainly succeeded in vindicating the Albigenses and the Waldenses of the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and following centuries from the calumnies which Popish writers have adduced against them, and have shown that their doctrines, from the twelfth century downwards, were substantially those now held by the Protestant churches. They have also shown that these bodies existed at an earlier period than that to which Papists commonly ascribe their origin, and they have even made it highly probable that the Waldenses subsisted from the time of

Claude, Bishop of Turin, in the ninth century; but it is not by any means so clear that they have succeeded in carrying the succession through them, by any satisfactory historical evidence, from the ninth century upwards into the period when the church is generally regarded by Protestants as not having become fatally corrupted in point of doctrine. A pretty full view of the historical positions usually maintained by Papists upon this subject, is to be found in the eleventh book of Bossuet's "History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches," and it is against this that the labours of subsequent Protestant writers have been chiefly directed. Indeed, Faber's "Inquiry into the History and Theology of the ancient Vallenses and Albigenses," published in 1838, is just formally an answer to that part of Bossuet's celebrated work, viewed in connection with the notions of the import of Christ's promises generally entertained by Papists, and expounded and applied by Bossuet in the fifteenth or last book of his work. Faber is one of those authors who, though thoroughly and cordially anti-Popish and anti-Tractarian, is yet so much of a High Churchman as to concede that Christ's promises imply the necessity of the constant and uninterrupted existence upon earth of a visible organized church, holding the substance of apostolic doctrine; and he adduces the Albigenses and the Waldenses, or Vallenses, as he calls them, as satisfying this condition. He has brought very considerable ingenuity and learning to bear upon the establishment of his position, and he has thoroughly disproved many of Bossuet's leading allegations. But I am not satisfied that he has established the precise point which he undertook to prove, although he has been bold and rash enough to stake upon the proof of it the whole cause of Protestantism, in so far as it is involved in the real meaning and application of our Lord's promises to His church.

The leading historical positions maintained upon this subject by Bossuet and other Papists are these:—First, that the Albigenses and Waldenses were two sects entirely different from each other in their origin, their location, their doctrine, and their character; secondly, that the Albigenses, settled chiefly in the south-east provinces of France, were the descendants of the Paulicians who came from the East, and were, like them, Manichæans, and that consequently they cannot be regarded even by Protestants as preserving the succession of apostolic doctrine; thirdly, that the sect

of the Waldenses originated with Peter Waldo, or Waldus, of Lyons, about the middle of the twelfth century, and had no existence before that period; and, fourthly, that these Waldenses, from their origin in the twelfth century down till the Reformation,—during the greatest part of which period they dwelt where they still do, in the valleys of the Cottian Alps,—were rather schismatics than heretics, separating from the church, like the ancient Novatians and Donatists, rather on questions of discipline than of doctrine; that on all the leading points of doctrine, especially in regard to the Eucharist, they held the views of the Church of Rome, and cannot therefore be consistently adduced by Protestants as maintaining and preserving the succession of apostolic doctrine.

With respect to the first of these positions, it is generally conceded by Protestant writers that the Waldenses and Albigenses were different sects, though they are often in popular usage confounded or identified with each other. The concession of this point, however, does not materially advance the Popish argument. The other three positions have been all disputed by Protestant writers, and we think that, upon the whole, they have been disproved; but, as we have already indicated, we do not regard all this as sufficient to establish the position which Faber has undertaken to defend. With respect to the alleged Manichæism of the Albigenses, it is true that this charge was usually brought against them by their persecutors, and by the Popish writers of the period; but it is just as true,—and we have it on the same authority,—that they themselves constantly denied that they held any Manichæan principles; that they persisted in this denial till their martyrdom; that no evidence was produced, either at the time or afterwards, that they held the Manichæan doctrine of two principles, original and eternal, or any of its legitimate consequences. So that we have in substance just the averment of their persecutors, burdened with the drawback of their having concurred in, or approved of, their having been put to death for conscience sake; and, on the other hand, their own denial of the charge, accompanied and followed by everything that could give it weight. The whole history of the Albigenses, and especially of the way in which they were calumniated and persecuted by the Church of Rome, irresistibly reminds us of the calumnies and persecutions directed against the primitive Christians in the second and third centuries; and the whole character and conduct of these men, as

it appears incidentally and unintentionally even in the narratives of their persecutors, is fitted to impress the mind with a strong conviction, that these victims of the cruelty of Papal Rome were men of the same character and principles as the earlier victims of Pagan Rome. Basnage thinks it probable that there were some persons among the separatists from the Church of Rome, in the south of France, who really were infected with some portion of Manichæan error; but he maintains that there is no evidence whatever of the truth of the charge in reference to the great body of those against whom it was adduced. In Pope Boniface VIII.'s celebrated Bull "Unam Sanctam,"—so famous for the extravagance of the claims which it put forth in behalf of the Papacy, for the silliness of its reasonings, and the grossness of its perversions of Scripture,—we have a curious instance of the slight and insufficient grounds on which the charge of Manichæism was sometimes based in those days; for the Pontiff there pronounces it to be a specimen of the Manichæan doctrine of two original principles, to maintain that the civil power is, in its own province, distinct from, and independent of, the ecclesiastical.\* Faber, in the third chapter of the Second Book of his Inquiry above referred to, has given a very ingenious and plausible, though merely hypothetical, explanation of the way in which—by a not very unnatural or improbable perversion of the real scriptural doctrines of the Albigenses—the accusation of Manichæism might have originated, without its originators having incurred the guilt of pure and absolute fabrication.

Upon the whole, we think it has been proved that there is no satisfactory evidence that the great body of those who, under the name of Albigenses, were in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries persecuted by the Church of Rome to almost entire extermination, held Manichæan errors; and that there is no reason to doubt that they were martyred, because, in opposition to the Papacy, they faithfully and honestly maintained apostolic Protestant doctrine; and that having been "slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held," they are still crying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?"†

\* Corpus Juris Canonici; Extrav. Com., Lib. i., tit. viii., c. i.

† Rev. vi. 9, 10.

Bossuet's third and fourth positions, however, concerning the origin and doctrine of the Waldenses, are, perhaps, still more important, so far as the argument is concerned, as Faber professes to be quite willing to rest upon them, even if the Albigenses were given up as Manichæan heretics. The averment of Bossuet and Papists is, that they originated with, and derived their name from, Peter Waldo, or Waldus, a rich merchant of Lyons, about the middle of the twelfth century; and it is certain that this individual separated from, and opposed, the Church of Rome,—that he gave abundant evidence of personal piety,—that he exerted himself in translating and circulating the sacred Scriptures, and in diffusing divine truth,—and thus became in a manner the founder of an anti-Popish sect, and entitled himself to a most honourable place among the witnesses for the truth. But it has also been contended,—and, we have no doubt, proved by sufficient evidence,—that *before* his time there existed in the valleys of the Alps an orthodox church, separated from, and opposed to, that of Rome; and there is, moreover, some fair ground for believing that Waldo had been himself originally connected with this pure church in the Alpine valleys,—that he taught the same doctrines which they held, and which he had learned from them,—and that afterwards his followers, when expelled from France along with the remains of the Albigenses that escaped the exterminating crusades, took refuge in the Alps, and joined the ancient Waldensian church, which had previously subsisted there, and with whose doctrine they agreed—from which, indeed, in the case of the more immediate followers of Waldo, their doctrines had been derived. We do not mean to aver that all these positions about the connection between Waldo and the old Waldensians of the Alps have been fully proved, but merely that there are a good many considerations which attach to them a high degree of probability, so that we would not hesitate to receive them, as we receive many other historical facts which are not very thoroughly established, while we would certainly not like to rest upon their truth or certainty any point of argument in controversy.\* The question, then, now is, What further do we know concerning the origin and history of this Waldensian church in the valleys of the Alps? It is certain that this church claimed to itself

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\* *Vide* Faber's Inquiry.

a remote antiquity, previous to the time of Waldo,\* and that this claim was generally conceded to it even by Popish writers. Beyond this there is not much that can be fairly regarded as certain or as established by satisfactory evidence. That a church of this description existed there in the time of Claude of Turin, in the ninth century,—who has been sometimes called the first Protestant,—there is fair reason to believe; and of its continued existence, and its substantial orthodoxy and purity, there is no reason to doubt. This, however, cannot be said to *prove* the existence of a church maintaining the succession of orthodox doctrine from the ninth to the twelfth century; and beyond the ninth century, in going backwards, there is really nothing deserving the name of evidence adduced in support of a visible organized orthodox church amid the valleys of the Alps. The Papists certainly have failed in showing that the Waldenses, —*i.e.*, the ancestors of the present Waldenses, in the valleys of the Alps,—derived their origin from Peter Waldo of Lyons in the twelfth century; but Faber, and other Protestants who adopt similar views, have equally failed in tracing, upon sure historical grounds, their unbroken succession as an organized church backwards from the twelfth century to the comparatively purer church of the early ages.

As to Bossuet's fourth position, that the Waldenses did not differ materially in doctrine from the Roman Church, but separated and remained apart from her, rather on grounds of discipline than doctrine,—and therefore cannot be appealed to by Protestants as preserving, for any portion of time, the succession of apostolic, anti-Popish doctrine,—we have no doubt that it has been conclusively disproved; and that satisfactory evidence has been adduced that, from the Reformation back to the eleventh century, and, in all probability, without any interruption to the time of Claude of Turin in the ninth, they were decidedly opposed, upon scriptural grounds, to the leading features in the system of Popish doctrine, and held in substance the great leading doctrines of Protestantism. This, we think, has been established by Basnage and by Faber, in answer to Bossuet; and it is a fact full of interest and value, and one which must ever invest the history of the Waldenses with an importance which attaches to comparatively few departments in the history of the church.

Upon the whole, then, we are persuaded that the attempt

made by Faber and others, to establish, through the Albigenses and Waldenses, an unbroken succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine, *as held and maintained by a visible organized church*, distinct from the Greek and Roman Churches, has failed; and the conclusion, therefore, is, either that our Saviour's promises do not imply and require this, or else that they have been fulfilled in the Greek and Roman Churches, and that these, therefore, must be regarded as having been, at the period of the Reformation, substantially sound and orthodox churches of Christ. It is a singular specimen of injudicious rashness in Faber to have staked so much upon a historical position, of which such meagre evidence could be adduced, and when there is so little in the terms in which our Saviour's promises are expressed to afford any plausible ground for enforcing the necessity of the concession. It is the duty, indeed, of upright men to guard carefully against the temptation of either perverting our Lord's statements, in order to bring them into accordance with the supposed facts of history; or, on the other hand, of perverting the facts of history in order to bring them into an accordance with the supposed import of our Lord's statements. But Faber, we think, has failed, both in interpreting aright our Lord's words, and in establishing his leading historical position of the unbroken succession of a visible organized orthodox church through the Waldenses; and there is really no difficulty in showing the accordance of the actual facts of history with all that our Saviour's promises can be proved necessarily to imply. His church, though not always appearing in a visible organized form, has never been destroyed from the earth. He has always had a seed to serve Him,—placed, it may be, in great variety of outward circumstances, living some of them within the pale of very corrupt churches, but still holding His truth, and walking in His ways. And the history of the Albigenses and Waldenses, which Faber has done a great deal to illustrate, affords most important and valuable matter for developing the fulfilment of Christ's promises, and assisting us in forming a just appreciation of the true character and tendencies of the great adversary of Christ and His cause—the apostate Church of Rome.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE CHURCH AT THE ERA OF THE REFORMATION.

WE have now surveyed the history of the church, and especially of the doctrines which it held forth and propagated, and of the discussions to which these doctrines gave rise, from the time of the apostles down to the beginning of the sixteenth century,—the era of the Reformation.

The sixteenth century is a period of surpassing interest and importance in the history of the church,—the most interesting and important, indeed, in many respects, of all, except that in which the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, and in which His own inspired apostles went forth to teach all nations in His name. Its leading general characteristic may be said to be, that it presents a remarkable, an extraordinary, manifestation of divine power and divine grace,—of God's special agency in raising up men eminently gifted and qualified by the indwelling of His Spirit; and in so communicating His grace, and so regulating the course of events, as to make these men instrumental in conferring most important benefits upon the church and upon the world. It presents to our contemplation a considerable number of most remarkable men, richly furnished of God with intellectual and spiritual endowments, placed in Providence in peculiarly interesting and trying circumstances, and effecting at length most important and valuable results. The events of this century are fitted, perhaps, more than those of any since the apostolic age, at once to illustrate the great principles of God's moral government in His dealings with His church, and to afford most important practical lessons for the instruction and guidance of His people, both collectively and individually.

The century opens with nearly the whole professing church sunk in abject slavery to the See of Rome, with one of the most infamous miscreants that ever disgraced human nature (Alexander VI.) claiming to be, and regarded by the great body