

THE
INFALLIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

A COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED IN THE
Divinity School of the University of Dublin

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I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE CONTROVERSY WITH ROME.

When I attended the Lectures of the Regius Professor of Divinity, now more than forty years ago, the prescribed division of his year's work was, that in one Term he gave a course of lectures on the Bible; in another, on the Articles; in the third, on the Liturgy. When I succeeded to the Chair myself, I found that, for several years previously, the subject of this Term's lectures, as set down in the University *Calendar*, had been, not the Articles, but the Roman Catholic Controversy. It is easy to understand how the change took place. It was, of course, impossible in the lectures of one Term to treat of all the Articles; and, some selection being necessary, it was natural that the Professor, on whom the duty is imposed by statute of giving instruction on the controversies which our Church has to carry on with her adversaries, whether within or without the pale of Christianity, should select for consideration the Articles bearing on the controversy which in this country is most pressing, and in which the members of our Church took the deepest interest—the controversy with Rome. This limitation of my subject being only suggested by precedent, not imposed on me by authority, I was free to disregard it. As I have not done so, I think I ought to begin by telling you my reasons for agreeing with my predecessors in regarding the study of this controversy as profitable employment for the lectures of this Term.

I readily own, indeed, that I have found, both inside and outside the University, that this controversy does not excite the same interest now that it did even a dozen years ago. In your voluntary Society, in which the members read theological essays on subjects of their own selection, I notice that topics bearing on this controversy are now but rarely chosen; whereas I can remember when they predominated, almost to the exclusion of other subjects. There are many reasons for this decline of interest.

One effect of Disestablishment, in not merely reviving the synodical action of the Church, but widely extending it, introducing the laity into Church councils, and entrusting to them a share in the determination of most important questions, has been to concentrate the interest of our people on the subjects discussed in such assemblies; and in this way our little disputes with each other have left us no time to think of the far wider differences that separate us from Rome on the one hand, and from various dissenting sects on the other. But besides this cause, special to ourselves, of

decline of interest in the Roman Catholic controversy, there are others which have operated in England as well as here.

First, I may mention a reaction against certain extreme anti-Romanist over-statements. It was only to be expected that, at the time of the Reformation, men who had with a violent effort wrenched themselves away from beliefs in which they had been brought up, and who, for the exercise of this freedom of thought, were being persecuted to the death, should think far more of their points of difference from their persecutors than of the points on which they agreed with them. A considerable section of the men who had witnessed the bloody scenes of Queen Mary's reign scarcely thought of their adversaries as worshippers of the same God as themselves. The form in which one of the opponents of Queen Elizabeth's marriage with a French prince put the question as to the lawfulness of marriage with a Roman Catholic was, whether it was lawful for a child of God to wed with a son of the devil. When Fox, the Martyrologist, has to speak of the religious services, not merely of the Roman Catholics of his own day, but of the Church in the days before any reformation had been attempted, he seems to regard them as fit subjects for ridicule and insult. It would be easy to quote specimens that would grate on the feelings of those of us who have least sympathy with Rome. When Fox has to tell of what he could well remember—the prayers which the Romanists offered up on the occasion of the supposed pregnancy of Queen Mary—he mocks them with the taunt of Elijah, 'Cry up louder, you priests, peradventure your god is asleep.' He does not seem to have reflected that the prayers in question were addressed, not to Baal, but to the same God whom he worshipped himself.

But modern conceptions of the proper attitude of mind of a historian require him to strive to enter impartially into the feelings of all his characters. We can now find apologies even for the magistrates who shed the blood of the first Christians, and whom their victims regarded in no other light than as the instruments of Satan. We can now recognize that many of them were grave magistrates, simply anxious to do their duty in carrying out the law; some of them humane men, who were sincerely grieved by what they regarded as the unreasonable obstinacy of those who left them no option but to proceed to the last extremities. One of the most harrowing and most authentic tales now extant of Christian heroism and heathen cruelty relates things done with the express sanction of Marcus Aurelius, the man who, of all the heathen of whom we have knowledge, approached nearest to Christian excellence; nay, who surpassed many professors of a better creed in purity of life, in meekness, gentleness, unselfish anxiety at any cost to do his duty. No wonder, then, that we can find apologies, too, for Roman Catholic persecutors, and believe that many a judge who sent a heretic to the stake may have been a conscientious, good man, fulfilling what he re-

garded as an unpleasant duty, and no more a monster of inhumanity than one of the hanging judges of George the Third's reign, who at one assizes sent scores of criminals to the gallows. If we can judge less harshly of Roman Catholic persecutors, it is still easier to judge mildly of ordinary Roman Catholics. With some of them we may perhaps be personally acquainted, and may know them to be not only just and honourable in the ordinary affairs of life, but, according to their lights, sincerely pious, living in the devout belief of the cardinal truths of our faith.

The feeling that there are many things in which we agree with Roman Catholics has been helped by the increased circulation among members of the Anglican Church of pre-Reformation, or distinctly Roman Catholic, books of devotion. In England especially, where Roman Catholics are few, and where the controversy with dissent has been the most urgent, members of the Established Church, besides the natural disposition to indulgence towards the less formidable enemy, sympathize the more with those who share with them not only their common Christianity, but also attachment to Episcopacy and to an ancient liturgy. And I must not omit to mention that, with regard to Eucharistic doctrine, a great change has taken place during the last quarter of a century in the feelings of the English clergy. Views are held by men who pass as moderate which, when I was young, a man would be accounted violently extreme for maintaining; while the opinions put forward by men who now rank as extreme would, in days that I can remember, have been considered absolutely outside the limits imposed by our Church's teaching. Hence has naturally sprung an inclination to sympathize with those with whom unity exists on this important subject, to the disregard of differences perhaps in real truth more vital.

In addition to the causes I have mentioned, the struggle with unbelief has benefited the cause of Romanism. In the first place, some of the minds less docile to authority, less inclined to mysticism, who, had they remained among us, would have been ranged strongly on the anti-Romanist side, have been lost to Christianity altogether; and this fact has increased the proportion of sympathizers with Romanism among those who still remain. Again, there are many whose temptations are altogether on the side of scepticism, and who, feeling themselves in danger of being worsted in the cruel conflict with doubt, have recoiled towards Rome, under the idea that there they would be safer. Distressed at results to which free inquiry seemed to lead them, they have determined to attempt no more to think for themselves, but submit themselves resignedly to the yoke of authority; and where can authority be found which gives more promise of relieving men of the responsibility of self-direction than that of a Church which claims to 'be infallible? In point of fact, a majority of the perverts which Rome has made in later years have been made through the road of scepticism; and I

have known Romish advocates unscrupulously use sceptical arguments, in order that their victims, despairing of finding elsewhere a solution of their doubts, might be so glad to welcome a Church which offered them certainty, as to be disinclined to make too minute an examination of her power to fulfil her promises.

Once more, the growth of scepticism has produced in another way disinclination to the Roman controversy. There are many nominal members of our Church who adhere to the profession of a creed which was that of their fathers, but who have little concern for religious truth; who are apt to think that a man's religion is his own affair, with which other people have no business to concern themselves; and that whether his belief be true or false docs not really much matter. Such persons are apt to regard any attempt to show that Roman teaching is false as a wanton attack on poor, harmless Roman Catholics, and as little different from personal abuse of unoffending people. I fear it will be a long time before men are so philosophic as to understand that a man is not your enemy because he tries to correct errors in your opinions, and that the more important the subject the greater the service he will render you if he makes you change your false opinion for a true one.

I have enumerated causes enough (and more might be added, if I were to speak of the influence of political changes) to explain the undoubted fact, that less interest is generally felt in the Roman Catholic controversy now than was felt twenty or thirty years ago. Yet I have no hesitation in presenting it to you as a subject, in acquiring a knowledge of which your time will be well spent. What use you are hereafter to make of your knowledge will depend upon circumstances in which you must be guided by considerations of expediency.

In different times, and in different circumstances, different dangers are formidable, and a man exercises a wise discretion in devoting his chief energies to combating the dangers which are most threatening at the time. Both in politics and in religion parties are apt to make the mistake of carrying on traditional warfare with enemies whose power has now decayed, and neglecting the silent growth of foes now far more formidable: in politics, for instance, delighting to weaken the executive government on account of instances of royal tyranny two hundred years ago, and taking no account of the opposite danger of anarchy: in religion, fearing only lest men should believe too much, and not noticing that in many places now the danger is lest they should not believe at all. I had occasion last Term to remark, that at different periods of St. Paul's life different controversies engaged him; and I pointed out that to overlook this was the fundamental error of Baur, who denied the genuineness of all Paul's letters which did not give prominence to that controversy which is the main subject of the four letters that

Baur admitted. Thus, I can quite acknowledge that different circumstances may make it wise to insist on different topics, and that it is not judicious to make the Roman controversy the main object at all times and in all places. But a man must be blind, indeed, if he imagines that there is no danger from Romanism. Even in England it is often formidable. In Ireland there is no place where it is not pressing.

I am not in the least ashamed of the object aimed at in the Roman Catholic controversy. I believe that the Church of Rome teaches false doctrine on many points which must be called important, if anything in religion can be called important; and it is not merely that on some particular points the teaching of that Church is erroneous; but they who submit to her are obliged to surrender their understanding to her, and submit to be led blindfold they know not whither. I count it, then, a very good work to release a man from Roman bondage—a release of which I think he will be the better, both as regards the things of eternity and those of time. The only question, then, that I should be disposed to entertain as to the expediency of direct controversy with Roman Catholics is, whether or not such controversy may be expected to eventuate in their conversion. It is notorious that many controversial efforts have been made with no other result than that of embittering those to whom they were addressed. We are not commanded to cast our pearls before animals who are likely to turn again and rend us; and if the state of men's feelings is such as to indispose them for a candid consideration of the truths set before them, then prudence may forbid the attempt. Of course, what I am saying would apply to the use of prudence in preaching Christianity just as much as in preaching Protestantism. In either case we are blameworthy if we preach the truth to others in such a way as to make them less likely to accept it. But, fully granting all this, I hold that it is unworthy of any man who possesses knowledge to keep his knowledge to himself, and rejoice in his own enlightenment, without making any effort to bring others to share in his privileges. Justly did the four lepers at the gate of Samaria feel their conscience smite them: 'We do not well; this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.' Had those to whom the light of Christianity was first given dealt so with our ancestors, we should still be lying in heathen darkness.

But, even if it should not be your duty hereafter to make any aggressive efforts for the dissemination of the truth, you may still be forced to take up the Roman Catholic controversy for the safety of the people committed to your own care. The most ardent admirer of peace societies may be forced to own that muskets and cannon have some use if an invasion be made on our own shores. And certainly our Roman Catholic countrymen have not that aversion to proselytism (at least when it is made in what they account the right direction) that some among ourselves recommend as a virtue. The

poorer members of our Church especially are under constant pressure from the eagerness of their neighbours to win them over to the faith of 'the true Church'—pressure which it would often much advance their worldly interests to give way to. Why should they not give way, if you, who are their spiritual guides, can give them no reason for refusing to submit to the Roman claims?

And setting aside the consideration of our duty to others, our duty to ourselves requires us not to shrink from a full and candid examination of the validity of the Roman claims. Can we believe in our Lord's Divinity—believe that He founded a Church, and not care to inquire whether or not it is true that He appointed a vicegerent upon earth to govern that Church, from whom His people are bound submissively to learn the truths of His religion, and apart from whom there can be no salvation? Again, if anyone acknowledges that Christ intended His people to be one, and that anyone commits a sin who makes causeless schisms and divisions in His body, he cannot justify his remaining separated in communion from the large numerical majority of the Christians of this country, if he thinks that his differences with them all relate to subordinate and trifling matters. For a man to say that he feels no interest in the Roman Catholic controversy, is to say that he thinks some of the most important religious questions that can be raised quite undeserving his attention; that he does not care to know what are the conditions which Christ has appointed for his salvation, and whether union with the Church of Rome be not one of them. I am persuaded that, if Romanism were true, it would be more tolerable in the Day of Judgment for a Protestant like myself, who has done his best to examine into the subject, and, however mistakenly, yet honestly, arrived at the conviction that the claims of Rome are unfounded, than for one who conceives himself entitled to indulge an eclectic sympathy with everything Roman that he, in his wisdom, may be pleased to call Catholic, but who disdains to inquire into the truth of other points of Roman teaching, and makes himself sure that he must be equally acceptable to God whether he be in the true Church or not.

I have just called myself a Protestant; and, in saying this, I use the word in its popular sense, in which it is equivalent to non-Romanist. It is true that there are non-Romanists—for example, members of the Greek Church—to whom this name is not commonly applied; but this is because we come so little in contact with Eastern Christians, that popular usage takes no account of them. I am aware that there are several who dislike to be called Protestant, because the title is one which can be equally claimed by men differing widely in opinion, and with some of whom we have little in common but opposition to Rome. But a man must be a poor logician if he does not know that objects may agree in a common attribute, and with respect to that attribute may be called by a common name, though differing widely in

other points. The controversy with Rome is so important, that it is highly convenient to have a word expressing what side a man takes on it: that is to say, whether he accepts or rejects the Roman claims. Indeed, in these lectures, it is impossible for me to dispense with the use of some word of the kind. Finding the word Protestant* in common use for this purpose, I do not trouble myself to look for any other, but frankly describe myself as a Protestant. And if a controversial attempt is made to hold me responsible for the opinions of everyone else described under the same name, I do not expect to be more embarrassed than were the men of the early Church when their heathen opponents attempted to hold them responsible for the opinions and practices of heretics who had in common with them the title of Christian.

By a Protestant, then, as I use the word, I mean one who has examined into the Roman claims, and has found reason to think them groundless; one who knows that there are not only great and precious truths on which we agree with the Church of Rome, but also points of difference so grave and fundamental as to justify our remaining in separate communion. If the Church of England or of Ireland be not, in this sense of the word, Protestant, her position cannot be defended at all. For her justification it is necessary to show not only that she is not bound to render any obedience to the Church of Rome, but also that the things demanded by that Church as conditions of union go beyond what one Church is bound to yield to another for the sake of godly union and concord among Christians, members of that one great Church of Christ, whose influence and extension through the world have notoriously been sadly impeded by internal dissensions and schisms.

Thus, from a Roman Catholic point of view, the more our Church purged herself from the sin of heresy, the greater would be the guilt of her schism; for the smaller the doctrinal differences, the less justifiable pretext there would be for separation. And I think a Roman Catholic must hold that

* I consider that we are not concerned with the history of the word, which in its origin had nothing to do with protesting against the errors of Popery, but with protesting against the decrees of a Diet of the German Empire, viz. that of Spires, in 1529. At that Diet the liberty was taken away from the sovereign princes of the German Empire of regulating religious affairs each in his own territory, according to his discretion. Against that decree of the majority certain princes protested, and appealed to the Emperor, on the ground that the decree was *ultra vires*, for that a majority of votes in the Diet could regulate a secular question, but not a spiritual or religious one. But the decree being made in the interests of those who wished to keep everything as it had been, and the protest against it by those who were desirous of reformation, it naturally happened that the party of the protestant princes and that of the Reformation should be synonymous. The word, however, has now come into popular use as denoting the non-Romanist members of the Western Church; and this use of the word is too convenient to be let drop. We are no more concerned with the history of its origin than we are with the Athenian laws about the exportation of figs when we use the word 'sycophant.'

the more a member of our Church approximates to the doctrine of Rome, the worse he makes his spiritual condition, if that approximation does not bring him to the bosom of the true Church. For such a man can no longer plead the excuse which an ultra-Protestant might urge, invincible ignorance incapacitating him for receiving the Church's teaching, which, in his sincere belief, is deeply tainted with peril of idolatry.* I need say no more, then, to convince you that our time this Term will not be ill spent in studying this controversy, inasmuch as on the successful maintenance of it by our Church depends her right to be accounted part of the true Church of Christ, and since a wrong decision on it, it is alleged, hazards our eternal salvation.

Possibly there may be some here who have not needed argument to convince them of the importance of the controversy which I propose to discuss with you, but who may be disposed to imagine that no laborious study of it can be necessary. It is always irksome to be offered proof of what it has never occurred to us to doubt. The first impression of one who has been brought up from childhood to know and value his Bible is, that there is no room for discussion as to the truth of the Roman Catholic doctrines, and that a few Scripture texts make an end of the whole controversy. He cannot conceive what ingenuity can reconcile prayers in an unknown tongue with the fourteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians; or the worship of the Virgin Mary with the text, 'There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' And assuredly, if we desire to preserve our people from defection to Romanism, there is no better safeguard than familiarity with Holy Scripture. For example, the mere study of the character of our Blessed Lord, as recorded in the Gospel, is enough to dissipate the idea that there can be others more loving and compassionate, or more ready to hear our prayers, than He. And the whole mental attitude of one who comes direct to the Bible for guidance, praying that God's Holy Spirit will enable him to understand it, is opposed to the Romish system, which renders difficult all real direct access between the soul and God, through the interposition of countless mediators both in interpreting God's will to us and in making known our desires to Him. Thus, believing as I do that the Bible, not merely in single texts, but in its whole spirit, is antagonistic to the Romish system, I feel that it would be time ill spent if I were to spend much, in these lectures, on the development of the argument from Scripture. I should be well pleased if our adversaries were content to fight

* See Newman's *Anglican Difficulties*, Lecture xi., where, having enlarged on the reasons which may excuse the unbelief of other persons outside the fold of his Church, he goes on to say that there is but one set of persons who inspire the Catholic with special anxiety, for whom he must feel the most intense interest, but about whom the gravest apprehensions, viz. those who have some rays of light vouchsafed them as to their heresy and as to their schism, and who seem to be closing their eyes upon it.

the battle on that ground; but the discouragement which the Church of Rome has always offered to the study of the Bible by her people affords a presumption that she is against the Scriptures, because she feels the Scriptures are against her.

But you would be greatly disappointed if you entered into controversial discussion with a Roman Catholic, expecting that by a few texts you could make an end of the whole matter. No one is much influenced by an authority with which he is not familiar. Roman Catholics generally are not familiar with the Bible; and if they hear passages quoted from it in apparent contradiction with the doctrines in which they have been brought up, they are satisfied to believe, in a general way, that you must be quoting unfairly, and that the contradiction can only be apparent. With the Roman Catholic the authority of the Bible rests on the authority of the Church, and he receives with equal reverence and affection whatever else is communicated to him on the same authority. In arguing with a Protestant, he challenges him to say on what grounds he can justify his submission to the Bible if the authority of his Church be set aside; and he is quite ready to assail with infidel arguments the independent authority of the Bible. For Rome's maxim has been, 'All or none'; and, like the false mother before King Solomon, she has been ready to slay the souls whom she is unable to keep. Thus the inexperienced Protestant, engaging in this discussion, is likely to find the arguments- on which he had placed most confidence set aside altogether, or the texts which had seemed to him conclusive disposed of by evasions quite new to him; while, on the other hand, he is plied with citations from ancient Fathers, purporting to show that his interpretations of Scripture are modern, and opposed to the judgment of all antiquity. Thus it frequently happens that an attack, begun with all the confidence of victory, ends in disappointment, and there is danger lest the disorder of failure should degenerate into total rout.

What I am insisting on, then, is that, in this controversy, it would be a fatal error to despise your antagonists. Very often has it happened that untrained bands, full of high spirits, and confident in the goodness of their cause, have found that their undisciplined courage was no match for the superior science of their opponents, or have advanced into false positions, whence no courage could avail to extricate them. And so, unwary controversialists are apt to damage their cause by over-statements, to rest the success of their cause on the truth of assertions which cannot be proved, or on the validity of general principles which can be shown by cases of manifest exception not to be universally true. Now, the effect of a bad argument is always to damage the party who brings it forward; for, when that is refuted, it is not merely that the argument goes for nothing, but there is produced a general distrust in the other arguments which are brought forward on the

same side. If a book were written containing a hundred reasons for not admitting the claims of the Roman Church, and if ninety of them were thoroughly conclusive, a Roman Catholic advocate who could show that the other ten were weak, would be regarded by his own party as having given a triumphant reply, and as having entirely demolished his opponent's case. And I believe that many a perversion to Romanism has resulted from the discovery by a member of our Church that some of the arguments on which he had been accustomed to rely were bad, and from his then rashly jumping to the conclusion that no better arguments were to be had.

For these reasons, if it should ever be your lot hereafter to engage in controversy, it will be essential to your success that you should have learned beforehand the strongest case that can be made by your opponents, in order that you may not be taken by surprise by anything likely to be advanced in the course of the discussion. You must be careful, also, to distinguish the authorized teaching of the Roman Catholic Church from the unguarded statements of particular divines, and not to charge the system as a whole with any consequences which Roman Catholics themselves repudiate. And, generally, you must beware of bad arguments, the fallacy of which, sooner or later, is sure to be exposed, when, like a gun bursting in the hand, they disable him who uses them. But there is a better reason for taking this course than that it is the more prudent one. Our object is not victory, but truth; for the subject is one of such importance, that a victory gained at the expense of truth would be one in which we should ourselves be the chief sufferers—left blindly to wander from the truth, wilfully rejecting guidance which had been offered to us.

With regard to myself, I feel that the strength of my conviction of the baselessness of the case made by the Romish advocates removes any temptation to be niggardly in making any acknowledgment they can at all fairly claim. If you play chess with one to whom you know you can give the odds of a queen, you are not very solicitous to play the strict game. You allow your antagonist to take back moves if he will, and you are not much distressed in mind should he succeed in making some unimportant capture on which he has set his heart. I know that it is impossible to prove that the Pope can never go wrong, and quite possible to prove that in many cases he has gone wrong, and very seriously wrong; so it costs my liberality absolutely nothing to acknowledge that on many occasions he has gone right. If the dispute is concerning some Roman Catholic doctrine which I know to be no part of primitive Christianity, it costs me no effort of candour if I see reason to acknowledge that the date of its introduction was a century earlier than some Protestant controversialists had asserted.

On the other hand, the strength of my convictions may operate disadvantageously by rendering me unable to see any force in some Romish ar-

guments, which, to other minds, seem very effective. When I take up some popular Roman Catholic books of controversy, although I am told they have been used with success in making perversions from our Church, they appear to me so feeble, that I feel little inclination to take the trouble of answering them.

But I own that, if it were not that the office which I hold imposes on me the disagreeable necessity, controversy is not to my taste, and I engage in it reluctantly. I read the writings of the Christian Fathers with a purely historical object, anxious to know how the men of former days believed and taught, and quite prepared to find that on many points their way of looking at things is not the same as mine. I take up then books of controversy, and both on one side and on the other I find that those who originally made extracts from the

writings of the Fathers were more anxious to pick out some sentence in apparent contradiction with the views of their opponents, than to weigh dispassionately whether the question at issue in the modern controversy were at all present to the mind of the author whom they quote, or to search whether elsewhere in his writings passages might not be found bearing a different aspect. The extracts thus picked out are copied, without verification, by one writer after another, so that, to one familiar with the controversy, books on it are apt to seem monotonous. And it constantly happens that at the present day controversial writers continue to employ quotations from writings once supposed to be genuine, but which all learned critics now know to be spurious. I feel little inclination to enter into a detailed exposure of errors of this kind. I have said already that, to an unlearned Christian, familiarity with the Bible affords the best safeguard against Romanism, and I will add now that a learned Christian, who makes himself familiar, by uncontroversial reading, with the thoughts of the men of the ancient Church, finds that he is breathing a different atmosphere from that of modern Romanism, and that he cannot accept many things now propounded as articles of faith, unless he is prepared to say that on many important questions we are wiser than the Fathers. That is what Roman Catholic advocates now actually say: but then they have no right to quarrel with Protestants who say the same.

In one respect I have an advantage in addressing an audience all of one way of thinking, that I am not bound to measure my words through fear of giving offence, and that when I think opinions false and absurd, I can plainly say so. Yet I should be sorry so to use this liberty of mine that my example should mislead you afterwards. In every controversy the Christian teacher should put away all bitterness, 'in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.' In this controversy we have to deal with those whose feelings of piety and reverence have in part fastened themselves on un-

worthy objects; and it requires a skilful hand gently to disengage these feelings, and give them a better training—not tear them up and kill them. We assail credulity, not faith; and we cannot use the weapons of those who deny the supernatural, and refuse to lift their thoughts above material things.

Your future success in controversy, should it be your lot to engage in it, may depend much on the strength of your faith in truths not controverted. For no one is much influenced by those with whom he has no sympathies; and your influence on those whom you would most wish to gain, and whom there is most hope of gaining—those, I mean, who truly love our Lord, and whose will to do His will has the promise of being blessed by the guidance of His Spirit into truth—must depend on yourselves being animated by the same love, and seeking for the guidance of the same Spirit.

In the interests, then, of controversy itself, I might give the concluding caution, which I should in any case have added for the sake of your own spiritual health, namely, that you should not allow the pleasure which intellectual combat has for many minds to detain you too long in the thorny paths of controversy, and out of those pastures where your soul must find its nourishment. ‘I love not,’ says Taylor, ‘to be one of the disputers of this world. For I suppose skill in controversies to be the worst part of learning, and time is the worst spent in them, and men the least benefited by them.’ When we must engage in controversy, it is not that we love contention, but that we love the truth which is at stake. Seek, then, in study of the Scriptures to know the truth, and pray that God will inspire you with a sincere love of it—of the whole truth, and not merely of that portion of it which it may be your duty to defend—and ask Him also to inspire you with a sincere love of your brethren: so that the end of all your controversy may be, not the display of your own skill in arguing, not the obtaining of victory for yourself or for your party, but the mutual edification of all who take part in it, and their growth in likeness to Christ.