

from producing from his writings one or two brief extracts that may have dropped from him inadvertently, or when the topic in regard to which his authority is adduced was not present to his thoughts, or was not fully and formally considered. The first thing, therefore, which in fairness ought to be attended to, in an investigation of this sort, is the question, whether or not the author ever had the precise point controverted present to his mind—whether or not he has really formed and expressed a deliberate judgment regarding it. If the precise point under consideration was never really present to his thoughts, or if it was not formally and deliberately entertained by him, then, as experience proves, it will probably be no easy matter to ascertain with certainty what his views regarding it were; and, even if they could be certainly ascertained, they would be entitled to no weight or deference as an authority, while they might still be of some value, indirectly, in ascertaining, in combination with other evidence, the views that then generally prevailed. This obvious dictate of common sense, confirmed by manifold experience, has been far too much overlooked, especially—though not exclusively—by Papists in adducing the testimony of the fathers; and, in consequence, there has been a great deal of most unprofitable and frequently most unfair discussion about the meaning of many obscure and confused passages, often terminating without leading to any very satisfactory or decisive result on either side. When Papists have adduced passages from the fathers in support of their tenets, the way in which Protestants have usually met them is by laying down and establishing such positions as these: that the words adduced do not *necessarily* require the sense which the Papists put upon them; that a careful examination of the context and scope of the passages proves that *this* was not in fact their meaning; and then particularly, that, from an examination of the whole writings of the author adduced, it can be proved that he held, not the Popish, but the Protestant view upon the point—or, at least, that he has given no clear or explicit deliverance regarding it. Protestants have fully established these positions, *or some of them*, in regard to a very large proportion of the passages commonly quoted by Papists from the writings of the early fathers; though the labour that has been spent upon this subject has been immeasurably greater than its intrinsic importance deserved, and though in this way a vast amount of learned lumber has been

bequeathed to the world, especially by divines of the Church of England.

These observations, however, apply chiefly to the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, or the Nicene age; which principally forms the debateable ground in this controversy with the Church of Rome. It is not till the fifth century, or the end of the fourth, that the Popish writers can find materials for making out a case that has anything like plausibility in support of almost any of the definite peculiarities of the Romish Church; and a large portion of what they commonly adduce from writers of these two centuries is but plausible, rather than solid. The Protestants have in the main successfully established, in regard to most of the writers of that period, one or more of the positions formerly stated. There is, however, good reason to believe that some of them have gone further than the evidence warranted, in denying that the germs or rudiments of many Popish doctrines were sown in the Nicene and immediately subsequent age, though they were not yet fully expanded and developed. But it is with the first of these centuries that we have at present to do; and here it has been established, upon a full and deliberate investigation of the whole materials, that the cause of Popery has nothing solid, scarcely anything even plausible, to rest upon; while, on the other hand, it cannot be fairly disputed that even in that early period there are plain traces of the “mystery of iniquity” being at work—indications of some of the germs of the system which was afterwards fully developed, and which operates so injuriously both on the temporal and spiritual welfare of men.

We cannot enter into a minute and detailed discussion of the various points involved in the Popish controversy, or into an investigation of the particular testimonies from early writers, which have been the subjects of so much useless discussion. We can merely state briefly and generally how the case stands. With respect to the worship paid to angels, saints, and images, and the adoration of the host, on which Protestants have based the heavy charge of idolatry against the Church of Rome, it is a matter of unquestionable certainty, and is admitted by learned Papists, that there is no authority to be produced for their doctrine and practice during the first three centuries. Thus one most important department of the mystery of iniquity is at once cut off from all pretence to the countenance and support of primitive antiquity.

There was no idolatry in the primitive church, so long as she was engaged in contending against pagan idolatry, invested with civil authority and with power to persecute; and nothing is more certain than that, in the discussions between the Christian fathers of this period and the defenders of pagan idolatry and polytheism, *the latter* had recourse to the very same sophistry in vindication of their undoubted idolatry as Papists now employ in defence of theirs, and that *the former* (the fathers) clearly and fully exposed its utter futility. It has been fully proved that the whole substance of what the Papists are accustomed to adduce, in defending themselves from the charge of being guilty of polytheism and idolatry in the worship they pay to angels, saints, and images, was brought forward by the advocates of paganism, and answered by the Christian apologists.

We have seen, indeed, that even in the third century there were plain traces of undue and extravagant honours being paid to martyrs and confessors, such as anniversaries instituted of their deaths in the case of martyrs, and conceding to their influence, in the case of confessors, a sort of right to modify what were believed to be scriptural principles in regard to penitence and admission into the communion. All this was wrong and injurious, and may perhaps be justly regarded as the germ or rudiment of the excesses and impiety that were afterwards introduced. But there is no evidence of the existence during this period of anything in doctrine or practice that was justly chargeable with being idolatrous or polytheistic. Even the addresses to these men, with which the works of some of the fathers of the fourth century abound, are rather exhibitions of foolish rhetorical declamation than prayers or invocations based upon a definite belief, such as the Church of Rome inculcates, that they were to be worshipped in any sense, or that they could exert any influence in procuring for men temporal or spiritual blessings. This, however, was a step in advance in the development of the mystery of iniquity, and led the way to the prevalence of Popish or antichristian polytheism, which became pretty general, and was introduced into the public service of the church in the course of the seventh century. It is deserving of notice, that in this way the worship of saints and angels crept into the church very gradually, without exciting much opposition, or calling forth much controversial discussion.

It was otherwise with the worship of images, to which we

shall afterwards have occasion to advert, which was established only towards the end of the eighth century, at what is called the Seventh General Council, or the Second Council of Nice, and after a severe and protracted struggle. During the first three centuries, the church was in open antagonism with paganism, and this contributed to preserve it in purity from an important class of errors. It was not till the altered circumstances of the church, taken under the protection of the civil authority, and freed from the necessity of openly contending with paganism, afforded a favourable opportunity, that Satan set himself to corrupt it, having recourse to his old expedient of fostering polytheism and idolatry, so natural to fallen man, and of overwhelming true religion under a mass of rites and ceremonies, and a crowd of external observances. It might have been supposed that, under the light of the Christian dispensation, the re-introduction of polytheism and idolatry was impracticable. But Satan knew better; and no sooner did the termination of the open contest between Christianity and paganism afford him a favourable opportunity, than he made an attempt to revive them under a Christian form,—an attempt which was crowned with the most marvellous success, and involved the great body of the professors of the Christian church for many centuries in the deepest guilt and degradation. The pagans of the first three centuries were accustomed to charge the Christians with atheism, because they had no splendid temples, no sacrifices, no images, no gorgeous dresses, no array of ceremonies and processions. This reproach, however, was in due time fully wiped away by the introduction of all the leading features of paganism, under a Christian form, indeed, but without losing anything of their essential nature, or operating less injuriously than before upon the interests of true religion. Had the primitive church borne even the slightest resemblance to the Church of Rome, the reproach of atheism on this ground never would have been adduced against it.

Sec. V.—The Sacraments.

One very important department of our controversy with the Church of Rome is that which respects the sacraments; and in regard to some of the doctrines and practices which may be comprehended under this head, they make somewhat more confident

and plausible appeals to antiquity than in regard to that to which we have last adverted. Protestants in general have freely conceded that the doctrine and practice of the church in regard to the sacraments was at an early period, and even during the first three centuries, considerably corrupted; but they do not admit, and it cannot be proved, that almost any of the *peculiar* doctrines of Popery had been invented during the period referred to, though the seeds of some of them had been sown, and were largely developed during the fourth, the fifth, and subsequent centuries. In the fathers of the third, and even of the second centuries, there are plain enough traces of a disposition to make great mysteries of the sacraments,—to indulge in vague and unintelligible representations of their nature and their consequences. The earliest symptoms of corruption or declension in the church are to be found, first, in the rise and growth of Prelacy; secondly, the introduction of confused and erroneous views upon the doctrines of grace; and, thirdly, of erroneous and exaggerated notions of the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments: and the progress of error and declension upon the two last topics, which are by far the most important, exerted a powerful reciprocal influence. It was mainly by the spread of erroneous and extravagant notions upon the subject of the sacraments, that the fundamental doctrines of the gospel were set aside and perverted; and it has been true ever since, in every age of the church, that both among mere formalists, who were satisfied with outward observances, and among men who had some earnestness about religion, but who were ignorant of, or opposed to, the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, the sacraments, erroneously understood, have been substituted for the weightier matters of the law—the sign has been substituted for the thing signified.

In the New Testament, certainly, the sacraments do not occupy any very prominent place; and nothing is said concerning them that gives any countenance whatever to what Papists and semi-Papists are accustomed to assert concerning their nature, objects, and results. Baptism is, indeed, said to save us, and men who receive the Lord's Supper are said to partake of the body and blood of Christ; but there are abundant materials in Scripture to prove that these outward ordinances are but signs and seals of spiritual blessings, which may, indeed, be said ordinarily to *apply* these blessings, but the efficacy of which in applying them is

wholly dependent upon the presence and operation of faith in the recipient; while faith, wherever it exists, confers and applies all spiritual blessings irrespective of any external ordinances whatever. The symbolical character of the sacraments was soon more or less obscured or lost sight of, and some traces of the Popish principles of the *opus operatum*—*i.e.*, some inherent power or efficacy of the ordinances themselves, irrespective of the faith and character of the recipient—began to make their appearance, which, in the progress of ignorance and corruption of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, were gradually more and more developed.

The first step in the progress of error in this matter was a confounding, more or less thoroughly, of the sign with the thing signified; and this gradually expanded into an ascription to the sacraments of a power of producing or conferring, by something like an inherent efficacy of their own, what they merely represented or symbolized. Before the end of the third century, the fathers were accustomed to speak of baptism as being at once the remission of sin and the renovation of the moral nature; and though this mode of speaking was originally adopted upon the *assumption*, that the faith which unites men to Christ, and is the instrumental cause of justification, and, in the full sense of the word, of moral renovation, existed, and was expressed or embodied in the reception of baptism, yet this consideration was gradually lost sight of, and they began to talk as if baptism of itself necessarily implied all this. Hence baptism came at length to comprehend, and thereby to shut out or abolish, so far as the professed doctrinal system was concerned, the great fundamental principle of justification by faith, and to be received as a substitute for that great change of moral nature indispensable to salvation, which is effected by the Holy Spirit through the belief of the truth. It is a very remarkable thing, that the great doctrine of justification by faith excited no formal controversy in the church, and can scarcely be said to have been even fully expounded and enforced, from the time of Paul to that of Luther. Satan's policy was to undermine it, rather than to assail it openly and directly; and this object was pursued and effected chiefly by throwing the doctrine of justification, in the scriptural sense, and according to the scriptural views of it, into the background, by giving prominence to the sacraments, and by encouraging extravagant notions of their nature and efficacy. It was chiefly baptism that was

employed for this purpose; and, accordingly, there are few subjects in regard to which the Papists can produce from the fathers a more plausible array of testimonies to countenance their tenets than in regard to this sacrament. Not that either the principles of the *opus operatum*, or the absolute necessity of baptism to salvation, can be shown to have been generally and distinctly held by the leading writers of the third century, though the latter was maintained explicitly by many before the end of the fourth; but that considerable advances were made towards these errors, and still more towards what has since been called *baptismal regeneration*,—an error, the maintenance of which may be confidently regarded as indicating an entire ignorance of the fundamental principles of the gospel.

It was common in the third century, and even in the fourth, for men who professed to have been converted to the faith of the gospel to delay their baptism till they thought that death was at hand; and this they did under the influence of a notion which then prevailed, that baptism conferred the remission of all past sins, and thus, as it were, cleared off all scores, and prepared them for death and heaven. This erroneous and most dangerous notion was not, indeed, directly countenanced by the doctors of the church, but there must have been something in the common mode of stating and explaining the nature and efficacy of baptism which naturally led to the adoption of it. The practice of delaying baptism gradually gave way before the doctrine of the absolute necessity of baptism to salvation both in infants and adults, which had become prevalent before the end of the fourth century. But the Church of Rome still teaches, both that baptism cleanses from all past sins,—freeing infants from all original sin,—and that it is indispensably necessary to salvation; and she can produce fully as good authority from the fathers for these as for any of the other errors by which she has corrupted the doctrines of the gospel.

The Lord's Supper forms a very prominent feature in the system of the Church of Rome. Everything about this ordinance she has most grossly corrupted. She has explained and applied it in such a way as virtually to overturn or neutralize the fundamental principles of gospel truth,—the great doctrines of the vicarious atonement of Christ, justification by faith, and sanctification by the Spirit of God; and she has embodied in her system

of doctrine and practice concerning it, her principal provisions for crushing the exercise of all mental independence and freedom of thought, and for subjecting the understandings, consciences, and the purses of men to the control of her priesthood. She has laboured with unwearied zeal and activity, to procure for her doctrines and practices upon this important subject the countenance and support of the primitive church, but without success. One of the most elaborate and voluminous controversies, in the form of a single combat, that ever took place, turns upon this question,—the controversy between those two noble combatants, Arnauld the celebrated Jansenist, and Claude the great champion of the French Protestant churches in the latter part of the seventeenth century. In that great controversy on the perpetuity of the faith of the church concerning the Eucharist, as it was called, everything bearing upon this topic was searched out, and applied with great ability and ingenuity on both sides. The practical result of this controversy concerning the Eucharist is very much the same as that which has been stated in regard to baptism. The Church of Rome has nothing solid, and little that is even plausible, to stand upon during the first three centuries,—nothing but a tendency manifested to talk in pompous and mystical language about the solemnity and efficacy of the ordinance, and to fail in distinguishing very accurately between the sign and the thing signified. It has been proved that the progress of obscure, unintelligible, and extravagant phraseology upon this subject advanced, but that it was not till the ninth century that we have any clear and unequivocal indication of the modern Popish doctrine of transubstantiation. It is very certain that, during the first three centuries, there was no adoration of the host; no altar, and no proper sacrifice; and that, of course, the mass, that great idol of Popery, was utterly unknown.

With respect to transubstantiation, or the alleged conversion of the bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ, on which the whole doctrine and practice in regard to the mass is founded, they have nothing to adduce from this period in support of it, except that the fathers call the bread and wine, as Scripture does, the body and blood of Christ,—the question, however, remaining in both cases to be determined, whether such statements mean, and were intended to mean, that the one was actually converted, *by a change of substance*, into the other; or merely that the one

was a figure, or symbol, or emblematical representation of the other. There is, as we have said, a good deal of confusion and obscurity in the language occasionally employed upon this subject, quite enough to prove the utter unfitness of the fathers to be authorities or guides; but there are sufficient materials to prove that not only for three, but for more than twice three centuries, though the obscurity and confusion of the language employed were increasing, the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation had not been broached.

Papists usually make this matter of transubstantiation the leading instance of a principle which they are in the habit also of applying to other topics,—that, viz., of the impossibility of a new doctrine being invented and broached subsequently to the time of the apostles, without attracting attention and calling forth opposition. We deny the soundness of the principle as a rule or standard for judging of the truth of doctrines. The perfection and sufficiency of the Scriptures prove that it is quite enough to show from the word of God, that from the beginning it was not so; while the history of the church suggests many considerations which evince that the principle, if true at all, is true only to a very limited extent. But, irrespective of all this, Protestants do not hesitate to undertake, in regard to this particular topic of transubstantiation, to prove that there was a long and gradual process of preparation for its fabrication in the growing corruption and declension of the church, and in the growing confusion and obscurity of the language employed upon this subject; that it was not till the ninth century that the doctrine of transubstantiation was clearly and unequivocally developed; that, notwithstanding the peculiarly favourable circumstances in which it was broached, from the corruption and ignorance which then prevailed, it did meet with decided opposition, and was not finally established as the public and recognised doctrine of the church for several centuries afterwards. Gieseler, in his very valuable “Text-Book of Ecclesiastical History,” states this point with his usual brevity, accuracy, and comprehensiveness, in this way, supporting his statement, as usual, with an abundance of satisfactory quotations and references: “Paschasius Radbertus, a monk, and from A.D. 844–851 abbot, of Corbey (A.D. 865), first reduced the fluctuating expressions long in use concerning the body and blood of Christ in the holy supper, to a regular theory of transubstantiation. His

doctrine, however, met with very considerable opposition. Rabanus Maurus rejected it entirely; Ratramnus” (known also by the name of Bertram), “in the opinion for which he was called upon by the emperor, and which has been often erroneously attributed to John Scotus, declared decidedly against it, and all the most respected theologians of the day adhered to the more reasonable view. Still this mystical doctrine, which had probably existed for a long time amongst the common people, though never before theologically developed, was not without its advocates, and it was easy to foresee that it needed only a time of greater darkness and ignorance, such as soon followed, to become prevalent.” *

Sec. VI.—*The Papal Supremacy.*

We cannot enter upon the numerous innovations and corruptions in doctrine, government, worship, and discipline, which have been obtruded upon the professedly Christian community by the Church of Rome. The great mass of them have no countenance, and scarcely pretend to have any countenance, from the fathers of the first three centuries; and when we have once got beyond this period, no inferior antiquity, alleged to attach to any doctrine or practice, can be held to afford even the slightest presumption that it had an apostolic origin; and, therefore, all discussions about the origin of doctrines and practices, which first appeared in a later age, possess a merely historical interest, and have no real bearing upon the question of even the probability of their being true or binding. Romanists have been much perplexed as to what course they ought to take in order to procure an apostolic sanction for their innumerable innovations. Some assert that all the doctrines and practices of the modern Church of Rome have existed in the church from the time of the apostles downwards, and endeavour to account for the want of any trace of them in the remains of ancient times, by the *disciplina arcani*, or the alleged habit of the ancient church to conceal some of her tenets and ceremonies. Others abandon altogether the attempt to establish the antiquity of matters of outward order and discipline, and found a great deal upon the erroneous and dangerous principle,—which has also re-

* Vol. ii., pp. 45–48 of Cunningham’s translation; and vol. ii., pp. 284–290 of Davidson’s.

ceived the sanction of the Church of England,—that the church has power to decree rites and ceremonies.

But the difficulty remains still in regard to *doctrines*, in the more limited sense of the word, which cannot be established from Scripture. Now, in regard to this subject, their general principles about the unwritten, as distinguished from the written, word, would seem, in all fairness, to tie them down to the necessity of proving a catholic consent with respect to all doctrines which they impose upon men's faith,—*i.e.*, of proving, by competent evidence, that they have been generally held by the church at large in every age since the apostles' days. But though this is a burden which their professed general principles manifestly impose upon them, and though they have made great efforts to sustain it, not only by means of sophistry and misrepresentation, but of forgery and interpolation, they have found the task impracticable. It has been proved that there are not a few doctrines taught by the Church of Rome, with respect to which not only no proof, but no presumption exists, that they were known at all during the first three or four centuries. They rather shrink from asserting openly and explicitly the right of the church,—infallible though she be,—to form new articles of faith confessedly not delivered to the church by Christ and His apostles, and imposing them upon men's consciences; and, therefore, they have devised two expedients by which they think they can evade the necessity of maintaining this startling claim, though, in fact, they are, both of them, just assertions of it in a somewhat disguised and mitigated form. The first is, that in consequence of the difficulties attaching to the investigation of this catholic consent, as a historical question or matter of fact, they ascribe to the existing church—*i.e.*, to the Romish authorities for the time being—the right of determining finally and infallibly, whether any particular doctrines that may have been broached, have or have not been handed down in the church from apostolic times. But as they could not fail to see that men could not easily be persuaded to believe an affirmative declaration to this effect made by the existing church, unless she had some evidence to produce of the antiquity of the doctrine, they have been led to have recourse to what is the favourite expedient now-a-days, and is known as the Theory of Development. It is based upon a principle or idea, the truth of which is admitted by Protestants, *viz.*, that the church is warranted, and may be called upon, accord-

ing to the circumstances in which she is placed, and especially the errors against which she may have to contend, to bring out more fully, and to define more precisely, the doctrines which the apostles delivered to the church; and then they add to this sound principle the unsound one, that the church—*i.e.*, the Church of Rome—has the right of authoritatively determining what tenets ought to be received as true and sound developments of apostolic doctrine, and what ought to be rejected as errors or corruptions; and from all this they deduce the inference, that what Protestants call Romish innovations in doctrine are true and just developments of doctrines which indeed were contained in substance in those taught by the apostles, orally or in writing; but were not developed, because there was no call for this till the broaching of errors required it. And while they rest this conclusion, and the truth of the particular doctrines which it respects, mainly upon the right of the church to develop and define, they also do their best, in regard to each particular doctrine, to bolster it up by any evidence they can derive from perverting Scripture and the testimonies of antiquity.

It is this theory of development that is advocated in Dr Newman's work, giving an account of his reasons for joining the Church of Rome. He virtually abandons the theory of tradition and catholic consent, about which he and his followers used to prate so much.* The way in which true Protestants should meet it is plain enough. They will investigate the true and honest meaning of development, as distinguished from mere invention or fabrication, and mark out the limits and conditions of the principle fairly and judiciously, so as to guard against tenets being called developments of previously existing and professed doctrines, when they are manifestly new inventions, which had previously

* The Tractarians, who still adhere to the Establishment, have been greatly puzzled as to how they should dispose of their late leader's Theory of Development; and, indeed, I do not know that any one of them has yet ventured to grapple with it. The orthodoxy of Newman's Theory of Development has given rise to a controversy among Romanists themselves. Cardinal Wiseman has adopted and

defended it.—*Dublin Review* for Dec. 1845 and Dec. 1847; *vide* Dr Wordsworth's Letters to M. Gondon, on the Distinctive Character of the Church of Rome, *Let. i.*, especially pp. 13 and 31 of 3d edition, 1848. It was opposed by Brownson, with the alleged sanction of American authorities; *vide* *Bulwark*, vol. ii., pp. 159 and 216.

no basis to rest upon; they will deny, and, if needful, disprove, the pretended right of the Church of Rome to decide authoritatively and infallibly as to what tenets are true and just developments of previously existing doctrines, and what are new inventions and corruptions; they will insist that all these questions be decided by the sacred Scriptures, interpreted in the exercise of common sense; and then, having thus cleared the ground, they will adduce direct proof, as has been often done, that all the peculiar doctrines of the Church of Rome are opposed to Scripture and primitive antiquity, or at least are wholly unsanctioned by them; and that in *either* case, men are not only warranted, but bound to reject them.

The causes which have led to the promulgation of this theory of development in the present day, are manifestly these: first, that in consequence of the profound investigations into the history of doctrines or dogmas, as it is commonly designated, which have recently taken place in Germany, it had become palpably absurd and impossible to maintain any longer the old Romish position, that all the doctrines of the Council of Trent could be traced back by anything like a plausible chain of evidence to the apostolic, or to any portion of the ante-Nicene, age; and, secondly, that the theory was in substance identical with that of the infidel Rationalists, who represent the Christian system, as taught by Christ and His apostles, as containing, indeed, some germs or rudiments of truth, but as very defective and imperfect, and admitting of great improvement; and that the adoption of it was thus a specimen of Rome's skilful adaptation to the prevailing sentiments and tendencies of the age; while Satan, who must always be taken into account as an influential party in all Romish schemes, has the advantage of men being, by the exposition of this theory of development, led into infidelity, or confirmed in it, if they should not be convinced of the right of the Church of Rome to determine authoritatively on the legitimacy of alleged developments.

When we consider the various shifts to which the defenders of the Church of Rome have been thus obliged to have recourse, in discussing the general subject of the fathers and antiquity, and recollect what we have already adduced as to the testimony of the first three centuries on some of the leading peculiarities of Popery, it can excite no surprise that some of the most eminent Popish controversialists—as, for example, Cardinal Perron and the Jesuit Petavius, than whom the Church of Rome has produced

no men more eminent, at once for erudition and controversial skill—have virtually given up the first three centuries, and have tried to take their stand, as the Tractarians do, upon the fourth and fifth centuries. Upon all these grounds, we do not intend to dwell at any greater length upon the bearing of the testimony of the first three centuries upon the points involved in the Popish controversy, with this exception, that we mean to make some observations upon the supremacy of the Pope, or the claim which he puts forth to be acknowledged and obeyed as the vicar of Christ upon earth, and the monarch of the universal church. This may be regarded as being in some respects the great leading characteristic of Popery, by which it is distinguished from all other professedly Christian communities, whether more pure or more corrupt.

We do not dwell upon the differences of opinion existing among Romanists themselves, as to what the Pope's supremacy implies—as to the kind and degree of power and authority that ought to be ascribed to him—although their internal controversies upon this subject afford important arguments against the whole of the Papal claims. There is a very considerable gradation of opinion upon this topic, even among men who have lived and died in the communion of the Romish Church—from those who ascribe to the Pope, as such, personal infallibility in all matters of doctrine and even of fact, and direct jurisdiction in temporal matters, down to some of the extreme defenders of the Gallican liberties, as they are called, who have represented him as being just the patriarch of the West, occupying, indeed, the highest place, both in point of rank and power, among the bishops of the Western Church, but not invested with any very large measure of authority or jurisdiction, to be exercised according to his own discretion, and independently of the synods or councils in which he might preside, and of the canons already received by the church. It is admitted, however, that almost all Romanists, including even most of the defenders of the Gallican liberties, maintain the supremacy of the Pope, as implying that he is invested with some measure of authority or jurisdiction over the whole church of Christ. Bossuet indeed, and other defenders of the Gallican liberties,* object to the position that the Pope has the power of ruling or governing

* Defensio Declar. Cler. Gal., P. i., Lib. i., c. ii. iii.

the universal church, inasmuch as this might be held to imply that he was entitled to rule, and, of course, was superior to an œcumenical council, which is the universal church representative,—a doctrine which the Gallican church has always strenuously opposed; and those of them who might hesitate to deny that the Council of Florence, in the fifteenth century, which ascribed to the Pope the right of ruling and governing the universal church, was œcumenical, and of course infallible, endeavour to get rid of its decree upon this subject, by saying—rather a nice distinction—that the universal church, which the Pope is declared by the council to have the power of ruling and governing, is to be understood, not *collectively*, as comprehending the whole church in the mass, or an œcumenical council as representing it, but only *distributively*, as including all the faithful, and all the different churches separately considered, which may be spread over the earth. But we need not enter into details as to the differences among Romanists with respect to the extent either of the Pope's spiritual or temporal supremacy, and must just regard it as implying in general, and by almost universal admission, a right to exercise jurisdiction or authoritative control over *all* the professing people and churches of Christ, if not over *the universal church*. Although it cannot, perhaps, be proved that the Church of Rome, as such, is committed to any precise definition of the kind or degree of power implied in the Pope's supremacy,—the meaning, as well as the authority of the decree of the Council of Florence, which looks most like a formal definition of anything that can be produced upon this point, being a subject of controversial discussion among themselves,—yet it can be proved that she is committed to this position, that it is indispensable to the salvation of any human being that he be subject to the Bishop of Rome: for this startling doctrine was not only inculcated in bulls issued by Pope Boniface VIII. and Pope Leo X., but confirmed by two of the Lateran Councils; and Bellarmine, accordingly, does not hesitate to say that the supremacy of the Pope involves the sum and substance of Christianity:—"De qua re agitur, cum de primatu Pontificis agitur? brevissime dicam, de summa rei Christianæ. Id enim quæritur, debeat ne Ecclesia diutius consistere, an verò dissolvi, et concidere? Quid enim aliud est quærere, an oporteat, ab ædificio fundamentum remove, a grege pastorem, ab exercitu imperatorem, solem ab astris, caput a corpore, quàm an oporteat ædifi-

cium ruere, gregem dissipari, exercitum fundi, sydera obscurari, corpus jacere?"*

If it be indeed true that the Bishop of Rome is the foundation of the Christian church, the pastor of the whole flock of Christ, the commander of the whole Christian army, the sun among the stars, the head of the body, it must be of some importance that individuals and churches should know this, and be suitably affected by the relation which he holds to them. If he be the vicar of Christ, and authorized *by Him* to govern His church—and upon no lower ground than this can the claims he puts forth be even entertained—he must produce Christ's commission, he must show Christ's authority for all the powers he claims; and this he professes to do, adducing Scripture proofs in support of his supremacy. It is true, indeed, that (as has been conclusively proved) these claims were never explicitly put forth in their modern dimensions, as resting upon a scriptural basis, till about the middle of the fifth century; and this upon general, and much more upon Popish, principles, furnishes a very strong presumption against their validity. But still, every claim that professes to rest upon scriptural authority is entitled to a deliberate examination, at whatever time or in whatever circumstances it may have been advanced.

The positions on which the Pope's claim to supremacy over the Christian church is based, may be reduced to two, though they may also be expanded into a larger number. The defenders of the Pope's supremacy are bound, and do indeed undertake, to establish these two positions—first, that Christ invested Peter with a primacy or superiority, not only of rank, honour, or dignity, but of actual authority or jurisdiction, over the rest of the apostles, and over all His church, so that he, by Christ's appointment, became their rightful ruler or governor, he being entitled to exercise authority over them, and they being bound to obey him; and that this supremacy was not personal to Peter, but was to be enjoyed by an unbroken succession of individuals to the end of the world; and, secondly, that, by Christ's authority and direction, Peter became and died Bishop of Rome, and transmitted to all his successors *in that see* the same authority or jurisdiction over the church which Christ had conferred upon him. Unless *both* these positions can be established, and

* Præf. de Rom. Pontif.

established from Scripture, the Pope's claim to supremacy must manifestly fall to the ground.

Now, it is evident, even at first sight, that the important points embodied in the second of these positions do not admit of being established by scriptural evidence. There is manifestly nothing in Scripture which, with any plausibility, can be advanced in support of them; and, indeed, the Papists scarcely venture to allege that there is, and usually under this head have recourse to general considerations, to far-fetched inferences, to vague probabilities, and mere human authorities, instead of specific Scripture proofs. It is otherwise, however, with the first position, or at least the first part of it, which asserts that a supremacy over the other apostles, and over the whole church, was vested in Peter by his Master. In support of this they do profess to produce positive Scripture proofs, and these are not altogether destitute of a certain measure of *prima facie* plausibility, especially our Lord's address to Peter after the apostle had confessed his faith in Him as the Son of God, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build My church." We cannot enter upon anything like a minute and detailed examination of the import of particular statements of Scripture. It is enough at present to observe that the Papists are, by their own principles, precluded from basing upon this text a proof of the supremacy of Peter, inasmuch as they cannot produce in support of their interpretation of it the consent of the fathers; nay, inasmuch as it is certain that a great proportion of the most eminent of the fathers, even in the fourth century, understood the rock on which the church was to be built, to mean, not the person, but the faith of Peter,—the great truth which he had just confessed, and which is evidently the foundation and main topic of the whole conversation. This is an interpretation which certainly cannot be disproved, and which is rendered all the more probable by the considerations, that Christ is represented in Scripture as being alone properly the rock on which the church is built; while, in the improper or subordinate sense in which alone any creature could be said to be the rock or foundation of the church, the designation is elsewhere applied equally to all the apostles, who were also, all of them, subsequently invested with the power of the keys, with the power of binding and loosing, in the same terms as Peter was.

There is no ground in the New Testament for believing that

Peter was invested by Christ with jurisdiction or authority over the other apostles and over the church; and there is no ground there for believing that he assumed or exercised any such jurisdiction. On the contrary, there is much declared and recorded in the New Testament which tends to prove—first, in general, that there was no proper superiority or subordination among the apostles, as rulers and governors of the church; and, secondly, and more specifically, that Peter was not invested with any jurisdiction over the rest of them, and that,—notwithstanding his eminent qualities, his distinguished services, and the signal honour which Christ put upon him by making him so prominent an instrument of extensive good,—he was not then regarded and treated as the vicar of Christ and the ruler of the church. With respect to the second part of the first position—viz., that the supremacy vested in Peter over the apostles, supposing it proved, was to be enjoyed by an unbroken succession of individuals in all future ages—it is scarcely pretended that there is any direct specific evidence in Scripture in support of it. It is a mere inference, resting, at best, upon vague general probabilities, and may be regarded as fairly precluded by the absurdity which it implies in its very first stage,—viz., that Peter's immediate successor must have been the lord and master of the apostles who survived him, including the apostle John, who survived all the rest. The dignity of Prince of the Apostles, which the Papists assign to Peter, if it ever existed, may have, for anything that can be shown, disappeared with the apostolic office.

It is, however, the second of the positions on which the supremacy of the Pope is founded—viz., that Peter, by Christ's orders, became and died Bishop of Rome, and transmitted to all his successors in that see the same jurisdiction over the church which Christ had conferred on him—that comes more immediately within our province. Unless this position be also thoroughly established, nothing whatever has been done towards proving the Pope's supremacy; and unless it be established from Scripture, there can rest upon no man an obligation to admit it. Now, it is perfectly manifest that there is nothing whatever in Scripture *that has even the appearance of bearing upon any of the points involved in it*; and this single consideration is conclusive against the whole claim. If there be any doctrines which we are required to believe as resting upon God's authority, and if these doctrines are

in some measure involved as to the grounds on which they rest in matters of fact, we must have these matters of fact recorded in Scripture itself, else they can be of no force or validity in establishing a *jus divinum*. The informations of ecclesiastical history may be of some use and weight in establishing the true meaning and import of some scriptural statements, as we formerly showed in the case of the heresies of the Docetæ and the Cerinthians; but this has no analogy with the present case: for here the facts alleged are made the real and the sole basis of doctrines, which it is admitted are not, as doctrines, taught in Scripture. Conceding, for the sake of argument, first, that Peter was invested with jurisdiction over the whole church; and, secondly, that he was to have a continued series of successors in the possession and exercise of this universal headship,—neither of which positions assuredly can be proved; yet all this avails nothing whatever towards establishing the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome, unless and until it be *further* proved that Christ intended *them* to be His successors in this universal headship. Now, as confessedly it is not stated in Scripture, either directly or by implication, that the Bishops of Rome were to be Peter's successors in the exercise of this supremacy, Papists have been constrained to admit that the only, the indispensable medium of probation by which they must establish this link in their argument, is the matter of fact that Peter became Bishop of Rome, and continued to occupy that see till his death. Even if this were proved, it would be no sufficient ground of itself for the important and weighty conclusion based upon it, as we would still be entitled to demand distinct and specific proof for the connection between the facts and the Popish inference drawn from them; *i.e.*, proof that Peter's becoming and dying Bishop of Rome was *intended by Christ* as an indication of His purpose that all the subsequent Bishops of Rome were to be His vicars on earth. Yet, on the other hand, it is manifest that unless this can be proved, and proved from Scripture, the whole argument for a *jus divinum*, or scriptural proof in support of the Pope's supremacy, at once sinks in the dust.

Accordingly, we find that Bellarmine is involved in great confusion and perplexity, and is constrained to make some important concessions in regard to this branch of his argument. He thinks he has proved—and we are at present conceding this, for the sake of argument—that Peter was appointed by his Master to be the

ruler and governor of His church, and even that Christ intended that Peter should have a perpetual series of successors in the exercise of the same jurisdiction. But he admits that he is *further* bound to prove that Peter became Bishop of Rome by Christ's orders, and died there by His appointment in the exercise of that office, and that this was intended to indicate that his successors in the see of Rome were also to be his successors in the government of the universal church; and when these points came up before him as positions to be proved, he saw, and was constrained to admit, that nothing like scriptural authority or a *jus divinum* could be pleaded in support of them. Having produced a testimony from one of the forged decretal-epistles of the Popes,—a series of documents acknowledged by himself in other parts of his works to be forgeries,—and two similar testimonies from Athanasius and Ambrose, fathers of the fourth century, to the effect that Peter came to Rome, and suffered martyrdom there, by Christ's orders, he founds this conclusion upon them, having nothing else on which to rest it: “Non est improbableè, (not a very confident statement) Dominum etiam apertè jussisse, ut sedem suam Petrus ita figeret Romæ, ut Romanus episcopus absolutè ei succederet.” It is, then, on a mere *non improbableè* that he bases this important step in the argument,—*viz.*, that Christ directed Peter to become Bishop of Rome, that He might thus indicate who were to be his successors in the government of the church. Again he admits, that *perhaps* “forte non est de jure divino, Romanum pontificem, ut Romanum pontificem, Petro succedere;” while, at the same time, he maintains that, though *perhaps* it is not of divine right, yet it pertains to the Catholic faith,—meaning by this distinction, that, though *perhaps* it cannot be proved from Scripture—the only source from which a proof, valid in the estimation of Protestants, his opponents, can be derived—yet it can be proved by arguments, the validity of which Catholics, as such—*i.e.*, Romanists—are bound by their principles to admit,—a point with which we need not concern ourselves. And the ground of this position he explains, repeating again the same important concession, though with evident marks at once of caution and trepidation, in this way: “Etsi autem Romanum pontificem succedere Petro, non habeatur expressè in Scripturis, tamen succedere *aliquem* Petro, deducitur evidenter ex Scripturis; illum autem esse Romanum pontificem habetur ex traditione Apostolica Petri, quam traditionem Concilia

generalia, Pontificum decreta, et Patrum consensus declaravit.*" Thus it appears that, after a good deal of shuffling and hesitation, the concession at length comes clearly out, that for anything beyond these two positions—which, even though proved or admitted, are manifestly and confessedly far from being sufficient of themselves to establish the doctrine of the Pope's supremacy,—viz., first, that Peter was invested with supremacy or jurisdiction over the church; and, secondly, that it was Christ's intention that Peter should have a series of successors in the office of universal monarch, and in the exercise of the jurisdiction which it implies—its advocates are dependent entirely upon general councils, the decrees of Popes, and the consent of the fathers. No materials derived from these sources could establish a *jus divinum*, even if more full and relevant than any which Papists have been able to produce from them. And, accordingly, most subsequent Popish controversialists have taken warning from Bellarmine's perplexity upon this point, while they have failed to imitate his candour, and have usually omitted to bring forward this branch of the argument, as if it were unnecessary for the establishment of their cause.

In this argument about the succession of the Popes to Peter, and the nature and amount of the evidence in support of Christ's having directed him to fix his see at Rome, and having intended *thereby* to indicate that his successors in that see were also to be his successors in the government of the universal church, Bellarmine assumes it as proved that Peter had been at Rome, that he became bishop of that church, and died in the occupation of that office; and it is important to remember that, essential as the proof of these matters of fact is to the establishment of the Pope's supremacy, there is not a vestige of evidence in support of them in Scripture, while no facts that enter into the necessary proof of a *jus divinum* can be admitted upon any lower authority. Here is a fatal defect which cannot be repaired. The general conclusion to which an examination of all the materials in Scripture bearing upon the point would lead, is the improbability that Peter ever was at Rome; while the common Popish averment, that he held the Roman see for twenty-five years after having been for seven years Bishop of Antioch, may be fairly regarded as disproved by

* De Rom. Pont., Lib ii., cap. xii.

Scripture;—and yet this averment forms a portion of the earliest authority we have for Peter being Bishop of Rome at all,—viz., a statement of Jerome's in the end of the fourth century.*

Though there is no certainty, no evidence in Scripture, that Peter ever was at Rome, and though the presumption from Scripture is rather against it, yet there is a considerable amount of historical evidence, of ordinary human testimony, that he suffered martyrdom in that city; and though, even as a mere question of historical evidence, it cannot be said to be thoroughly established, yet Protestants have generally admitted it as being, upon the whole, most probable. As to the position that he was Bishop of Rome, in the modern sense of the word, there is not a vestige of anything like evidence in support of it in Scripture. On the contrary, there is much in Scripture to prove—first, that no apostle became, in the modern sense, bishop of any particular church,—a thing as absurd, as Dr Isaac Barrow says, “as if the king should become Mayor of London, or the Bishop of London should become Vicar of Pancras;” and, secondly, that no such functionaries as modern bishops existed in the apostolic age. This second position goes to the root of the matter, while it suggests the consideration that the firmest basis on which to rest our assaults upon Popery, so far as church government is concerned, is the Presbyterianism of the New Testament. There is, then, no Scripture evidence that Peter was invested with jurisdiction or authoritative control over the other apostles and the whole church, or that he was to have a series of successors in the exercise of this jurisdiction; there is no Scripture proof that he ever was at Rome, or held the office of bishop of that church; and, lastly, there is no indication in Scripture that it was the mind and will of Christ that the Bishops of Rome should succeed him in the possession of any of the powers and prerogatives which he enjoyed. ALL these positions must be established, and established from Scripture, in order to lay the foundation of a *jus divinum* in pleading for the Pope's supremacy; while not one of them can be proved from the word of God, and most of them can be disproved by conclusive scriptural evidence. Surely Luther was well entitled to his joke, when, adverting to the entire want

* Vide Kipling's Reply to Dr Troy, in The Churchman Armed, vol. ii., pp. 270–274.

of Scripture evidence for this sweeping and presumptuous claim, he put this question, "Where is it written, except perhaps at Rome, in the church of St Peter's, in the chimney with a bit of coal?"

I have still to advert to the testimony of the first three centuries upon the claim of the Bishops of Rome to supremacy over the whole Church,—a claim which, as formerly explained, implies, and is based upon, these two positions: first, that Peter was invested by Christ with authority or jurisdiction over the other apostles and over the whole church; and, secondly, that by Christ's directions he became, and died, Bishop of Rome, and transmitted to his successors in that see the jurisdiction over the whole church which he himself possessed. If such a right had been conferred upon Peter and the Bishops of Rome, this must have been well known to the church, and their knowledge of it must have appeared palpably in their statements and proceedings. This is so evident from the nature of the case, as not to require illustration. A negative argument from antiquity—if there be, indeed, materials on which to rest it—must evidently be at once legitimate and powerful in opposition to Papal claims; *i. e.*, in other words, if there be no clear traces in primitive antiquity of Peter and the Bishops of Rome claiming this supremacy, and having the exercise of it conceded to them, this must be, to say the least, a very strong presumption that no such right was ever conferred upon them.

Accordingly, the defenders of the Papal supremacy have commonly laid down this position, and have virtually admitted that it was necessary for them to prove it in order to make out their case,—*viz.*, that ever since the formation of the Christian church, the Bishops of Rome, as Peter's successors, have claimed and exercised jurisdiction over the whole flock of Christ. They have not been able to produce anything whatever in support of this position that has even the appearance of evidence, though they have certainly displayed the most extraordinary diligence and ingenuity in distorting and perverting the statements of early writers, and the facts and incidents of ancient history, in order to extract from them something in support of their claims. Every phrase or expression that has ever dropped from any ancient writer in commendation of Peter or of the Church of Rome, or of any of its bishops; every instance in which the Bishops of Rome were applied to by any

one for advice or assistance; every case in which they interfered in the discussion or arrangement of any subject, and seem to have contributed in any way, or to any extent, to its adjustment;—everything of this sort is put down as a proof, not of the possession of excellence or of influence, but of proper jurisdiction or authority over the church. But as it may be confidently asserted that not only there is nothing in Scripture which asserts or implies that Peter exercised, and was recognised as entitled to exercise, jurisdiction over the other apostles and the church at large, but much which shows that no such right was then imagined to exist, so the same assertion may be made with equal confidence in regard to the first three centuries, and for a considerable period beyond them.

We have shown that Bellarmine was forced to admit that the position, essential to the establishment of the Papal supremacy—*viz.*, that Christ, by arranging that Peter should die Bishop of Rome, *intended* to indicate His will that his successors in that see should also succeed him in the government of the whole church—could not be proved from Scripture, and therefore was not based *jure divino*; while he contended that it was founded upon what he called "the apostolic tradition of Peter." By this, of course, he meant, first, that Peter himself had made known to the church that this was his Master's will; and, secondly, that the knowledge of this important fact—*viz.*, that he had done so—rested upon tradition. He then proceeds to specify more particularly what proof there was of this tradition, on which so much depended; and therefore, in support of it, cites general councils, the decrees of Popes, and the consent of fathers; and he goes on to produce proofs from these different sources.

As to the general councils, none were held during the first three centuries; so that their authority by itself, as a proof of apostolical tradition, is of no value, while at the same time they do not come under the limits of our present subject. We may merely remark, in passing, that the first four general councils,—which were held, two in the fourth, and two in the fifth century,—whose doctrinal decisions upon points of faith are generally admitted by Protestants to have been sound and orthodox, neither said nor did anything which affords the slightest countenance to the claim of Papal supremacy; that many things in their history and proceedings afford arguments against the Papal supremacy, which its