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Calvin, John


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JOHN CALVIN
TRACTS AND LETTERS

Volume 3: Tracts, Part 3
Edited and Translated by
Henry Beveridge

THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST
JOHN CALVIN

THE TRUE METHOD OF GIVING PEACE TO CHRISETENDOM AND REFORMING THE CHURCH.

"Spacious indeed is the name of peace," says Hilary, "and fair the idea of unity; but who doubts that the only peace of the church is that which is of Christ?"—truly an admirable sentiment which ought to arise in our mind whenever we treat of establishing peace and concord among Christians, and especially when the object sought is consent in doctrine. For as pious and moderate men are averse to dissension and detest contention and strife, it can scarcely happen that any discourse whatever which proposes to quell them shall not be plausible at first sight. And who, if not devoid of humanity, does not willingly lend his ear and his mind when true and serious mention is made of pacifying the church? There is no man possessed only of a moderate sense of piety whom this foul and dreadful rending of the body of Christ does not grieve and exasperate. But seeing that crafty men not unfrequently insinuate themselves under this pretext, while they seek to adulterate the pure doctrine of Christ, who can deny that it is the part of prudence to look cautiously at the kind of Peace which is offered us? For as Christ always recommends peace to us as a primary object, so he teaches that the truth of his Gospel is the only bond of peace. Wherefore, it is of no use for those who are trying to seduce us from the pure profession of the Gospel, to gloss it over with the name of Concord. What then? Peace is indeed to be longed for and sought with the utmost zeal; but rather than it should be purchased by any loss of piety, let heaven and earth, if need be, go into confusion!

I am not here debating with Turks and Jews, who would wish the name of Christ utterly extinguished, or with grosser Papists, who demand from us an open abjuration of true doctrine, but with the contrivers of a kind of specious pacification, who leave us a half Christ, but in such a manner that there is no part of his doctrine which they do not obscure or bespot with some stain of falsehood. And this artifice for deforming piety they send forth—so help them!—under the name of reformation! Is it thus that while they secretly lead us away from the Author of peace, they gloss over the matter by vainly promising peace? They shall never succeed so far with their dissimulation as to prevent their counsels from being disclosed. They doubtless hope that if the Churches which have embraced the purer doctrine of the gospel once decline and allow themselves to be corrupted in any quarter, it will be easy to make them forthwith lose whatever good remains. And, verily, they are not wrong in this opinion. For by the most just and the ordinary judgment of God, those who knowingly and willingly allow his sacred truth to be polluted with lies, are totally deprived of the valuable possession. For it is not a thing of such vulgar worth, that what is deemed most precious among men should be purchased at the cost of impairing it in the least. I am aware, indeed, that the impious and profane do not form their estimate of the future according to the judgment of God. But without knowing the cause, they judge rightly of the event.

It is strange, however, that some are so sкиle, not to say alienated in mind, as to put faith in the words of such men! I am not ignorant of their thought. It is, that if they now yield a little, they will make a greater progress afterwards, when the occasion offers. But whence is that occasion which they promise themselves suddenly to arise? I now see them receding from the right path. Therefore there is nothing that can less be hoped than that they are to reach the goal by wandering from it: nay, rather it is to be feared that God may shew himself the avenger of their pernicious defection, by withdrawing the part which they retain. But whatever be their fancied hope, they take too much, far too much upon them, when they bargain concerning the eternal and immutable Truth of God, how far it is to prevail! They say—
provided what is fundamental remains safe, the loss of other things is tolerable. They speak thus just as if Christ had given himself up to be divided at their pleasure. It is something, I admit, when the entire renewal of piety cannot all at once be obtained, to secure at least the principal heads, provided we cease not to follow after what is still wanting. But when the Son of God has given us the doctrine of his gospel to be enjoyed entire, to rend it by compact, in order to preserve some part for ourselves, is most sacrilegious.

But here it lies. When a struggle for life must be endured, few know what it is to defend the cause of Christ. Nay, these men carry their effrontery so far as to declare, that it is no part of their intention to tempt God rashly, (by exposing themselves rashly,) As if those were throwing themselves into unnecessary danger, who choose to suffer any extremities rather than deviate one hair's-breadth from the doctrine of life. Where then are the lofty terms in which they spake a little ago with their swords in their hands? How is it that, with them, constancy in defending the Truth begins to be temerity the moment they see that they must die rather than secede from it? Let us, however, be mindful of the exhortation of Paul, and hasten to give glory to Christ and his gospel, whether it be by life or by death. Whatever may happen, let it be on our resolute determination to listen to no terms of peace, which mingle the fragment of men with the pure truth of God. Let it, I say, be our fixed principle, that the voice of the Shepherd alone is to be heard, that of strangers guarded against and rejected.

Hence it is easy to infer what plan is to be adopted in pacifying dissension. For did not the offences of men terrify, and, as it were, blind us, nay, did not some, while they would be too cautious, walk blindfold in the clearest light, we should easily come to an agreement as to the heads of doctrine which are necessary to preserve the state of the Church. But as a right judgment cannot be formed except from the case itself, I think it will be worth while briefly to review the points in which nothing can be yielded.

I know it is a common saying with many, that we are not to stand out pertinaciously on other points, provided the doctrine of free Justification remains safe. Those who speak thus do not say the whole, and yet say something. I admit, indeed, that a solid knowledge of our salvation is never possessed by us, without carrying along with it almost the whole sum of Christian doctrine. But, first, in a sum of Christian doctrine not only to postpone the worship of God, (in which his honour turns,) but to pass it over in silence, were very unjust, as I shall again advert to afterwards. Secondly, there is a great difference between merely uttering the one expression—we are justified by faith—and setting forth the whole matter in a distinct explanation. If in matters, however trivial, all are wont carefully to obviate disputes, which might arise from obscurity of language, why should not the same at least, if not greater caution be used in a matter of the highest moment?

Hence, in order that these men may prove their carefulness to retain this part of doctrine concerning gratuitous Justification unimpaired, they must first determine what man is capable of by himself. For in discriminating between the nature of man and the grace of God, the first thing in order is to see what belongs to the former as its own. Here I know not what mediators rise up, who, that they may slay pious souls while seeming to appease their opponents by equivocating subtleties, leave man freedom of will, though weak and damaged. In other words, they are liberal with what is not theirs, when they transfer to man that which belongs to the grace of God.

It must be acknowledged, indeed, that man retains a will even though it is held captive under the tyranny of sin and Satan; but how do they think they will satisfy us, when they awkwardly restrict the proud name of freedom by the epithet of a weak power? Then when they describe the mode of obtaining Justification, they teach that God does not act with man as with a block, that he does not draw him without his being willing. Who denies this? But the question is, whence comes that teachableness of the human will which makes it show itself obedient to God, while nature is altogether contumacious and intractable? Is it not to
stumble on the threshold when they on the one hand exte-
nuate the misery of man, and on the other obscure the aid
of Divine grace? Either, then, the true method of Justifi-
cation will not be at all possessed by us, or we must make this
our starting point, viz., that the mind of man is blind until
it is illuminated by the Spirit of God—that the will is en-
slaved to evil, and wholly carried and hurried to evil, until
corrected by the same Spirit, and that the voluntary recep-
tion of grace cannot have any other origin than this—that
God forming a heart of flesh out of our stony heart, brings
us who were formerly turned away back to himself.

When we come to the definition of the word, care must
be taken that respect to works be not intermingled with
gratuitous Reconciliation, which wholly consists in the for-
giveness of sins. For though we are never reconciled to
God, without being at the same time presented with inhe-
rent righteousness, yet things which cannot be separated
ought to be distinguished. And this is the second branch
in this question, viz., to have the method by which God
justifies us defined. We say, therefore, that we are justified
by faith, because the righteousness of Christ is imputed to
us. If any one, on the other hand, objects that we are made
partakers of Christ only by being renewed by his Spirit unto
the obedience of the law, this must be acknowledged to be
true; but let Regeneration be what it may, we deny that Jus-
tification is to be placed in it.

We do not act thus either from a love of disputation, or
because we will not allow anything to be passed over that
does not altogether please us. The cause which urges us is
most necessary. The point involved is peace of conscience,
without which we must all be most wretched, nay, almost
undone. It is asked, I say, where our consciences may rest
safely in regard to salvation. If they are agitated by dis-
quietude, or in doubt, Paul teaches that faith is made void.
(Rom. iv. 14.) And he declares that this is the necessary
result, so long as they look to the law. What then? That we
may have salvation, we must at the same time have a sure
conviction of righteousness. Any part of this righteousness,
however small, if placed in works will totter, as resting on

an insecure foundation. It remains, therefore, to recline
solely on the pardon of sins. It is a plain matter, that we
cannot come boldly before the tribunal of God, unless we
are certainly persuaded that he is our Father: and this
cannot be without our being regarded as righteous in his
sight. Thus we are precluded from all access to him, until
trusting in his paternal good will, we can without hesitation
invoke him as our Father. But if there is no salvation and
no invocation of God, without tranquil and sure trust for
the conscience; and, on the other hand, if conscience
cannot rest in anything short of certain righteousness, who can
doubt that the whole righteousness on which man ought to
lean, is contained in the free remission of sins? Our media-
tors then only gloss the matter in pretending that inherent
righteousness concurs with the merit of Christ, when the
point under discussion is the mode of justifying. Such con-
currence must necessarily beget a fearful conflict, until, allo-
gether forgetting works and discarding the mention of them,
we obtain not a part of righteousness only, but the whole
entire from Christ.

They say that God does not act with us after the manner
of an earthly judge, who only acquits, and does not also be-
stow true righteousness. I admit it. But while a twofold
grace is at the same time bestowed upon us by Christ, we
ought carefully to consider the effect of each. The question
now asked is, In what way are we accepted by God? If
works are mixed up with the free Imputation of Righteous-
ness, another question will immediately arise, viz., how far
works avail in procuring the favour of God, and whether
free imputation holds the chief place, or is only a kind of
inferior auxiliary? What else is this than completely to sub-
vert the foundation? Accordingly, Paul deservedly includes
the righteousness of faith—simply in forgiveness of sins,
teaching that it is described by David when he pronounces
the man blessed to whom sins are not imputed. (Rom. iv. 6;
Psalm xxxii. 2.) And certainly that blessedness which
David mentions flows from righteousness. It follows then,
that we are righteous in this, that our sins are not imputed.
Hence, Zacharias in his song describes instruction concern-
ing the forgiveness of sins, as the knowledge of salvation. (Luke i. 77.)

On the whole, let us remember that the debate here is not simply concerning the manifold grace of God toward us, but concerning the cause of our Reconciliation with him. This cause, unless it is fixed as one, is null. For Scripture does not tell us to borrow only part of our righteousness from Christ in order to supply what is wanting in our works; but the Apostle plainly declares that Christ himself was made righteousness to us. And in another passage he declares, that men are righteous before God by the very circumstance that our sins are no longer imputed to us. (1 Cor. i. 30; 2 Cor. v. 19.)

Both the magnitude and variety of the blessings which we receive from Christ are indeed to be extolled; nor does it become us to restrict his office and efficacy to any one species. Nor, when we say that men are justified by the benefit of Christ, are we to be silent as to the grace of Regeneration; nay, rather, we must take care not to separate what the Lord perpetually conjoins. What then? Let men be taught that it is impossible they can be regarded as righteous by the merit of Christ, without being renewed by his Spirit unto a holy life; and that it is in vain for any in whom the Spirit of regeneration dwells, not to glory in the free adoption of God; in short, that God receives none into favour who are not also made truly righteous. But there is need of distinction, lest the one of the two gifts should de­rogate from the other. Let the children of God consider that Regeneration is necessary to them, but that, nevertheless, their full righteousness consists in Christ—let them understand that they have been ordained and created unto holiness of life and the study of good works, but that, nevertheless, they must recline on the merits of Christ with their whole soul—let them enjoy the righteousness of life which has been bestowed upon them, still, however, distrusting it so as not to bring before the tribunal of God any other trust than trust in the obedience of Christ.

In order that ambiguities may be removed, it is necessary that the Righteousness which we obtain by faith, and which is freely bestowed upon us, should be placed in the highest rank, so that, as often as the conscience is brought before the tribunal of God, it alone may shine forth. In this way the righteousness of works, to whatever extent it may exist in us, being reduced to its own place, will never come, as it were, into conflict with the other; and certainly it is just, that as righteousness of works depends on righteousness of faith, it should be made subordinate to it, so as to leave the latter in full possession of the salvation of man. There can be no doubt that Paul, when he treats of the Justification of man, confines himself to the one point—how man may ascertain that God is propitious to him? Here he does not remind us of a quality infused into us; on the contrary, making no mention of works, he tells us that righteousness must be sought without us; otherwise that certainty of faith, which he everywhere so strongly urges, could never stand; still less could there be ground for the contrast between the righteousness of faith and works which he draws in the tenth chapter to the Romans. Wherefore, unless we choose to sport with so serious a matter, (this would be fraught with danger!) we must retain propriety of expression, which carries with it the knowledge of the thing expressed. Were the thing conceded to us by those who entangle this part of the doctrine by their comments, I would easily give up all contest about the word. But those who confound the two kinds of righteousness together; seeing the thing they aim at is to prevent the righteousness of Christ from being entirely gratuitous, are on no account to be borne.

But we must obviate their cavil, when they bring forward James, and collect other passages in Scripture, where the term justify is taken differently, to establish what they call concurrence. James does not mean that man acquires righteousness with God, even in the minutest degree, by the merit of works; he is only treating of the approval of righteousness. (James ii. 21.) And who denies that every man proves what he is by his actions? But to furnish men with credible evidence of your disposition is a very different thing from meriting salvation in the sight of God. Hence, not to be imposed upon by the different meanings of the
word, we must always observe whether reference is made to God or to men. Moreover, we deny not that the righteous are called the children of God, in respect of holiness of life, as well as in respect of a pure conscience: but as no work, if weighed in the Divine balance, will be found otherwise than maimed, and even defiled by impurities, we conclude, that this name of righteousness, when given to works, is founded on free pardon. Believers, therefore, are righteous by works, just because they are righteous without any merit of, or without any respect to works, seeing that the righteousness of works depends on the righteousness of faith.

Hence, too, it is apparent what we ought to think concerning the Reward of Works. Assuredly the labour of the godly is not in vain in the Lord, seeing various rewards are daily paid to it in the world, and the highest reward is laid up for it in the heavens. But they are greatly mistaken who think that any reward is paid to good works by way of debt: for we must always return to this, that as God declares there is no righteousness except in the perfect obedience of the law, so men merit nothing unless they fulfil all the commandments of the law out and out. If strict justice decide, an eternal curse awaits every man who fails in one single iota. Wherefore, the whole promises which make the fulfilling of the law a condition, Paul hesitates not to term void, till that strictness has been mitigated by virtue of a free promise.

A free promise I do not understand in the same way as many do. I hold it to be free, not because, while we owe ourselves and our all to God, he has spontaneously and liberally promised a reward to works which he might demand of us as his right, but because he assigns a reward proportioned to the worth of his own favour rather than to any worth in them. For that promise, however liberal, which stipulated for the fulfilment of the law, gives us no assistance by itself, since no man ever will be found to satisfy his duty. Hence there is need of the aid of a new promise, viz., that works shall have a reward, because they are acceptable in consequence of pardon. In this way, believers are not defrauded by the hope of reward, which ought to stimulate them to the study of good works; nor are they either puffed up with perverse confidence, or elated with vain glory. The true nature of the reward is this—it does not correspond in equity to the merit or worth of the works, but is derived from their gratuitous acceptance.

Moreover, we cannot submit to allow faith itself to be not only obscured, but also adulterated, by a false interpretation. They do so who pretend that it can truly exist without charity. This is the old invention of the sophists, that a faith which is informal is nevertheless real, and that it becomes formed by the addition of charity. Hence, too, has arisen the error of supposing that faith is a bare and frigid knowledge, which indistinctly apprehends that God is true. We dispute not about words; but as the salvation of men turns on this question, the ambiguity which involves the whole question in darkness is fraught with peril. As God justifies us freely by imputing the obedience of Christ to us, so we are rendered capable of this great blessing only by faith alone. As the Son of God expiated our sins by the sacrifice of his death, and, by appeasing his Father's wrath, acquired the gift of adoption for us, and now presents us with his righteousness, so it is only by faith we put him on, and become partakers of his blessings. Now, if we know not what faith is, what access shall we have to obtain salvation? Those who, in the present day, purchase peace from the Papists by equivocating arrangements, admit that the true faith which discriminates between Christians and unbelievers may be void of charity. They act just like a man who praises the wine contained in his cask, and cuts off the cork to prevent any one from getting a draught of it.

It is now, I presume, clear enough how important it is, in order to maintain the doctrine of Justification entire, to have a sure definition of faith. What it is may be partly inferred from the effect of justification. It justifies because it makes us put on Christ, that he may dwell in us, and we be his members. Can that which makes us one with the Son of God exist without his Spirit? This were no less absurd than for any one to assert that the soul which animates the body, which gives it sense and motion, and is, in short, its life, is
itself without life. Any one who holds the one point, that Christ is possessed by faith, will no longer think of entertaining the distinction of an "informal" and a "formed" faith. Faith, I say, is a firm certainty of conscience, which embraces Christ as he is offered to us by the gospel. But is not faith one of the principal gifts which newness of life bestows upon us? Hence, too, it is said to have been given us for a sign. Faith is the resurrection of the soul, as Christ declares in these words,—"He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." (John xi. 26.) How then can it be dead while it gives life? Faith is the evidence of divine adoption. But how can we be the sons of God, unless we are guided by his Spirit? Faith gives us access to God. How can we have access without a good conscience?

Assuming the contrary of all this, or saying nothing about it, still it is necessary, if we would be at peace in the unity of the faith, previously to agree as to the term Faith. But, as I have already promised, it is enough for me to demonstrate how far they are from retaining Justification, who, while they study to appear the enemies of the truth, devise a middle kind of doctrine, which suits neither heaven nor earth. To this subject I confine myself.

With regard, then, to the obtaining of Righteousness before God, I say that we must necessarily hold the following five points concerning Faith:—First, that it is an undoubted persuasion, by which we receive the word brought by Prophets and Apostles as truth sent from God. Secondly, that what it properly looks to in the Word of God is the free promises, and especially Christ, their pledge and foundation, so that, resting on the paternal favour of God, we can venture to entertain a confident hope of eternal salvation. Thirdly, that it is not a bare knowledge which flutters in the mind, but that it carries along with it a lively affection, which has its seat in the heart. Fourthly, that this faith does not spring from the perspicacity of the human mind, or the proper movement of the heart, but is the special work of the Holy Spirit, whose it is both to enlighten the mind and impress the heart. Lastly, that this efficacy of the Spirit is not felt by all promiscuously, but by those who are ordained to life.
ledge has any excellency, and glories in having preached Christ, as containing the whole sum of the gospel. (Eph. iv. 13; Phil. iii. 8; 1 Cor. ii. 2.)

Moreover, that confidence in the Divine love towards us is produced by faith, one passage abundantly testifies, viz., the fifth to the Romans, where Paul teaches that we have peace of conscience, so as to dare to glory in the hope of eternal life. (Rom. v. 11.) He had previously said, that to keep us from wavering in doubt and trepidation, we are heirs by faith, (Rom. iv. 16;) whence it is clear that a firm certainty is required. In the same manner he writes to the Ephesians, that we have boldness and access to the Father with confidence, through faith in him. (Eph. iii. 12.) Nor does John tell us to think, but to know, that we are the sons of God, although it doth not yet appear. (1 John iii. 2.) He, therefore, who does not hold this, is altogether ignorant of the nature of faith.

This position being laid down, it is clear that faith is always combined with serious impressions. Were it otherwise Paul would not enjoin us to fix our roots in Christ, and rear the superstructure on faith; nor would faith itself have the name of obedience, far less would it be called our victory over the world. (Col. ii. 7; Phil. ii. 12; Rom. i. 5; 1 John v. 4.) And surely when Paul writes, that with the heart we believe unto righteousness, he does not place faith in the brain. (Rom. x. 10.) I now omit the epithets I formerly mentioned—that it is the life of the soul, that by it Christ dwells in us, that it is the cause of our obtaining salvation, and the like. These could by no means apply to mere knowledge. This is what Paul elsewhere means when he says, that we, beholding the face of God in the mirror of the gospel, are transformed into it from glory to glory. (2 Cor. iii. 18.) For the knowledge must be lively and efficacious which thus transforms us into the image of God.

Then, that Faith is the work of Divine illumination Scripture confirms by all the passages in which it charges the human mind with blindness. But as it were too long to collect them all, I shall only note a few of the first which occur.

Paul, throughout the first and second chapters of 1 Corinthians, does nothing else than show, that all the discernment of the human mind in the mysteries of God is dim and null. Those then who penetrate them are born not of the will of man, or of the flesh, but of God. (John i. 13.) For flesh and blood does not reveal it to them, but our Father in heaven. (Matt. xvi. 17.) Wherefore Paul entreats God in the behalf of the Ephesians, that he would open the eyes of their mind, and give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of himself, that they may be able to apprehend what is his calling. (Eph. i. 17, 18.) And justly, since, as he afterwards subjoins, the love of Christ to which we are called surpasses all knowledge. (Eph. iii. 19.) Whence it follows, as he elsewhere affirms, that it is given us to believe, (Phil. i. 29;) that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from above, (John iii. 27;) and that no man can come unto Christ unless the Father draw him. (John vi. 44.) Moreover, if we examine the human heart, we shall find that it is not only prone to distrust, but is carried to it by the whole instinct of nature. Here again, therefore, the Spirit of God must come to our aid, and be to us both an earnest and a seal. (Rom. viii. 15.) He is who opens our mouth that we dare without fear invoke God as our Father, (Gal. iv. 6,) who sprinkles our souls with the blood of Christ, (1 John v. 4;) whence it is clear that a firm faith is required. (Rom. vi. 14;) That confidence in the Divine love towards us is produced by Faith, one passage abundantly testifies, viz., the fifth to the Romans, where Paul teaches that we have peace of conscience, so as to dare to glory in the hope of eternal life. (Rom. v. 11.) He had previously said, that to keep us from wavering in doubt and trepidation, we are heirs by faith, (Rom. iv. 16;) whence it is clear that a firm certainty is required. In the same manner he writes to the Ephesians, that we have boldness and access to the Father with confidence, through faith in him. (Eph. iii. 12.) Nor does John tell us to think, but to know, that we are the sons of God, although it doth not yet appear. (1 John iii. 2.) He, therefore, who does not hold this, is altogether ignorant of the nature of faith.

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Again, “We are his workmanship, created in Christ unto good works, which he hath prepared that we should walk in them.” (Eph. ii. 10.) This must be noted, because as men are proud above measure, they seize to themselves what ought to have been ascribed to God alone. To this preposterous arrogance God opposes his free Adoption, which alone is the cause of our being called, and so alone distinguishes us. Never, assuredly, is God anticipated by us, but he seeks the wandering and lost sheep.

Moreover, the efficacy of the Call I mentioned must be understood to consist in that not only is the grace of God offered to us, but our will also is formed to embrace it. For between the Elect and the Reprobate there is this difference, that while God addresses both by the voice of man, he specially teaches the former inwardly by his Spirit. The ministry of man, I say, is common to both, but the inward grace of the Spirit is peculiar to the Elect. Hence the words of Christ, “Whoso hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me.” (John vi. 45.)

Unless these points are put beyond controversy, though we may ever and anon repeat like parrots that we are justified by faith, we shall never hold the true doctrine of Justification. It is not a whit better to be secretly seduced from the alone foundation of salvation than to be openly driven from it. But there are also other things in which masked mediators maliciously subvert this part of the doctrine which they profess in word to be willing to defend.

They say that the Confession of Sins is necessary in order to obtain pardon. But to whom do they bid us confess? Not to God, but to Priests! Is not the name of Justification more than shamelessly brought forward while consciences are laid under such a necessity? That consciences may be freed from the fear of eternal death, the law of God itself must be abrogated so far as not to bind us by its curse. What then, if they put on the fetters of new laws which bind them more strongly? Scripture declares, that we are justified, not because we fulfil the law, but because we rest on the sacrifice of Christ, by which sins have been expiated. It is not therefore the observance of the law but the pardon of transgression that justifies us. For when the very forgiveness of sins, which looses us from all chains, is tied to a condition, is not the conscience shaken out of all certainty in regard to salvation? We are promised the forgiveness of sins, provided we shall have confessed into the ear of a priest. What is this, I ask, but just to subject the acquittal of the divine law to a human law, and place it, so to speak, under a kind of servitude? For such legislators enact, that the forgiveness of sins which frees us is not itself to be free.

Besides, it is an atrocious insult to God to arrogate so much to man as to make the Remission of Sins depend on their pleasure, especially seeing that he strictly claims this for himself by the Prophet, “I am, I am he, says he, who wipe away their iniquities.” (Isaiah xlii. 25.) What! does God himself, when he offers us this blessing, impose the law of confessing? Does Christ himself, to whom this office and command peculiarly belong, prescribe anything of the kind in forgiving sins? We nowhere read so. Now, when men rise up and lay their veto upon Christ to restrain his grace, is it not more than sacrilegious audacity? And even, if we leave such a right to men as to be the arbiters between God and us, in the matter of grace, by dictating laws, do we not reject the benefit of Christ by such ingratitude? This cannot with any decency be denied. We all in misery flee to the forgiveness of sins as the only asylum of salvation. A certain way is shewn us by the Son of God. A certain method is appointed for obtaining the great boon. Here a mortal man interposes, and dares to preclude access. He points to the door locked by him, and will not allow it to be opened except by the key of confession. Do those who take this tyranny upon them make Christ the only author of righteousness, or do they not rather rob him of part of the honour, and transfer it elsewhere? Where is free righteousness if it is ransomed in this way?

Moreover, as pious souls have already experienced how dire the slaughter was when they were forced to such confession, our false mediators, to make them feel less pain, devise a middle course. They say that Confession is neither,
on the one hand, to be too much relaxed, nor, on the other, to be made too stringent. Certainly some progress seems to be made when part of the anxious enumeration is remitted! Mere trifling! For if we hold that none are acquitted before God but those who have confessed their sins to a priest, who shall take it upon him to deduct one iota? Shall we not always run the risk of having omitted something, for which God may call us into judgment?

Peace of conscience, without which there is no salvation, exists only when there is an undoubting faith in acquittal. If every one must confess before he can be forgiven, it is not for the will of man to define how far this necessity extends. Thus nothing is left but constant disquietude, and slow torture, and perplexing doubts, which will wear out the soul not less effectually than open murder. The mediators are contented with the enumeration of the sins which occur to one thinking and examining himself carefully. What is this but to sprinkle the poison with a drop of honey, to make it less sensible at first taste? For if anything, however small, is wanting to the proper diligence, the sinner will still fail; nay, the whole promise will give way, and abyss will follow abyss. If the knowledge of salvation consists in relying with tranquil mind on the forgiveness of sins, whoever spontaneously puts on this fetter knowingly and willingly throws away his salvation.

To pretend the authority of Christ for this impious tyranny displays no less effrontery than bad faith. The theologasters of Sorbonne, on account of their gross ignorance, might have been pardoned when they corrupted Scripture. Now, in so much light, the same excuse cannot be taken. The mediators tell us, that the power of binding and loosing was given to the Apostles, and they add, that it cannot be exercised unless he who officiates knows whether he ought to loose or retain. Hence they make out their enumeration.

Why should I again discuss a puerile objection which we have so often refuted? When the Apostles are invested with the power of binding and loosing, it is certain that under these terms the power and fruit of the gospel are committed to them. It greatly concerns us to know that the acquittal pronounced to us by the mouth of man is ratified by God. Let us remember that it is mortal men who testify that we are exempted from liability to eternal death. To attest so great a matter even angels would not be equal! What then would become of us did not the Son of God himself interpose his own authority as a sanction to his command? Moreover, the execution of the command removes all doubt on this head. The Apostles did not discharge their office of binding and loosing by hearing Confessions, but by preaching the gospel. Nay, it is certain that in the better ages, when Religion flourished, the rite was either unknown or not very commonly received. It is beyond dispute, that for a whole thousand years and more the Churches were free from this law, which the new mediators obtrude upon us as perpetual, and of the same date as the gospel. But if this pretended cognizance is so necessary that none but he who has heard can forgive sins, we must charge with temerity, not only all the most excellent Pastors of the Primitive Church, but the Apostles themselves, and, by consequence, the Master and Lord of all, for having dared to bind and loose, while they knew nothing of the practice of confessing!

I know that there are men who, when they see any prospect of advancing their interest, are ready to do anything that may be ordered them. And the reason why they strongly urge Confession is, because they wish to make the world obsequious to them, and to hold it in subjection. On many accounts, therefore, do they contend that the rite of Confession is most useful, in other words, useful, because it suits their personal interest. But when they have said all, the most plausible thing they say is, that they put the wicked to the blush once a year. No doubt, much progress is made when the shame of man weighs more with us than reverence for God and angels! And yet experience, the best of teachers, tells us, that even this is most falsely asserted. For men wanton in sin, more from trusting that they shall be safe, as soon as they have disburdened themselves of anything which inwardly oppresses them, by pouring it into the ear of a Priest. Just as if they could escape the tribunal of God by delegating judgment to men! In short, just as
drunkards do, they prepare themselves by an emetic for a new debauch.

But, on the other hand, how strong the objection which we have to offer. Is it not known that from this hydra innumerable evils spring? But granting that what they insist upon is true, nothing ought to be of weight sufficient to make us consent that consciences shall be brought into bondage, the grace of Christ prostituted, and faith oppressed. Though it were most expedient, I say, that men should be forced to confess their sins, yet to colour Confession and hold it forth as a thing necessary to salvation, is neither expedient nor lawful. Consciences cannot be squeezed by the chains of such laws, without being strangled. Therefore twisting them all asunder, let us learn to have all our feelings in subjection to the promises of free mercy alone.

In like manner, when Scripture treats of the spiritual forum of conscience, there is no mention of Satisfactions. The satisfaction of Christ is the only one which not only exempts us from guilt and liability to eternal death, but is the price that buys off temporal punishments also. There is something plausible at first sight in the distinction that the eternal punishment is freely forgiven by the benefit of Christ, and the temporal by our satisfaction, but on a nearer inspection it altogether vanishes. First, we have the opposition of all the prophets, who uniformly attribute relaxation of punishment to the Divine mercy. What God pardons freely, it is certain that we do not merit by our works. When the Prophet introduces God as saying, "For my own sake will I do it, not for your sakes," (Ezek. xx. 44; xxxvi. 22.) the thing spoken of is the remission of temporal punishment. Nay, whenever they flee to seek free pardon, they depreciate external calamities as signs of the Divine anger. And when God receives us into favour, he at the same time promises that he will put an end to our calamities. In short, as punishment follows guilt just as the fruit is borne by the tree, so when guilt is forgiven, punishment, as if its root were cut off, is also extinguished.

It is true, that the best way for men to escape from being judged by God, is to judge themselves, as Paul declares.
by equivocating courses, assail the glory of Christ, which he has been pleased so to connect with our salvation, that he who detracts from the one violates both. Therefore we must, in asserting the doctrine of free Justification, give proof not only how dear our salvation, but also how precious the glory of Christ is to us. Hence it appears what a detestable end is plotted for us by those pernicious mediators, who, by their false glosses, would induce us not only to be ungrateful to the Son of God, but treacherous to our own salvation.

But granting that the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone was left to us entire, what place do those who leave us nothing but this think that the worship of God is to hold? Do they regard it as so frivolous a matter that it ought not to delay the peace of the Church? I say that it is to be preferred to the safety of men and angels! Those, therefore, who not only postponing, but even abandoning the worship of God, urge the other head only, have not yet learned what true Religion is. If any one objects, that a principal part of Divine Worship is comprehended in faith and its exercises, I admit it, but to debate about the mode in which men obtain salvation, and say nothing of the mode in which God may be duly worshipped, is too absurd.

We may add that the knowledge of this matter demands its own proper explanation. There are two principal branches. First, we must hold that the spiritual Worship of God does not consist either in external ceremonies, or any other kind of works whatsoever; and, secondly, that no Worship is legitimate unless it be so framed as to have for its only rule the will of him to whom it is performed. Both of these are absolutely necessary. For as we savour of nothing but earth and flesh, so we measure God by ourselves. Hence it is that we always take more pleasure in external show, which is of no value in the sight of God, than in that inward worship of the heart, which alone he approves and requires. On the other hand, the wantonness of our minds is notorious, which breaks forth, especially in this quarter, where nothing at all ought to have been dared. Men allow themselves to devise all modes of worship, and change and rechange them at pleasure. Nor is this the fault of our age. Even from the beginning of the world, the world sported thus licentiously with God. He himself proclaims that there is nothing he values more than obedience. (1 Sam. xv. 22.) Wherefore, all modes of worship devised contrary to his command, he not only repudiates as void, but distinctly condemns. Why need I adduce proofs in so clear a matter? Passages to this effect should be proverbial among Christians.

When our glossing mediators carelessly omit, and do not even make a single observation on the former branch, viz., that the Worship of God is spiritual, what else do they seek than some lurking place for deceit? Assume, however, that this may be tolerated. But when they class among works, good in themselves, those which are voluntarily undertaken, without any command from God, they pervert the whole rule of right and godly living. For what will become of the words, “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,” (Matt. xv. 9) if men may wander at will beyond the law of God?

They carry their effrontery so far as to say, that those who approve not of Works of Supererogation, are at variance with the Holy Spirit. Why so? Is it because the Spirit of God in Isaiah (Isaiah l. 12) commends works of this description, when he condemns those, which otherwise have the fairest appearance, on the single ground that God requires them not at our hands? I see their objection. To sell all, to practise perpetual virginity, to spend labour in preaching gratuitously, is to us nothing but this think that the worship of God is to hold. But granting that the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone was left to us entire, what place do those who leave us nothing but this think that the worship of God is to hold? Do they regard it as so frivolous a matter that it ought not to delay the peace of the Church? I say that it is to be preferred to the safety of men and angels! Those, therefore, who not only postponing, but even abandoning the worship of God, urge the other head only, have not yet learned what true Religion is. If any one objects, that a principal part of Divine Worship is comprehended in faith and its exercises, I admit it, but to debate about the mode in which men obtain salvation, and say nothing of the mode in which God may be duly worshipped, is too absurd.

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convicted of folly? Christ does not address all indiscriminately when he says, “Go and sell all” (Matt. xix. 21,) but him who, falsely imagining that he had performed the whole law, was swollen with vain confidence. To shew him that he was still far from complete perfection, Christ teaches the vice in which he was indulging, viz., excessive attachment to his riches. Whence it is plain that such a sale was comprehended under the commandments of the law.

The same thing may be said of Virginity. Every one ought to see what his gift is, lest labouring under incontinence, while he aspires to celibacy, he wrestle with God. And then he who is endued with the gift of continence, ought not to plume himself on his continence, as if he were leading a more perfect life than others. For neither is virginity praised as if it were a virtue in itself, but only in reference to its end, that freed from all avocations we may bestow our study and all our care more freely on the service of God.

And why did Paul refrain from taking stipend, but just to obviate the malice of false apostles, who asked none in order that they might throw a stigma on his ministry, or at least detract from his authority. In what respect, then, I ask, does a minister supererogate beyond the measure of his duty, when he omits nothing which he sees would conducing to the good of the Church? Paul could not have acted otherwise without exposing himself to the mockery of the wicked. What then did he do that, first, he ought not to have done; and that, secondly, was not prescribed by God?

They also put forward the example of David who danced before the ark. What has this to do with the establishment of fictitious modes of Worship? If David had it in his mind to establish some new worship, who can excuse his temerity in attempting a thing so strictly prohibited by the Lord? (Deut. xii. 8.) It was certainly a common law binding upon all that they were not to do as each pleased, but only as the Lord had commanded. If therefore David added anything of his own to the commandment, he improperly dared to do more than was lawful. If we admit that he sinned, what aid can a perverse example give to his imitators? I do not however concede that David danced with the intention of exhibiting a worship not commanded him. It is well enough known that ceremonies were a species of exercises of piety, which were to be estimated not so much in themselves as in their end. What then did David mean by that dancing, but just to conduct the ark of the Lord with magnificence to the place divinely destined and consecrated for it? Although there is no doubt that he was led to this by a special inspiration of the Spirit, which is always to be observed in the extraordinary acts of the saints.

But lest any one should cavil and say, that we are too rigid in external matters when we thus expressly destroy all freedom, I would here protest to the pious reader that I am not now debating about Ceremonies which are only subservient to decency and order, or which are signs of and incitements to that reverence which we pay to God. We are disputing about works which the mediators pretend to be pleasing to God in themselves, and by which they affirm that he is duly worshipped. For when they talk of the righteousness of works, they obtrude fictions added at the will of man. Paul, (Rom. xii. 1,) would have us act on the service of God. We are here and all our care more freely on the service of God.

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ingly receive. But who perceives not that what they add about the Succession of Bishops is captiously said? We maintain, not without reason, that for several centuries the Church was so torn and dismantled, that it was destitute of true pastors. We maintain that those who assumed the title to themselves were nothing less than pastors. Our mediators not only insist on wolves being regarded as shepherds, but affirm that the Church is not to be sought anywhere else than among them.

We certainly deny not that the Church of God has always existed in the world; for we hear what God promises concerning the perpetuity of the seed of Christ. In this way, too, we deny not that there has been an uninterrupted succession of the Church from the beginning of the gospel even to our day; but we do not concede that it was so fixed to external shows—that it has hitherto always been, and will henceforth always be, in possession of the Bishops. And how, pray, do they prove this to be necessary? No promise can anywhere be found. Nay rather, when Peter admonishes us that there will be false teachers in the Church, as there were among the ancient people, (2 Pet. ii. 7,) and Paul declares that Antichrist will sit in the temple of God, (2 Thess. ii. 4,) they point not to foreign enemies who by violent irruption and for a little time disturb the Church: they speak of what is called the ordinary administration of Prelates, that no one might dream of a tranquil and flourishing state of the kingdom of Christ. Therefore, if the Church resides in the successors of the Apostles, let us search for successors among those only who have faithfully handed down their doctrine to posterity.

I know that this continuous Succession is extolled by Irenaeus, Origen, Augustine, and some other ancient writers. But it is mere imposition to attempt to employ their testimony in defence of the tyranny of the Papacy, which has nothing in common with the ancient form of the Church. Irenaeus and Origen had to do with base miscreants, who, while they advanced monstrous errors, gave out that they had received them by divine revelation. This falsehood was easily refuted, as many were still alive who had been familiar with the disciples of the Apostles. The remembrance of the doctrine which the Apostles had delivered was recent. The very walls, in a manner, still re-echoed with their voice. Is it strange that those holy men cited as witnesses the Churches which had both been constituted by the Apostles, and had, without controversy, retained their constitution? Augustine was contending with the Donatists, who, inflated with frantic pride, boasted that they alone possessed the Church, though there was no reason why they should dissent from others. Augustine objects to them, that the Churches which they repudiated, and from which they had become schismatics, had flowed in uninterrupted succession from the Apostles. This he did on the best grounds, as the Donatists acknowledged that these Churches had persevered in the doctrine they had originally received.

Very different is our case: for we deny the title of Successors of the Apostles to those who have abandoned their faith and doctrine. Those perfidious mediators who confound light and darkness are not ignorant how unlike, or rather how contrary, the present perverted government is to the ancient government of the Church. What effrontery, then, is it to use the name of the Church herself as a cloak for oppressing the Church? Would that the Succession which they falsely allege had continued until this day: with us it would have no difficulty in obtaining the reverence which it deserves. Let the Pope, I say, be the successor of Peter, provided he perform the office of an Apostle. Wherein does Succession consist, if it be not in perpetuity of doctrine? But if the doctrine of the Apostles has been corrupted, nay, abolished and extinguished by those who would be regarded as their successors, who would not deride their foolish boasting? By the same kind of argument I might prove that all tyrants have been the best supporters of freedom, since there was an uninterrupted transition from the republic to their monarchy. Whether it now be so let fact determine. But our mediators purposely endeavour to prevent this estimate from being made, by raising a prejudice in favour of the doctrine from the honour which they bestow on the persons.
Briefly to conclude this part of our subject: We are in search of the Church of God. We all admit it to have been so propagated from the beginning, as to have continued through an uninterrupted series of ages down to our day, and to be diffused at present over the whole world. Another question remains, viz., Is it tied down to persons? Although we see how perilous it is to admit this, still we are unwilling to be so very solicitous in taking precautions for the future. But when the name of the Church is usurped by those who, as far as in them lay, have utterly destroyed it, how daringly were it not to reclaim at least against the present evil? Hilarius, even in his time, said that the Church rather lurked in caverns than shone conspicuously in primary sees. What lamentations can suffice to deplore the fearful devastation which stalks abroad everywhere in the present day? The knowledge of the Church must therefore be sought elsewhere than from the titles of men; and in vain do we go round searching for it while the truest method spontaneously presents itself. Who of us, to recognise a man, would look at his shoes or his feet? Why then, in surveying the Church, do we not begin at its head, seeing that Christ himself invites us to do so? He says, “Where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” (Matt. xxiv. 28.) Wherefore, if we would unite in holding a unity of the Church, let it be by a common consent only to the truth of Christ.

When they come to the authority of the Church, whatever be the false colours with which our mediators delude the eyes of the ignorant, they are at last reduced to this; that instead of the word of God, human license alone is to prevail. Their threefold chime is well known. It belongs to the Church to discriminate between spurious and genuine Scriptures: she also has the right of interpreting Scripture: her traditions have the force of oracles. Where these foundations have been laid, it is plain that the power of which God has been robbed is transferred to horns and mitres. Be their conduct what it may, provided they are adorned with an episcopal title, they constitute the Church.

Moreover, boundless license will be given them, if they are to interpret Scripture at will, frame Articles of Faith, and impose laws on the conscience. In such a case, what will be left for God? This is more than manifest treachery to the kingdom of Christ, sound doctrine, and our salvation. And will they cry out that we are fomenting discord, hindering and disturbing peace, if we do not forthwith assent? That it is the proper office of the Church to distinguish genuine from spurious Scripture, I deny not, and for this reason, that the Church obediently embraces whatever is of God. The sheep hear the voice of the shepherd, and will not listen to the voice of strangers. But to submit the sound oracles of God to the Church, that they may obtain a kind of precarious authority among men, is blasphemous impiety. The Church is, as Paul declares, founded on the doctrine of Apostles and Prophets; but these men speak as if they imagined that the mother owed her birth to the daughter.

The object they aim at is notorious. They refer to a Canon. First, I ask, at what time they suppose it to have been published? There is no mention of it in the Council of Nice; and yet the Holy Fathers then were armed with strong enough weapons against Arius, as they had the Scriptures in their hands. Secondly, What will become of the oracles of God to the Church, when these men speak as if they imagined that the mother owed her birth to the daughter.

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ference will avail them little with intelligent men. Peter admonishes us that the prophecies can now be no more understood by the perspicacity of the human mind than they could at first have been composed by it. He therefore exhorts, that as they came down from heaven, so we should pray to have their genuine meaning opened to us by the Spirit of God. Nothing is to be given to ambition—nothing to arrogance. But does it thence follow that a right of interpreting has been conveyed to a few? They also bring forward, that the Spirit was promised to the Church to guide her unto all truth, and bring to mind whatever Christ had taught. But while they, in the mean time, rob the Church of what was given her by Christ, does not their deceit deserve to be exposed?

The Spirit of God furnishes the gift of interpretation to those to whom he thinks fit to give it for the common edification of the Church. The effect and use of this gift is not only suppressed but annihilated by those who give the bishops sole power to dictate to others what they must follow. It often happens that the bishops have no knowledge of the genuine meaning of Scripture. Then those who force us to abide by their injunctions, arm madmen with a sword by which they can miserably hack the whole of Scripture to pieces. In short, whosoever subjects the meaning of Scripture to the will of the bishops, kills the soul, and leaves nothing but a lifeless corpse. We must drag forth the snake which the mediators hide among the brambles. Their object is, that there may be nothing in Scripture so clear and strong as not to be evaded by one word, if it happens not to be agreeable to the horned herd.

The third part of ecclesiastical power our mediators place in the sanctuary of doctrines as well as laws. The former species they call Traditions, which, if any one disowns, he, in their opinion, denies that the Church is the foundation of the truth. By this trap miserable souls are ensnared, and dare not reject any superstition whatever which has prevailed for a long period of time. They, indeed, adduce a plausible example in the Baptism of Infants; but as there is no fiction too gross or childish to be vended in the Papacy under the name of Tradition, whosoever has not the caution to keep out of this trap, voluntarily entangles himself in all kinds of superstition.

I do not, however, concede to them that Paedobaptism had its origin in the Tradition of the Church. It certainly appears to be founded on the institution of God, and to have derived its origin from circumcision. It would have little foundation if it depended only on the will of man. Accordingly, we must hold it as an universal rule, that no Sacrament is legitimate, unless it be of God and not of men. But to return to the present subject: not only the Blessing of the Pascal taper, the Exorcism of Water, and similar follies, which are of endless number, but the ritual of the Mass, and all the impious worship of this description, they make perfectly pure by a simple process, by merely giving them the name of Traditions, so that everything to which time has given a kind of prescriptive right is, as it were, placed beyond controversy, and holds up its head among the commandments of God. Will no man oppose this? Nay, rather a thousand times incur the obloquy of disturbing the peace, than by perfidious dissimulation betray the essential truth which is here endangered.

The true Church of Christ never passed any laws save such as might conduce to maintain order, cherish concord, and invigorate discipline. Such laws as every sober man will admit are rightly passed, and are to be observed by all pious men. Indeed, this is not the dispute. But it is necessary to provide against two evils, if we wish the Church to be safe. That the burdens imposed at the present day on Christians are no lighter, and not less numerous and diversified than those which the Jews of old sustained, it is impossible for any man to doubt, though the thing is expressly contrary to the ordination of Christ. He who abrogated divine laws, in order to release us from bondage, assuredly never meant that we should be oppressed by new laws of men. It has been done however. Not only has that liberal government been taken away, but souls have been forced as it were into a mere slaughter-house; at least the necessary result is, that they must be kept in a state of
constant torture. For some of them are openly repugnant to the prescribed rule of God, while the observance of others is impossible. Yet so far are those who hold the reins from curbing this tyranny, that their only thought is to establish it; and now our moderate men, by bringing forward the authority of the Church, make themselves the tools of this ungodly tyranny.

There is the other evil, the correction of which is not less necessary. The laws which the tyrants recommend under the name of the Church they term Spiritual, as being destined to rule the conscience. An appendage to this evil is the superstition which I mentioned, viz., their pretence that the observance of them pertains to the worship of God. But God claims spiritual government for himself alone, and for his word, that conscience untouched by man may learn to look only to his word. “There is one Lawgiver,” says James, (James iv. 12.) “who is able to save and to destroy.” And Paul strictly admonishes us, who have been set free by the benefit of Christ, not to enslave ourselves to men. (1 Cor. vii. 23.) In another place he rebukes the Colossians for being subject to decrees. (Col. ii. 20.) What do our mediators say? Without any mention of redress, they simply lay us under the necessity of obeying as heretofore. But whatever is given to men is so much abstracted from the authority of God. Have done then with that prevaricating obedience which breaks the bridle of God in order to strangle us with the cords of men!

Their appointing the Roman Pontiff over the whole Church, a thing intolerable in itself, is to be more keenly repelled because of the pretence that it was a privilege granted to Peter. Christ commands Peter to feed his sheep. What! does he not command the other Apostles likewise? But there must be some reason why Christ addresses him in these terms. As if it were not clear that by the thrice repeated command to feed the sheep, he was restored to the honour of the Apostleship from which he had fallen by thrice denying Christ. But with what modesty, I ask, do they interpret the name of “sheep” as applying to the whole Church? By the same argument I might hold that the office which Christ bestowed upon him, he assigned to others, whom he exhorts to feed the flock of Christ. (1 Pet. v. 2.) According to them, Peter was to govern the whole Church, because it was said to him, “Feed my sheep.” Therefore, when he writes that the same thing was to be rightfully done by others, he either confers on them the right bestowed upon himself, or he shares it equally along with them.

But they sport too wantonly with Scripture when they pretend that the whole Church is comprehended under the name of “sheep.” He was indeed a shepherd of the sheep of Christ, that is, those of them on whom he bestowed his labour, and as far as his ministry could extend. For if he was to preside over all Churches with plenitude of power, as our mediators prate, Paul acted unjustly in denying him superior rank. But who ever heard tell of Peter having claimed anything for himself in regard to other strange Churches? Nay, rather, when he is sent by the Church, he obeys like any other one of the meeting. I deny not that he was distinguished among others, and that, because of the excellent gifts in which he excelled, the honour of the first place in all their meetings was assigned to him. But to have the command of the whole world is a very different thing from presiding over a small body of men.

But let us assume that all which they pretend was given to Peter: who can concede that it was given as a Patrimony which he might transmit to heirs? They say he left successors the same right which he had received. Therefore, every one who is a successor of Peter must be Satan, since this epithet was applied to him! Where is there any mention of Succession? When Paul treats professedly of the whole administration of the Church, he neither appoints one head, nor makes the primacy hereditary; and yet in that place he is wholly intent on commending unity. After mentioning that there is one God the Father, one Christ, one Spirit, one body of the Church, one baptism, he describes the mode of preserving unity, viz., that to each of the pastors grace was distributed according to the measure bestowed upon them by Christ. Where is the plenitude of power when he refers each to a certain measure? Why did he not
immediately add one Pope? Nothing would have been more appropriate to the occasion had the fact been so.

Let us grant, moreover, that a perpetuity of Primacy in the Church was sanctioned in Peter. Why should the Seat of Primacy be found at Rome rather than elsewhere? The reason they allege is, that it was the See of Peter; just as if one were to place the principal See of the Jewish Church in the desert, because there Moses the greatest of Prophets, and Aaron the High-Priest, performed their office even till death. But let the reason be good. What of Antioch? They prefer Rome because Paul died there. But there are probable grounds for inferring that what they say of the Roman Episcopate of Peter is fabulous. Paul salutes several private individuals when he writes to the Church of Rome. Three years after he is carried thither a prisoner; Luke relates that he was received by the brethren;—still there is no mention of Peter. Paul writes various Epistles from prison: he mentions the names of certain persons of no mean rank;—there is no place for Peter among them. If he were there, such silence would be a marked insult! Then, when he complains that at his first defence no man stood by him, would he not affix the stigma of extreme perfidy on Peter if he was then the Pastor of the city? Again, when, in another place, he glances at all whom he had with him, who can believe that Peter was of the number? And yet this is almost the whole time which they assign to his Roman See.

But without raising that question, If Rome obtains the Primacy because it was Peter’s last See, why does not Antioch hold the second place at least among the Patriarchates? Why were James and John, who appeared to be pillars along with Peter, unable to acquire the next dignity for their Sees? How preposterous was the mode of distribution, when they preferred Alexandria, the see of Mark, who was only one of the disciples, to Ephesus and Jerusalem? But I desist from comparing Apostles together. Where did the Lord and Master of all, before whose splendour all other dignity vanishes away, perform the office of High-Priest, both in teaching and dying, but at Jerusalem? Shall Jeru-

salem then be no See of Christ, and Rome seize upon the honour? To this we add, that the apostleship of Peter was specially to the Jews, as Paul testifies, and therefore properly has no reference to us. Let us leave it to the Jews, then, whose question it is, to debate about this succession.

With the same modesty they produce Cyprian as a witness in this cause—Cyprian, who charges Bishops with tyrannical pride if they arrogate to themselves any authority over their colleagues! He indeed commends one bishopric, but it is the bishopric of Christ, of which each bishop holds a part in solidum, as he expresses it. But he afterwards states that schisms arose from contempt of the Chief Priest. See their ingenuousness! What Cyprian says of the Levitical priesthood they wrest to the Popacy. For, if Cyprian regarded all as schismatics who refuse to submit to the Roman Pontiff, what place is he himself to occupy after having inveighed so freely against Stephen, not only charging him with ignorance and arrogance, but forcing him back into his proper place, as if he were one of the common herd? Wherefore, let them here cease so impudently to abuse the testimony of God and man.

But it is a useful means of removing dissension, they say, that there be one of eminence whom all are compelled to obey. Of this, then, let them leave the Church at liberty to consult; and let them not pretend that an appointment which ought to be made on grounds of expediency was prescribed by God. But even this expediency is falsely pretended, especially while the plentitude of power of which they boast breaks out into licentiousness, and can no more be separated from tyranny than the fire can be separated from its own heat. And not to continue longer here, if plenary power over the Christian world is nothing else than an Universal Bishopric, Gregory everywhere denounces it as nefarious and blasphemous, and fit only for Antichrist! To whom shall we give credit on the subject of the Popacy more readily than to a Pope? Let the Roman Pontiff now plume himself as he will on this authority which flatters ascribe to him: with men of sense he will do no more than show himself to be Antichrist!
. Now, to leave everything else, if they wish the Roman Pontiff to be recognised as Head of the whole Church, they must, in the first place, give us a true bishop; for who is to have pre-eminence among bishops but one, and an excellent one in the order of bishops? They themselves, when they would deck out the Papacy, have ever in their mouths the Succession of Peter and Vicegerency of Christ. Will our mediators then have the audacity to give the name of Christ's Vicar to one who, after routing the truth of Christ, extinguishing the light of the gospel, overthrowing the salvation of men, corrupting and profaning the worship of God, and trampling down and tearing to pieces all his sacred institutions, domineers like a barbarian?

What resemblance, I ask, has the Pope to Christ, that he should be his substitute and representative? What has his tyranny in common with the ministry of Peter, that he should be deemed Peter's successor? Therefore, in order to our coming to an agreement concerning the Primacy, we must set out with insisting that he on whom we confer the first place in the Church shall prove himself to be truly a bishop. For he who lays it down as the bond of unity, that, be the Roman Bishop what he may, the whole world should be subject to him, can never gain his point in any other way than by stirring up an impious revolt from Christ.

In the Sacraments our worthy and impartial pacificators shew this much moderation, that the number seven, which was rashly devised by the presumption of unlearned men, and crept in through the foolish credulity of the world, is to be retained as sacred. I must ever be entreating my readers to reflect on the weight and magnitude of the cause under discussion. Christ instituted the Sacraments to be not only symbols of the true religion, which might distinguish the children of God from the profane, but also evidences, and therefore pledges of the divine favour toward us. In Baptism, both forgiveness of sins and the spirit of regeneration are offered to us; in the Holy Supper we are invited to enjoy the life of Christ along with all his benefits. Where are we to stop if with these the fictions of men are intermingled?

They pretend, indeed, that God is the author of the whole.

This subject will be discussed afterwards. At present, I only say that we shall be dastardly indeed if we allow any Ceremonies whatsoever, the offspring of human brains, to be put on a footing with those solemn mysteries in which the sum of our salvation is contained. When Christ asks, whether the Baptism of John was from heaven or of men? (Matt. xxi. 25,) he intimates, that it was not to be regarded as legitimate and binding if it was not of divine appointment. The same holds good in all the Sacraments. And, indeed, while these mediators profess that the Sacraments not only attest but exhibit things above the reach and faculty of men, it is plain that the perverseness is extreme which would subject them to the will of men. That two Sacraments were committed to us by Christ is undisputed. Of the other five, then, let us see what we ought to think.

Before proceeding, however, it may be worth while briefly to observe in regard to Baptism that what they say of its absolute necessity might better have been omitted. For, besides tying down the salvation of men to external signs, no small injustice is done to the promise, as if it were unable to give the salvation which it offers unless its sufficiency were aided from another quarter. The offspring of believers is born holy, because their children, while yet in the womb, before they breathe the vital air, are included in the covenant of eternal life. Nor, indeed, are they admitted into the Church by baptism on any other ground than that they belonged to the body of Christ before they were born. He who admits any others to baptism profanes it. Now, then, when they make baptism to be so necessary that they exclude all who have not been dipped with it from the hope of salvation, they both insult God and also involve themselves in great absurdity. For how could it be lawful to put the sacred impress of Christ on strangers?

Baptism must, therefore, be preceded by the gift of adoption, which is not the cause merely of a partial salvation, but bestows salvation entire, and is afterwards ratified by baptism.

Hence, as error usually springs from error, the office of baptizing, which Christ committed to the Ministers of the Church alone, they delegate not to any common individual.
among the people, but to silly women. I do not notice that when discussing the form of baptism they postpone the explanation of the doctrine as if it were of little moment, and insist on the bare pronunciation of the words: as if Christ, when he ordered his Apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, had dictated some kind of magical charm, and not rather meant summarily to indicate whence the whole efficacy of baptism flows, in whose name and by whose order it is administered, on what faith it depends, and to what end it ought to be referred.

All the Ceremonies by which posterity has partly vitiated, partly obscured, the pure Baptism of Christ, they order to be left untouched; nay, if they have been anywhere abolished they are to be restored. What else is this than to soil the heavenly laver of Christ with the muddy impurities of man? Christ commanded the simple symbol of water. With it, as was right, the Apostles were contented. The same soberness did not prevail with their successors. They became delighted with the oil and the taper and similar follies. At length, as is usual, perverse superstition crept in, and the chrism added by man was considered of more value than the water consecrated by Christ! The water itself behoved to be consecrated by a new and showy rite, as if it were otherwise profane. In short, the act of baptizing has been compounded of so many various parts that the symbol of water, which alone ought to have been conspicuous, is lost among the crowd.

Our superstitious masters allege that these additions serve to adorn Baptism, but the fact proclaims that the pure administration of it is rather obscured. There was need at least of some correction. Our mediators, so far from admitting this, distinctly provide that nothing is to be touched. Let this much be granted to ancient custom, that things which are not only superfluous, but useless, may be tolerated. But what if any are found to be absurd and ridiculous, and little suited to the dignity of the ordinance? They will themselves be forced to admit that of this sort is the spittle with which they moisten the infant's lips. Christ anointed the mouth of the dumb man, whose speech he was about to restore, with spittle. How preposterous the imitation which tries the same thing on infants! Is it thus that the miracles of Christ behave to be commemorated? This mockery, (whence or when it arose is unknown, but it certainly has no authority of weight,) when they obstinately defend, do they not plainly shew that their object is not to leave us one spark of light?

In treating of the Supper they bring back the fiction of Transubstantiation, against which all are forced to protest who are unwilling that the true use of the Supper should be lost to them. A common property of the Sacraments is, that in a manner adapted to the human intellect they exhibit what is spiritual by a visible sign. The spiritual meaning of the Supper is, that the flesh of Christ is the meat and his blood the drink on which our souls are fed. Unless the sign correspond to this the nature of the Sacrament is destroyed. It is therefore necessary that the bread and wine be held forth to us, that from them we may learn what Christ sets before us in figure. But if the bread which we see is an empty show, what will it attest to us but an empty shadow of the flesh of Christ? They pretend that there is only an appearance of bread, which deceives the eye. How far will this phantom carry us?

Believers, in order to recognize the true feeding of the soul, must therefore stop at the sign which corresponds to the body on which they are to feed. In short, the object of the Sacraments is to effect, by an analogy between the sign and the thing signified, a kind of transition from the bodily sense to the understanding mind.

What do our worthy moderators say? You are mistaken in thinking you taste bread and wine. That which was bread has ceased to be so, and nothing remains but a spec-trum! Of what thing then will it be to me a symbol? To make the matter plainer, let us borrow a similitude from Baptism. Should any one deny that what we are there washed with is water, will not the whole reality of baptism immediately vanish? For who can persuade himself that he has the washing of regeneration if he finds nothing of the kind in the sign? Therefore, in order that the Sacrament may be beneficial to us, we must never allow ourselves to be
driven from this position, which is also confirmed by several strong passages of Scripture—that the bread which is broken among us is the κοινωνία (communion) of the body, and that, in like manner, the wine is the communion of the blood of Christ.

In addition to the clear testimony of Scripture we have the consent of the Primitive Church. Nothing is more certain than that this dream, which did not come into the mind of any man for more than six hundred years, suddenly emerged, like a kind of abortion, from brawling sophists; and yet so strong was the belief of the analogy I have mentioned, between the sign and the thing signified, that it was at first exploded. Several years afterwards passed away, during which barbarism increased, and, along with the study of all good arts, a purer religion became obsolete. This was Satan's opportunity for again introducing the scouted doctrine. And yet in almost all ages have there been men of sound minds, who did not disguise their dissatisfaction, but declared it not only freely by their voice, but also by their writings.

But granting that the error has been confirmed by a remote antiquity, we are strictly bound by the words of Christ not to dare to subscribe to any human decrees which would set us at variance with them. Christ orders us to take and eat bread. This is the most serious act of all. A promise is added, which cannot have effect unless we truly eat bread. For the analogy I have mentioned must always be retained,—that, as the body is nourished by bread and wine, so the flesh of Christ is the food, and his blood the drink of the soul. We, therefore, obeying the command of Christ, at the same time also embrace the promise, not doubting but that the secret virtue of the Spirit will effect within us that which bread signifies to the eye. Those worthy men who assume the part of pacificators, assert a fictitious metamorphosis, which is nowhere mentioned in Scripture, with as much superciliousness as if an hundred messages had been sent from heaven to confirm it.

We say that we cannot lawfully depart from the exact words of Christ. What cause is there for their being so fierce against the reverence which we thus pay to Christ, that on this single charge they pronounce us heretics? For not contented with the simple ordinary condemnation, they calumniously accuse us of questioning the omnipotence of Christ, and charging him with foolishness, as if we were here disputing about the power of Christ, and not rather searching for the meaning of the ordinance in his word. That all things are to be changed by Christ, we too admit. But should any one from this infer that heaven is changed into earth, he will be a ridiculous estimator of the divine power, destroying the whole order of nature as fixed and established by God, to substitute monsters in its stead. Thus, in this question, they trouble themselves to no purpose in seeking what Christ can do, when the only point which ought to occupy all our thoughts is, what does Christ will? But his will can only be ascertained by his word. Let them then produce one syllable in evidence of this alleged transmutation. Not one can be found. Nothing then can be more futile than the calumny by which they bring us into contest with the power of Christ, a contest which has no existence.

When they say that we charge Christ with foolishness, how mightily do they lie? Christ declares, that he gives his body and his blood by holding forth bread and wine. All this we receive, and doubt not that he will make good his promise, which, however, cannot be made good unless the thing itself be exhibited. But thus it is. In comparison with their prodigies they value as nothing whatever has proceeded from the mouth of Christ, and explains the whole force of the ordinance, and contains the whole effect of the spiritual grace in which faith acquires. Here, without enumerating the endless absurdities, or rather monstrous errors, which this Transubstantiation has produced, who that is at all pious, and duly instructed in the school of Christ, does not detest it, even on this account—that while the Supper of Christ has the property of raising us to heaven, no sooner is the persuasion settled in our minds that the bread is changed into the body of Christ, than our thoughts, which ought to have risen to heaven, are immediately bent down to earth? Christ invites us to himself.
The True Method of Giving Peace

As we cannot climb so high, he himself lends us his hand, and assists us with the helps which he knows to be suited to us, and even lifts us to heaven, as it is very appropriately expressed by those who compare the Sacraments to ladders. Suppose now, as these men insist, that what is seen on the sacred table is not bread but Christ inclosed, who will not remain fixed down both in mind and body to earth, when he thinks he possesses Christ? In this way the sign which ought to have employed each bodily sense in raising the mind above the heavens, keeps it bound by the bodily senses under the elements of the world. Here I only express what has notoriously happened. How few will be found in the Papacy who do not gaze so stupidly on the outward sign as to forget that Christ is to be sought amid the glories of heaven!

To this gross stupor a still worse superstition is annexed. For where is Christ adored except in the bread? But if the authority of Scripture prevailed with us, we would think so magnificently of his celestial glory, that we would not allow ourselves to have any carnal or earthly thought of him. Though we may deem preposterous adoration of Christ a light fault, it will not cease to be regarded by God and angels as execrable sacrilege. Thanks, however, to our moderators for speaking out their sentiments freely. They might have deceived by silence. But when they assert that Christ is properly adored in the Sacrament, their words admonish us what we shall have to do if we subscribe to their decrees.

I certainly admit that Christ is to be worshipped wherever we are; and in the Supper, where he offers himself to be enjoyed by us, he cannot be duly received unless he be adored. But the question is, Whether is our adoration to look upwards or downwards? Moreover, as nothing is done there that is not heavenly, though it be done on earth, if we would prepare ourselves for receiving with benefit, our minds must be raised higher than the earth and the world. Then, while Christ is seated in heavenly glory, any one who turns in a different direction to adore him departs from him. And what meaning will there be in the ancient preamble, “Sursum Corda,” which the Papists still chant in their masses, if our worship cleaves to the earth? But when men have once entered a labyrinth, the result must always be, that as they proceed they get more and more entangled. Therefore, if we would adore Christ as we ought, we must lay aside all earthly thoughts of him. In this way, when celebrating the Supper, we shall indeed worship him as present, but with minds upraised to heaven, whither faith calls us, not fixed down on the bread, which were not less at variance with the right rule of faith, than with the glorious majesty of Christ.

Then as to their saying that after the Supper is finished, the body of Christ, nevertheless, remains, as long as the consecrated bread is preserved, this behoved to be added to make them consistent in error. For whither could the body of Christ fly away, after once the bread had taken its place? But what kind of religion should we say those have who assent to such vile absurdities, unless, indeed, it be mere pretence? For who that is not plainly fascinated by the devil will desire more in the Sacrament than the promises contain?

Let us now weigh the words of Christ. He certainly does not address the bread, and bid it become his body. The bread, therefore, is not for himself, nor is the body in himself, but for us, inasmuch as it is offered to us for a spiritual symbol. Then, while the command and the promise cohere to each other, it is not for us to put asunder what the Son of God hath joined. But what does he say? Before promising us his body and blood, he orders us to take, eat, and drink. Now, if the communion which he enjoins be taken away, what place will there be for the promise annexed to it? Christ, I say, extends to us his body, but it is to be eaten; he holds forth his blood, but it is to be drunk. The whole force of the consecration, therefore, is directed to us, not to the bread or the wine; and indeed to us, as obeying the command of Christ.

This reference may be illustrated by a similitude. Paul declares, (1 Cor. x. 3, 4,) that the manna was spiritual food, and that the water which flowed from the rock was, in like manner, the same spiritual drink as ours. The words are clear. The fathers were partakers, though under different
signs, of the same Christ with ourselves. But who ever heard that the pot of manna which was reserved was worshipped by the pious? Nay, though the Jews were carried, with a kind of frantic impetus, to all kinds of idolatry, none of them ever thought of such a thing. What if, during the eating, any part of the body of Christ should have fallen, or been trampled upon? What! when more than the proper quantity had been collected, and it became putrid, did the body of Christ become tainted? Should any one have employed that water in washing away impurities, would the blood of Christ have been soiled? That which was carried away to the crevices of the ground, that which the cattle drank—(for they had no other watering-place)—what was it but water? We thus see that nothing lies under signs, except with reference to those to whom the signification belongs. In like manner we refute their prattle about adoration. For though Paul declares that the rock was Christ, the Israelites were not so stupid as to prostrate themselves before it.

But to return to the subject in hand: Our mediators insist that, after consecration, the body of Christ always remains, independently of its use in the Supper. If conjectures are to be admitted, it is certainly probable that, when our Lord celebrated the first Supper with the Apostles, some fragment of the bread remained over, and we do not read that he who received the cup last drank the whole: for they were all ordered to drink of the cup, not to drink it out. It might thus have happened that the blood of Christ was swallowed by some random guest. What! when one loaf was broken in the primitive Church, will they say that the remains were set aside in a cupboard? No; they had not yet learned the new wisdom, which feigns that the bread is changed by magical incantation. Let us, then, adhering to the words of Christ himself, acknowledge that his body is no more exhibited to us by the bread, than the grace of God is without his promises. He says that he gives his body, not to be kept shut up in a cupboard, but to be distributed among the faithful.

The use of the cup, as those who have been accustomed to it cannot easily be kept from it, is conceded to them by

way of indulgence, and under condition that they are not to find fault with the practice which has been long in use, of communicating under one kind. The privilege they are to enjoy till such time as a decree of the Council lets them understand what is to be done. What will be stable in religion, if we subject the ordinances of the Son of God to abrogation at the will of men? The command is clear, "DRINK YE ALL OF IT." They evade this by the puerile cavil, that Christ spoke thus to the Apostles alone, whom he had already made priests: as if he were not prescribing a common rule for all. What! did he institute a special Sacrament for priests and not rather for the whole Church? If there were any doubt on the subject, Paul removes it when he declares that he delivered to the Corinthians, male and female, that which he had received of the Lord, viz., that all, without exception, were to drink. Can a better interpretation be desired?

It is notorious that this mode of Communicating, as delivered by the Lord, was practised in the Church for more than seven hundred years. Nay, an edict of Gelasius is extant, which communicates those who abstain from the cup and take the other part. "Let them," says he, "be kept from the whole, or let them take the whole: they cannot take the ordinance thus divided without great sacrilege." To this sacrilege which Gelasius so much detests, men have dared to break forth not only by a superstitious obstinacy, but by a tyrannical prohibition. What pious mind does not shudder at this diabolical audacity?

The pretexts used to defend it only double the evil. As some drops of the blood might occasionally be spilled, they allege that it was to obviate this danger. Thus, if we believe them, they alone have observed that for which the eternal wisdom of God failed to provide. The mistake committed by it they believe to correct. We have already obviated the danger by disposing of the false idea of magical exorcism; but yet though a thousand dangers impended, I maintain that it would not be lawful to make any change in the perpetual and inviolable edict of Christ.

They allege that Christ is received whole under the bread,
because he cannot be divided. The refutation of this quibble is also easy. Christ is entire in himself, but still so that he can communicate himself to us according to the measure of our faith. It is certainly not without cause that He offers his body to us under the bread, and his blood under the wine: for he in this manner testifies that he is our whole food, which consists of meat and drink. Christ enjoins us not to seek a part of life only, but our whole life in him. And as he knows that for this we need some assistance, he holds forth to us the symbols of meat and drink. In holding forth the bread, he declares that his flesh will be our meat, and he adds the cup to intimate that in his blood we have spiritual drink. Now, when men interpose and give out that one part is amply sufficient for us, as Christ cannot be divided, are they to be listened to while so openly subverting the ordinance? And, indeed, by so acting they as much as in them lies divide Christ, while they fear not to separate those sacred badges of his body and blood, which he has joined by an inseparable tie.

They say that he who has Christ whole under this species of bread, ought to be contented with it. But seeing that he communicates his body and his blood to us separately under two symbols, we shall not be contented till we have the whole which he himself has given. For he who allows men to restrict it to a half, in the first place, derogates as much from Christ; and, in the second place, by lacerating the ordinance, deprives himself of its fruit and virtue. And we must boldly repudiate the language of certain crafty men, who tell us, that as it is an external matter, it is not much worth the fighting for. While they butcher so many innocent men for the worship of their idol, whence does this talk of so much moderation suddenly arise? In vindicating the badge of the blood by which we have been redeemed, let us not, if need be, spare our own blood!

To make out Confirmation to be a Sacrament, they pretend that it differs not from the laying on of hands which Luke relates that the Apostles used. If this is true, how will they shew their license to make that common and promiscuous which was destined for certain persons only. We do not read that the Apostles laid hands upon all, but that they used this symbol only in distributing the gifts of the Holy Spirit. That these were common to all, even they themselves do not allege. There will, therefore, be this difference, that a Sacrament which the Apostles bestowed on certain men only, our new mediators expose to all alike. Then when they confess that Chrism has been superadded, whereas the Apostles only used the laying on of hands, who do they think will be persuaded that men have obtained the power of exhibiting any gift of the Spirit which it pleases them to figure? After enumerating the seven, they tell us that each of them effects what it figures. Therefore, if men are at liberty to bring forth a Sacrament without authority from the word of God, that which God claims for himself alone has been subjected to their will.

Besides, their doctrine is repugnant to the very definition of a Sacrament. They will not deny that the end proposed by the Sacraments is to be a kind of seals to us in confirming the promises of God in our minds. Where, then, is the use of a Sacrament, if it seals no promise? But none can be found which they can fit to their Confirmation. In the Sacraments we seek proof of the Divine favour towards us—proof which none but God himself can furnish. What is there of this nature in Confirmation? In short, as the public stamp distinguishes genuine coin from spurious, so, wherever I do not see the word of God engraven, there I will confidently object that a Sacrament is falsely alleged.

I hear what our moderators advance on the other side. All the promises which we have concerning the gift of the Spirit they accommodate to Confirmation. But it is to take far too much license to themselves to restrict what God promises simply to any whatever of their ceremonies. Simple and disencumbered of any sign are the words which I have from the lips of Christ—that his Spirit will be continually present with believers. Those men pretend that they have the Spirit enclosed in oil as in a kind of box, and that he is brought out by their unction. Meanwhile, the promises which they thus misapply they pretend to found upon, that they may not seem to speak without reason.
But since the Church believes thus, they tell us that, if we think differently, we must deny her to be the pillar of the truth—an atrocious crime, if it were real! But as they assume the name of the Church, not less falsely than arrogantly, over what else do they insult than the ever-oppressed truth? And the better to betray their barbarian ferocity, they call that so oft-exploded fiction of septiform grace the faith of the Church, of which none may lawfully doubt.

Isaiah enumerates six gifts of the Spirit with which he teaches that Christ would be endued. (Isaiah xi. 2.) How a seventh has been added in the common version, I know not. As if some sublime mystery had been beneath, septiform grace was coined out of it. But, first, the number seven originated in mistake. Secondly, to say nothing of this, what equity will there be in forcing the Spirit of God, as it were, into a corner, and confining him to seven effects, when he is elsewhere called the Spirit of truth and holiness, and grace, and prayer, and adoption, and is here invested by the Prophet with six titles?

If either our ingratitude or blindness of our eyes is so great that the goodness of our cause is overwhelmed by unjust prejudices, there will certainly be more justice in posterity, who will recognize how furiously those wolves who arrogate the name of shepherds have preyed on the innocent sheep of Christ.

There is nothing so absurd, nothing so foul, as not to get wiped by this one towel—the Church, which is the best Interpreter of Scripture, thinks so. Thus, when they assign the right of Confirming to bishops only, they add, that this was approved by the consent of the whole Church; that is, if such consent is to be estimated by their caprice. But here they act still more unworthily. They fear not to allege the practice of the Apostles. As there are only three passages in Luke where he relates that the Spirit was given by this ceremony, (Acts viii. 17, ix. 17, xix. 6,) he testifies that hands were laid on Paul himself by Ananias, just as they were on others by Paul, John, and Peter. What bishops will they give to Ananias that he may not be said to have seized on another's office? And yet they cry out that we are heretics if we do not assent to their convicted falsehoods! Nay, when they substitute common priests for bishops, in case of necessity, (on which subject their Canons contain an epistle of forgery,) they show that that apostolical practice which they play before our eyes is by no means held to be their law.

Still, however, the laying on of hands, they say, is to be observed: for if it is not to be believed that the Apostles used it without command from Christ, their observance of it is equivalent to a law to us. To this they add, that it was not a vain symbol. Hence they infer that it ought to be considered as a Sacrament. I admit both positions; but our mediators, not considering what ought not to have been omitted, viz., of what thing it was a Sacrament, ignorantly make that perpetual which was temporary.

It is notorious that the Gifts of the Spirit, which were then given by the laying on of hands, some time after ceased to be conferred. Whether this was owing to the ingratitude of the world, or because the doctrine of the Gospel had already been sufficiently distinguished by the miracles of nearly an hundred years, is of no consequence to the present subject. All see that the thing which the Apostles indicated by that rite was taken away. To what end, then, since the reality has received its accomplishment, will the sign be prolonged? Should any one in the present day attempt to introduce the practice of laying on the dead, because Elisha and Paul, on good authority, used the symbol in raising the dead, who would not at once repudiate the preposterous imitation? We therefore deny not that it was a Sacrament to the Apostles; but we hold it to be one which was abrogated when the reality was taken away. Wherefore, if our mediators wish to retain the use of it, let them first restore the thing signified.

But though I admit that after Miracles had ceased, the practice of laying on of hands was nevertheless retained by the primitive Church, we ought not to be considered as thus prejudiced, unless a distinct authority from Scripture can be produced. Besides, our mediators give a very different reason from that of the early Christians. For while Augustine acknowledges that it is nothing but a solemn symbol of
prayer, they in vain endeavour to hide themselves under the shadow of those from whom they so widely differ.

We also should like to see that rite everywhere restored by which the young are presented to God, after giving forth a Confession of their Faith. This would be a not unbecoming approval of their Catechism. But however pious and useful some ordinances of men may be, they must sink far beneath the honour of Sacraments, which were divinely delivered to us, and have comprehended in them the covenant of eternal salvation.

Now, however, Unction cannot be received without those appendages which all the pious ought justly to abhor. For what is less to be borne than that Confirmation should be preferred to Baptism, and be called a worthier Sacrament, and be regarded with greater veneration? Our mediators indeed craftily disguise these foul blasphemies, but as they necessarily accompany the oil, what do they aim at by such silence, but just to murder us unaware? Unction, according to them, proceeded from the Church. But it is the same Church, if we believe them, which introduced those meretricious glosses for the purpose of adorning her cause. If we assent, will not Christ justly upbraid us with making void the commandments of God through human traditions? And what is the commandment of God that will thus be spurned? Baptism, the washing of regeneration, by which we put on Christ—Baptism, the testimony of our adoption, the entrance into the kingdom of God, ablution in the blood of Christ, the commencement of new and eternal life, will yield to oil trodden out in the press of men. And shall we be judged Christians, if not only by our silence, but by open suffrage, we give room for so iniquitous a comparison?

The Council of Aurelium decreed that all who had been baptized were to be Confirmed, in order to be found full Christians! for it denies them to be Christians until they are anointed with Episcopal oil. Our mediators take it for granted that this is a decree of the Church. What then will become of the Apostles and martyrs who were never oiled? Nay rather, what will become of us if we long for any other Christianity than that which Apostles and martyrs had?

This dogma, which wrenches us away from their society, is not so affronting to them as fatal to ourselves.

Another diabolical sentiment broached by the Council our mediators expressly confirm, though they speak somewhat more modestly. But what matters it, seeing that both look to the same end? The sum is, that we are Regenerated to life in Baptism, but are equipped for battle by Confirmation! What else is this than to strip baptism of one half of its efficacy? For if we therein put on Christ, if we are ingrafted into the likeness of his death, so that being dead to the world and the flesh, we rise again to newness of life, which is to endure for ever—who sees not that our mediators transfer what was contained under baptism to their own fictitious Unction? Our part, therefore, is to expose our life an hundred times, rather then silently and dissemblingly allow our baptism to be thus rent asunder.

The Sacrament of Penance we have already in some measure discussed, when treating of Confession. At present I will only remark, that atrocious insult is offered to God, when the name of Sacrament is given to the kind of Absolution which they pretend to be necessary. I mention not that a destructive snare is laid for consciences, when confession is prescribed as necessary to obtain forgiveness of sins. This has been already said elsewhere. But when they insist that the reconciliation of man with God shall be sealed by the ceremony of Absolution, I say that they do a thing too arrogant for men to do! Where did they get the license to fabricate a sign at their own hands, and then order it to be a pledge to sanction salvation? God promises us the forgiveness of sins. Of the ceremony there is not one word. These men send us away to a priest, who by a wave of his hand is to declare to us that our sins are forgiven—as if they had the power of affixing the efficacy of Christ's death to their decrees. Therefore, as we value the forgiveness of sins, so must we earnestly contend that the belief of it shall not be suspended on a rite humanly devised.

As we acknowledge the Anointing which the Apostles used in Curing the Sick to have been a Sacrament, so we deny that it belongs to us, because, like the grace to which
it was subservient, it was temporary. All know that the gift of healing was not perpetual. It is one of those things by which God was pleased to distinguish the new preaching of the gospel until it should gain credit in the world. Accordingly, we can gather from ancient historians that it was shortly after taken away. In a matter so notorious and confessed, it was superfluous to adduce evidence. What then do our mediators mean? If they pretend that the gift which the Apostles denoted by the symbol of oil, lasted beyond their age, they will be convicted of the vilest effrontery. Now, there is a common axiom, that "the accessory follows the nature of the principal," and therefore I conclude, that after the thing was taken away it is not only in vain to retain the sign, but it is to sport with too serious a matter. In order to be true imitators of the Apostles they must be endued with the gift of healing. And while not possessing it they nevertheless usurp the sign, they are nothing but apes.

But James the brother of the Lord not only gives evidence in favour of this Unction, but also celebrates it by his own promulgation. For here their rhetorical vehemence waxes very boisterous. I willingly assent to the words of James, (James v. 14,) but I deny it to have been his intention to prostitute what he knew to be an efficacious sign representing divine grace, to a frigid imitation. It is certain that the anointers of this day are no more ministers of the grace of which James speaks than the player who acted Agamemnon on the stage was a king.

They allege that the grace which Christ here holds forth is despised. But what is that grace? Those whom the Apostles anointed they at the same time cured. So Mark testifies. (Mark iii.) Now, however, none are anointed but the dying, so that when any one afterwards recovers, they are not far from thinking that the unction has been profaned. And our moderators repeat the caution not to apply the oil till death is evidently approaching. But let them answer me: When James assigns this relief to the sick indiscriminately, how dare they restrict it to perilous and mortal diseases? If the authority of James is of such weight with them, why do they hesitate not to depart from it? But allowing them to use this license with impunity, with what face do they bring forward James, whose words expressly overthrow what they would establish? He declares that the sick man will be relieved. How many recover health by the oil? Scarcely one in a hundred lives after unction. Nay, they do not administer it to cure their sickness, but to send them fatter to the grave. And still they charge us with cruelty for refusing this most admirable solace to the sick; as if one was ever seen who had experienced any benefit from it. I omit the many frivolities with which this histrionic unction is accompanied, nay, the impious superstitions with which it is stuffed, for I have said enough already to demonstrate their folly.

The Laying on of Hands, by which Ministers are consecrated to their office, I do not quarrel with them for calling a Sacrament. But that this appellation should be applied to what they call the seven orders, as they have hitherto been received in the Papacy, and our mediators approve, I hold to be not at all agreeable to reason. Nay, what they affirm of the priesthood is nugatory, viz., that the honour and authority of it are conferred on all whom bishops ordain. First, it is well known to what end men are ordained in the Papacy, and our mediators approve, I hold to be not at all agreeable to reason. Nay, what they affirm of the priest is nugatory, viz., that the honour and authority of it are conferred on all whom bishops ordain. In the formal chant of inauguration bears, that power is given them to offer Sacrifices pleasing to God; though they cannot shew that any thing of this kind was commanded by Christ.

Although the discussion of this matter will be better deferred to the proper place, it is easy by a single word to overthrow their pretended priesthood. When bishops, without any authority from God, appoint individuals to offer sacrifices, by what right will they cause the Holy Spirit to descend upon them? I wholly deny that the Papal priesthood is founded on a divine call. How then can I dignify the ceremony by which they are ordained with the name of Sacrament?

Moreover, when our glossing mediators insinuate a Perpetual Succession, we must again withstand their craftiness. They insist that all presbyters are to be deemed legitimate
who have been ordained by horned bishops, and they exclude all from the ministry who have not been ordained by their hands. In the former case, indeed, they go much farther, and, as if they were making new creatures, pretend that an indelible character is imprinted by the benediction of the bishop.

It is worth while to observe what the rite is for imprinting this character. As Christ by breathing gave a sign of the Spirit whom he was bestowing on the Apostles, so their bishops, as if they were blowing out the Holy Spirit from their throats, emulate the example of Christ after their fashion, in other words, preposterously. There is another thing also which they borrow from the Mosaic law, viz., anointing the fingers. But who taught them to bring back into use what Christ abrogated by his advent? In this matter they are not only destitute of precept, but they cannot without falsehood even pretend the countenance of antiquity. Both are novel inventions unknown to antiquity.

If the right of the Priesthood in which they glory is founded on a Perpetual Succession from the Apostles, let its origin first be investigated. I have already mentioned their principal ceremony, and I deny it to have the authority of the Apostles. Their priesthood, therefore, fails at the very beginning, or rather is far distant from the beginning which they would assign to it.

But to come to the fountainhead, how often in many places has their Succession been interrupted? Over how many Churches do their histories tell that heretics presided! Almost all Germany twice before our day abandoned the Roman See: once when Presbyters were forced to put away their wives, and a second time when Gregory VII., in his hostility to the Emperor Henry IV., sought to withdraw the Germans from him by fulminating at them. I omit more recent examples which will readily occur to the well-informed reader. Who, moderately versant in history, does not know that three Anti-popes distracted the Church by their factions? Two of them at least appointed several bishops, and those again ordained presbyters. Where is the continuous Succession?

But, omitting these, it will be necessary to leap over Popess Joan, if they would continue their series from the Apostles! If ancient annals are examined we shall find that many primary Sees were occupied by heretics. They gain nothing by concealing all these interruptions.—To return to more recent times. Until they prove the Council of Basle not to be legitimate, I shall always maintain that there is not an individual among the whole Popish clergy who is not schismatical. They all derive their origin from Eugenius, whom the Council not only deposed from the Papacy, but condemned with all his followers, as guilty of heresy and schism. I am aware of the usual answer. It is the only asylum remaining to them: they boldly repudiate the authority of that Council. But as it had all the marks which they require in a lawful Council, what force this repudiation ought to have let pious readers judge!

Even were these things not so, I deny that there is truly one bishop under the whole Papacy, unless indeed, in a proof of such consequence, we are satisfied with the title and the insignia. I do not now say what kind of insignia they are by which they attract reverence. All the pious know that they are profane masks, at the sight of which the Apostles, if they were alive, would stand amazed. Assume, however, that if there was the reality besides, they would be in other respects befitting, are we to judge them bishops from mere empty parade? They have nothing episcopal about them except that a few occasionally mount the pulpit to deliver one or two sermons, and then, as if they had performed their part, do something else the rest of the year. Others are kept back by ignorance, and a goodly number from thinking it somehow or other beneath their dignity to address the people, although scarcely one in a hundred could be found who could perform the office of teaching without making himself a laughingstock.

Assume, however, that by their silence and doing nothing they are Successors of the Apostles, how few of them deign to make presbyters by their own hand? Do they not, for the most part, delegate the task to vile mendicants? Good God! to what are we fallen? that there should be such mockery in the Church, that any one bound by a vow of per-
petual poverty, but who, by begging and chanting, has raked together three hundred gold pieces, and spent them in purchasing a bull giving him the name of Ascalonite Bishop, may suddenly come forth a Successor of the Apostles, and hire out his labour everywhere in making presbyters, that the succession of the Church may not fail! Were the Apostles to behold this foul confusion of the sacred order, would they recognise it in anything of their own?

What if I refer them to Canonical Elections? I speak not now of the rule of Christ which alone ought to suffice us. I only ask, whether he is to be regarded as the just successor of a true bishop, who has either been obtruded by force or introduced by Simony, or raised to the episcopate by some profane method? Taking this position, let them answer me concerning the election of their Pope, whether it has any affinity, I say not with the ancient and too rigid form, but with the prescription of Nicolas as related by Gratian? Nicolas, who had already degenerated very widely from the pure form, delivers a mode of election which might be tolerated. If we are to take the matter strictly, the succession was at that time also interrupted. But what is done in the present day? I need not repeat what all know, that the Cardinals, in electing the Pope, pay no more respect to the injunctions of the decree of Nicolas, than the devils rioting in hell do to God speaking from heaven, (Distin. 23. cap. in Nomine.)

What is to be thought of the whole Bishops? The words of Leo, Bishop of Rome, are, “Let him who is to be over all be elected by all. For he who is assumed, without being examined and approved, is violently intruded.” (Dist. 79, cap. Si quis Apostolicae Epist. 90.) And whenever he makes mention of this subject, he declares that none is a true bishop save he who has been elected by the clergy and sought by the people. (Epist. 87 et alibi.) Nor does Gregory in several passages speak differently. If their sentiments are to have effect, all who are called bishops in the Papacy in the present day must confess themselves to be robbers. For no one, however impudent, will say that he was sought by the people, while, as regards the Clergy, the ancient prac-
tice had long ago become so corrupt, that lazy bellies only, who call themselves Canons, sold their suffrages. Bishops have now begun to be the benefices of princes.

In addition to this is the manifest abomination of Simony. For what for the most part is now the recommendation which procures the honour? So far am I from taking pleasure in a lengthened detail, that it is painful even to advert to the flagitious insults offered to the Christian name. It is well, however, that while I am silent the fact speaks for itself, that nothing is more at variance with the order of the Apostles than the skulking licentiousness with which bishops are laid hold of in the present day. When the Apostle discourses how the Son of God was made a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, he carefully follows out the similitude, without which the comparison made by David would not stand good. Unless they would exalt themselves by some new and special privilege above the Son of God, let them shew how modern bishoprics are framed on the apostolical model. No doubt there will be an admirable correspondence between the two, when one, who never in his life sees the people committed to him, when a boy ten years old, a pimp, a gambler, a sportman, persons practised in all wickedness, and devoid both of piety and liberal learning, become the representatives of the Apostles!

A still greater dispute arises. If it appears that they are the most inveterate enemies of the doctrine which the Apostles not only delivered, but sealed with their blood; if it be made plain that all their counsels, all their endeavours, their whole purpose, are directed avowedly to subvert what the Apostles with the greatest labours established, what more would we? Let audience only be granted us, and we will easily shew that there is scarcely any part of sound doctrine which they have not vitiated by their corruptions. This much we shall certainly prove, that they have contaminated the pure worship of God by impious superstitions, and involved the doctrine both of faith and repentance in endless errors; that by darkness of various sorts they have not only obscured but almost extinguished the virtue and grace of Christ; and by unworthy methods have adulterated the
Sacraments. This the servants of Christ have been proving now for thirty years. We are proceeding in the same course, not to mention that of our writings are clear witnesses.

These worthy men, when they see themselves overwhelm-ingly convicted and mortally wounded, tell us that no molestation must be given to the Successors of the Apostles! But a knowledge of the fact is to be ascertained by a discussion of doctrine, and to this we, trusting confidently in a good cause, voluntarily challenge them. To save themselves from answering, they wish to prejudge the very point in debate. Can it indeed be, that those who are in everything contrary to the Apostles, are able to prove merely by continuity of time that they hold the place and act as the Viceregers of the Apostles? On the same pretext, one who, after murdering a man seizes on his house, might hold himself out as his representative!

The Papacy is much further distant from that mode of government which the Apostles recommend to us, than tyranny, however fierce and truculent, is from a free and well ordered state of liberty. Who would now bear a tyrant boasting the name of consular, or other lawful magistracy which he may have assumed? Not one whit less is the effrontery of those who, after overthrowing the sacred regiments, established both by the order of Christ and the practice of the Apostles, yet claim succession to it for their tyranny. For though the series of time were perfectly continuous, still if the Apostleship has fallen, (and this must be when the worship of God is torn asunder, the office of Christ buried, the light of doctrine extinguished, and the Sacraments polluted,) what Succession can remain? Unless perhaps it be, that as the heir succeeds to the dead, so these men think they have obtained the succession by the demise of godliness. But seeing they have completely changed the whole method of government, the chasm between them and the Apostles is too deep to allow of any intercommunication of right. To conclude this part of the subject in one word, I deny Succession to a thing which has no original. I likewise deny that the office of sacrificing, which they account the chief in their priesthood, ever flowed from the Apostles.

Let them, therefore, look out for the founders of their order.

When under the same pretext they shut the mouths of all the pious who long for a revival of the Church, by telling them they are not duly called to the office of teaching, they gain nothing more than to let the whole world see that their tyranny cannot stand unless the truth is oppressed. It is true, indeed, that in a well ordered Church none are to be admitted to the office of teaching but those who have been called by the ordinary pastors. But what is this to the Papacy unless the power of Christ be transferred to Antichrist? The Apostles gave endeavour, as was meet, to propagate the Church to posterity. For this purpose they ordained pastors elected by the suffrages of the people. Afterwards, along with purity of doctrine, the just method of electing became obsolete. Will none now be a proper minister of Christ save he who has crept in by corruption?

The Succession which they so haughtily arrogate to themselves I have already rescued from them. Let us remember, besides, that since, by their inauguration, they make Priests, not Pastors, all who submit to ordination by their hand are tied down to a tyrant. Shall none, then, be able to come forward, except under wicked and detestable auspices, to advance the kingdom of Christ? Nay, they say how much soever all things may have gone to wreck, let no man who is not called interfere. I have already observed that whenever the state of the Church is safe, or at least tolerable, an effrontery of those who, after overthrowing the sacred regiments, established both by the order of Christ and the practice of the Apostles is too deep to allow of any intercommunication of right. To conclude this part of the subject in one word, I deny Succession to a thing which has no original. I likewise deny that the office of sacrificing, which they account the chief in their priesthood, ever flowed from the Apostles.
tion of shepherds. But experience teaches that the sheep, though scattered, are sometimes preserved by the secret power of God.

The Church, I say, sometimes lies hid, and escapes the eyes of men, so that any external regimen or Primacy is looked for in vain. Hence, though the Succession of the Bishops is interrupted, the perpetuity of the Church, nevertheless, stands. If they do not yet perceive that they are making ado about nothing, I ask where they read that it is necessary to the end of the world that bishop succeed bishop in uninterrupted series?

We read, that in ancient times, when, partly by the ignorance and sluggishness, partly by the perfidy and wickedness of the priests, the worship of God had been vitiated, the administration of sacred rites lay unattended to, pure doctrine was perverted, and the Church had well-nigh fallen, prophets were raised up by the extraordinary inspiration of God to restore her ruined affairs. And, indeed, it was necessary that it should be so. What is said in Ezekiel and Jeremiah belongs to us not less than to the ancient people, that God, to punish the iniquity of evil shepherds, will drive them away, and give good and faithful shepherds to feed according to his will. (Ezek. xxxiv. 2; Jer. iii. 15; xxxiii. 12.) For although God daily gives such by the calling of men, yet there is a singular species of giving, when the work of man ceases, and he himself appoints those whom he sees to be necessary, though human judgment pass them by.

If they still quiver as a dart against us, any one may retort, and ask, by what shield they defend themselves? Almost all their pulpits are occupied by monks, or other hired sophists, who have learned to declaim by brawling in Sorbonne. Of all these, what is the call? Assuredly they cannot produce any other, except that when the bishops, with the whole herd of their priests, were dumb, they substituted strangers in their stead. But as that substitution is new, having taken place more than eight hundred years after the age of the Apostles, let them cease to make such impudent abuse of their name.

That those who at this time have held forth a torch to us, to enable us, after long wandering, to return to the way, were holy prophets of God, is attested by the noble and truly divine specimen which they gave of their ministry. They never would have been called to do this service to the Church by the wolves who were burning with rage to destroy and devour it. Therefore, to cure an incurable evil, especially when the usual remedies failed, God himself behoved to bring assistance by putting forth his own hand. Now, the same wolves that beset the sheepfold complain that we have entered without their authority, and clamour against us as the disturbers of order, because, instead of waiting for a command from them, each, as was meet, has studied to do his utmost in succouring the poor sheep. But ever since matters were brought to a somewhat better state by our labours, the laying on of hands is observed with greater sanctity amongst us than in any part of the Papacy.

I come now to the other Orders, in reviewing which our moderators follow the vulgar custom, and apply the name of Sacrament to each. Here I shall be more brief than the importance of the subject deserves. For it is easy to shew in a few words how impudently they call upon us to acknowledge them to be Sacraments. I do not mention that throughout the Papacy Deacons and Inferiors are ordained not to do duty, but as persons who aspire to the honour of the Priesthood, to which their canons authorize them to climb step by step. And yet an expeditious method of leaping over has been invented: for in one day all the minor orders are heaped on one individual. In short, there is nothing in the farces acted by players so ludicrous as may be seen in that show of ordaining.

Our worthy moderators connive at the flagrant abuses, as if these were not a suitable time to correct them. But though I should say nothing about these, I hold it impossible to allow the name of a Sacrament to be applied to acts to which no promise of God applies. For what need is there for pretending a Sacrament in appointing a person to put dogs out of the church? And what in the present day is the office of Exorcists? For they do not even pretend any use of them as they do in the case of others. Yet they de-