

called upon to maintain, or about which they cherish any solicitude. Everything beyond this is of inferior importance.

It is to no purpose to adduce against this truth the doctrine of the unlawfulness of intolerance or persecution, or of the assumption of jurisdiction by civil authorities in religious and ecclesiastical matters: for the undoubted truth of these doctrines merely *limits, or marks out*, the sphere within which alone it is competent for the civil authorities to act in the discharge of their obligation, but certainly does not prove the non-existence of the obligation itself,—unless, indeed, it be at the same time proved (and this, we are persuaded, cannot be done) that civil authorities *cannot possibly do anything* directed to the object of promoting the interests of religion and the church, without necessarily and *ipso facto* interfering with the rights of conscience, and the freedom, independence, and spirituality of the church of Christ. It is, of course, equally irrelevant, to argue against this truth from the abuses that have been too often manifested in the practical application of it,—as when error instead of truth, a corrupt instead of a pure church, has been aided and promoted by the civil authorities; or when, even though scriptural truth and a pure church may have been aided, there was yet so much that was defective and erroneous in the way in which the civil power interposed, as to do more than to neutralize the benefits resulting from its interference. The most plausible thing that has been alleged upon this branch of the subject is, that the interference of civil authorities in religious matters, as a whole, has been accompanied and followed with a great preponderance of evil to religion. But neither does this, even though it were conceded as a matter of fact, disprove the truth of the general principle of the duty or obligation,—as it may be asserted and proved, on the other side, that the evils have arisen merely from the duty not having been correctly understood, or discharged in a right way.

It is equally little to the purpose to allege, as if in opposition to this truth, that Christ left His church dependent upon the voluntary contributions of His people, without any assistance from, or interference on the part of, civil rulers, and allowed it to continue in this condition for eight hundred years. The fact that He did so is an important one, and is fitted and intended to convey some valuable lessons; but it assuredly does not teach us anything about what the duty of nations and rulers to the church is.

The fact referred to affords satisfactory and conclusive evidence of these positions,—viz., that a condition of entire separation from the State, and entire dependence upon the contributions of the people, is a perfectly lawful and honourable condition for a church of Christ to occupy; and that the church may flourish largely, both internally and externally, without any countenance or assistance from the civil powers, and accomplish fully all its essential objects. It proves this, but it proves nothing more. The conduct of the civil authorities to the church during that period was not certainly the model according to which civil rulers ought to act,—they were not then discharging their duty to the church, for they generally persecuted it. If they were not discharging aright their duty to the church—which, by universal admission, is at least entitled to toleration,—and if their non-discharge of duty actually affected the condition of the church, then it is manifest that the manner in which they acted, and the state in which the church was, *in consequence*, placed, afford no materials whatever for deciding how they ought to have acted; and of course the whole subject of whether any, and if any, what obligations lie upon rulers in regard to religion and the church, is left wholly untouched, to be decided, as every question of truth and duty should be, by the written word.

Attempts have been made to show that, whatever duty or obligation may seem to lie upon civil rulers in this matter, the church is interdicted by the law of her Master from entering into an alliance with the State, or accepting assistance from the civil power. That the church is interdicted from sacrificing any of the rights or privileges which Christ has conferred upon her,—neglecting, or promising to neglect, any of the duties which He has imposed upon her,—disregarding, or promising to disregard, any of the directions He has given her, in order to obtain, or as a condition of enjoying, the favour and assistance of the kingdoms of this world, is certain; and assuredly *this* guilt does at this moment attach to every Protestant ecclesiastical establishment in the world. But it has never been proved, that, if the civil authorities rightly understood their duties, and were willing to discharge them aright, attaching no unwarrantable conditions to their offers of service, they could not render assistance to the church which she might be fully warranted to accept.

These considerations, when expanded and applied, are, I think,

quite sufficient to answer the objection by which the scriptural principle,—that a general obligation lies upon nations and their rulers to aim, in the regulation of national affairs, at the good of the church of Christ, and the welfare of true religion,—has been opposed; and to warrant us in maintaining that this is a portion of scriptural truth which the church ought to hold forth, and which nations and their rulers ought to act upon. At the same time, it is undoubtedly true, that in most cases the interference of the civil power in religious matters has done more evil than good; and that the instances have been very numerous in which churches have consented to sinful interferences upon the part of the civil authorities with the rights and privileges which Christ had conferred upon them. Indeed, I am not sure that any Protestant established church has ever wholly escaped this sin and degradation, except the Church of Scotland at the era of the second Reformation; for even the Revolution settlement, though to a very large extent based upon scriptural principles, was not perfectly free from all defect or imperfection. It was grievously encroached upon by the restoration of patronage in the beginning of last century. Its fundamental principles were overturned by the recent interferences of the civil authorities, so that it became impossible for a man who had scriptural views of what a church of Christ is, and of what are the principles by which its affairs ought to be regulated, to remain in connection with it.

Sec. II.—Co-ordinate Authorities.

Assuming that what has been called the Voluntary principle is untrue, and that nations and rulers have duties to discharge towards the church of Christ which *may* lead to the formation of an alliance, or union, or connection between them, we return to the question, What are the principles that ought to regulate the relation that may be formed and may subsist between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, as representing *the State* and *the Church*? The relation may be formed and carried out either upon the principle of the equality and independence of the two powers, or upon that of the subordination of the one to the other; and under this latter head of subordination, it may be contended either that the Church is, and should be, subordinate to the State,—

a doctrine known in modern theological literature in this country under the name of Erastianism, often called on the continent Byzantinism; or that the State is subordinate to the Church, which is the doctrine of the Church of Rome.

The first of these principles,—viz., that of the equality and independence of the civil and the ecclesiastical powers,—the independent supremacy of each in its own proper sphere, and within its own peculiar province,—is that which is sanctioned by the word of God. It has been held in substance, though, it must be admitted, with different degrees of clearness and firmness, by most Protestant writers, but by none so clearly and firmly as by Scottish Presbyterians, who have always been accustomed to condemn all deviations from it, or corruptions of it in theory or in practice, as involving either Erastianism or Popery. The advocates of the Voluntary principle concur with us in thinking that the Church and the State are two co-equal and independent powers,—each supreme in its own province, and in the execution of its own functions; but then they deduce from this principle the conclusion that there can be no union or alliance between them, and that, because distinct and independent, they should always remain separate from each other. We dispute the soundness of this conclusion, and maintain that, in entire consistency with the preservation of their proper distinctness and independence, they may enter into a friendly alliance with each other upon terms of equality, retaining all their own proper and inherent rights and prerogatives, the unfettered exercise of their own functions,—and yet may afford to each other important assistance. Of course, we do not need to prove against them the original distinctness and independence of the civil and ecclesiastical powers, and the necessity of this distinctness and independence being always preserved,—for in this they fully concur with us,—but merely to show that the existence of this original distinctness and independence, and the necessity of its being always maintained, are not inconsistent with, and do not necessarily obstruct or prevent, the formation of a union or friendly alliance between them. That civil government is an ordinance of God; that nations and their rulers are accountable directly to God, and are not put into subjection to the church or to its office-bearers; and that the members and office-bearers of the church are, in common with other men, subject in all civil things to the powers that be,—are doctrines which can be easily

shown to be sanctioned by the word of God. That the visible church of Christ is an independent society, distinct from the kingdoms of this world, having a constitution, laws, office-bearers, and functions of its own; and that civil rulers, as such, have no right to exercise any jurisdiction or authoritative control in the regulation of its affairs, can be established with equal clearness from the sacred Scriptures. Of course, these doctrines, if true, virtually prescribe the state of things which ought to exist, and to exist always; or, in other words, establish the position, that the relation which ought to subsist between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, is one of equality and independence; and that this equality and independence must ever be maintained inviolate. Practical difficulties may arise from the existence of two equal and independent powers having jurisdiction over the same persons, and operating in some sense within the same sphere, though their provinces are different; and these have been set forth fully both by Popish and Erastian writers, under the head of an *imperium in imperio*, in order to establish the general position; but the only question is, Does not the word of God represent them as being, and of course make them to be, *de jure*, distinct and independent? and does not this impose an obligation upon all concerned to regard and treat them as such, and to preserve them as far as possible in that condition? To this question but one answer can be given; and it establishes upon the authority of God's word the truth of the Presbyterian doctrine,—for so may we call it,—that the relation of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, even when they are united together, should be regulated throughout by the principle of their distinctness from, and independence of, each other.

Sec. III.—*Erastianism.*

With reference to the theory of subordination, it is to be observed that Papists and Erastians, though running to opposite extremes, start from the same point, and combine in the use of one leading argument, which, they think, proves subordination *generally*, without determining on which side it lies. It is that to which we have already referred, as based upon the alleged absurdities and mischiefs of an *imperium in imperio*, from which they infer the necessity of *one* supreme power, which shall be

possessed of ultimate jurisdiction in all matters civil and ecclesiastical.* The answer to this we have already indicated,—viz., that the word of God represents them as two distinct societies, with distinct laws and office-bearers, and that we have no right to change their character and government, because of difficulties, actual or apprehended, especially as we can also prove that these difficulties can be easily adjusted and prevented by the application of scriptural views of the distinctive provinces, functions, and objects of the two powers or societies. Thus far the Papists and the Erastians agree in opposition to the Presbyterians and the word of God; but here they part company, and proceed in opposite directions,—the Erastians ascribing the superiority or supremacy to the civil, and the Papists to the ecclesiastical power. Let us first advert briefly to the Erastian extreme.

The Erastian controversy is much older than Erastus, who flourished soon after the Reformation, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, and had Beza for his opponent. Ever since the civil power began in the fourth century to interfere in religious matters, there have been discussions upon this subject. The first topic that was discussed at any length—for no one then disputed the right and duty of the civil magistrate to advance the cause of religion and the welfare of the church—respected the question of toleration and persecution, or the right of the civil power to inflict temporal punishment upon heretics and schismatics. This was defended by Gregory Nazianzen, and also by Augustine in his controversy with the Donatists, who changed his opinion upon the question, and changed it for the worse, having been at one time opposed to the infliction of temporal punishments for religious errors, though he always continued to oppose the lawfulness of putting men to death for heresy. This restriction, which Augustine insisted upon putting on the exercise of the magistrate's right to inflict temporal punishments upon heretics, was soon disregarded; and before the middle of the fifth century (Augustine died in 430), Pope Leo the Great, as he is called, effected and defended the taking away the life of a heretic,—the practice being thus appropriately introduced among professing Christians by the head of that communion, one of whose scriptural characteristics it

* Erastus, Lib. iii., c. i., pp. 160-1. Du Moulin, *The Right of Churches*, c. xxv.

is, that she is drunk with the blood of the saints. This doctrine was unchallenged, and was acted upon to a fearful extent, till the time of the Reformation, and even then it was not rejected by all the Reformers; for it cannot be denied that both Calvin and Beza maintained the lawfulness of putting heretics to death,—a doctrine which was held by some eminent Protestant divines even in the seventeenth century. It is now universally abandoned, except by Papists, and we need not dwell upon it; but since I have been led to advert to it, I may remark, in passing, that the defence of the rights of conscience in modern times, in opposition to intolerance and persecution, has been often conducted upon very latitudinarian and dangerous principles, in the way of dwelling upon the difficulty, if not impossibility, of discerning truth,—the innocence almost, if not altogether, of error,—in short, upon grounds manifesting an ignorance or negation of the paramount claims of truth, and the responsibility connected with the discovery and the maintenance of it. This remark applies not only to Bayle and Voltaire, and to men of that stamp, but also to Jeremy Taylor and Locke, in their writings upon this subject, and to many in our own day. The best and safest course in setting forth the rights of conscience, and in opposing intolerance and persecution, is to adhere to *negative* ground, and merely to maintain that no man has a right to dictate or prescribe authoritatively to another in matters of religion,—that it is unwarrantable and unlawful to inflict temporal punishments merely on account of errors in religious opinion,—and that, of course, it is robbery to take away men's property, and murder to take away their lives, merely on this ground.

The Emperors, from the time when they came to make a profession of Christianity, and to interfere in ecclesiastical matters, assumed a large measure of authority in regulating the affairs of the church. The distinction between things without and things within—*ἔξω και ἔσω*—on which Constantine professed to act, and which to some extent he did observe, was soon forgotten, or interpreted so as to bring almost everything under civil control; and for several centuries, what would be called in the language of modern times gross Erastianism generally prevailed. The first thing that interfered with its dominion was the rising power of the Bishops of Rome, who at length succeeded, to some extent, in depriving the civil power of some of its just rights, and subjecting

it to ecclesiastical control. In the disputes between the Popes and the temporal sovereigns, and in the treatises written on both sides in defence of the claims and procedure of the two parties, there seems to have been scarcely an approach made towards sound scriptural views upon the proper relation of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities. There was a constant leaning, both in what was done and in what was written, either to the Popish or the Erastian extreme. After the Reformation, many of the Protestant princes succeeded in securing to themselves a large share of the power in ecclesiastical matters which had formerly been held by the Bishop of Rome, which our Presbyterian forefathers used to say was just changing the Pope, but not the popedom; and in no country were they more successful than in England, in none less so than in Scotland. The alleged merit of Erastus, which has procured for him the honour of being ordinarily spoken of in theological literature as the representative of a set of opinions much older than his time, and which he himself did not do very much towards unfolding and applying, lay in this, that he, more distinctly than any before him, laid down the principle that Christ has not appointed a government in the church in the hands of church officers distinct from the civil magistrate. Though Erastus himself applied this principle chiefly to exclude excommunication, or the exercise of jurisdiction by the church in the admission or expulsion of ordinary members, yet it obviously admits of, and indeed requires, a wider application; and the principle itself, and all that naturally is involved in, or results from, it, has been usually exposed and denounced by Presbyterian divines under the designation of Erastianism. The word is often used, indeed, in a wider sense, as a general designation of views which ascribe a larger measure of authority to the civil magistrate in religious matters, than those who use it regard as warranted by Scripture—just as Pelagianism is often used to designate, in general, views which ascribe a larger measure of power to men to do the will of God, than those who use it think the Scripture sanctions. The general usage of theological writers abundantly warrants this wide and vague application of it; but among Scottish Presbyterians it has been commonly employed in the somewhat more restricted and definite sense which has just been explained.

Although Erastianism, used as a general designation of views

which ascribe to civil rulers a power and authority in religious matters which the Scripture does not sanction, may be justly enough described as making the Church subordinate to the State, in opposition to the Popish extreme of making the State subordinate to the Church, yet the direct and formal maintenance of this position has not usually been the form which the controversy assumed. The Papists, indeed, do not scruple openly and explicitly to lay down the doctrine of the subordination of the State to the Church, and think that they can adduce a plausible argument in support of this doctrine from the higher and more exalted character of the ends or objects for which the church was instituted. Erastians, having no such plausible pretence for laying down an analogous, though opposite, general position, have felt it necessary to go about the elevation of the civil, and the degradation of the ecclesiastical, power in a somewhat more indirect and insidious way; and the most ingenious contrivance they have been able to devise with this view, is to deny that Christ has appointed a distinct and independent *government* in the church for the regulation of its affairs. They first attempt to give some measure of probability to the position by the principle formerly adverted to and exposed—of the necessity of there being but one supreme government, possessed of ultimate jurisdiction in all things; and then they try to show that, in the scriptural view of the church and its constitution, there is no provision made for the exercise of anything like an independent judicial or forensic authority in deciding controversies or causes that may arise about religious and ecclesiastical matters—labouring to explain away the scriptural statements by which it has been conclusively proved that the right of deciding judicially or forensically all those questions which must arise wherever a church exists, and is in operation, belongs, by Christ's appointment, not to civil rulers, but to ecclesiastical office-bearers and the church itself. The main question, then, comes to this,—Has Christ appointed a distinct government in the church, with judicial authority for the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, and a right of deciding, according to the word of God, all questions that may arise in the discharge of its ordinary functions?—or, what is virtually and practically the same question in another form,—Is it accordant with Scripture, that civil rulers should possess and exercise jurisdiction, or a right of authoritative judicial decision, in ecclesiastical matters?

Perhaps it may be said that men have been often called Erastians who had never denied a distinct government in the church, or ascribed jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters to civil rulers. This is quite true, but it does not by any means follow that the designation was unwarranted. Erastians have commonly been men who were not so much concerned about the maintenance of permanent scriptural truth, or the establishment of general theological principles, as about the promotion of some present selfish object,—defending the existing proceedings of civil rulers, or palliating their own conduct in submitting to civil encroachments upon the rights of the church. Hence they have usually avoided, as well as they could, the assertion of general positions,—the maintenance of abstract principles,—and have exerted their ingenuity in keeping the true question and its proper merits in the background. Some of them, like the *judicious* Hooker, have confounded altogether the members of the Church and the State, and have virtually denied that the church is a distinct independent society; others, admitting that it is in some sense a distinct independent society, have denied that this society has a distinct government, or an independent power of judicial decision in ecclesiastical matters, according to the word of God; while others, again, without formally denying a distinct government altogether, have set themselves to curtail the sphere or province within which this government is to be exercised,—especially by fabricating and trying to illustrate a distinction, which is altogether unnecessary and unfounded, between spiritual and ecclesiastical matters. And many more, who might with perfect justice be called Erastians, have abstained wholly from the discussion of general principles, and have confined themselves to an attempt to palliate and gloss over the interferences which the civil authority might happen at the time to be making, and opposition or resistance to which might have proved inconvenient or dangerous. The Erastian constitution of the Church of England was certainly not settled as the result of anything like a deliberate consideration of what, on general scriptural principles, ought to be the relation between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities. It was determined solely by the arbitrary usurpations of Henry VIII. and his daughter Queen Elizabeth, and the submission of the church to almost anything which they chose to demand; and the consequences

have been, first, that in the thirty-seventh Article of that church, the supremacy which is attributed to the sovereign is described with a considerable measure of vagueness and ambiguity, while there is enough in it to warrant us in ascribing to that church the assertion of the jurisdiction of civil rulers in ecclesiastical matters, in opposition to the word of God; and, secondly, that Episcopalian divines, in defending the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown as established by law, have never ventured to moot the great principles of the question as to the nature and conditions of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities in a frank and manly way, or to discuss general doctrines upon the subject, but have contented themselves with palliating the existing state of things, and adducing examples of the exercise of similar authority on the part of Christian emperors before their powers were curtailed by the Bishops of Rome.

Sec. IV.—Popish Theory.

We have now only to advert to the Popish theory, some knowledge of which is necessary to understand the contests *inter imperium et sacerdotium* which occupy a very prominent place in the ecclesiastical history of several centuries, and a correct acquaintance with which is necessary in order to see how utterly baseless is the charge which has been so often adduced against the scriptural principles upon this subject—that they are identical with those of the Church of Rome.

This charge has been frequently adduced against Presbyterian principles by Erastians, and it is still a favourite one with them even at the present day. I have had occasion before to show that it requires some portion of knowledge and discrimination to handle aright the charge of a doctrine or practice being Popish; and this subject affords another illustration of the lesson. The practice among Erastians of charging scriptural Presbyterian principles with being Popish, seems to have originated in England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. At that period, the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown,—which, of course, can be defended only on Erastian grounds,—was assailed by two classes of adversaries—the Puritans or Presbyterians, and the Papists. So far as mere opposition to the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown is concerned, it is quite true that the Presbyterians and the Papists had

a common cause to maintain, and supported it to some extent upon common grounds. Its Episcopalian defenders found it no easy matter to answer the arguments of either party upon this subject, and therefore adopted a policy, which has been always a favourite one with Erastians, of evading the real merits of the question, and endeavouring to create a prejudice against their opponents by dwelling upon the mere fact, that Presbyterians and Papists agreed upon this subject, and trying to persuade men to receive this as a proof of the erroneousness of the principles which they held. It is quite true that there are some points of agreement upon this subject between Presbyterians and Papists; but it is also true that there is a clear line of demarcation between their principles, upon the general subject of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities; and it is *not* true,—though this is the practical conclusion which Erastians would wish to insinuate,—that there is no medium between Popish and Erastian principles. In so far as Presbyterians agree upon this subject with Papists, they undertake to prove that their views are sanctioned by the word of God; and when this is proved, it is no sufficient reason to abandon them because they are also held—though, as in the case of many other doctrines, held with some grossly corrupt additions—by the Church of Rome.

We would briefly advert, first, to the points in which Presbyterians and Papists agree upon this general subject; and then, secondly, to those on which they differ. The substance of their agreement just lies in this, that they concur in opposing all Erastian principles,—*i.e.*, everything implying, or tending towards, or deducible from, the subordination of the Church to the State, or the ascription to civil rulers of any jurisdiction or right of authoritative control, whether direct or indirect, in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, in the government of Christ's house; and on this ground they concur in opposing the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown, and all that is implied in it. They concur also, of course, in the leading scriptural grounds on which they rest their opposition to Erastianism, which are in substance these: first, that though the Scripture imposes upon civil rulers an obligation to promote the interests of true religion and the church of Christ, it does not invest them with any jurisdiction or authoritative control in religious or ecclesiastical matters; *i.e.*, though, to use a distinction in frequent use among the old Presbyterian

writers in opposing Erastianism, it gives them a power *circa sacra*, it gives them none *in sacris*; and, secondly, that the scriptural views of the origin and character, constitution and government of the Christian Church, are necessarily and obviously exclusive of the idea of its being subordinate to the State, or of civil rulers having any jurisdiction or authoritative control over the regulation of its affairs. These are the scriptural grounds on which all intelligent opposition to Erastianism *must rest*; and they are not the less clear and conclusive because Papists concur with Presbyterians in maintaining them.

Opposition to Erastianism, however, is not a mere negation, when viewed in connection with the scriptural grounds on which it is based. It includes or implies an assertion of some important positive principles with respect to the constitution and government of the church of Christ. And we need not be afraid to say, that there is one great and important scriptural truth upon this subject which, like the doctrine of the Trinity, has been always held by the Church of Rome, and been fully followed out by it to all its consequences,—viz., that the church is a divine institution established by Christ, placed by Him in a condition of entire independence of any secular or foreign control, and invested by Him with full powers of self-government, and complete sufficiency within itself for the execution of all its functions. The doctrine of the church—meaning thereby the statement of the principles of Scripture on the subject of the church—has, as we have had occasion to show, been greatly corrupted by the Church of Rome; but the doctrine just stated, which that church holds, assuredly has the full sanction of scriptural authority, and therefore *all men* are not only warranted, but bound, to believe it. In this doctrine with respect to the character and constitution of the church, and in the consequent rejection of all secular or civil jurisdiction in the administration of its affairs, Papists and Presbyterians do certainly agree; and whatever may be the motives which induce Papists to maintain it, all Presbyterians who are worthy of the name adhere to it, because they believe and can prove that it is taught in the word of God. In accordance with the general Erastian policy already described, the defenders or palliators of civil jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters have evaded a fair and manly discussion of the scriptural grounds on which their views and conduct have been assailed; and the Episcopalian

defenders of the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown have always shown a very great unwillingness to lay down any distinct or definite positions by which they might vindicate their own cause; and while often on this account contradicting one another, they have found their principal satisfaction in trying to play off the Presbyterians against the Papists, and the Papists against the Presbyterians, and in producing instances from the earlier history of the church, in which civil rulers assumed as wide a jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters as that which they are bound by their position to defend. Calderwood * gives the following account of the way in which they usually defended the supremacy of the Crown against the Papists; and it is strikingly descriptive not only of them, but of all who down to our day have acted upon Erastian principles:—"Qui Primatus Regii jura discere voluerit ex Hierarchicorum contra Pontificios scriptis polemicis, nihil certi reperiet. Nam vel Andabatarum more inter se dimicant, vel de facto potius exempla quorundam Imperatorum a recta norma sæpius deflectentium congerunt, quam de jure argumenta proferunt. Ex statutis regni, Commissariorum jurisdictione in causis Ecclesiasticis, et tabulis Hierarchiæ, facilius et certius omnia Primatus Regii jura edoceri possumus."

While this is the ordinary aspect presented by the writings of Erastians, whether engaged in defending the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown, or the ecclesiastical supremacy of the civil courts, we find in some Popish writers not only unanswerable arguments against all Erastianism, but likewise much good scriptural matter in defence of the dignity and independence of the church of Christ, brought out occasionally in a tone and spirit which is certainly of a somewhat higher and nobler kind than is usually exhibited in any exposition of the grovelling and secular views of the Erastians. But the Church of Rome has polluted and corrupted all the doctrines of God's word, even those in which she has retained in form a substantially sound profession of the truth; and it is mainly by her errors and corruptions upon the subject of the constitution, and government, and ordinances of the church, and of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, that she has gained and preserved her despotic control over the minds and consciences of

* Altare Damascenum, c. i., p. 27. Ed. 1708.

men and the regulation of the affairs of the world. She holds the theory that the civil power is subordinate to the ecclesiastical; and she has followed out this theory, both in speculation and in practice, to an extent which has produced much error and much mischief. Presbyterians deny equally the subordination of the civil power to the ecclesiastical, and of the ecclesiastical to the civil. They concur with Papists in holding the distinctness and independence of the Church, and her supremacy in her own province; but they concur equally with the Erastians in holding that the same independence and supremacy belong to the State within *its* province. They go this length with both, because the word of God requires it; but they go no further with either, because the word of God forbids it. This scriptural Presbyterian principle has been generally and correctly described as involving a co-ordination of powers, and a mutual subordination of persons. The co-ordination of powers just means the entire co-equality—independence—of the two powers, each being supreme in its province, and with reference to its own objects and functions; and the mutual subordination of persons means, first, and more generally, that the same persons, if members of the church, are subject to the civil power, and to that alone, in all civil matters, and to the ecclesiastical office-bearers, and to them alone, in ecclesiastical matters, in so far as any earthly authority is entitled to regulate them; and secondly, and more specifically, that civil rulers, if church members, are just as much subject to the control of ecclesiastical office-bearers in ecclesiastical matters as their subjects are, and that ecclesiastical office-bearers are just as fully subject to civil rulers, in all civil things, as any other members of the community. This is the scriptural Presbyterian principle, and it differs clearly and palpably in some most important respects from the common doctrine of Papists.

The Erastians have scarcely anything to allege in favour of the subordination of the ecclesiastical to the civil, except the cavil about an *imperium in imperio*, in which the Papists agree with them, and which we formerly exposed. The Papists, in addition to this, plead, in support of the subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical, the higher and more exalted character of the ends or objects to which the latter is directed. This affords no ground whatever for subordination in respect of authority or jurisdiction, while the equality of the two in this respect,—their co-ordination

as opposed to subordination,—is clearly involved in the views of them which are presented to us in the Scriptures. The leading Popish position, then, is unfounded and untrue. But we have at present to do chiefly with the applications which they make of this position—the consequences which they deduce from it. The position may be regarded generally as ascribing to the ecclesiastical power a right to exercise jurisdiction or authoritative control over the civil. A learned and liberal jurist of the Gallican school, named Barclay, wrote in the beginning of the seventeenth century a treatise *De potestate papæ*, in opposition to the temporal or secular power of the Pope, which was judged worthy of being answered in a separate work by Cardinal Bellarmine. Barclay laid down this as his fundamental position: “Potestatem ecclesiasticam, et politicam jure divino distinctas, et separatas esse, ut, quamvis ambæ a Deo sint, utraque suis terminis conclusa in alterius fines invadere suo jure nequeat, neutrique in alteram imperium sit.” Bellarmine admitted the truth of the principal part of this position, but objected to the last clause of it, as involving a denial of the right of the ecclesiastical power to exercise jurisdiction or authoritative control over the civil. He says, after quoting Barclay’s position, “Hoc principium, sive fundamentum in ultima particula falsum omnino esse contendimus, in illis videlicet ultimis verbis, *neutrique in alteram imperium sit*. Si quidem affirmamus, ecclesiasticam potestatem, distinctam quidem esse a politica, sed ea non modo nobiliorem, verum etiam ita superiorem esse, ut eam dirigere, et corrigere, et in certis casibus, in ordine videlicet ad finem spirituales, et vitam eternam, eidem imperare possit.”*

In what, then, do the Papists regard this power of directing, correcting, and commanding, which they ascribe to the ecclesiastical authorities, in respect to the civil, as consisting?

First, it consists in this, that civil rulers are bound to be regulated, in whatever they do in regard to religion, not directly by the word of God, or their own conscientious convictions of what is true or false, right or wrong, but by the decisions and orders of the church; whereas Presbyterians hold that civil rulers have just the same liberty of conscience as ecclesiastical office-bearers, and

* Bellarmine, *De potestate summi Pontificis in rebus temporalibus*, cap. ii., p. 38.

are just as much entitled and bound to judge for themselves, and with a view to the regulation of their own conduct, and the discharge of their own duty, what is true or false, right or wrong, without being under any obligation to be guided by the decisions or directions of the church, as such, irrespective of their accordance with the word of God. Of course, it is not contended that either civil or ecclesiastical rulers are entitled to form what judgments they please upon any matters of religion, and to be guided merely by what they may sincerely and conscientiously believe. The word of God is the supreme and only standard by which all men, publicly and privately, collectively and individually, in a civil or in an ecclesiastical capacity, are bound to regulate their opinions and actions in all matters of religion, and in all matters to which its statements may apply. This is an important truth, which should never be overlooked; but what Presbyterians contend for is, that civil rulers have the same independent right of judgment as ecclesiastical office-bearers,—the same access to God's word,—and are equally entitled and bound to judge for themselves as to its meaning, and their consequent duty in matters of faith and practice. Civil rulers are entitled and bound to feel that, in all they may do in regard to religion and the church, it is to God they are responsible, and it is by His word that they ought to be regulated. The Church of Rome, no doubt, professes to be guided by the word of God; but then she insists that civil rulers, *in virtue of the alleged subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical*, shall, without personal investigation, at once take her decisions and decrees as certainly true and righteous, and receive them as directly and immediately regulating the manner in which they are to act, or to exercise their civil power, their control over the persons and properties of men in everything pertaining to religion. The Popish doctrine makes the civil ruler the mere tool or servant of the church, and represents him as bound implicitly to carry out the church's objects, to execute her sentences, and to make everything subservient to the accomplishment of all her designs; while the Presbyterian doctrine represents civil rulers as holding immediately of God, entitled and bound to judge for themselves according to His word, and leaves to them fully and honestly the same liberty of conscience, the same supreme and independent jurisdiction in their own province, as the church claims in hers. Presbyterians have been often charged with claiming the same authori-

tative control over the conscience and judgment of civil rulers as the Papists do; but the charge is utterly unfounded. Their principles do not require it,—nay, do not admit of it; while the general principle of Popery, as well as its special doctrine upon this subject, demand, in consistency, that they should put forth such a claim, and exert themselves to the utmost to realize or enforce it. The true Presbyterian principle upon this subject is thus admirably stated by Gillespie: "The civil sanction added to Church-government and discipline, is a free and voluntary act of the Magistrate. That is, Church-government doth not, *ex natura rei*, necessitate the Magistrate to aid, assist, or corroborate the same, by adding the strength of a law. But the Magistrate is free in this, to do or not to do, to do more or to do less, as he will answer to God and his conscience: it is a cumulative act of favour done by the Magistrate. My meaning is not, that it is free to the Magistrate *in genere moris*; but *in genere entis*. The Magistrate ought to add the civil sanction *hic et nunc*, or he ought not to do it. It is either a duty or a sin; it is not indifferent. But my meaning is, the Magistrate is free herein from all coercion, yea from all necessity and obligation; other than ariseth from the word of God, binding his conscience. There is no power on earth, Civil or Spiritual, to constrain him. The Magistrate himself is his own judge on earth, how far he is to do any cumulative act of favour to the Church. Which takes off that calumny, that Presbyterian Government doth force or compel the conscience of the Magistrate."*

The *second* conclusion which the Papists deduce from the general doctrine of the superiority of the ecclesiastical over the civil is, that the church, and especially the Pope as the head of it, has power, or a right of authoritative control, in temporal or civil matters; while Presbyterians, following out fully the principle of the independence and equality, or co-ordination in point of jurisdiction, of the two powers, restrict equally civil and ecclesiastical rulers to their own sphere or province. Some Popish writers ascribe to the Pope direct supreme power in temporal things, holding him to be the Lord paramount of the world, or at least of the Christian world; while others, among whom is Bellarmine, deny to him direct and immediate jurisdiction in civil things, but ascribe

* Gillespie, Aaron's Rod Blossoming, B. ii., c. iii., p. 182.

to him an indirect authority in these matters, to be exercised *in ordine ad spiritualia*, which, as he is the judge of when and how far the interests of religion may require him to interfere in secular matters, is just giving him as much of temporal power as he may find it convenient to claim, or may be able to enforce. Erastians have often asserted that Presbyterians claim some similar indirect power in temporal things, or over the proceedings of civil rulers; but the charge is wholly unfounded: for Presbyterians do not ask anything of civil rulers but what they undertake to prove that the Scripture requires of them, and what they are therefore bound to do, not as subordinate to the church, but as subordinate to God's word; and they do not pretend, as Papists do, that the sentences which the church may be warranted to pronounce upon civil rulers, when church members, on the ground of sins committed, *affect their civil status or authority*, their right to exercise civil power, and the obligation of their subjects to obey them. It is the doctrine of Presbyterians, as stated in our Confession, that "infidelity, or difference of religion, does not make void the magistrate's just power,"—a principle which of course implies, and implies *a fortiori*, that no step which may be competent to the church, as such, and no sentence which the ecclesiastical authorities may pronounce, can tell authoritatively upon the relation and mutual duties of rulers and subjects, or upon the actual regulation of civil affairs; while the Church of Rome holds that, in the subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical, there is involved a right on the part of the church, and especially of the Pope as the head of it, to make ecclesiastical sentences affect the *status* and authority of civil rulers, the validity of civil laws, and the regulation of civil affairs.

The *third* and last point in which the general doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject differs from that of Presbyterians, is the claim set up by Papists on behalf of ecclesiastical office-bearers, of exemption from the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil tribunals even in civil or temporal matters,—that is, in questions affecting their persons or property. As the Erastian defenders of the supremacy of the Crown have generally held that the church has no right to exercise ecclesiastical discipline upon the sovereign, its temporal head; in like manner, and upon an analogous, though opposite ground, the Papists claim that the persons and property of ecclesiastics should not be subject to the juris-

diction of the ordinary civil courts, but only to that of separate ecclesiastical tribunals. It is this claim, and this alone, which is intended to be denied in our Confession of Faith, when, after speaking of the just power of magistrates not being made void by infidelity or difference of religion, it adds, "from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted." It is this exemption of the person and property of ecclesiastics from the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil tribunals, that is commonly intended by Popish writers when they speak of ecclesiastical liberty, or the freedom of the church; and Presbyterians concur with all other Protestants in maintaining that *this* is a liberty or freedom which Christ has not conferred upon His church, and which, when asserted as a right, runs counter to scriptural views of the authority and functions of civil rulers. Some of the more moderate Papists have declined to ground this exemption upon a divine right or upon scriptural authority, and have represented it merely as a reasonable and proper concession made to the church by the civil power; but most of them have held it to be necessarily involved in the general principle of the subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical, and to have also directly, and by itself, special warrant in the word of God; while Presbyterians have fully and honestly carried out in this, as in other respects, their great scriptural principles of a co-ordination of powers, and a mutual subordination of persons.

It is right to mention that there are one or two incidents in the history of the contentions between King James and the Church of Scotland, which have been represented, and not without plausibility, as involving something like a claim upon the part of the church to this Popish exemption in civil matters from the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil tribunals. The allegation is merely plausible, and cannot be fully established,—though it may be admitted that some rash and unguarded statements were made upon the occasions referred to. That this is all that can be truly alleged, has been shown by Dr M'Crie's admirable *Life of Andrew Melville*.

In all these important respects,—those which affect the foundations of the whole subject,—there is a clear and palpable line of demarcation between Presbyterian and Popish doctrines in regard to the principles that ought to regulate the relation between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities; and the common Erastian allegation of their identity is proved to be utterly unfounded in

fact, and may not unfairly be regarded as an unwarrantable attempt to create prejudice by misrepresentation, and to escape thereby from a fair discussion of the question upon its merits.

The substance of this whole matter is this: Christ requires us to render to Cæsar what is Cæsar's, and to God what is God's. Erastians violate the precept by giving to Cæsar what is God's,—God's in such a sense that Cæsar has no authority, and is entitled to no obedience, in anything regarding it. Papists violate this precept by taking from Cæsar what rightfully belongs to him, under the pretence of giving to God what He Himself has given to Cæsar, though not to the exclusion of His own paramount control; while Presbyterians,—*i.e.*, all who have been deserving of the name, and have really understood their own professed principles,—have fully obeyed it, in its letter and in its spirit, by ascribing to the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities their true character, their due power, their legitimate jurisdiction, each in its own province; and by maintaining fully and faithfully the exclusive supremacy of God as the only Lord of the conscience, and of Jesus Christ as the only King and Head of the Church, while acknowledging the complete and absolute control of the civil power over the persons and property of all the members of the community.

CHAPTER XIV.

SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGY.

THE twelfth century produced two works which exerted an extensive and long-continued influence upon theological literature, and are therefore entitled to some share of our attention: Peter Lombard's "Libri Quatuor Sententiarum," or Four Books of Sentences,—the foundation and text-book of the Scholastic Theology; and the Decree of Gratian, the basis of the "Corpus Juris Canonici," or Canon Law. From the twelfth century till the Reformation, the great body of the writers upon ecclesiastical subjects were divided into two classes, who were called Theologians and Canonists; and the chief occupation of the Theologians was to comment upon Lombard's Four Books of Sentences, while that of the Canonists was to comment upon the Decree of Gratian, and upon the additions made to it during the next two centuries, making up the body of the Canon Law. The scholastic theology has exerted a very considerable influence upon the theology of modern times—not only among Popish but Protestant writers—and the Canon Law has always been, and still is, the basis of the science of ecclesiastical jurisprudence; and therefore all who aspire to the character of well-instructed theologians ought to know something about them. We will first advert to Lombard's Four Books of Sentences, and the Scholastic Theology; and then to Gratian's Decree, and the Canon Law.

The leading feature of the scholastic theology, or the theology of the schools and the schoolmen, as they are called, was the application of the metaphysics and dialectics of Aristotle to the subject of theology. By some its origin is traced back to Augustine; but this notion has no better foundation to rest upon than the facts that that great man manifested a fondness for philosophical speculations, and sometimes indulged in them unnecessarily, and that he discussed every subject in an exact and

logical way. Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, who flourished in the eleventh century, and was the principal opponent of Berengarius, is more usually and more justly reckoned, in some sense, the founder of the scholastic theology, inasmuch as he brought, to a considerable extent, both the materials of metaphysical speculation and the forms of dialectic argumentation to bear—first, upon the discussion of those topics which were connected with the nature and mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, and afterwards upon some of the other recondite subjects in theology. The history of scholastic theology is usually divided, by those who have treated of it formally and at length, into three periods,—the first extending from the time of Lanfranc till that of Albertus Magnus, who flourished about the year 1220, a period which includes the production of the Four Books of the Sentences; the second extending from the time of Albertus till that of Durandus, who flourished about the year 1330, and including nearly all the most celebrated names among the schoolmen, except Lombard, such as Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventura, and John Duns Scotus; and the third and last extending for nearly two hundred years from the time of Durandus till the Reformation. It can scarcely be said that these divisions are marked out by any very palpable differences in the mode in which theological subjects were generally discussed in the different periods, though it may be said in general that the defects and mischiefs of the system were not fully developed till the second of these periods, and that no very material change took place during the third either for better or worse; while it produced no men to be compared, in point of ingenuity and acuteness, with some of those who flourished during the second period.

The general object of the schoolmen was to exhibit the substance of Christian truth in a systematic and connected order,—an object undoubtedly of the highest importance, and constituting indeed, when rightly accomplished, the crown and completion of the study of theology as a science; and the great defect of the method they ordinarily pursued was, that they did not adopt a right standard, by seeking to ascertain the meaning of scriptural statements, and then aiming at systematizing, expounding, and defending the truths which the word of God contains. They were almost wholly destitute of right views of what modern divines call the *principium theologiæ*,—meaning thereby the source from which theological

knowledge is to be derived, and the rule or standard by which theological doctrines are to be judged of. Before the scholastic theology arose, the word of God had come to be very much neglected and superseded, and the knowledge necessary for interpreting it aright was almost universally wanting in the Western Church. It is certain, for instance, that Thomas Aquinas, who was in many respects the most eminent, and perhaps, all things considered, the most influential of the schoolmen, knew nothing of Greek or Hebrew. Long before their time, it had become the almost universal practice to settle all theological disputes, not by studying the word of God, and ascertaining the meaning of its statements, but by an appeal to tradition, and the authority of the fathers, and to the decrees of popes and councils. The schoolmen certainly did nothing to introduce a sounder method of theological investigation, by appealing to Scripture, and labouring to ascertain the exact meaning of its statements; on the contrary, they may be said to have still further corrupted it, by introducing, in combination with tradition and mere authority, something resembling the rationalistic element of the supremacy of human reason,—not, indeed, that they formally and avowedly laid down this principle, but that their neglect of Scripture, and their unbounded indulgence in unwarranted and presumptuous speculations upon points in regard to which there could manifestly be no standard of appeal but just their own reasonings, had a tendency to encourage it.

This leads us to notice the other great defect of the scholastic theology, and that is, its consisting, to a large extent, of the discussion of useless and unprofitable questions, which cannot be determined, and which would be of no practical value if they could. A very considerable amount of mental activity was manifested in the twelfth, and still more in the two following centuries. There are some of the schoolmen who have never been surpassed in ingenuity, acuteness, and penetration. But being not in general possessed of much erudition, and having adopted erroneous principles of investigation, there was great want of materials on which they might exercise their mental powers; and this state of things tended strongly to produce what is one leading characteristic of their works,—viz., the formation of endless distinctions and differences upon every topic of inquiry, and the broaching and prosecution of all sorts of subtle questions, which, though not admitting of determinate answers, afforded abundant scope for