

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

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE CHURCH AT THE ERA OF THE REFORMATION.

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

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

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

of Christendom as being, the vicar of Christ on earth, and the monarch of His church; and with the whole body of the church sunk in the grossest ignorance, superstition, and immorality. We have then presented to our view a very small number of humble and obscure individuals led to raise their voice against this state of things, to expose its inconsistency in all respects with the will of God revealed in His word, and to reject the usurped authority of those who presided over it. We see vast power and extraordinary appliances put forth by the potentates of the earth—civil and ecclesiastical—to crush this opposition, but without success. We see these humble individuals, in the face of difficulties only inferior to those which the apostles encountered, attaining to a measure of success, and achieving results second only to those which inspired men enjoyed and effected,—results bearing most materially upon the temporal and spiritual condition of men, and still largely affecting the state of the world; and in connection with the origin, progress, and results of this great movement, our attention is directed to a long series of interesting transactions, in which the counsels of monarchs, the intrigues of politicians, and the conflicts of armies, were strikingly directed and overruled of God for aiding the efforts of His servants, for frustrating the machinations of His enemies, and accomplishing His own purposes, both of judgment and of mercy. The men whom God employed in this work must be objects of no ordinary interest to all who feel concerned about the promoting of God's glory, and the advancement of His cause. It must be at once useful and delightful to examine who and what they were, what natural endowments they possessed, what spiritual gifts and graces the Lord bestowed upon them; and how their character and conduct were influenced by the circumstances in which they were placed, how they bore their trials, discharged their duties, and improved their opportunities. It is abundantly evident, that, with all their excellences, the Reformers were men of like passions with ourselves, and not unfrequently exhibited in their words and actions the common infirmities of even renewed human nature. But this, too, opens up to us additional sources of interest and instruction in examining their history; for we are not only entitled, but bound, to notice their errors, infirmities, and shortcomings, and the bearing of these upon the cause they supported, and the objects they aimed at,—and thus to learn useful lessons for the regulation of our

own views and conduct. It is important to acquire a familiarity with the principal transactions which constitute the Reformation, and with the lives and character of the principal Reformers. But it is not my intention to dwell upon historical or biographical matter,—to trace the connection of events in providence, however important,—or to delineate the character of men, however excellent and useful. This has been done abundantly in works which are easily accessible.\* We must restrict ourselves to the theology of the sixteenth century.

This is by far the most important feature in the history of the church of this period. The great distinguishing fact of the Reformation was the revival and restoration of sound doctrine, of the true principles taught in the sacred Scriptures in regard to the worship of God and the way of a sinner's salvation; and another, next in importance to this in a theological point of view, was the way in which this restoration of the true doctrines of God's word was received by the Church of Rome, or, in other words, the formal adoption and consecration by the Council of Trent, in opposition to the scriptural doctrines of the Reformers, of many of those errors in doctrine and practice which had been growing up in the church during a period of about fourteen hundred years. The restoration, then, of the doctrine, worship, and government of the church to a large measure at least of apostolic purity, on the one hand; and, on the other, the perpetuation by supposed infallible authority, as the creed of the Church of Rome, of many of the heresies and corruptions which had grown up during the long intervening period,—form the great features of the sixteenth century, in a theological point of view; and the examination of these subjects in the light of God's word will afford abundant materials for profitable and interesting reflection.

The system of theology adopted by the Reformers was, in its leading features, correctly deduced from the word of God, and deservedly retains its place in the symbolical books of most of the Reformed churches. Theological science may, indeed, be said to have been considerably altered and extended since the era of the Reformation; but these changes, in so far as they are improvements, respect more the form and aspect in which the scheme of

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\* See the Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation, p. 2, etc.—EDRS.

divine truth is represented and established, than the substance of the materials of which it is composed: they relate much more to the precise meaning of particular statements of Scripture, than to the great general conclusions which ought to be deduced from an examination of its contents. The doctrines of the Reformers with regard to the total depravity of fallen man, and the utter servitude or bondage of his will, with reference to anything spiritually good, in consequence of this depravity; his inability to do anything for his own salvation, either by meriting aught at God's hand, or by effecting any real improvement upon his own character and condition; his justification by God's free grace upon the ground of Christ's righteousness received by faith alone; the sovereign purposes and efficacious agency of God in providing and applying to men the redemption purchased by Christ; and the true place occupied by the church as a society, by its ordinances and arrangements, and by everything of an external kind, as distinguished from personal union to Christ by faith in God's great scheme of salvation;—*on all these points* the doctrines of the Reformers can be proved to be in full accordance with the sacred Scriptures, and to have been only confirmed by the assaults which have been made upon them. They have been opposed not only by Papists, but by Protestants. They have been assailed by men who professed to be greatly concerned for the dignity of human nature and the interests of morality. They have been attacked more or less openly by superficial and conceited men, who, professing great zeal for the interests of religion and the conversion of sinners, have devised easier and simpler methods of effecting these results. But the Lord has ever raised up men well qualified to defend these doctrines, and He has ever honoured them as the instruments of accomplishing His purposes of mercy. These doctrines honour Him, and He will honour them. He will continue, as in time past, to make them the instruments, in the hand of His Spirit, of bringing men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto Himself; and as, at the time of the Reformation, He employed these doctrines, and the men to whom He had taught them, for inflicting a deadly wound upon His great adversary, the apostate Church of Rome, so He will continue to employ the same instrumentality in all future contests with the man of sin, until that system, and every other that may set itself in opposition to His revealed will and purposes, shall be

destroyed by the breath of His mouth, and consumed by the brightness of His coming.

It is important to mark what the doctrines were, which, at the commencement of the Reformation, the Church of Rome, as such, may be fairly held to have publicly and officially adopted, especially as this inquiry is connected with some discussions of general interest which have attracted much attention in the present day. I have already referred to Dr Field's celebrated work "On the Church," in the third edition of which, published in 1635, there is an appendix to the third book, where, as the title bears, "it is clearly proved that the Latin or Western Church, in which the Pope tyrannized, was, and continued, a true orthodox and Protestant church, and that the devisers and maintainers of Romish errors and superstitious abuses were only a faction in the same, *at the time* when Luther, not without the applause of all good men, published his propositions against the profane abuses of Papal indulgences." This doctrine was very acceptable to the Tractarians of our own day in the earlier stages of their progress; because, if true, it enabled them to maintain that the Reformers, at least the Anglican ones, had never seceded from the Latin or Western Church, but had merely reformed, in opposition to the Pope, some corruptions which had grown up in the church, though never sanctioned by it; that it was the same church which subsisted, and of which they were office-bearers and members, before and after the Reformation; and that it was only the novelties introduced by the Council of Trent after the Reformation, and the tyranny of the Papal See in enforcing them, that obstructed the union of the Latin or Western Church upon Catholic principles. These were very favourite notions with the Tractarians for a time, chiefly for this reason, that they enabled them to give a sort of vindication of the Reformation; and, at the same time, to avoid representing it as giving any sanction to the right of men, in the exercise of their own private judgment as to the truth of doctrines, to set themselves in opposition to the authority of the church. At length, however, the more able and honest men among them came to see that this was a weak and indefensible compromise, and convinced themselves that the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent afforded no more adequate ground for renouncing, or remaining in a state of separation from, the catholic church, than those doctrines which

had been publicly sanctioned before Luther and Zwingle began the work of Reformation.

Another reason for adverting to this subject, independently of this special argument and discussion, is, that we meet with some diversity of statement even among approved Protestant authors upon the matter referred to,—most of them, indeed, asserting that there were some important errors which were generally taught in the Church of Rome, but not formally sanctioned by the church, as such, till the Council of Trent; and others, though not absolutely denying this statement, thinking it true only to a very limited extent; while the opposite extreme to this,—viz., that no heresies warranting and requiring secession had been formally and fully adopted by the Church of Rome before the commencement of the Reformation,—has been adopted by others besides Dr Field, who were not Tractarians. I cannot enter into detail upon this subject,—which might easily be drawn out to almost any length as an important department in the history of theology,—but will briefly state the substance of what appears to me to be capable of being established by satisfactory evidence with respect to it, notwithstanding the difficulty, or rather impossibility,—obviously fatal to the ordinary claims and professions of the Papists,—of ascertaining what are, and what are not, œcumenical and infallible councils binding the whole church by their decisions. Unguarded and extreme statements upon this subject are not unfrequently found in Protestant authors; but the general truth upon the point may, I think, be fairly comprehended in the two following positions:—First, the Latin or Western Church, as such, under the dominion of the Pope, had, before the Reformation, publicly and officially sanctioned such doctrinal errors as rendered it lawful and necessary to abandon her communion, and had sanctioned them in such a way that she could not retract them without thereby contradicting and renouncing all her claims to obedience and submission;—and, secondly, there are some important doctrinal errors now forming part of the recognised creed of the Church of Rome, which, though generally taught there before the Reformation, did not receive the formal sanction of the church, as such, till the Council of Trent.

With respect to the first of these positions,—viz., that before the Reformation the Latin or Western Church was officially and irrevocably committed to important doctrinal errors, which fully

warranted secession from her communion,—I do not mean to attempt a detail of all the errors that can be established against her, but will merely refer to a few of the most important and notorious.

Protestants have usually received, as scriptural and orthodox, the doctrinal decisions of the first four general councils, and even of the fifth and sixth; though in all of them increasingly,—and especially in the last two,—many deviations from the scriptural primitive practice with respect to the government and worship of the church were countenanced, and too much evidence was given of the growing influence of a worldly and secular spirit in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs. But then the very next general council,—the seventh, or the second Council of Nice, in the eighth century,—involved the church, Eastern and Western,—for it is received by the Greek as well as by the Latin Church,—in all the guilt, theoretical and practical, of idolatry; for it formally and fully sanctioned and enjoined the worship of images,—thus at once teaching an important doctrinal error, and sanctioning an idolatrous practice. The Council of Trent, in its decree about the worship of images, founds mainly\* upon the authority of this second Council of Nice, and certainly gives no decision upon the subject which the acts of that council did not fully warrant; and consequently it pronounced no judgment upon this point, the guilt of which had not rested upon the whole church, as such, for more than seven hundred years before the Reformation: for the opposition made to the decisions of the second Nicene Council by a provincial synod at Frankfort, under the auspices of the Emperor Charlemagne, though a very important historical fact, and very annoying to the Romanists, did not last long, or accomplish much against the prevailing tide of idolatry; and certainly it does not affect the truth of the position, that the decrees of this council in favour of image-worship were received and acted upon by the whole church for many centuries before the appearance of Luther.

The same position holds true *in substance* of the other leading department of Romish idolatry, or rather polytheism,—viz., the invocation and worship of the Virgin Mary, and of saints and angels. We say *in substance*, because there is no such formal

\* Sess. xxv.

decision of any œcumenical council preceding that of Trent in support of these practices, and the doctrines on which they are based; and the reasons of this are, that they crept in at an earlier period than image-worship: at least the invocation and worship of saints, though not of Mary, advanced more gradually, and at length prevailed universally in the church, without calling forth much public opposition, or requiring any formal decision of a council to maintain them,—facts which emboldened the Council of Trent to perpetrate the deliberate falsehood of asserting\* that “they were, in accordance with the practice of the catholic and apostolic church, handed down from the earliest period of the Christian religion, and sanctioned by the consent of the holy fathers and the decrees of the sacred councils,”—without thinking it needful to refer to any specific evidence or testimony in support of the allegation. But though there is no formal decision of any œcumenical council previous to the Reformation in favour of the invocation and worship of saints and angels, there can be no question that the doctrine and practice of the church as to the substance of this matter had been conclusively and irrevocably fixed for many centuries, and that the Council of Trent did not go one step upon this point beyond what had been universally approved and practised by the church for many hundred years. It is true that, before the Reformation, there had been discussions and disputes among Romanists themselves as to the kind and degree of the worship or *cultus* that was to be paid to saints and images, and as to the foundations on which it rested. But the Council of Trent took good care not to decide these knotty points; and they remain undecided to this day, still occasionally giving rise to differences of opinion among the defenders of Popish idolatry. In regard, then, to the important charge of idolatry and polytheism brought by Protestants against the Church of Rome,—a charge including at once doctrinal error and sinful practice,—it is perfectly plain that the whole guilt of it had been incurred by the church, as such, long before the Reformation, and that this guilt was not even aggravated by anything that was done by the Council of Trent. It is true, indeed, that some of the earliest Reformers, and especially Luther, did not rest much upon this charge of idolatry, or see fully, for some time at least, the guilt which it

\* Sess. xxv.

involved; but the Protestant system, as developed and defended by the comprehensive master mind of Calvin, brought out this idolatrous corruption of the worship of God as a leading charge against the Church of Rome, and one of the main grounds that rendered it obligatory to secede from her communion.

The other leading errors which it can be proved that the Church of Rome had officially sanctioned before the Reformation were these:—transubstantiation,—the absolute necessity, in order to forgiveness, of the confession of all mortal sins, etc., to a priest,—the duty of extirpating heretics, and the right of the church to compel the civil power to aid in this work,—as settled by the fourth or great Lateran Council in 1215;—the supremacy of the Pope as the ruler of the universal church,—and the existence of a purgatory after death, in which believers are punished for their purgation, and in which they derive benefit from the prayers and satisfaction offered for them on earth,—as settled by the Council of Florence in 1435;—the lawfulness of breaking faith with heretics,—and the non-obligation of communion under both kinds, or, as it is usually called, *communio sub utraque specie*, or, for the sake of brevity, *sub utraque*,—that is, the use of the cup or wine as well as the bread in the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper,—as settled by the Council of Constance.

The fourth or great Lateran Council is unanimously regarded by Romanists as œcumenical and infallible; and though a variety of strange and forced expedients have been tried by some of them, especially by the defenders of the Gallican liberties, to get quit of the authority of those of its decisions that involved an assumption of jurisdiction by the church over the civil power—(as, for instance, by alleging that, in pronouncing these decisions, it did not properly act in its ecclesiastical capacity as a council, but by the authority of the civil powers, who were present in great numbers upon the occasion),—yet the binding ecclesiastical authority of all its other decisions has been invariably maintained in the Church of Rome. It established, then, beyond all question the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the change of the whole substance of the bread and wine, after consecration in the Lord's Supper, into the real flesh and blood of Christ, and the necessity, in order to forgiveness, of the confession of all mortal sins to a priest,—the first a monstrous absurdity, and the other a principle of flagrant tyranny, and tending directly to corrupt the doctrine of justification. In regard to

confession, the Council of Trent did little more in substance than repeat the canon of the fourth Lateran Council upon this subject, commonly called "omnis utriusque sexus," referring to it by name, and formally approving of it. With respect to transubstantiation, though the Council of Trent has expounded it more in detail, and imposed upon the belief of the church some additional absurdities and extravagances in their explanations of it, so as to cut off the evasions by which some of the more rational Papists, who flourished in the intervening period, endeavoured to soften or modify the canon of the Council of Lateran; yet there can be no doubt that the whole substance of the doctrine of the church,—of all to which the Church of Rome is even now committed,—was really contained in that canon, and of course became the formal doctrine of the church in the beginning of the thirteenth century.

In regard to the Council of Florence, it can scarcely be said to be unanimously admitted to be œcumenical by the Romanists; for its claim to this character is denied by some, though not by all, of the defenders of the Gallican liberties. This denial is based mainly upon its having been set up by Pope Eugenius IV. in opposition to the Council of Basle, which was sitting at the same time, and which the French generally regard as œcumenical. The more decided and consistent defenders of the Gallican liberties maintain that it was illegal and incompetent for Pope Eugenius to dissolve, as he did, the Council at Basle, and to transfer its sittings first to Ferrara, then to Florence; and those more courtly French authors, who, like Natalis Alexander, maintain that the Council of Florence was legitimately convoked, and therefore œcumenical, are virtually forced, in defending this position, to throw their Gallican principles overboard for the time. But, after all, this is more a question of form than substance; for the *doctrinal* decisions of the Council of Florence have been universally received as sound and orthodox even by those Romanists who entertained great doubts as to the legal question of its formal authority. Upon this point the statement of Alexander is unquestionably well founded. It is in these words: "Denique Florentina synodus, ratione saltem dogmatum ab ea finitorum, œcumenica totius ecclesiæ catholicæ consensu prædicatur."\* With respect to purgatory, the Council of Florence

\* Natalis Alexander, vol. xviii., p. 608.

went at least as far as the Council of Trent, which on this point, and on the kindred topic of indulgences, spoke with extreme caution and reserve, though plainly enough indicating that the acknowledged doctrines of the church upon these points contained more than they thought it expedient at the time to declare. With respect to the supremacy of the Romish See and of the Pope, the decree of the Council of Florence, which does not assert either the Pope's personal infallibility or his superiority over a general council, is admitted *in terminis* by the Gallican clergy,—and, of course, by all Romanists,—as the doctrine of the church, though the Ultramontanists do not regard it as going far enough, or bringing out the whole truth upon the subject. And it is quite certain that the Council of Trent did not, by any formal decision, teach any other doctrine upon this fundamental principle of Popery than what the Church had been already committed to by the Council of Florence. Indeed, I do not know any sufficient evidence to prove that the Romish Church, *as such*, ever has been, or is now, justly chargeable with teaching any other doctrine upon this subject than what was decreed by the Council of Florence, although very many Papists have taught, and without any censure, that the Pope is personally infallible, and is superior to a general council; and although this, which is certainly the prevailing opinion among them, seems to be the natural result to which some of the acknowledged principles of Popery, and some of the grounds on which they are commonly defended, lead. The decision of the Council of Florence upon this subject, contained in what is called the "Decretum Unionis," or the Decree of Union with the Greeks, is this, "that the apostolic see and the Roman Pontiff hold the primacy or supremacy over the whole world; that he is the successor of St Peter, the prince of the apostles, the true vicar of Christ, the head of the whole church, and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that in St Peter full power was given to him by our Lord Jesus Christ of feeding, ruling, and governing the universal church."\* This, then, was the universally and officially received doctrine of the Romish Church for at least nearly a century before the Reformation. All this power and authority were held to belong to the Pope, and to belong to him *jure divino*.

I have said that this decree is admitted *in terminis* by the

\* Natalis Alexander, vol. xviii., pp. 633–4.

Gallican clergy, and, of course, by all Romanists. But it is fair to mention that there is one phrase in it about which some of the French writers have scrupled, unless it be understood and explained in a certain sense. It is the expression, "governing the universal church." They have no difficulty about ascribing to the Pope,—and that, too, *jure divino*,—a right to govern all the faithful, and all churches; but a right to govern the universal church might be construed so as to imply superiority to a general council, which they refuse to concede to him. A general or œcumenical council is held to *represent* the universal church, and upon its representing the universal church its supreme power and authority are based; but even an œcumenical council can scarcely be held to rise higher than the universal church which it represents; and if the Pope has the right to govern the universal church, he might be held by implication to have the right to govern, and, of course, to be superior to, the general council which represents it. Still they do not reject the decree *in terminis*, as they think it quite capable of a sound sense; but only are anxious to explain that they understand the phrase "universal church" distributively, as they say, *i.e.*, as synonymous with all churches, or every portion of the church, separately considered, and not collectively, as embracing the whole church in its totality represented in a general council. Indeed, Bossuet has shown, in the first book of his great work, entitled, "Defensio declarationis cleri Gallicani," that the French prelates in the Council of Trent objected to the repetition *in terminis* of the decree of the Council of Florence on the Pope's supremacy, fully admitting, at the same time, that it was capable of a sound sense, consistent with their principles, but afraid that it might also be held to admit of the construction above described, which would have brought it into collision with the Gallican liberties in the article of the superiority of a general council over the Pope; and he praises the candour and moderation of Pope Pius IV. in allowing the subject to be dropped in the council, and to be left without any new decree upon the footing on which the Council of Florence had placed it, and in assigning as his reason, that he did not wish any points to be decided but those in regard to which the fathers of the council were unanimous: "Quare," Bossuet\* says, "Pius IV. non agit pugnaciter, neque ea sibi tribu-

\* Defens. Declar. Cler. Gallic., Pars i., Lib. i., cap. ii.

*enda contendit*, quæ multi privato sensu, sed quæ omnes communi fide *tribuerent*, atque a Formula Florentinâ, rectâ licet, si bene intelligatur, sed tamen dubiâ Gallis in tanta re omnem ambiguitatem recusantibus temperandum putat." However, the Florentine formula, as Bossuet calls it, even with the Gallican explanation,—*i.e.*, taking the phrase "universal church" distributively and not collectively,—commits the whole church to the doctrine, as based upon Scripture and divine right, that the Pope is the successor of Peter, that he is the vicar of Christ on earth, the head of the whole Christian church, and invested by Christ with a right to rule and govern all the faithful, and all churches. And this is a doctrine which faithfulness to Christ and His word forbids us to admit, and requires us to renounce; while it also precludes the notion with which at one time some of the Tractarians seemed to be enamoured,—*viz.*, that if they could only persuade the church of Rome to abandon what they then called the Tridentine novelties,—*they* would willingly acknowledge the Pope of Rome as the patriarch of the whole Western Church, and thus get back, as they imagined, to the catholicity of the fifth century.

The only other topics to which I propose to advert, in illustration of the first general position, are,—the decrees of the Council of Constance as to the lawfulness of breaking faith with heretics, —and the non-obligation of communion under both kinds. In regard to the recognised authority of the Council of Constance, the case stands shortly thus. It is regarded by the defenders of the Gallican liberties as œcumenical in all its decisions and actings; while by most other Romanists, the decrees of the fourth and fifth sessions, in which it determined that a general council is superior to a pope, are excepted. But while, on this account, it is not admitted by the Ultramontanists and the immediate adherents of the Pope into the ordinary catalogue of general councils, its decisions upon all other points, except the one specified, are received by them, and by all other Romanists, as œcumenical and infallible; and, therefore, its decrees in regard to keeping faith with heretics, and communion in both kinds, had been fully sanctioned and adopted by the church before the Reformation.

Papists of all sections have in modern times exerted their utmost ingenuity to exempt the Council of Constance and the Church of Rome from the guilt of having sanctioned, as a general

principle, the lawfulness of breaking faith with heretics, and of having acted upon this principle in the case of John Huss. But all their ingenuity has proved fruitless. It can be proved that this nefarious principle was in substance asserted and acted upon by the Council of Constance in sessions which are admitted by all parties to be œcumenical, and which were afterwards confirmed by the Pope. The Council of Trent has certainly not gone any further in this matter than the Council of Constance had done. In the negotiations which were carried on for a time about the Protestants appearing at the Council of Trent, different forms of safe conduct (*salvus conductus*) were offered to them by the council, which were rejected as unsatisfactory; just as if any safe conduct would have protected them, if the Pope, having them once in his power, had thought it safe and expedient to put them to death. At length the council, professing to be very desirous that the Protestants should appear, agreed, in their eighteenth session, to give them a fuller and more ample safe conduct than any that had been formerly tendered to them; and, to remove the apprehensions reasonably inspired by the doctrine and practice of the Council of Constance, they expressly referred to these decisions, formally guaranteed the Protestants against all danger from that quarter, and suspended their force and operation for the present occasion, “*quibus in hac parte pro hac vice derogat*,”\*—thus affording conclusive proof that the Council of Constance had sanctioned the breaking of faith with heretics, and recognising the principle as still the ordinary doctrine of the church, though its practical operation might be suspended by a competent authority upon a particular occasion.

In regard to communion in one kind, or in both kinds, the Council of Constance had explicitly laid down the doctrine, that there is nothing in Scripture imposing an obligation upon Christians, from deference to Christ's commandment, to communicate in both kinds, and that the church had full power to prohibit the use of the cup or the wine; and it exercised this power in actually forbidding what Christ had so clearly and explicitly enjoined upon His followers. This, then, was the established and undoubted doctrine and practice of the Romish Church for more than a century before the commencement of the Reformation; and the Council of Trent did nothing more upon this subject than repeat

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\* *Sees. xviii.*

the substance of the decree of the Council of Constance, and appeal to the authority of that council in support of their decision.

Thus, then, it appears that, before the Reformation and the Council of Trent, the Romish Church, *as such*, had by public and official acts incurred the guilt of idolatry and polytheism in worship, heresy in doctrine, and tyranny in government,—had given abundant evidence, not merely by prevalent relaxation of discipline and gross corruptions and abuses in practice, but by public and solemn deeds binding the whole communion, that she had already apostatized from the pure worship and the true doctrine of God,—that she claimed and exercised the right of altering Christ's arrangements, and trampling upon the rights and liberties of His people,—that she required of all her subjects beliefs and practices which a regard to Christ's honour and authority obliged them to repudiate,—that she required the belief of what was insulting to men's understandings, and the practice of what was opposed to the plain principles of morality; and that, *therefore*, it was not only warrantable in them, but incumbent upon them, to renounce her authority, to abandon her communion, and to provide for themselves the administration of God's ordinances, and the enjoyment of the means of grace, in a manner more accordant with the scriptural and primitive standard, and in circumstances in which their own consciences might be void of offence, and on which they had better reason to expect the divine blessing.

The *second* position necessary for bringing out the whole truth upon the state of doctrine in the church at the Reformation, is this,—that there are some important doctrinal errors, now undoubtedly forming part of the recognised creed of the Church of Rome, which, though generally taught in her communion before the Reformation, had not then formally the sanction of the church, as such, and which were for the first time imposed irrevocably by infallible authority in the Council of Trent; and the grounds of this position we would now briefly illustrate.

No one can fail to be struck with the consideration, that in contemplating the principal doctrinal errors which had become part of the formal and recognised creed of the church before the Reformation, there are none which are very closely or directly connected with the essential principles bearing on the way of a sinner's salvation,—none that very immediately impinged upon



what are commonly called the doctrines of grace; and yet Protestants now generally charge the Church of Rome with teaching dangerous error upon these most important subjects. In truth, this charge is mainly based upon grounds furnished by the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent, upon statements which were sanctioned by that council, but which could not be proved to have been previously adopted by the church, as such, or by any authority entitled, upon her own principles, to represent her. Pelagianism,—which, if we take in also the modified form of it, commonly called semi-Pelagianism, may be held virtually to comprehend all that is anti-evangelical, everything that has been put forth by professing Christians in opposition to scriptural views of the doctrines of grace,—had, chiefly through the influence of Augustine, been condemned in general, or in the gross, by several Popes in the fifth century, and by the General Council of Ephesus. The decrees of the African Synod in the fifth, and of the Council of Orange in the sixth century, condemning explicitly and in detail Pelagian and semi-Pelagian errors, had, though not formally adopted by the universal church, or by any œcumenical council, been generally treated with respect and deference, when any reference was made to these topics; and no evidence has been produced to prove that, down to the Reformation, the church, as such, had formally and officially incurred the guilt of rejecting or condemning any of the leading principles of the Augustinian system of theology, or of setting itself in direct and palpable opposition to the doctrines of grace. Accordingly, Protestants have had no great difficulty in producing testimonies in support of scriptural or evangelical principles from men who lived in the communion of the Romish Church from Augustine to Luther, and even during the period that intervened between the commencement of the Reformation and the Council of Trent. There can be no question, however, that Pelagian and semi-Pelagian views had deeply tainted the ordinary teaching and authorship of the church long before the Reformation; and, indeed, we may say from the second century downwards.

The truth is, that Pelagian sentiments, or corruptions of the scriptural views of the doctrines of grace, are uniformly found to accompany a low state of personal religion,—these two things invariably acting and reacting upon each other, and operating reciprocally as cause and effect. The whole of the general bear-

ing and tendency of the Romish system was fitted at once to destroy personal religion, and to pervert or eradicate evangelical doctrine. Had Satan not succeeded in effecting both these objects,—although, indeed, the one necessarily implies or produces the other,—his masterpiece would have proved a failure. But he was permitted to succeed; and the consequence was, that, for many centuries before the Reformation, personal piety had in a great measure disappeared from the church; the true doctrines of the gospel,—at least true scriptural views of the way of a sinner's salvation,—were almost wholly unknown. Pelagianism, though not formally sanctioned by the church, pervaded the general teaching of her functionaries; and of the few who were not entirely indifferent about all religion, it might be said, that, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.

This state of matters, so far as speculative doctrine is concerned, was greatly promoted by the labours and writings of the schoolmen. Many of them were men of acute and vigorous intellect; but personal religion was in the scholastic age at a very low ebb: the humble and prayerful study of the word of God had been wholly abandoned; and the necessary consequence, upon the principle already adverted to, was, that their speculations upon theological subjects assumed, upon the whole, a decidedly Pelagian or anti-evangelical complexion. The schoolmen, indeed, may be fairly and justly regarded as being substantially the Rationalists of the middle ages; and though they continued to hold the doctrines of the Trinity and the atonement,—chiefly, it would almost seem, as affording scope and materials for presumptuous, if not profane, speculations,—the general character of their views upon most of the other doctrines of the Christian system, resembled to a considerable extent that of the low Pelagianism of modern Socinians. It is quite true that valuable testimonies in support of some scriptural and anti-Pelagian doctrines have been produced from the writings of the scholastic divines, and especially from the two most eminent of them all,—Peter Lombard, the Master of Sentences, and Thomas Aquinas, commonly called the Angelic Doctor, or the Angel of the Schools, who had also the honour of being canonized. But the points on which these men held anti-Pelagian views, were *chiefly* (though not exclusively) those which were not

matters of pure revelation, which were based upon metaphysical reasonings as well as scriptural statements,—in regard to which powerful and vigorous intellects, if they got anything like fair play, might lead men to sound notions, even though they were not seeking and enjoying the guidance of the Spirit and word of God; and with respect to which error is not so certainly the accompaniment of ungodliness, as in the case of some other doctrines of Scripture, which, perhaps, come still more directly and immediately into contact with the ordinary apprehensions and workings of the human mind when first directed to religious subjects: in short, they were the doctrines of predestination, providence, divine agency, and necessity,—topics on which we have seen in modern times such men as Hobbes, Collins, and Priestley,—an atheist, an infidel, and a Socinian,—maintaining views *in some respects* very similar to those which are taught in the sacred Scriptures, and embodied in the scheme of evangelical and Calvinistic truth. Among the schoolmen in general, original sin was very much explained away; and the natural ability of man, as he is, to do the will of God, and to contribute to effect his own salvation, was broadly taught. Justification, as a distinct head of doctrine, was thrown into the background, and was seldom formally discussed; while all scriptural principles regarding it were virtually overturned by the errors held upon the points just referred to, and by the open assertion of the merit of good works, and the justifying efficacy of the sacraments. Pelagian principles upon these important points, though deeply pervading the speculations of the generality of the schoolmen, incurred no opposition or censure from the ecclesiastical authorities, just because they were very congenial to the prevailing sentiments and character of the age in regard to religion. These authorities, indeed, would still have professed, had there been any call to make the profession, that they respected the authority of Augustine, and rejected Pelagianism; while the fact is unquestionable, that the ordinary teaching of the schools and of the pulpit had become Pelagian to its core.

The church, indeed, in its public and official capacity, could not be said to have sanctioned these doctrinal errors; but they pervaded the public teaching of her functionaries, and she made no effort to check them. Bradwardine, Archbishop of Canterbury in the fourteenth century, commonly called Doctor Pro-

fundus, whose work, “*De causa Dei contra Pelagium*,”\* marks an era of some importance in the history of theology, and contains a valuable defence of evangelical truth, though in a somewhat barbarous and scholastic form, deploras bitterly the general prevalence of Pelagian error over the church, and earnestly appeals to the Pope to interpose to check it, addressing him in these words: “*Rise, Peter, why art thou sleeping?*” But Peter did not find it convenient to hear him, and continued to sleep on; and, in consequence, the Pelagian heresy, in its grossest and most injurious forms, prevailed generally over the whole church in the beginning of the sixteenth century. A large portion of the zeal and energy of the Reformers was directed against these prevalent errors, which they ascribed very much to the influence of the schoolmen (of whom they commonly spoke in terms of perhaps more than merited contempt), and which they justly regarded as dishonouring to Christ, and injurious to the souls of men. In regard more especially to Luther, it may be said that his main vocation, work, and achievements, were just to expose and resist the prevalent Pelagian heresies which perverted the way of salvation, and corrupted the scheme of divine truth. His earlier opponents, fortified by the authority of the schoolmen, and the toleration at least of the ecclesiastical authorities, were open enough in defending Pelagian error, and in opposing the principles of evangelical truth,—the scriptural doctrines of grace. Before, however, the Council of Trent assembled, the Romanists had been impressed with the necessity of being a little more cautious in their statements upon these subjects, if they wished to keep up the profession which the church had all along made, more or less fully and honestly, of rejecting Pelagianism.†

In a production of Melancthon’s, which displays all the infirmities of his character, and is in many respects extremely discreditable to him, written in the year 1536, when he was

\* Referred to in Amesii “*Bellarminus Enervatus*,” tom. iv., p. 44. The passage in Bradwardine is on p. 872.

† Field (B. iii., c. viii., p. 85) gives a very curious extract from Cardinal Contarinius, or Contarini (of whose sound views of Justification, see Ranke’s History of the Popes, pp. 37

and 53), in which the Cardinal complains, “That if any man did debase the nature of man, deject the pride of sinful flesh, magnify the riches of the grace of God, and urge the necessity of it, he was judged a Lutheran, and pronounced a heretic; though they that gloried in the name of Catholics were themselves Pelagian heretics.”

carrying on some negotiations with Francis I. of France,\* we find the following statement with reference to the growing soundness of Romanists on some of these questions since the commencement of the Reformation, and the consequent probability of an adjustment of all differences by mutual concessions: "Controversiam de justificatione ipsa tempora mollierunt. Nam de multis convenit inter doctos, de quibus fuerunt initio magna certamina. Nemo jam defendit ista absurda quæ leguntur apud Scholasticos, quòd homines possint Legi Dei satisfacere, quòd mereantur remissionem peccatorum dignitate suorum operum, quòd sint justì, id est, accepti propter propriam dignitatem, et legis impletionem. Omnes jam fatentur fide opus esse, hoc est fiducia in Christum in remissione peccatorum, de qua fide nulla est mentio in Scholasticis. Omnes jam fatentur interesse gloriæ Christi, ut illa fides inculcetur hominibus. Convenit item inter Doctos de libero arbitrio, de peccato originis et de plerisque aliis quæstionibus conjunctis." There is some truth in these positions, viewed merely as statements of fact, though, taken even in that light, they are far stronger than the evidence warrants: for the Romanists had not become quite so orthodox as Melancthon's statement represents them; while the inference which Melancthon desired to deduce from them, of the possibility and probability of a reconciliation with Rome, was wholly unwarranted. The Romanists, however, were feeling the necessity of throwing off the gross Pelagianism of the schoolmen, which had generally prevailed, and been defended, at the commencement of the Reformation; and in the Council of Trent their ingenuity was exerted to combine these three objects: First, to find something to condemn in the doctrines of the Reformers; secondly, to avoid as much as possible a formal condemnation of the scholastic doctrines; and, thirdly, to deprive their opponents of any very tangible ground for charging them with Pelagianism. How far they succeeded in combining these objects, we shall afterwards have occasion to consider; and in the meantime we may remark that the investigation will require some care, and is not unattended with difficulties: for it is not really so easy, as might at first sight appear, to explain and to make palpable how it is, and to what extent, that

\* "Consilium de Moderandis Controversiis Religionis," Opera, vol. iv., p. 827.

the Church of Rome, as judged nakedly by the decisions of the Council of Trent, does pervert the gospel of the grace of God. But what we have to observe at present, and with reference to the subject under consideration, is, that though at the time of the Reformation the Pelagian heresy prevailed almost universally in the Church of Rome, and though in consequence she incurred great guilt, and did fearful injury to the souls of men, she had not then formally and officially, as a church, given her sanction to Pelagian errors; and that to whatever extent she may be now, as a church, publicly and formally responsible for anti-evangelical principles, directly injurious to the souls of men,—this is owing to her refusing to embrace the pure gospel light which the Reformation introduced, and to the proceedings of her last infallible council. Protestants have generally held,—and we have no doubt that the position can be established,—that the Council of Trent did, in its hatred to the doctrines of the Reformers, and in opposition to its obvious policy and general intention, erect into articles of faith, to be thereafter implicitly received by all men, various points which had formerly been left free as subjects of general speculation, and on which a considerable diversity of opinion prevailed among themselves; and that in this way the Church of Rome has become irrevocably committed to some important doctrinal errors, the guilt of holding which she had not formally incurred in her official capacity at the commencement of the Reformation, and from the guilt of which, therefore, *she might* then, without any sacrifice of her principles, have escaped, and, of course, might have been still exempted, but for the decisions of the Council of Trent.

The main topics of a doctrinal kind which are set forth with anything like minuteness of detail in the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent, are these:—the rule of faith, original sin, justification, and the sacraments, both generally and particularly; the sacrament of the Eucharist, or of the altar, as they often call it, including the sacrifice of the mass; the sacrament of penance, including the subjects of confession, satisfaction, and absolution; and the sacrament of orders, including the hierarchy, or the ordinary government of the church,—the heads respectively under which these subjects are commonly ranked and discussed in Popish works on theology. Now, upon all these subjects it can be proved, I think, that the Council of Trent irrevocably committed the

Church of Rome to important doctrinal errors, which, though in most cases they had prevailed in the church long before, had hitherto been left free as topics of speculation, and had not been explicitly settled by any binding ecclesiastical authority.

The church had not before, in her official capacity, put tradition on a level with the written word, or thrust the apocryphal books into the canon of Scripture, or formally set up her own authority and the unanimous consent of the fathers as the standards according to which the Scripture must be interpreted. These principles had been largely acted upon in the Church of Rome, and with the most injurious effects upon the interests of sound doctrine and pure religion. But the church, as such, had not before incurred the guilt of corrupting the standard of God's truth, and trampling by a general law of universal obligation upon the ordinary rights of men in investigating it. She had, indeed, as we have already seen, required of her subjects the belief of some important doctrinal errors, which the word of God condemned, and which, consequently, a due regard to its authority should have obliged them to reject; but until after the Reformers, rejecting all human authority and mere ecclesiastical traditions in religious matters, appealed to the written word of God alone, the Church of Rome had not fully incurred the guilt of authoritatively and avowedly polluting the very fountains of divine truth, and of making the word of God of none effect.

In regard to original sin, the old decisions of the church against the Pelagians prevented the Council of Trent from going so far astray as otherwise the speculations of the schoolmen might have led them; and, accordingly, the formal symbolical doctrine of Rome upon this subject is much sounder than that of many men who have borne the name of Protestants, though she has contrived by other means to neutralize the wholesome influence which scriptural views of original sin usually exert upon men's conceptions of the whole scheme of divine truth. But the main error which the council imposed upon the belief of the church on this topic,—viz., that concupiscence in the regenerate, by which is meant very much what we commonly understand by indwelling sin, is *not* sin,—had not before received any formal ecclesiastical sanction, and that, therefore, it might be, and in point of fact was, opposed by some who continued in the Papal communion.

The doctrine of justification occupied a very prominent place

in the minds and in the writings of the Reformers. There is no doctrine of greater intrinsic importance, and there was certainly none that had been more thoroughly obscured and perverted for a very long period. Even Augustine's statements upon this point were not free from error and ambiguity; and this doctrine, as we have had occasion to observe in another connection, though the main subject of controversy in the church in the apostolic age, had never again been fully and formally discussed till the age of the Reformation: not certainly because Satan's enmity to the scriptural truth upon this important point had been mitigated, but because he had fully succeeded in condemning and burying it without controversy, and without the formal exercise of ecclesiastical authority. There was, indeed, no previous decision of the church which could be said to have formally and explicitly defined anything upon this subject; and when the Reformers brought out from God's word, and under the guidance of His Spirit, the truth upon this point, which had been buried and trampled on almost since the apostolic age, so far, at least, as concerns a correct scientific exposition of it (for we willingly admit that there were many who, with confused and erroneous speculative views upon the subject, were practically and in heart relying wholly upon the one sacrifice and the one righteousness of Christ), the Church of Rome was free,—unfettered by any previous ecclesiastical proceeding,—to have embraced and proclaimed the doctrines of Scripture regarding it. We learn from Father Paul, in his history of the Council of Trent,\* that when the fathers of Trent came to consider the subject of justification, they felt themselves somewhat perplexed, because it was not a subject which they had been accustomed to discuss, as it formed no distinct head in the scholastic theology. Original sin had been largely discussed in the schools, and therefore the fathers were somewhat at home in it. But as to justification, not one of the schoolmen, as Father Paul says, had even conceived, and far less refuted, Luther's views regarding it. The fathers had therefore to proceed upon an unknown track; and as they did not take the word of God for their guide, they introduced for the first time into the formally recognised theology of the Church of Rome, statements which, though cau-

\* Tome i., Livre ii., lxxv., p. 335. Courayer.