

proclamation of these great scriptural doctrines, both at home and abroad, God has been pleased to honour them with a large measure of success in the conversion of sinners.

But no church has ever continued long in this intermediate position; and the probability is, that they too will manifest a tendency towards one or other of the two extremes. It is earnestly to be hoped that it may be that one which will enable them to retain all the scriptural truth they at present hold, and to bring it out more completely and consistently than they now do. They are accustomed to admit that Calvinism has been always held in combination with a great deal of important scriptural truth; and they are anxious to separate this truth from what they are fond of calling the peculiarities of Calvinism,—which they sometimes represent as of no great importance,—and which they profess to dislike chiefly as neutralizing or obstructing the operation and effect of the truth which they and Calvinists hold in common. We do not deny that they hold many important fundamental truths, or that the truths in which they agree with us are more important than those in which they differ from us. But we hold that what they call the peculiarities of Calvinism are very important truths,—essential to a *full* and *complete* exposition of the scheme of Christian doctrine,—to an exact and accurate development of the whole plan of salvation; and, more particularly,—for this is the only point we can at present advert to,—that they do not follow out, fully and consistently, the scriptural truths which they hold, and that, if they did, this would certainly land them in an admission of all the fundamental principles of Calvinism.

I do not now enter into an illustration of this position. The materials for illustrating it have been furnished in the examination of the different doctrines controverted between the Calvinists and the Arminians. In the course of this examination, we have repeatedly had occasion to show that the point in dispute really turned practically upon this question,—Whether God or man was the cause or the author of man's salvation. Socinians ascribe man's salvation—that is, everything needful for securing his eternal happiness—to man himself; Calvinists, to God; while Arminians ascribe it partly to the one and partly to the other,—the more Pelagian section of them ascribing so much to man, as practically to leave nothing to God; and the more evangelical section of them *professing* to ascribe it, like the Calvinists, wholly to God,

but—by their denial of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism—refusing to follow out this great principle fully, and to apply it, distinctly and consistently, to the various departments of the scheme of divine truth. They do this commonly under a vague impression, that, when this great principle is followed out and exhibited, distinctly and definitely, in the particular doctrines of Calvinism, it involves results inconsistent with the free agency and responsibility of man,—just as if the creature ever could become independent of the Creator,—and as if God could not accomplish all His purposes in and by His creatures, without violating the principles of their constitution. All men who have ever furnished satisfactory evidence, in their character and conduct, of being under the influence of genuine piety, have not only professed, but believed, that the salvation of sinners is to be ascribed to the sovereign mercy of God,—that man can do nothing effectual, in the exercise of his own natural powers, for escaping from his natural condition of guilt and depravity,—and must be indebted for this wholly to the free grace of God, the vicarious work of Christ, and the efficacious agency of the Spirit. Now, Calvinism is really nothing but just giving a distinct and definite expression and embodiment to these great principles,—applying clear and precise ideas of them to each branch of the scheme of salvation; while every other system of theology embodies doctrines which either plainly and palpably contradict or exclude them, or at least throw them into the background, and involve them in indefiniteness or obscurity, which can generally be shown to resolve ultimately into a contradiction or denial of them.

Evangelical Arminians profess to believe in the utter helplessness and moral impotency of man by nature to anything spiritually good. This great principle finds its full and accurate expression only in the doctrine of original sin, as explained and applied by Calvinists; while even the soundest Arminians usually find it necessary to introduce some vague and ill-defined limitation or modification, which they are not able very clearly to explain, of the universal and entire guilt and depravity of man. They all admit something which they call the sovereignty of divine grace in the salvation of sinners; and by the admission of this, they *intend* to deprive men of all ground of boasting, and to give God the whole glory of their salvation. But if the peculiar principles of Calvinism are denied, the sovereignty of God in determining the everlasting

salvation of sinners is reduced to a mere name, without a corresponding reality; and whatever professions may be made, and whatever may be the intentions and feelings of the parties making them, the salvation of those who are saved is not determined by God, but by men themselves,—God merely foreseeing what they will, in point of fact, do, and regulating His plans and His conduct accordingly. Evangelical Arminians profess to ascribe to the agency of the Spirit the production of faith and regeneration in men individually; and seem to exclude, as Calvinists do, the co-operation of man in the exercise of his natural powers in the origin or commencement of the great spiritual change which is indispensable to salvation. But whatever they may hold, or think they hold, upon this point, they cannot consistently—without renouncing their Arminianism, and admitting the peculiar principles of Calvinism—make the agency of the Spirit the real, determining, efficacious cause of the introduction of spiritual life into the soul; and must ascribe, in some way or other,—palpably or obscurely,—some co-operation to man himself, even in the commencement of this work. And if the commencement of the work be God's, in such a sense that His agency is the determining and certainly efficacious cause of its being effected in every instance, then this necessarily implies the exercise of His sovereignty in the matter in a much higher and more definite sense than any in which Arminians can ever ascribe it to Him. It is not disputed that, whatever God does in time, He decreed or resolved to do from eternity; and, *therefore*, men, in consistency, must either deny that God does this,—that the agency of His Spirit is the cause of the implantation of spiritual life,—of the commencement of the process which leads to the production of faith and regeneration *in any other sense* than as a mere partial concurring cause co-operating with man,—or else they must admit all the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism in regard to grace and predestination.

It is not, then, to be wondered at, that, as we lately remarked, some of the most eminent divines in Germany have recently been led to see and admit the inconsistency of the denial of Calvinism with the admission of the scriptural doctrine of the Lutheran symbols in regard to depravity, regeneration, and the work of the Spirit; and that some of them have been led, though apparently chiefly upon the ground of consistent philosophical speculation, to take the side of Calvinism. And there are few things more

earnestly to be desired, with a view to the promotion of sound doctrine and true religion in our own land, than that the Wesleyan Methodists should come to see the inconsistency in which their peculiar doctrines upon these points involves them; and be led to adopt, fully and consistently, the only scheme of theology which gives full and definite expression and ample scope to all those great principles which all men of true piety profess to hold, and in some sense do hold, and which alone fully exhibits and secures the glory of the grace of God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—in the salvation of sinful men.\*

\* Knapp's Lectures on Christian Theology, pp. 116 and 411; (Wood's Notes). Hagenbach's History of Doc- trines, vol. ii., pp. 448–52. Wegscheider's "Institutiones," pp. 466–483.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

*Sec. I.—Presbyterianism.*

THE leading general questions which have been broached in connection with the subject of church government are these:—Is the ordinary administration of the affairs of the church vested in the body of the members of the church, collectively and indiscriminately, or in a select number, who, in virtue of their office, are invested with a certain measure of authority in the management of ecclesiastical affairs, and of control over the ordinary members of the church? And if the latter be the truth,—as the Reformers in general believed it to be,—then such questions as these naturally arise: What are the different classes or divisions of the office-bearers of the church, and what are their different functions respectively? Are there any of them priests, possessed of a proper priestly character, and entitled to execute priestly functions? Is there any divinely-sanctioned class of functionaries in the church superior to the ordinary pastors of congregations? And if not, is there any other class of office-bearers, in some respect inferior to them, but entitled to take part along with them in the government of the church? Most of these questions were fully investigated and discussed at the period of the Reformation, and were then settled on grounds which have ever since commended themselves to the great body of the Reformed churches. With a partial exception,—to be afterwards noticed,—in the case of Luther, the Reformers generally held that the ordinary right of administering the affairs of the church was vested, not in the body of the members, but in select office-bearers.

Most of them held that the church, collectively,—which they usually defined to be *coetus fidelium*,—was vested by Christ with such entire self-sufficiency, such full intrinsic capacity with respect to everything external, for the attainment of its own ends and the

promotion of its own welfare by means of His ordinances, as to be entitled, in extraordinary emergencies, to do *anything*, however ordinarily irregular, that might be necessary to secure these results. This is the great general principle that is indicated in our Confession of Faith, when it lays down the position, that, “to the catholic visible church, consisting of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children, Christ has given the ministry, the oracles, and the ordinances of God.” The Reformers made use of this important principle to defend, against the Romanists, the validity of their own vocation to the ordinary work of the ministry, and the special work of reformation. But they did not regard it as at all inconsistent with the following truths, which they also generally maintained, as founded upon the word of God,—namely, that the church is bound, as well as entitled, to have office-bearers, and just the kinds and classes of office-bearers which are sanctioned by the sacred Scripture; that Scripture contains plain enough indications as to the way in which these office-bearers should be appointed and established,—indications which should be implicitly followed as far as possible, and in all ordinary circumstances; and that these office-bearers, so appointed and established, become, in virtue of their office, vested with authority to administer the ordinary government of the church, subject to no other jurisdiction or authoritative control than that of Christ Himself speaking in His word.

The Church of Rome had extensively corrupted the teaching of Scripture in regard to the government of the church as a society, no less than in regard to the great principles that determine the salvation of men-individually. The leading features of the Romish system of government, which the Reformers assailed upon Scripture grounds, may be comprehended under the heads of the Priesthood, the Papacy, and the Prelacy. By the priesthood, we mean the ascription of a proper priestly character, and the exercise of proper priestly functions, to some of the ecclesiastical office-bearers; or, in substance, what is sometimes discussed in the present day under the name of the *hierarchical principle*. The leading considerations that demonstrate the anti-scriptural and dangerous character of this principle, we have already had occasion to advert to, in discussing the sacramental principle. The Papacy and the Prelacy,—the supremacy of the Pope and the authority of diocesan bishops,—we considered in our former discussions. At

present we can give only a few historical notices of the way in which they were discussed at the period of the Reformation, and of the use that has since been made of the discussion which they then received.

The Romanists contend that the government of the church, as settled by Christ, is monarchical,—one supreme ruler being set over the whole church, and being, *jure divino*, invested with the highest authority in the regulation of all its affairs. There is, indeed, a difference of opinion among Romanists themselves—and the point has never been settled by any authority to which all Romanists yield submission—upon this important question, Whether this supreme ruler of the church is, *de jure*, an absolute or a limited monarch,—some of them contending that the Pope has unlimited power of legislation and jurisdiction, and that all other ecclesiastical functionaries are merely his delegates, deriving their authority from him, and wholly subject to his control in the execution of all their functions; while others maintain that even the Pope is subject to the jurisdiction of a general council, and bound to regulate his decisions by the canons of the church,—and allege, moreover, that bishops derive their authority from Christ, and not from the Pope, though they are subject, under certain limitations, to his control in the ordinary execution of their functions. Still all Romanists acknowledge that the Pope is the supreme ruler and universal monarch of the church, while they vest the ordinary administration of the affairs of particular churches in bishops, as a distinct order from presbyters or ordinary pastors,—ascribing to them—when they are assembled in a general council, and thus represent, as they say, the universal church—the privilege of infallibility.

Luther first discovered that the Pope has no right to govern the church *jure divino*; and then, as he proceeded with his investigations, he found out that the Pope has no good right to the crown and the sceptre as monarch of the church even *jure humano*. As he continued to study the word of God, he was soon led to see that there is no warrant in Scripture for “those falsely denominated bishops,”—to use his own language in the title of one of his treatises,—and became convinced that ordinary presbyters or pastors are fully competent to the execution of all the functions which are necessary in discharging all the ordinary duties, and in carrying on the ordinary operations, of a church of Christ. Neither Luther, however, nor his more immediate followers,

directed much attention to the formation of a scriptural system of church government. Indeed, Luther\* seemed at one time to have perverted and misapplied the scriptural principle, that all believers are in some sense priests, and to have deduced from this principle the conclusion, that believers indiscriminately had a right to administer all God's ordinances, and to take part in regulating all the affairs of His church,—the appointment and setting apart of individuals to labour in what are usually reckoned the functions of the ministry being regarded by him, at that period, rather as a matter of convenience, suggested by the obvious advantages of the plan, than as a matter of necessary scriptural arrangement. He came afterwards, however, to see more clearly the scriptural authority of a standing ministry, and of fixed office-bearers as distinguished from the ordinary members of the church; but he and his followers continued, as I have explained, to have rather loose views of the necessity of positive scriptural warrant for everything that might be established as a part of the ordinary government and worship of the church, and ascribed to the church itself a certain discretionary power of regulating these matters as might seem best and most expedient at the time. Luther himself never held or claimed any higher office than that of a presbyter; and yet he considered himself entitled to execute, and did execute, all the functions necessary for conducting the ordinary operations of a church of Christ, and preserving a succession in the ministry. Nay, on one or two occasions, he assumed and exercised the authority of ordaining a bishop or prelate,†—that is, of investing a man with a certain measure of control over other pastors; and some Prelatic controversialists, in their eagerness to get some countenance from the Reformers, have been rash and inconsiderate enough to appeal to this fact as a proof that Luther held their principles, while, indeed, it proves the very reverse. It is very certain that no mere presbyter, who held Prelatic principles, would have assumed to himself the power of making a bishop, as the assumption and exercise of such a power by a presbyter plainly

\* Luther, *De instituendis ministris Ecclesiæ*, published in 1523; *Opera*, tom. ii. Ed. 1557. Bellarmin., *De Sacramentis*, Lib. i., c. xxv., tom. iii., p. 44. Ed. 1615.

† Brown, on Puseyite Episcopacy

(p. 249), refers for proof of Luther's ordination of two bishops to Melchior Adams' "*Vitæ German. Theolog.*," p. 150, and Seekendorf, "*De Lutheranismis*," Lib. iii., p. 392.

involves an explicit denial of the scriptural authority of the episcopate as a distinct and higher order; and the denial or assertion of this embodies, as I have repeatedly had occasion to explain, the true *status questionis* in the controversy between Presbyterians and Prelatists. Luther's conduct upon the occasion referred to certainly proves that he did not think it to be positively sinful, or even unlawful, for one pastor to be invested by common consent, when particular circumstances seemed to render it expedient, with a certain measure of control over other pastors. It proves this, but nothing more; while his conduct upon that occasion, the whole tenor of his life and history, and the express statements contained in his writings, all concur in proving that he held, in common with all the other Reformers, that the episcopate, as a permanent, necessary order of functionaries in the church, has no warrant or authority in Scripture.

It is to Calvin, however, that we are indebted for the fullest and most accurate exposition of the scriptural scheme of government, as well as of the scriptural system of doctrine. His leading principles were these: That a separate ministry is a standing ordinance appointed by God, provision being made in His word for preserving and perpetuating it in the church in a regular manner; and that ministers who have been duly and regularly set apart to the work are alone warranted, in all ordinary circumstances, to administer God's ordinances of public preaching and the sacraments; that presbyters, or ordinary pastors of congregations, are fully authorized to discharge all the ordinary duties necessary in the administration of the affairs of the church,—including, of course, the ordination of other pastors; that the episcopate, as a permanent necessary institution, is wholly unsanctioned by Scripture, and is therefore, upon principles formerly explained, by plain implication forbidden; and, finally, that a distinction between the office-bearers and the ordinary members of the church is established by Scripture, and ought to be permanently observed, while, at the same time, the power of ruling in the church, or presiding in the administration of its affairs, as connected with the holding of office, is not limited to pastors as the authorized administrators of solemn ordinances, but ought to be exercised by them in common with the office-bearers duly chosen and set apart for that purpose. It was chiefly in denying the lawfulness of the assumed jurisdiction of the Pope and of

bishops, and in asserting the parity of all ministers of the word or pastors of flocks, and the propriety of others, not pastors, taking part along with them in the administration of the ordinary affairs of the church, that Calvin set himself in opposition to the scheme of ecclesiastical government that existed in the Church of Rome. And his doctrines upon these subjects were adopted, and in substance acted upon, by almost all the Reformers, and in almost all the churches of the Reformation, with the limitation which has been already explained in the case of the Lutheran churches, and with a somewhat similar, though rather greater, limitation in the case of the Church of England.\* I cannot at present enter upon an exposition of the scriptural grounds by which Calvin's scheme of church government can be established, but must content myself with adverting to a few historical circumstances connected with the discussions to which it has given rise.

As the whole Popish scheme of church government, including the offices and functions of popes and prelates, was assailed by the Reformers, this subject came under discussion in the Council of Trent, which was held for the professed purpose of giving an authoritative and infallible decision upon all the various questions raised by the Reformers; and in the proceedings of the council, and, indeed, in Popish works generally, it is taken up, so far at least as Prelacy is concerned, under the head of the "Sacrament of order."† On this, as on many other subjects, there were considerable differences of opinion among the members of the council, and great difficulty was experienced in drawing up the decrees. A very interesting account of these difficulties, of the discussions and intrigues to which they gave rise, and of the views of the different parties concerned in them, is to be found in the seventh book of Father Paul's History of the Council of Trent. The leading points decided by the council in their decrees and canons upon the sacrament of order, so far as we are at present concerned with them, are these: that there is a proper visible priesthood under the New Testament, or a distinct body of men who are truly and properly priests, and whose special characteristic is, that they have the right to consecrate and offer the true body and blood of the Lord, and of retaining and remitting sins; that

\* *Vide* Bunsen's ridiculously erroneous account of the general character of the views of Luther and Calvin on this subject, in his "Church of the Future."  
† Sess. xxiii.

there are other orders of clergy in the church besides the priesthood, both major and minor, through the latter of which men rise to the priesthood; that there is a hierarchy appointed by divine ordination, consisting of bishops, presbyters, and deacons; and that bishops are superior to presbyters, and have the exclusive power of confirming and ordaining. This is the substance of the authorized doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, as settled by the Council of Trent; and it will be observed that, in addition to what is peculiar to Romanists, it contains an explicit assertion of the leading distinguishing principles of Prelatists,—indeed, a much fuller and more explicit assertion of Prelatic principles than has ever been given by the Church of England. It is true that there was much discussion in the Council of Trent upon the question, whether the superiority of bishops over presbyters, at least as to the *potestas jurisdictionis*, was *jure divino* or not; and that, through the strenuous exertions of the Pope and his creatures, the council abstained from declaring formally and expressly that it was. As some Episcopalian controversialists endeavour to draw from this circumstance a presumption in favour of their views, and as the fact itself is curious, it may be proper to give some explanation of it.

Presbyterians have been accustomed to assert that the views and practice of Episcopalians upon the subject of the hierarchy are the same as those of the Church of Rome, and to regard this, *when combined with the fact that they were rejected by the great body of the Reformers*, as a strong presumption against their truth. That the views of Prelatists are identical with those of the Church of Rome, is too plain to admit of any doubt; for what is Prelacy, *as a doctrine*, but just the maintaining that the hierarchy consists of three distinct orders,—bishops, presbyters, and deacons,—and that bishops are superior to presbyters, being possessed of the exclusive power of confirming and ordaining? And all this is explicitly asserted, *totidem verbis*, by the Council of Trent as the doctrine of the Church of Rome. Prelatists, indeed, do not regard confirmation and ordination *as sacraments*, as the Church of Rome does; but they agree with Romanists in holding that the administration of both these ceremonies forms a necessary part of the ordinary business of the church, and one which cannot be transacted by presbyters, but only by bishops. But notwithstanding this clear and full accord-

ance, some Prelatists have alleged that the Church of Rome is no friend to Prelacy, and have brought forward the fact already referred to in proof of this. Now, it is quite plain that no such fact as this can in the least invalidate or neutralize the manifest accordance between the decisions adopted and promulgated by the Council of Trent, and the principle held by Prelatists,—especially as it is certain that all Popish writers, ever since the Council of Trent, have been zealous supporters of the leading views for which Prelatists, as such, contend.

There were two causes, of very different kinds, that produced division and disputation in the preliminary discussions in the Council of Trent on the subject of the *jus divinum* of the superiority of bishops over presbyters. As there were a few men in the council who seem to have honestly held scriptural views upon the subject of justification and predestination, so there appear to have been some who honestly doubted whether the superiority of bishops over presbyters, as a distinct higher order of functionaries, could be fully established from Scripture or the traditions of the early church. It was openly asserted by one of the most eminent theologians of the council, that not *Ærius* alone, as Prelatists commonly allege, but also that Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Sedulius, Primasius, Chrysostom, Theodoret, *Æcumenius*, and Theophylact,—all of them eminent fathers,—had maintained, more or less explicitly, the identity of bishops and presbyters. Many plain traces and testimonies of this original identity were to be found, as Presbyterians have often proved, down till the period of the Reformation. It may be sufficient, as a specimen of this, to refer to the important facts, that the original identity of bishop and presbyter is expressly asserted both in the Decree of Gratian, and in the Sentences of P. Lombard, who both flourished in the twelfth century,—the one the great oracle of the Church of Rome in canon law, and the other in theology. It is a curious indication of the same general state of sentiment, combined with the results of the revived study of the Scriptures, that in the books put forth by public authority in England, in the reign of Henry VIII., and under the superintendence of Archbishop Cranmer,—after the authority of the Church of Rome had been thrown off, but before the Protestant system was very well understood,—it should be declared that the New Testament makes explicit mention only of

two orders of ecclesiastical office-bearers,—namely, presbyters and deacons.\* Prelacy had universally prevailed for many centuries in the Church of Rome; but a latent and probably unconscious regard to scriptural authority and early tradition had still so much influence, that some eminent writers, of almost all periods down till the Reformation, were disposed to look upon the episcopate and the presbyterate not as two distinct orders, but merely as two different degrees (*gradus*) in one and the same order, and to regard the great difference between them, which was exhibited in the actual government of the church, as based only upon comparatively modern practice and ecclesiastical law,—views, in substance, the same as those held by the generality of the English Reformers.

The classification of the different orders of the clergy still common, or rather universal, among Romish writers, may be fairly regarded as affording a sort of involuntary and unintentional testimony to the same general idea. When it is found that Romish writers make no fewer than seven different orders of clergy,—all of them *clerici*, as distinguished from *laici*; some authorities, like Bellarmine, making the ordination of each distinct order a sacrament,—it might, perhaps, not unnaturally be supposed, that these seven orders are popes, cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, presbyters, and deacons. This, however, would be an entire mistake. The priesthood is the highest of the seven orders of clergy, and comprehends presbyters and bishops, and all the various ranks above them. The other six orders of the clergy are all inferior to the priesthood, and go down through the various gradations of deacons, sub-deacons, acolytes, exorcists, and readers, to doorkeepers (*ostiarii*) inclusive. Now, this universal practice of the Romish writers in making the priesthood or presbyterate the highest of the seven orders of clergy, may be fairly regarded as something like an unintentional admission of there being some foundation in Scripture and primitive antiquity for the great doctrine of the Reformers upon this subject,—namely, that presbyters, or pastors, are really competent to execute all, even the highest, functions necessary in the ordinary business of the church. And there is no reason whatever why we may not legitimately attach some weight, in this as in other matters,

\* Boyse's Account of Ancient Episcopacy, c. i.

even to the faint indications of primitive doctrine and practice preserved in the Church of Rome,—indications which are just entitled to the more weight, because they point to a state of things opposed to what is now, and has long been, the authorized doctrine and practice of the church which has preserved them.

The few more honest men, however, who were somewhat influenced by these considerations, would not have been able to have thrown any serious difficulty in the way of the Council of Trent deciding more fully and explicitly in favour of the *jus divinum* of Prelacy, more than the few men who held sounder views upon other points were able to prevent the council from condemning them, had not another influence come into play. Those members of the council, chiefly Spanish bishops, joined afterwards by a few French ones, who pressed for an explicit decision in favour of the *jus divinum* of Prelacy, were men who were anxious to see a thorough reformation of abuses,—disposed to curb the power of the Pope,—and likely to employ whatever authority might be assigned to bishops in prosecuting objects, and in effecting results, to which the Pope was decidedly opposed. This, of course, was quite a sufficient reason why he should resist a formal declaration of the *jus divinum* of the episcopate, in order, if possible, to keep the bishops more dependent upon his own control in the ordinary execution of their functions. And this result, accordingly, was effected by a vigorous application of the ordinary system of fraud, intrigue, and intimidation, by which, in almost every instance, the Court of Rome contrived to manage the council at its discretion, and at least to prevent the adoption of any deliverance to which it was opposed.

It ought to be observed, also, what was the exact position taken by the generality of those in the council who opposed a formal declaration of the *jus divinum* of Prelacy. They did not deny the *jus divinum* of a superior *potestas ordinis*,—that the episcopate, in general, as a distinct superior office or class of functionaries, rested upon a *jus divinum*,—but merely that individual bishops held their office, and possessed an inherent right to execute all its functions, *jure divino*. The office of a bishop or prelate, they admitted, was established by Christ, and could not be abrogated or abolished even by the Pope; but they contended that each individual holding the office derived his personal authority from the Pope, and was wholly subject to his control in the exe-

cution of his functions,—that he held this *jure pontificis*, and not *jure divino*. Now, all this might be held without affecting the fundamental principle of Prelacy,—without leading to a denial of the *jus divinum* of Prelacy in the sense in which it forms a subject of controversy between Presbyterians and high church Prelatists. The Pope did not urge the Council to decide explicitly in favour of his view upon the point, and contented himself with preventing an explicit denial of it.

This is the whole history of the matter, and it is plainly quite inadequate to serve the purpose for which it is sometimes adduced by Episcopalian controversialists. It remains unquestionably true, that the Church of Rome holds, as a fundamental part of her system of church government,—which she maintained in opposition to the scriptural arguments of the Reformers,—all the leading principles of Prelacy, and that she has asserted them much more fully and explicitly than the Church of England has ever done. The Council of Trent has established it as an article of faith, that bishops are superior to presbyters, and possess the exclusive power of confirming and ordaining; while the utmost length which the Church of England has ventured to go on the subject, is exhibited in the following declaration, contained in the Preface to the Ordinal: “It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the apostles’ time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ’s church,—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.” Now, this declaration is very vague and ambiguous. It contains no explicit assertion of the superiority of bishops over presbyters, as a distinct higher order. It assigns to bishops no peculiar functions necessary in the ordinary administration of the affairs of the church, which presbyters are incompetent to perform. It does not assert that these orders existed *in* the apostles’ time, but only that they existed *from* the apostles’ time; and the general reference to the holy Scripture, as concurring with ancient authors in affording materials for establishing the general conclusion of the existence of these orders as a matter of fact, is very far from amounting to an assertion of a proper *jus divinum* in favour of each of the orders, as distinct from the others. This is the only thing like a doctrinal deliverance the Church of England has ever given on the subject of Prelacy,—the great distinctive feature of its form of government,—and it comes far short, in point of clearness and

fulness, of that given by the Council of Trent. The cause of this great vagueness and ambiguity in the only thing like a doctrinal deliverance the Church of England has ever given on the subject of Prelacy, is the same in substance as that which prevented the Council of Trent from explicitly deciding in favour of the *jus divinum* of the superiority of bishops over presbyters, in the sense in which we have explained it. The leading men connected with the reformation of the Church of England did not believe or maintain the *jus divinum* of Prelacy. The original defenders of the Prelacy of the Church of England took, on this subject, much the same ground as they did in vindicating the rites and ceremonies which they retained,—namely, that there was nothing unlawful or sinful about it, and that when it was established by the concurrence of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities it was right to submit to it. There is then, at least, as good ground for alleging of the Church of England as of the Church of Rome, that it is no good friend to Prelacy; and it is hopeless for Prelatists to escape, by this or by any other process, from the odium of concurring in the doctrine and practice of the great apostasy upon this subject.

It is not enough, however, as we have had occasion to explain, to warrant us in designating any doctrine or practice as Popish, in any sense which affords a legitimate presumption against its truth, unless we can show that, besides being taught and maintained by the Church of Rome, it was always condemned and rejected by the great body of those whom, at the era of the Reformation, God raised up and qualified for restoring His truth; and to the testimony of the Reformers we must now proceed to advert.

#### *Sec. II.—Testimony of the Reformers as to Presbyterianism.*

Episcopalians are in the habit of boasting, that for the space of fifteen hundred years, from the time of the apostles till the Reformation, Prelacy prevailed over the whole Christian church; and they adduce this as a very strong presumption in its favour; nay, they sometimes represent it as a proof that it was established by the apostles themselves. There are ample materials, as I have had occasion to show, for cutting off at least the first two of these centuries; and these are by far the most important,—indeed, the

only ones that are possessed of any real importance. It is an important fact, that ought never to be forgotten, that the only two productions we have of men who personally associated with the apostles, the genuineness and integrity of which is free from reasonable suspicion, are, the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, and the epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians; and that these epistles contain satisfactory evidence that, in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, the churches of Corinth and Philippi, at least,—and we have no reason to suppose that there was anything peculiar in their case,—were governed upon Presbyterian, and not upon Prelatic, principles. But even if Prelatists could justly boast of the consenting practice of the whole church *after* the age of inspiration and infallibility, we would not hesitate to oppose to it, upon the field of human authority,—for in neither case does it rise higher,—the unanimous testimony of the Reformers.

We ascribe authority, properly so called, in religious matters, only to God, who is Lord of the conscience. We submit implicitly to men only when they can prove that they speak in His name, and under His guidance. We receive nothing as certainly coming from Him, and therefore imperatively binding upon us, except what is found recorded in His written word. And it is of the last importance to distinguish accurately at all times between what is properly authoritative and what is not,—between what at once imposes an obligation upon our understanding, and what merely affords a presumption or probability. But there is a reasonable deference due to the opinion of men, in certain circumstances, which may be regarded as affording some presumption, or indicating some probability, in favour of the scriptural truth of the views which they profess. And estimated by the dictates of right reason upon this point, we have no hesitation in regarding as superior in weight and value to that of any other body of men who could be specified, the testimony of those whom God, at the era of the Reformation, honoured as His special instruments, in bringing out and pressing upon the attention of the world the scriptural method of salvation revealed in His word. Everything about the men,—their general character and history,—the mode in which they ground their opinions,—the source from which they derived them,—and the gifts and graces which God bestowed upon them,—the success He vouchsafed to them in

bringing out and diffusing the fundamental doctrines of Christian theology,—all combine in giving probability to the conclusion, that the doctrines which they taught concerning the constitution and government of the church of Christ are in accordance with the sacred Scriptures. It is well known, that most of those men whom God raised up during the middle ages, as witnesses for Himself and His truth, amid the deep darkness of Popery, derived from the study of the Scriptures the leading principles of Presbyterianism on the subject of church government. And if, in addition to this, we find that the great body of the Reformers deduced Presbyterian principles from the same source,—and if this, again, be confirmed by the fact, that the Council of Trent condemned them, and that they now stand anathematized in the Church of Rome,—we have the largest accumulation of probabilities in their favour that can be derived from any mere human testimony. Now, all these positions can be conclusively established; and they form a much stronger presumption in favour of Presbyterian, than can be adduced in favour of Prelatic, principles.

With respect to the first of them, it may be sufficient at present to mention, that when Archbishop Bancroft published, in 1588, the sermon which, from its high Prelatic strain, gave so much offence to the Reformed churches, an answer to it was written by Dr John Reynolds, who was regarded at that time as the most learned man in the Church of England,\* in which, among other things, he asserted and proved, “that all they who have for five hundred years last past, endeavoured the reformation of the church have taught, that all pastors, whether they be called bishops or priests, are invested with equal authority and power.” It is perfectly certain, from the quotations formerly given, that the Council of Trent explicitly condemned the Presbyterian principles which they ascribed to the Reformers, and explicitly asserted, in opposition to them, the fundamental principles of Prelacy. And we have now to add, with reference to

\* Bishop Hall, speaking of Reynolds, says, “He alone was a well-furnisht librarie, full of all faculties, of all studies, of all learning; the memory, the reading of that man, were neere to a miracle” (Works, folio, p. 262). His letter to Sir Francis Knolls, in answer to Archbishop Bancroft, is to be found in Petrie's Church History, and in Boyse's Account of Ancient Episcopacy. Chauffepié has a life of him.

the remaining one of these three positions, that the Council of Trent were right in ascribing Presbyterian principles to the Reformers, and in regarding them as doctrines of the Reformation.

It cannot, indeed, be proved, that *all* the Reformers held that it was sinful or unlawful to introduce into, or to continue in, the church, all pre-eminence or superiority of one pastor over another. But the toleration which *some* of them manifested upon this point, did not arise from their holding anything like the proper principle of Prelacy; but solely from their not having, as I have shown was the case with Luther and his immediate followers, any clear perception of the unlawfulness of introducing, as a permanent arrangement, into the government of the church, anything which has not the positive sanction of Scripture. It can be proved, however, that the great body of the Reformers, including Luther and his followers, denied the fundamental principle of Prelacy, and maintained that there is nothing in Scripture which requires or sanctions the permanent existence in the church of a distinct order of functionaries higher than ordinary pastors,—nothing which proves that there is any ordinary function of the church, anything ordinarily necessary to be done in the administration of its affairs, to the execution of which presbyters are not fully competent. The Reformers were unable to find any evidence in Scripture of the apostles having indicated any intention that they should have successors in the apostolic office, though this is the position which many Episcopalians assign to their prelates, and though this idea is perhaps their most plausible mode of accounting for the non-appearance of prelates in the New Testament. The Reformers could see no trace in Scripture of the apostles having made, or enjoined, or sanctioned the appointment of any regular permanent order of functionaries for the service of the church, except presbyters and deacons. And they thought it perfectly certain, and beyond the reach of all reasonable doubt, that the New Testament uniformly ascribed the same names, and the same functions or duties, to those whom it calls indiscriminately bishops and presbyters. They professed themselves utterly unable to account for this remarkable fact, so different from anything to be found in the writings of more modern times, except upon the assumption, that the inspired writers used bishop and presbyter as two different names for one and the same class of functionaries; and that by this practice

they intended to indicate to us in what way, and by what orders of persons, the government of the church was to be permanently administered. That these were the views which were deduced from Scripture, with respect to the government of the church, by the great body of the Reformers, Lutheran and Calvinistic, can be easily and conclusively established from their writings. And, indeed, I think there is no impropriety in saying, that this is a question on which there is not room for an *honest* difference of opinion among men who have really examined it.

Yet it is well known that it is the general practice of Episcopalian controversialists, to assert that the Reformers in general, and even Calvin and Beza, were favourable, or at least were not unfavourable, to Prelacy. The process by which they usually attempt to establish this position, is in substance this: they overlook or conceal all those parts of the writings of the Reformers in which they discuss the subject of church government formally and of set purpose; and then they lay hold of incidental expressions, which, taken by themselves, may be somewhat ambiguous, and present them in a garbled and mutilated form, and without the light which the context and scope of the passage cast upon the meaning. Abundant illustrations of these statements might be easily produced from the writings of Episcopalian controversialists. The only excuse—and it is a very imperfect one—for the unwarrantable and discreditable course which many of them have pursued in this matter, is, that they have just copied their extracts from their predecessors, without taking the trouble of examining them in the writings of the authors from whom they were quoted. And I could produce, were it worth while, some curious instances, in which this long continued process of successive copying at second hand has worn away the traces of Presbyterianism which attached to some even of those passages when they were first brought forward for Prelatic purposes. The first collection of these garbled extracts to prove that the Continental Reformers were not unfavourable to Prelacy, was made by Archbishop Bancroft, who, as we have seen, was the first to break the peace among the Reformed churches. This he did chiefly in a very insolent and dishonest book, published in 1593, and entitled, “Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline,”—that is, of course, of the Presbyterian views of government and worship advocated

by the Puritans of that period. The book is intended and fitted merely to excite prejudice—without fairly discussing the subject upon its merits. The leading object is, by misrepresentation and garbled extracts, to create an impression, that the leading defenders of Presbytery were dishonest, ignorant, and inconsistent,—that they had no fixed principles, and were at utter variance among themselves, as to the grounds on which their cause should be defended. He does not, indeed, deny that Calvin had advocated and established Presbyterianism; and he pretends to give a minute account of the invention of Presbyterian church government by Calvin, and openly asserts that Presbyterianism was the mere result of external circumstances, or rather that it was fabricated by Calvin for selfish and ambitious purposes. But then he asserts that the chief impugners of bishops had begun to relent; and in proof of *this* position he adduces most of those passages from Calvin, Beza, and other Reformers, which the generality of Episcopalian controversialists have ever since, down even to the present day, been accustomed to quote, for the purpose of proving that they were favourable to Prelacy.

Another expedient that has been extensively employed by Episcopalian controversialists to neutralize the testimony of the Reformers in favour of Presbyterian, and in opposition to Prelatic, principles, is to represent them as setting up Presbyterian government from necessity, and as apologizing for their conduct in doing so by pleading the difficulties of their situation,—the great difficulty, if not impossibility, of doing anything else in the circumstances in which they were placed. In connection with this topic, some of them have made a very becoming display of their great charity, by pleading this excuse of necessity in behalf of the Continental Reformers; taking good care, at the same time, to aggravate by the contrast, the conduct of those unreasonable Non-conformists in our own country, who, without the plea of necessity, have refused to embrace and submit to the apostolic form of government, as it is called, which is established among them.

This notion is very often brought forward in Episcopalian works. This mode of treating the subject may be admitted to indicate a somewhat kindlier spirit and temper than the course adopted by those sterner Episcopals, who really unchurch all the churches of the Reformation. But the only thing that can be said of it with truth is, that it is a pure fabrication, without

any evidence whatever to rest upon. The Reformers never pleaded necessity in their own behalf, and they never condescended to apologize on that, or on any other, ground, for their approving and establishing Presbyterian church government. They always believed, and they openly and unhesitatingly maintained, that in doing so they were following the guidance of the sacred Scriptures,—that, in the arrangements they adopted and established with regard to the government of the church, they were only removing the corruptions which had been introduced into it, and were regulating it according to the mind and will of God revealed in His word. This is the uniform and consistent testimony which the Reformers gave on the subject in their writings; and there is not the slightest ground, in anything they ever said or did, for doubting its sincerity. Nay, several of the Reformed churches have introduced into their Confessions of Faith an explicit assertion of the fundamental principles of Presbyterianism, as a portion of the unchangeable truth of God revealed in His word, and imposed by His authority upon the faith and practice of the church. This attempt, then, to neutralize the testimony of the Reformers upon the subject of church government,—though in some respects well meant,—is altogether unsuccessful.

The only thing else of any moment which Episcopals have brought forward in order to break the force of the testimony of the Reformers against Prelacy, and to soften the singularity of the position of the Church of England among the churches of the Reformation, is the existence of bishops in the churches of Denmark and Sweden, and of superintendents in some other Lutheran churches. The Episcopacy of Denmark and Sweden is but a slight deviation from the general uniformity of the Reformed churches as a whole; and, besides, the Protestant bishops set up in these countries at the Reformation were not the regular successors of men who had been consecrated to the episcopal office, but derived their ordination and authority from Luther, and the presbyters who were associated with him,—so that they were incapable of maintaining proper Prelatic principles, and thus resembled very much the present bishops of the Methodist Church in the United States, who derive their authority from John Wesley, and two other presbyters through Dr Coke, whom Wesley and his associates appointed a bishop. As to the superintendents in other Lutheran churches, this institution affords no testimony in

favour of proper Prelacy. These superintendents are not regarded as holding a distinct higher office, superior to that of presbyters, and investing them simply as holding that office with jurisdiction over ordinary pastors, but merely as presbyters raised by the common consent of their brethren to a certain very limited control for the sake of order. This institution is no proof that the Lutheran churches hold the *doctrine* of Prelacy, but merely that they hold the *lawfulness* of a certain limited pre-eminence or superiority being conferred by presbyters upon one of themselves. Indeed, the doctrine of Presbytery, as opposed to Prelacy, was not only held, as we have seen, by Luther and his associates, but was distinctly declared in the articles of Smalcald, which is one of the symbolical books of the Lutheran church. There it is set forth, that all the functions of church government belong equally of right to all who preside over the churches, whether called pastors, presbyters, or bishops; and this general principle is expressly applied to ordination, as proving that ordination by ordinary pastors is valid.\*

The whole doctrine of the Lutheran church upon this subject is thus laid down by Buddæus,—and there cannot be a doubt that his statement fairly embodies what has always been held by the generality of Lutheran divines: “Si jus divinum spectes, ministri ecclesiæ omnes inter se, intuitu dignitatis et officii, sunt æquales. Discrimen enim, quod deinceps inter episcopos et presbyteros intercessit, tempore apostolorum ignotum fuit. Interim nihil obstat, quo minus ecclesia muneris et dignitatis quandam inæqualitatem introducat, modo non ex docentibus imperantes fiant, et, quod humana auctoritate factum est, jure divino constitutum credatur.”†

It has always been one of the leading general arguments which Romanists have adduced against the Reformers and their successors in the Protestant churches, that, though mere presbyters, they assumed functions which belonged only to bishops,—and especially that, as mere presbyters, they were incapable of preserving a succession of pastors in the church, since bishops alone had the power of ordaining to the ministerial office. And this, of course, is the same objection which is commonly adduced against us by Prelatists. The substance of the answer which has always been given by

\* Tittmann, Lib. Symb. Eccles. | † Instit. Theol. Dogm., p. 1336;  
Evang., p. 271. | Vide p. 1340. Ed. 1724.

Presbyterians to this objection, whether adduced by Romanists or by Prelatists, is this,—that, according to the standard of God’s word, there is no higher permanent office in the church of Christ than the presbyterate, and that presbyters are fully competent to the execution of all necessary ecclesiastical functions. These two positions confirm and strengthen each other. If Christ has not appointed any higher permanent office in the church than the presbyterate, then presbyters *must* be competent to the execution of all necessary ecclesiastical functions; and, on the other hand, if they are competent to the execution of all necessary ecclesiastical functions, this is, at least, a very strong presumption that no higher office, with peculiar and exclusive functions, has been established. The functions which are assigned exclusively to the episcopate by the Council of Trent, and by Prelatists in general, and represented as at once its distinguishing characteristics, and the proofs of its necessity, are *confirmation* and *ordination*; and with respect to these two functions, the Reformers, and Protestants in general, have maintained and established these two positions: first, that confirmation is not a necessary ecclesiastical function,—not a process which there is any reason to believe that Christ intended to be carried on wherever He has a church, in the ordinary administration of affairs; and, secondly, that though ordination, or the solemn setting apart of men to the pastoral office, is necessary, and forms an indispensable part of the ordinary permanent business of the church, there is nothing in Scripture which throws any doubt upon the perfect competency of presbyters to ordain,—nay, that there is quite enough to establish positively, not only the validity, but the regularity, of the ordination which is performed, as Timothy’s was, by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

These were the leading doctrines deduced from the sacred Scriptures by the whole body of the Reformers upon the subject of the government of the church; and their most unequivocal and decided testimony in favour of Presbyterian principles may well enable us to regard with perfect indifference the anathemas of the Council of Trent, and the denunciations of high church Prelatists, who stigmatize Presbyterian ministers as unwarranted and profane intruders into sacred offices and functions, and who consign the members of Presbyterian churches to what they call “uncovenanted mercies.”