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Changes in the Form and Spirit of Church Government - Corruption of the Popes

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CHAPTER IV.

CHANGES IN THE FORM AND SPIRIT OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT—CORRUPTION OF THE POPES.

It is now my purpose to notice those alterations actually made in the form and spirit of the Christian church government. Necessarily my reference to these matters must be brief; sufficient only to demonstrate the fact for which I am contending in these chapters.

I am forced to admit that the description of the church organization in the New Testament is not all one could wish it to be. Only the faintest outline may be traced in those documents which all Christians accept as authority, and as they are fragmentary the description of the church contained in them is necessarily imperfect.

From what is written it appears that the quorum of the Twelve Apostles exercised a universal jurisdiction over the church, and a sort of primacy seems to be accorded to three of their number, Peter, James and John. Before the crucifixion Jesus also called into existence quorums of seventies to whom he gave similar powers to those bestowed upon the Twelve;^a but for some reason, doubtless the imperfection of the Christian records, we can learn nothing more of them than is set down in the tenth chapter of Luke.

After the departure of the resurrected Messiah from his disciples at Bethany, the apostles, as fast as men were brought to faith and repentance through their preaching, or-

^aCompare Luke x with Matt. x; also see Seventy's Course in Theology. First Year Book.

ganized in the various cities where they labored branches of the church, over which they appointed elders or bishops to preside;^b and these evidently were assisted in their duties by deacons.^c In an enumeration of the church officers given by Paul we have other officers named besides apostles, prophets, seventies; *viz.*, evangelists, pastors and teachers.^d

It is difficult from the New Testament to determine the exact nature and full extent of the duties of these respective officers in the church, or their gradation. But that there was a prescribed duty to each officer, a limit to the authority of each, and a gradation among them, which made a harmonious whole—a complete ecclesiastical government, with all the parts properly adjusted and assigned their respective duties, there can be no question. For Paul likens the church of Christ to the body of a man, which, though it hath many members, yet is it one body; and all the members are necessary; one cannot say to the other, “I have no need of thee.” So all these officers in the church, the apostle argues, are necessary; and as the head in the natural body cannot say to the foot, “I have no need of thee,” neither in the church can the apostle say to the deacon, “I have no need of thee;” much less can the deacon say to the apostle, “I have no need of thee.”^e “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?” he asks. The implied answer is, No; but, as he

^bActs xiv:23. Acts xx:17, 28.

^cPhilip i:1. I Tim. iii. This also is the view of Clement of Rome who, in writing to the Corinthians in the third century, says of the apostles: “So preaching everywhere in country and town, they appointed their first fruits when they had proved them by the spirit, to be bishops and deacons unto them that should believe. And this they did do in no new fashion; for indeed it had been written concerning bishops and deacons from very ancient times; for thus saith the scriptures in a certain place: ‘I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith.’”

^dEph. iv.

^eI Cor. xii.

elsewhere says, the whole body—i. e., the church—“is fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.”^f

This organization as given by the Master had for its purpose the perfecting of the saints; the work of the ministry; edifying the body of Christ; and to prevent the saints being carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight and cunning of men.^g The apostle who thus specifies the purposes of the church organization also intimates that it was to be perpetuated until the saints all come to the “unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God—unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ.”^h Furthermore, it is obvious that since the church organization was given for the purposes above enumerated, so long as there are saints to be perfected, or a necessity for work in the ministry; so long as the church needs edifying or the saints guarding from heresy, and the deceitfulness of false teachers—just so long will this organization of the church with apostles and prophets, seventies and elders, bishops and pastors, teachers and deacons be needed; and since the kinds of work enumerated in the foregoing will always be necessary, we arrive at the conclusion that the church organization as established by the apostles was designed to be perpetual.ⁱ But that it was not perpetuated is clearly demon-

^fEph. iv.

^gEph. iv.

^hIbid.

ⁱIn this connection it may be observed that the vacancy in the quorum of the Twelve, occasioned by the apostasy of Judas, was filled (Acts i: 24-26). Paul, too, though not in the original Twelve was an Apostle, and so subscribes himself in nearly all his letters. Clement of Alexandria, an elder and writer of the second century, calls Clement of Rome, the “Apostle Clement.” Though whether this is meant in a rather loose sense or because he had been ordained such by one of the apostles—for he was an associate of both Peter and Paul—does not appear. (Philip iv: 3.)

strated by writers of the second century, who, with the single exception of Clement of Alexandria, who calls Clement of Rome an "Apostle," recognize no other officers in the church than bishops, presbyters (elders) and deacons. It is difficult to account for the sudden loss of so many orders of officers in the church, unless, indeed, the apostasy for which I contend had made very great progress as early as the opening of the second century, which, I believe, was the case.

It appears from a statement of Clement of Rome^j that persons selected by the apostles to be bishops, and after the death of the apostles those selected by other men of repute in the church, were submitted to the people for their approval, and this was the custom until the fourth century. It was also the custom of the bishops to employ the elders as a sort of council; and to call upon the people for their assent in the important matters of church government. In course of time, however, early in the fourth century, this respect for the principle of common consent was lost. The people were first altogether excluded from a voice in ecclesiastical affairs; and the next step was to deprive the elders of their former authority.^k Thus power was centralized in the hands of the bishops, which enabled them to control everything at their distretion, and paved the way for those abuses of power which bear eivdence of the awful apostasy of the church.

So far as can be learned from the Christian annals, the churches that grew up under the preaching of the apostles recognized in that quorum a general presidency over all the churches established; and in fact seemed to regard each sep-

^jSee epistle of Clement to the Corinthians.

^kMosheim's Eccl. Hist., Cent. iv, Bk. ii, Part ii, ch. .ii. See also his remarks on the government of the church in Cent. iii and ii.

arate church as but a member of the one great household of faith. But after the death of the apostles, these several branches seem to be considered separate and independent organizations, united in faith and charity, it is true, but in nothing further bound together. There is no evidence that there was such a thing as subordination among the churches, or rank among the bishops. As might be expected, however, there was a peculiar respect paid to the churches founded by the apostles. Those churches were appealed to in controversies on points of doctrine, as most likely to know what the apostles taught, but the appeal had no other significance. This equality of rank among the bishops, together with the simple form of church government, described above, was soon changed. The bishops who lived in cities, either by their own labors or those of the elders associated with them, raised up new churches in the adjacent villages and hamlets. The bishops of these rural districts being nominated and ordained by the bishops presiding in the cities, very naturally felt themselves under the protection and dependent upon the city bishops. This idea continued to grow until these bishops of "the suburbs and the fields" were looked upon as a distinct order of officers, possessing a dignity and authority above the elders, and yet subordinate to the bishops of the cities who, wherever they presided over bishops in outlying districts, soon came to be designated as archbishops.

Gradually, and perhaps almost imperceptibly, the church in the west in its government followed the civil divisions of the Roman empire. The bishop of the metropolis of a civil province, in time came to be regarded as having a general supervision of all the churches in that province, and soon it became the custom to style them metropolitans.

The bishops of the great cities of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch, after the ascension of Constantine,

were made to correspond to the four praetorian prefects created by Constantine in the civil government; and before the end of the fourth century received the title of patriarchs.¹ It is also said by Mosheim, though denied by other writers, that next to the patriarchs were bishops whose jurisdiction extended over several provinces and corresponded to the civil exarchs; next came the metropolitan bishops whose jurisdiction, as already stated, was limited to a single province, and corresponded to the governor of the provinces. The archbishops presided over a district including several bishoprics within a province; and lastly came the bishops of churches.

Concurrent with these changes arose the customs, first derived from the Greeks, of holding provincial councils. The bishops living in a single province met in council to confer upon matters of common interest to their churches. At first the attending bishops looked upon themselves as merely the representatives of their respective churches, without further jurisdiction than to discuss and come to agreement on matters of common concern. But gradually they usurped the power to order by decree where at first they were wont to advise or entreat. Nor was it long ere the decrees of these provincial councils were forced upon the respective churches as laws to be implicitly obeyed.

There was some resistance to this from the lower clergy, but it was quickly overcome by the activity and ambition of the bishops, who were only too glad to escape the restraints imposed upon their movements by the doctrine of common consent. It is said also that as many changes occurred among the lower order of the clergy as among the bishops. The elders and deacons aping the conduct of their file lead-

¹The bishops of Jerusalem, in the 5th century, also contended for and at last secured the title of Patriarch. (Mosheim's *Eccles. Inst.*, Cent. v. Part ii, ch. ii.)

ers became too proud to attend to the humble duties of their offices, and hence a number of other officers were added to the church—sub-deacons, acolythi, ostiarii, lectors, exorcists and copiatæ^m—while the elders and deacons spent much of their time in indolence and pleasure.

If the ambition of rival bishops distracted the church in the second and third centuries, much more did ambitious prelates—patriarchs and metropolitans—of the fourth and fifth centuries disturb its tranquility. They contended about the limits of their respective jurisdiction with all the bitterness of temporal kings seeking an enlargement of their dominions. They made conquests and reprisals upon each other in much the same spirit, and at times were not above resorting to violence to attain their ends. It soon happened that the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem sank below their fellow patriarchs of Rome and Constantinople in wealth and dignity. The prelates of these latter cities fiercely contended for the title of universal bishop; and in that contest the bishop of Constantinople was not always unsuccessful.

Over the protest of Leo the Great, in the fifth century, the council of Chalcedon decreed that the bishop of “New Rome” ought to enjoy the same honors and prerogatives with the pontiff of ancient Rome, on account of the equal rank and dignity of the two cities. In the following century, encouraged by past successes the bishop of “New Rome,”—John, surnamed the Faster, because of the austerity of his life, assembled a council of eastern bishops on his own account, to decide on charges brought against the patriarch of Antioch. It was on this occasion that he made such an assumption of the title of acumenical or universal bishop, that Gregory the Great supposed him to be aiming at a suprem-

^mMosheim’s Eccl. Inst., Cent. iii, Part ii, ch. ii.

acy over all the Christian churches. In spite of the opposition of Gregory, the Faster, sustained by the emperor, continued to wear the title, though, it is said, not in the sense that Gregory supposed. The contest continued from this time forward with little interruption until that fatal schism came between the east and the west with which the reader has already been made acquainted." The patriarchs of New Rome retained their hold upon the east; but the decay, moral and spiritual, which blighted those churches steadily went on, until at the last, Mohammedan civilization displaced Christian civilization. The crescent rose triumphantly above the cross, and the east sank into a settled gloom out of which it has not yet been able to rise.

In the west it was otherwise. There all was activity. The Roman pontiffs not only sent their missionaries to the barbarians to preach the supremacy of the popes, but the barbarians came to Rome. They came with arms in their hands and as conquerors, it is true, and in the closing years of the fifth century obtained an easy victory over the western division of the empire. But if imperial Rome was vanquished, there arose above its ruins papal Rome, in majesty little inferior to that possessed by imperial Rome in her palmyest days; and in the course of time the victorious barbarians bowed in as humble submission to the wand of the popes as their ancestors had to the eagle-mounted standard of the emperors. Moreover, the barbarous nations that fell under the influence of the Roman missionaries were accustomed to hold their priests in a superstitious reverence. In portions of Western Europe the Druid priests had reigned over both people and magistrates, controlling absolutely the jurisdiction of the latter; and, in the case of the supreme

"See pp. 20, 21.

priest, according to some authorities,^o the reverence of the barbarians amounted to worship. This reverence, on their conversion to Christianity, was readily transferred to the supreme pontiff of the Catholic Church; and made possible that spiritual and temporal despotism before which monarchs trembled and the world stood in abject fear.

Having traced the rise of the Church of Rome to this point, it yet remains to say that the corruption of her clergy and members kept pace with the developing splendor of the hierarchy. The pride, ambition and wickedness which bishops and other ministers of the church practiced in the second and third centuries have already been pointed out, and at the same time it was suggested that in these matters there was not likely to be any improvement after ease and luxury—ever the panderers to immorality—had increased the appetite for sensual pleasures and supplied the means of gratification.

Early in the history of the church the morality of the times not only excused but justified lying and deceit whenever it was supposed that the interests of religion could be promoted by it; and hence the existence of that mass of childish fable and falsehood respecting the infancy and youth of Messiah, and the wonder-working power of the relics of the saints and martyrs which has brought the Christian religion into contempt. Not even the greatest and most pious teachers of the first five or six centuries are free from this leprosy;^p and if such characters as Ambrose, Hilary, Augustine, Gregory Nazianzen, and Jerome are not free from it, how much more may we expect to find it a vice with men of less reputation!

The attempt to live in a state of celibacy gave rise to

^oSchlegel among them.

^pMosheim's Eccl. Inst., Cent. iv, Part ii, ch. ii.

many scandals in the church. Ambitious of a peculiar sanctity, the clergy began to abstain from marriage, but not from the pleasures supposed to be peculiar to the married state. It became the custom for the priests to live with "sub-introduced women," who "passed as sisters of the priests, the correctness of whose taste was often exemplified by the remarkable beauty of their sinful partners."⁹ It is only fair to say that a law of Honorius condemned this practice, but it is to be feared that the only effect of the law upon those undertaking to live in the unnatural condition which celibacy imposes was merely to drive the practice from the public gaze.

Of all the writers who have given us a description of the moral condition of the church in the period of which I write, I think Salvian, who wrote about the middle of the fifth century, is the most vivid, and hence I quote in part his arraignment:

"The very church which should be the body to appease the anger of God, alas! what reigns there but disorders calculated to incense the Most High? It is more common to meet with Christians who are guilty of the greatest abominations than with those who are wholly exempt from crime. So that today it is a sort of sanctity among us to be less vicious than the generality of Christians. We insult the majesty of the Most High at the foot of his altars. Men, the most steeped in crime, enter the holy places without respect for them. True, all men ought to pay their vows to God, but why should they seek his temples to propitiate him, only to go forth to provoke him? Why enter the church to deplore their former sins, and upon going forth—what do I say?—in those very courts they commit fresh sins. their mouths and their hearts contradict one another. Their prayers

⁹Intellectual Development of Europe, Vol. i, p. 359. Draper remarks also that "the children arising from these associations do not appear to have occasioned any extraordinary scandal."—Ibid.

are criminal meditations rather than vows of expiation. Scarcely is service ended before each returns to his old practices. Some go to their wine, others to their impurities, still others to robbing and brigandage, so that we cannot doubt that these things had been occupying them while they were in the church. Nor is it the lowest of the people who are thus guilty. There is no rank whatever in the church which does not commit all sorts of crimes.

"It may be urged that we are better at heart than the barbarians who oppose us. Suppose this to be granted: we ought to be better than they. But as a matter of fact, they are more virtuous than we. The mass of Christians are below the barbarians in probity. True, all kinds of sins are found among them; but what one is not found among us? The several nations have their peculiar sin; the Saxons are cruel, the Franks perfidious; the Gepidæ inhuman; the Huns lewd. But we, having the law of God to restrain us, are given over to all these offenses. Then, to confine ourselves to the single sin of swearing, can many be found among the faithful who have not the name of Jesus Christ constantly upon their lips in support of their perjuries? This practice coming down from the higher to the lower classes, has so prevailed that Christians might be deemed pagans. This, although the law of God expressly forbids to take his name in vain. We read this law; but we do not practice it; as a consequence the pagans taunt us that we boast ourselves the sole possessors of God's laws and of the rules of truth and of what that law enjoins. 'Christians, indeed, to the shame of Jesus Christ,' say they."^r

In book VI on *The Providence of God*, Salvian continues his arraignment:

"We rush from the churches to the theatres, even in the midst of our perils. In Carthage the theatres were thronged while the enemy were before the walls, and the cries of those perishing outside under the sword mingled with the shouts of the spectators in the circus. Nor are we better here in Gaul.

^rThe above quotation is taken from the third and fourth books on "The Providence of God," by Salvian.

Treves has been taken four times, and has only increased in wickedness under her misfortunes. The same state of things exists in Cologne—deplorable wickedness among young and old, low and high. The smaller cities have been blind and insensible to the dangers threatening, until they have overwhelmed them. It seems to be the destiny of the Roman empire to perish rather than reform; they must cease to be, in order to cease to be vicious. A part of the inhabitants of Treves, having escaped from the ruins, petitions the emperor for—what? A theatre, spectacles, public shows! A city which thrice overthrown could not correct itself, well deserved to suffer a fourth destruction.

* * * * Would that my voice might be heard by all Romans! I would cry: Let us all blush that today the only cities where impurity does not reign are those which have submitted to the barbarians. Think not, then, that they conquer and we yield by the simple force of nature. Rather let us admit that we succumb through dissoluteness of our morals, of which our calamities are the just punishment.”

The moral condition of the church did not improve in the sixth nor the seventh century. It kept getting worse and worse until in the tenth century those writers most interested in upholding the purity of the church declare that this was an iron age, barren of all goodness; a leaden age, abounding in all wickedness; and a dark age, remarkable for the scarcity of writers and men of learning. Christ is represented as in a very deep sleep, the ship as covered with waves, and there were no disciples who by their cries might wake him, being themselves asleep.^s “Infidel malice,” says Milner, “has with pleasure recorded the vices and crimes of the popes of this century. Nor is it my intention to attempt to palliate the account of their wickedness. It was as deep and atrocious as language can paint; nor can a reasonable man desire

^sSuch are the representations of Cæsar Baronius, a Catholic historian of the 16th century. He was a candidate for the papacy in 1605, and hence his devotion to the Catholic church cannot be doubted.

more authentic evidence of history than that which the records both of civil and ecclesiastical history afford concerning the corruption of the whole church.”^t

As already remarked, it is the contention of the Roman Catholic Church that from Peter to Pius IX there has been an uninterrupted line of bishops in the see of Rome who have held divine authority; who succeeded both to the divine authority and mission of St. Peter; with power to bind and loose on earth and in heaven; who were, in fact, the vicars of Christ on earth, presidents of the church universal.

It now becomes my duty to refute that claim and give further proof of the complete apostasy of the church by presenting the history of the popes for h. cc hundred years, from the middle of the eighth to the middle of the eleventh century. I quote the sketch from Draper’s “Intellectual Development of Europe:”

“On the death of Pope Paul I., who had attained the pontificate A. D. 757, the Duke of Nepi compelled some bishops to consecrate Constantine, one of his brothers, as pope; but more legitimate electors subsequently, A. D. 768, choosing Stephen IV., the usurper and his adherents were severely punished; the eyes of Constantine were put out; the tongue of Bishop Theodorus was amputated, and he was left in a dungeon to expire in the agonies of thirst. The nephews of Pope Adrian seized his successor, Pope Leo III., A. D. 795, in the street, and forcing him into a neighboring church, attempted to put out his eyes and cut out his tongue; at a later period this pontiff trying to suppress a conspiracy to depose him, Rome became a scene of rebellion, murder and conflagration. His successor, Stephen V., A. D. 816, was ignominiously driven from the city; his successor, Paschal I., was accused of blinding and murdering two ecclesiastics in the Lateran Palace; it was necessary that imperial commissioners should investigate the matter, but the pope died, after having exculpated himself by oath before thirty bishops. John

^tMilner’s Ch. Hist., vol. iii, Cent. x, ch. i.

VIII., A. D. 872, unable to resist the Mohammedans, was compelled to pay them tribute; the Bishop of Naples, maintaining a secret alliance with them, received his share of the plunder they collected. Him John excommunicated, nor would he give him absolution unless he would betray the chief Mohammedans and assassinate others himself. There was an ecclesiastical conspiracy to murder the pope; some of the treasures of the church were seized; and the gate of St. Pancrazia was opened with false keys, to admit the Saracens into the city. Formosus, who had been engaged in these transactions, and excommunicated as a conspirator for the murder of John, was subsequently elected pope, A. D. 891; he was succeeded by Boniface VI., A. D. 896, who had been deposed from the diaconate, and again from the priesthood, for his immoral and lewd life. By Stephen VII., who followed, the dead body of Formosus was taken from the grave, clothed in papal habiliments, propped up in a chair, tried before a council, and the preposterous and indecent scene completed by cutting off three of the fingers of the corpse and casting it into the Tiber; but Stephen himself was destined to exemplify how low the papacy had fallen; he was thrown into prison and strangled. In the course of five years from A. D. 896 to A. D. 900, five popes were consecrated. Leo V., who succeeded in A. D. 904, was in less than two months thrown into prison by Christopher, one of his chaplains, who usurped his place, and who, in his turn, was shortly expelled from Rome by Sergius III., who, by the aid of a military force, seized the pontificate, A. D. 905. This man, according to the testimony of the times, lived in a criminal intercourse with the celebrated prostitute Theodora, who, with her daughters Marozia and Theodora, also prostitutes, exercised an extraordinary control over him. The love of Theodora was also shared by John X.: she gave him the first arch-bishopric of Ravenna, and then translated him to Rome, A. D. 915, as pope. John was not unsuited to the times; he organized a confederacy which perhaps prevented Rome from being captured by the Saracens, and the world was astonished and edified by the appearance of this warlike pontiff at the head of his troops. By the love of Theodora, as was said, he maintained himself in the papacy for fourteen years; by the intrigues and hatred of her daughter, Marozia, he was overthrown. She surprised him in the Lateran Palace; killed his brother Peter before

his face; threw him into prison, where he soon died, smothered, as was asserted, with a pillow. After a short interval Marozia made her own son pope as John XI., A. D. 931. Many affirmed that Pope Sergius was his father, but she herself inclined to attribute him to her husband Alberic, whose brother Guido she subsequently married. Another of her sons, Alberic, so called from his supposed father, jealous of his brother John, cast him and his mother Marozia into prison. After a time Alberic's son was elected pope, A. D. 956; he assumed the title of John XII., the amorous Marozia thus having given a son and a grandson to the papacy. John was only nineteen years old when he thus became head of Christendom. His reign was characterized by the most shocking immoralities, so that the Emperor Otho I. was compelled by the German clergy to interfere. A synod was summoned for his trial in the Church of St. Peter, before which it appeared that John had received bribes for the consecration of bishops, that he had ordained one who was but ten years old, and had performed that ceremony over another in a stable; he was charged with incest with one of his father's concubines, and with so many adulteries that the Lateran Palace had become a brothel; he put out the eyes of one ecclesiastic and castrated another, both dying in consequence of their injuries; he was given to drunkenness, gambling, and the invocation of Jupiter and Venus. When cited to appear before the council, he sent word that 'he had gone out hunting;' and to the fathers who remonstrated with him, he threateningly remarked 'that Judas, as well as the other disciples, received from his master the power of binding and loosing, but that as soon as he proved traitor to the common cause, the only power he retained was that of binding his own neck.' Hereupon he was deposed, and Leo VIII. elected in his stead, A. D. 963; but subsequently getting the upper hand, he seized his antagonists, cut off the hand of one, the nose, finger, tongue of others. His life was eventually brought to an end by the vengeance of a man whose wife he had seduced.

"After such details it is almost needless to allude to the annals of succeeding popes; to relate that John XIII. was strangled in prison; that Boniface VII. imprisoned Benedict VII., and killed him by starvation; that John XIV. was secretly put to death in the dungeons of the castle of St. Angelo; that the corpse of Boniface was dragged by the populace through the streets.

The sentiment of reverence for the sovereign pontiff, nay, even of respect, had become extinct in Rome; throughout Europe, the clergy were so shocked at the state of things that, in their indignation, they began to look with approbation on the intention of the Emperor Otho to take from the Italians their privilege of appointing the successor of St. Peter, and confine it to his own family. But his kinsman, Gregory V., whom he placed on the pontifical throne, was very soon compelled by the Romans to fly; his excommunications and religious thunders were turned into derision by them; they were too well acquainted with the true nature of these terrors; they were living behind the scenes. A terrible punishment awaited the Anti-pope John XVI. Otho returned into Italy, seized him, put out his eyes, cut off his nose and tongue, and sent him through the streets mounted on an ass, with his face to the tail, and a wine-bladder on his head. It seemed impossible that things could become worse; yet Rome had still to see Benedict IX., A. D. 1033, a boy of less than twelve years, raised to the apostolic throne. Of this pontiff, one of his successors, Victor III., declared that his life was so shameful, so foul, so execrable, that he shuddered to describe it. He ruled like a captain of a banditti rather than a prelate. The people at last, unable to bear his adulteries, homicides and abominations any longer, rose against him. In despair of maintaining his position, he put up the papacy to auction. It was bought by a presbyter named John, who became Gregory V., A. D. 10045."

"More than a thousand years had elapsed since the birth of our Savior, and such was the condition of Rome. Well may the historian shut the annals of those times in disgust; well may the heart of the Christian sink within him at such a catalogue of hideous crimes; well may he ask, Were these the vicegerents of God upon earth—those who had truly reached that goal beyond which the last effort of human wickedness cannot pass?"

Is it not difficult to reconcile one's mind to the thought that these men who ruled the Catholic Church for three centuries were the vicegerents of God on earth? Or that through them a divine authority and a divine mission has

"Intellectual Development of Europe, Vol. i, pp. 378-382.

been transmitted to later and happier times? To do so one would be under the necessity of maintaining that no amount of immorality, however infamous, can possibly disqualify men from acting as God's representatives. And such a position would be contrary to all the evidence of scripture, as well as revolting to sound reason.