

their leaning to Erastianism had a deeper foundation than this, in the general character and tendency of their doctrinal views,—especially in their latitudinarianism, which implied or produced a want of an adequate sense of responsibility connected with the discovery and the maintenance of all God's truth; and thus tended to dispose them towards an allowance or toleration of the interference of a foreign and incompetent authority in the decision of religious controversies, and in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs.

In 1614, the States of Holland, under Arminian influence, issued a decree imposing great limitations, amounting virtually to a prohibition, upon the public discussion of the controverted points,—very similar, indeed, both in its substance and in its object, to the declaration afterwards issued by royal authority, in England, under Laud's influence. The orthodox divines—especially Sibrandus Lubbertus, professor at Franeker—attacked this decree, at once as requiring what was sinful in itself, that is, a neglect or violation of a duty which God had imposed,—and as involving a sinful assumption of authority on the part of the civil powers. Grotius defended this decree, and the principles on which it was based, in several pieces contained in the sixth volume of his theological works; the principal of which, entitled “*Ordinum Hollandiæ ac Westfrisiæ Pietas*,” contains a good specimen of the combination of Erastianism with the most latitudinarian views in regard to doctrine. He wrote, about the same time, his famous treatise, “*De Imperio Summarum Potestatum circa Sacra*,” which I have had occasion to mention,—an elaborate defence of a system of the grossest Erastianism, such as some even of his Prelatic correspondents in England could not digest. This work was not published till 1647, two years after its author's death. Another branch of the same controversy originated in a work of Utenbogard, minister at the Hague, a very zealous and influential supporter of Arminianism, published in Dutch in 1610, on the authority of the Christian magistrate in ecclesiastical matters. This was answered, in 1615, by Walæus, afterwards professor of theology at Leyden, in a very valuable treatise, entitled “*De munere Ministrorum Ecclesiæ, et Inspectione Magistratus circa illud*,” contained in the second volume of his collected works, which also include some important treatises on the Arminian controversy, especially in defence of Molinæus's “*Anatome Arminianismi*” against Corvinus. Utenbogard's treatise was defended,

and Walæus's answered, by two men of very superior talents and learning—Gerhard John Vossius and Episcopius. Vossius was a man of great learning, and leaned very much to Arminianism, though he did not fully embrace the whole of that system of theology. His answer to Walæus was written in 1616, in the form of a letter to Grotius; and it is contained in a very curious and interesting work, entitled, “*Præstantium ac Eruditorum Virorum Epistolæ Ecclesiasticæ et Theologicæ*,”—a work published by Limborch, and designed to advance the cause of Arminianism. It was also published separately in a small quarto, in 1669, under the title of “*Dissertatio Epistolica de jure Magistratus in rebus Ecclesiasticis*.” Episcopius's defence of Utenbogard was published in 1618, entitled, “*De jure Magistratus circa Sacra*,” and is contained in the second volume of his works. The controversy upon this subject between the Calvinists and the Arminians continued, without any material change of ground, after the Synod of Dort, in 1618–19; and there is some discussion of it, on the one side, in the “*Censura*” of the Leyden divines, on the Confession of the Remonstrants; and, on the other, in Episcopius's “*Apologia pro Confessione*,” in reply to the “*Censura*.”

A somewhat different aspect was given to the controversy, by the publication, in 1641, of a small work by Vedelius, entitled, “*De Episcopatu Constantini Magni*.” Vedelius was a Calvinist, professor of theology at Franeker, and had written a valuable book, which was very galling to the Arminians, entitled, “*De Arcanis Arminianismi*,” and was answered by Episcopius. He professed to reject the doctrine of the Arminians, in regard to the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate with respect to religious matters, and to assign to him much less authority,—a much more limited right of interference,—than they had done; but his views did not satisfy the generality of orthodox divines, who still thought them somewhat Erastian, and maintained that, in opposing Popish errors, he had gone too far to the other extreme, and had ascribed to the civil power too much authority in religious matters. From the very modified views held by Vedelius upon this subject, his opponents, in answering him, were led to deal more closely than had ever been done before, with the real intricacies and difficulties of the question, and with the minuter distinctions which are necessary for the more full development and the more exact elucidation of the different topics which it involves; and *their* works, in consequence,

have usually been regarded by sound Presbyterian divines, as exhibiting the most complete and accurate view of the principles involved in what has been commonly called the Erastian controversy. The principal answers to Vedelius's work were these three,—all of them valuable works, and well worthy of being perused by those who wish to understand this question thoroughly,—Revius's "Examen Dissertationis Vedelii;" Triglandius's "Dissertatio Theologica de Civili et Ecclesiastica Potestate;" and Apollonius's "Jus Majestatis circa Sacra,"—all published immediately after Vedelius's work, and just about the time of the meeting of the Westminster Assembly. Voetius also, professor of divinity for many years at Utrecht,—a man of prodigious learning,—was a zealous opponent of Erastianism, and wrote largely upon this subject at different periods of his life, and in opposition to different opponents, especially in the first and last parts of his great work, "Politica Ecclesiastica,"—the first published in 1663, and the last in 1676. His principal antagonist upon this subject was Lewis du Moulin, or Ludovicus Molinæus, a son of the famous Molinæus, who took so active a part in the Arminian controversy, and was long the leading divine in the Protestant Church of France. Lewis settled in England, and obtained a chair in Oxford during the Commonwealth. He adopted Independent, or Congregational, views on church government, chiefly, it would appear, because he thought them more favourable to Erastianism than Presbyterian principles,—a notion for which he could plead the authority of Congregational divines of the highest eminence,—namely, the five dissenting brethren, as they were called, in the Westminster Assembly. They, in their "Apologetical Narration," had asserted that they gave as much, or, as they thought, more, power to the civil magistrate in religious matters than the principles of Presbyterians would allow them to do,—a declaration which, whether it be regarded as made honestly or hypocritically, has been very galling to those who have succeeded them in the maintenance of Congregational principles. Du Moulin wrote at least four books in defence of Erastianism,—one in English, entitled, "Of the Right of Churches, and of the Magistrate's Power over them;" and three in Latin, the first and most important entitled, "Parænesis ad ædificatores imperii in imperio,"—the allegation, that scriptural and Presbyterian views about the independence of the church of Christ establish an *imperium in imperio*, having been

always, as I have explained, the favourite argument of Erastians; and the other two entitled, "Jugulum causæ" and "Papa Ultrajectinus,"—the pope of Utrecht being Voetius, and the title being intended to insinuate, as is often done still, that the principles of Presbyterians upon this subject are the same as those of the Church of Rome.

I have gone on to notice Voetius and his antagonist Du Moulin, that I might finish what I had to say about this controversy, as it had been conducted in Holland during the seventeenth century. I now turn to Great Britain, where the Erastian controversy broke out at the time of the Westminster Assembly. A very excellent account of the controversy, as then conducted, will be found in the fourth chapter of Dr Hetherington's very valuable "History of the Westminster Assembly." I can only mention, that the two principal works produced at this period in defence of Presbyterian, and in opposition to Erastian, principles, are Gillespie's "Aaron's Rod Blossoming," and Rutherford's "Divine Right of Church Government," both published in 1646,—Gillespie's work being much more luminous, and much better digested, than Rutherford's; and the second book of it being, perhaps, upon the whole, the best work to be read, in order to obtain a comprehensive view of the principles of the Erastian controversy. The chief Erastian book of this period is Selden, "De Synedriis," which is directed to the object of assailing Presbyterian principles, with materials derived from the Old Testament and the Jewish polity,—materials which are discussed in the first book of Gillespie's "Aaron's Rod Blossoming."

There was little discussion upon this subject in England after the Restoration. The controversy was then transferred to Scotland, where the Presbyterian Nonconformists, in defending their refusal to submit to the ecclesiastical establishment then imposed upon the nation, not only objected to the intrinsic unlawfulness of the things imposed, but to the sinful usurpation of the rights of Christ, and of His church, exhibited by the civil authorities in imposing them, and were thus led to expound the principles by which the interference of the civil authorities, in regard to religious matters, ought to be regulated. The principal works in which their views upon this subject were set forth are—Brown of Wamphray's "Apologetical Relation," published in 1665; the "Apology for the Oppressed, Persecuted Ministers and Profes-

sors of the Presbyterian Reformed Religion," in 1677; and Forrester's "Rectius Instruendum," etc., in 1684. There has not, from that period till our own day, been much discussion upon this subject in Scotland. Brown of Wamphray, while in exile in Holland, published, in 1670, an important and valuable work on this subject, entitled, "Libertino-Erastianæ Lamberti Velthusii Sententiæ, de Ministerio, Regimine, et Disciplinâ Ecclesiasticâ Confutatio," which is well worthy of perusal.

These are the chief eras or occasions of the discussion of the Erastian controversy, or of the principles that ought to regulate the provinces, functions, and duties of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, and of their relation to each other; and these are the principal books from which a knowledge of these subjects, and of the way in which they have been discussed, ought to be derived. There are several other interesting departments of the controversy, a knowledge of which tends to throw some light upon it, but to which I can merely allude: such as, first, the controversy in France during the seventeenth century, on the subject of the Gallican Liberties, in which Richer, Fleury, Dupin, and Bossuet, being preserved by their Popery from the opposite extreme of Erastianism, but being occupied in establishing the entire independence of the civil upon the ecclesiastical, that they might refute the Pope's claims to temporal jurisdiction, direct or indirect, arrived at the same general conclusions as Presbyterians,—though they advanced to them from an opposite direction,—as to the proper relation between the civil and the ecclesiastical; secondly, the discussions carried on in England after the Revolution by the Nonjurors, especially Leslie, Hickes, Dodwell, and Brett, in which, though greatly hampered by their admission of the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown, as set forth in the Articles and Canons of the Church of England, they made a fair approach to scriptural and Presbyterian principles about the independence of the church of Christ,—advocating views similar to those put forth in our own day upon this subject by the Tractarians; and, lastly, the thoroughly Erastian views advocated in the end of the seventeenth century, and the early part of the eighteenth, upon philosophical, political, and historical grounds, by some eminent German lawyers and jurists, who were profoundly skilled in ecclesiastical history, especially Thomasius, Boehmer, and Puffendorf.

*Sec. IV.—Free Church of Scotland.*

This controversy has been revived in our own day, and in its practical consequences proved the immediate cause of the Disruption of the ecclesiastical establishment of this country, and of the formation of the Free Church of Scotland. The precise cause or ground of the Disruption was this,—that the civil authorities required of us to do, in the execution of our functions as ecclesiastical office-bearers, or in the administration of the ordinary necessary business of Christ's church, what was inconsistent with the word of God and the recognised constitution of the church; and that we refused to do what was thus required of us,—first, because the things required to be done were in themselves wrong, sinful, opposed to the mind and will of God as revealed in His word, and to the interests of true religion; and, secondly, because to have done them on the ground on which obedience was required of us,—namely, submission to the alleged law of the land,—would have been an aggravation, instead of a palliation, of the sin, as it would have involved, *in addition*, a sinful recognition of the sinful usurpation, by civil authorities, of a right to interfere in Christ's house, and to substitute their laws instead of His in the administration of the affairs of His kingdom. On these grounds we were compelled, for conscience sake, to abandon our connection with the State, and our enjoyment of the temporalities of the Establishment; and we could not have preferred any other ground on which we might have been called upon to testify for Christ's truth, and to suffer for His name's sake, than just that great principle which God in His providence seems to have specially committed to the custody of the Church of Scotland,—namely, the principle of Christ's sole right to rule in His own house,—to reign in His own kingdom,—to govern all its affairs by His own laws, and through the instrumentality of His own office-bearers. It is important to understand the principles on which the Free Church of Scotland is based, so that we may be able to intelligently explain and defend them; and to take care that, in so far as we are concerned, they shall be fully maintained, duly honoured, and faithfully applied.

The Free Church of Scotland having been formed in this way and upon this ground, was naturally led, while adhering to

the whole standards and principles of the Church of Scotland, and asserting her right to that designation in opposition to the present ecclesiastical establishment, to introduce into her Formulæ for license and ordination a more explicit reference to her peculiar standing and testimony; and to this point I would now, in conclusion, briefly advert. The principal changes which, since the Disruption, have been made upon the Formulæ are these: first, the substitution of the word Erastian for the word Bourignian in the third question, and the introduction of the fifth question bearing more immediately upon the causes and grounds of the Disruption, and the special standing and testimony of the Free Church. By the old Formulæ, originally adopted in 1711, and still used in the Establishment, probationers and ministers are required to renounce all Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, Bourignian, and other doctrines, tenets, and opinions contrary to the Confession of Faith. As Mrs Antonia Bourignon is now almost wholly forgotten, we did not think it necessary to retain a renunciation of her errors, and have, in consequence, substituted Erastian in this question instead of Bourignian, as we consider it an important branch of present duty to bear public testimony against Erastianism, and think we can easily prove that Erastian tenets, contrary to the Confession of Faith, are held by many in the present day who have subscribed it.

The fifth question, introduced into the Formula for the purpose above-mentioned, is this, "Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of His church, has therein appointed a government in the hands of church officers, distinct from, and not subordinate in its own province to, civil government, and that the civil magistrate does not possess jurisdiction, or authoritative control, over the regulation of the affairs of Christ's church? And do you approve of the general principles embraced in the Claim, Declaration, and Protest adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1842, and in the Protest of ministers, and elders, and commissioners from presbyteries to the General Assembly, read in presence of the Royal Commissioner on the 18th May 1843, as declaring the views which are sanctioned by the word of God, and the standards of this church, with respect to the spirituality and freedom of the church of Christ, and her subjection to Him as her only Head, and to His word as her only standard?"

I can only add one or two explanatory notes on this question. It consists of two parts: the first asks assent to certain doctrines in regard to the constitution of Christ's church and the relation between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities; and the second, to the *general principles* embodied in certain documents. It is expressly laid down in the Confession of Faith, that "Christ, as King and Head of the church, has therein appointed a government, in the hands of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate." We know, from the explicit testimony of Baillie, that this statement was introduced into the Confession for the express purpose of condemning Erastianism. The able and learned Erastians of that age saw, *and admitted*, that it cut up Erastianism by the roots, and, in consequence, exerted themselves, and successfully, to prevent the English Parliament from sanctioning that part of the Confession. It was often found, in the recent controversies against the Erastians of our day,—who are neither able nor learned,—that they must either renounce the views they entertained and the course they pursued, or else abandon this doctrine of the Confession, which they had subscribed. We still regard this great truth as warranting the whole course which *we* pursued in our contest with the civil authorities, as it is sanctioned by the law of the land as well as the word of God; and we still proclaim it to be the ground and basis of our peculiar standing and testimony in regard to the spirituality and freedom of the church, and its relation to Christ as its only head. The additional matter introduced into the statement of doctrine in the first part of this question, we regard as implied in, or deducible from, that doctrine of the Confession which forms the basis of it, and as fitted only to bring out more fully and explicitly its import and application as subversive of all Erastianism. If the government which Christ has established in His church be distinct from civil magistracy, it cannot be subordinate in its own province to civil government. The distinctness of the two naturally implies the non-subordination of the one to the other; and this of itself must be held to be conclusive upon the point, unless it could be proved that Christ has expressly subordinated the one to the other,—a position which, though it is the only legitimate foundation of frank and honest Erastianism, was never openly maintained by those Erastians with whom we have had to contend.

The non-subordination to civil government of the distinct

government which Christ has established in His church, naturally leads to the next position in the question, which is just an extension or amplification of what goes before, pointing it more directly and specifically against the proceedings that produced the Disruption,—namely, that the civil magistrate does not possess jurisdiction or authoritative control over the regulation of the affairs of Christ's church. It is also explicitly and formally asserted, in another position contained in the Confession,—namely, that the civil magistrate may not assume to himself the "power of the keys,"—a phrase which, according to the usage of divines, might include the administration of the word and sacraments, but which, when distinguished from these, as it evidently is in the Confession, *must* mean the exercise of jurisdiction in the regulation of the affairs of the church. Jurisdiction, or authoritative control, of course means a right to make laws for the regulation of the affairs of the church, which are to be obeyed from regard to the authority that enacted them, or to pronounce decisions which are to be obeyed, because pronounced by one to whom obedience in the matter is legitimately due. When any civil magistrate assumes such jurisdiction or authoritative control in the regulation of the affairs of Christ's church, he is guilty of sin; and when the church submits to the exercise of such jurisdiction, she too becomes a partaker of his sin, and is involved in all the guilt of it.

The Claim of Rights of 1842, and the Protest of 1843,—the two documents described in the second part of the question,—consist, to a large extent, of the proofs and evidences, that the interferences of the civil authorities with the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs were violations of the constitution of the country, and of the laws of the land; and, therefore, it is only to the general principles embodied in them that assent is required. And these general principles are just those which are set forth in the first part of the question; while the reference to these documents at once connects together scriptural doctrines, constitutional principles, and important historical transactions,—all combined in setting forth the distinctive standing and testimony of the Free Church of Scotland, and in fully vindicating the position she now occupies, and the general course of procedure, on her part, which led to it. These are the only very material changes which have been introduced into our Formulæ for license and ordination, subsequently to, and in consequence of, the Disruption. They

are directed solely to the object of bringing out more fully and prominently our distinctive principles and our peculiar testimony; while both by what we have retained, and by what we have changed and added, we at once declare and establish our claim to be regarded as the true Church of Scotland,—the inheritors and possessors both of the principles and the rights of those by whom that church was reformed, first from Popery, and then from Prelacy and the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown.