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THE
CHURCHMAN

AUGUST, 1899.

ART. I.—SPURIOUS DOCUMENTS OF THE CHURCH
OF ROME.

I PROPOSE to show that the forgeries of the Church of Rome were a great means employed by her for the consolidation of her spiritual and temporal dominion. The wonder is that she should have had the hardihood to persevere in this work through successive generations. But she knew, from the ignorance which universally prevailed, that she might safely practise on the credulity of her spiritual subjects. Roman Catholics have now for some time admitted that their forefathers have been the victims of imposture. Even leading members of the Vatican Council in 1870 had the courage to denounce the usurpations of the Church of Rome, and to describe them as founded on frauds and forgeries. Students of ecclesiastical history will at once remember that I am here referring particularly to the Donation of Constantine and to the Decretal Epistles. I fear, however, that many are altogether ignorant of these remarkable documents. I propose, therefore, now to give an account of them.

I shall begin with the Donation of Constantine.¹

This document contained an alleged grant of the city of Rome and of the exarchate of Ravenna by the Emperor Constantine to the Pope. It was produced by the Pope Stephen to King Pepin when he had compelled the Lombards to evacuate the contested territories, for the purpose of inducing him to cede them to the See of Rome. Some people, however, imagine that Stephen only stated to Pepin that the grant had been made, and that the document was afterwards forged to confirm the truth of that assertion. The tradition

¹ This document may be seen in Migne's "Patrologia," vol. lxx. VOL. XIII.—NEW SERIES, NO. CXXXI. 41

had for some time prevailed that Constantine, on his departure from Rome for Constantinople, had invested the Pope with some authority over the city. The idea is that some designing person, near the end of the eighth century, anxious for the advancement of the Papacy, had dexterously laid hold of the tradition for his own purpose, and had embodied it as a fact in the instrument called the Donation. It seems to have been found among the Decretal Epistles, of which I shall speak presently; but whether it was composed by the Pope, or by some other ecclesiastical person, it is now admitted to have been a gross and impious forgery. And yet upon this basis the Popes have rested their claim to sovereignty over the monarchs of the earth, and to supreme sway over the Churches of Christendom.

The Donation of Constantine begins in the following manner:

“In the name of the holy and undivided Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Flavius Constantine, Cæsar, and Emperor in Jesus Christ,” etc.

“To the most holy and blessed Father of fathers, Sylvester, Bishop and Pope of the city of Rome, and to all his successors who shall hereafter sit in the chair of the blessed Peter, to the end of the world; and to all our most reverend and catholic Bishops, loved of God, and subject throughout the world to the holy Church of Rome by this our imperial constitution,” etc.

Then follows an account of his conversion, which differs altogether from that given by Eusebius. He informs us that Constantine embraced Christianity in consequence of a miraculous cross which he saw in the heavens as he was advancing to attack Maxentius, having this inscription upon it: “*Hac vince*”—“In this conquer.” We are informed, however, in the document that Constantine was afflicted with the leprosy on account of his sins; that, after having exhausted to no purpose the resources of medical science, he had consulted the heathen oracles as to an effectual remedy; that he had been informed that if he plunged into a bath of the blood of infants, he should be immediately cured of the disorder; that a number had been collected for the purpose of being killed; and that Constantine, touched by the sight of the infants, who were unconscious of the terrible doom which awaited them, as well as of the mothers who stood dissolved in an agony of grief around him, had forbidden the slaughter of the innocents. Then he was recommended to apply to a holy man, Pope Sylvester, who was at that time living in a cave in the mountains, and that he had miraculously cured him of his leprosy. In gratitude for this cure, he

had become a convert to Christianity, had asked to be baptized, and had issued this document, in which he had made over certain territories to the holy See at Rome. The deed then proceeds:

“While I learned these things from the teaching of the blessed Sylvester, and by the grace of the blessed Peter, I found myself perfectly restored to health. We, with all our nobles, and the whole Senate, with my chiefs also, and all the people subject to the glorious empire of Rome, judged it right that, as St. Peter, when on earth, appears to have been made the Vicar of the Son of God, so the bishops who are the successors of St. Peter ought to obtain from us and our empire the power of supremacy, more than that which has pertained to our imperial majesty, thus choosing for ourselves the prince of the Apostles and his successors as our steadfast patrons with God. And we decree that the holy Church of Rome shall be honoured with the same reverence as our imperial authority on earth; and that the most holy chair of St. Peter be more gloriously exalted than our own earthly throne, conferring on it power and dignity, and authority and imperial honour. And we decree and ordain that the Bishop of Rome shall hold supremacy over the four sees of Antioch, of Jerusalem, of Alexandria, and of Constantinople, as also over all the churches in the whole world; and we decree that the Pontiff who for the time being is over the holy Roman Church shall be higher than, and chief over, all the priests of the whole world; and that all things whatsoever relating to the worship of God and the establishment of the Christian faith be determined in accordance with his judgments.

“We grant to the same holy Apostles, my lords the most beloved Peter and Paul, and through them also to the blessed Sylvester, our father and supreme Pontiff, and to all his Pontifical successors who to the end of the world shall sit in the chair of the blessed Peter, and by this Act give the Lateran palace of our empire—the palace which is far superior to all the palaces in the whole orb of the earth; also our diadem—that is, the crown of our head—together with our mitre, and also the mantle that usually surrounds our imperial neck, and with these also our robe of purple and our cloak of scarlet, and all our imperial robes, and the rank of our imperial and presiding knights, conferring upon him at the same time the imperial sceptres, with all the imperial insignia, badges, and decorations, and all that belongs to the imperial dignity.”

The decree, after having declared that the clergy are to be made patricians and consuls, that they were to have the same caparisons for their horses as those which were used by

the Roman senators, and that the Pope may admit whom he will to the clerical office, thus proceeds :

“ We have decreed that the said venerable Sylvester, our father and supreme Pontiff, and all his successors the Pontiffs, ought to use the diadem—that is, the crown—which we transfer from our own head to him, made of the purest gold, with precious stones, and that he ought to wear it on his head to the praise of God and to the honour of the blessed Peter. But inasmuch as this most blessed Pope himself will not suffer the crown of gold to be upon the crown of the priesthood, which he wears to the glory of the blessed Peter, we have with our hands placed on his head the mitre of resplendent white, symbolizing the resurrection of our Lord. And in our reverence for the blessed Peter we ourselves hold the reins of his horse, as holding the office of his stirrup-holder ; and we ordain that all his successors shall wear the same mitre in their processions, in imitation of the empire ; and that the Papal crown may never be lowered, but may be exalted above the crown of the earthly empire, lo ! we give and grant not only our palace as aforesaid, but also the city of Rome, and all the provinces and palaces of the city of Italy and of the western regions to our aforesaid most blessed Pontiff and universal Pope, our father Sylvester, and the Pontiffs his successors, and by this divine and pragmatic constitution command them to be ceded to and remain in the jurisdiction of the holy Roman Church.

“ Wherefore we have thought it fitting to transfer our empire and the power of our kingdom to the regions of the East, and have commanded to be built a city to our name in the province of Byzantium, and an empire to be established there ; because where the supreme head of the priesthood and of the Christian religion has been placed by the heavenly Emperor, it is not right that the earthly emperor should have authority. And all these things which by this imperial decree and by the other sacred edicts we have enacted we now decree shall continue unaltered to the end of the world.”

This edict concludes with a clause condemning those who violate it “ to be bound and snared in eternal damnation, having the saints of God, the princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, as their enemies, both in the life that now is and in that which is to come ; and being burned in the lowest hell, to perish with the devil and the wicked.”

This is the celebrated Donation of Constantine. We cannot fail to be amazed at the awful impiety of the language, for the forger begins the document with the name of the Holy Trinity, and concludes with imprecating the most direct curses on those who contravene its authority. A glance will serve to show the

imposture to all thinking men; for they will observe that Constantine is represented as having transferred the seat of empire to a city which had not been built, and as having given the Pope the supremacy over the See of Constantinople, which had not yet been founded. They will think it strange, too, that the miracle of Pope Sylvester should have been the cause of the conversion of the nobles and people as well as of the Emperor, so that they should all have been induced to agree with him in giving the Pope this supremacy over the churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople, and this sovereignty over the sovereigns within the boundaries of the Western Empire. But, as Gibbon says in his "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," "So deep was the ignorance and credulity of the times, that this most absurd of fables was received with equal reverence in Greece and in France, and is still enrolled among the decrees of the Canon Law. The emperors and Romans were incapable of discerning a forgery that subverted their rights and their freedom" (chap. xlix.).

For many centuries the Church of Rome appealed to this document as the title-deed to the possession of a spiritual and temporal dominion. Thus Pope Leo IX., in the middle of the eleventh century, vindicated the claims of the Papacy by giving in an epistle almost in detail the different particulars mentioned in this document, and by asserting that Constantine confirmed the Donation with a golden cross, which he placed along with the document on the tomb of St. Peter. I shall give the reason for this constant appeal to the Donation in the words of Gibbon: "This fiction was productive of most beneficial effects; the Greek princes were convicted of the guilt of usurpation, and the revolt of Pope Gregory was the claim of his lawful inheritance. The Popes were delivered from the debt of gratitude, and the nominal gifts of the Carolingians were no more than the just and irrevocable restitution of a scanty portion of the ecclesiastical state. The sovereignty of Rome no longer depended on the choice of a fickle people, and the successors of St. Peter and Constantine were invested with the purple and prerogatives of the Cæsars."

I should occupy too much space if I were to show that Popes, Cardinals, and historians have cited this document as a real instrument, and were to refute the arguments urged in support of its authority. Suffice it now to observe that the learned of the Church of Rome, after having for a long time exerted every effort to defend it, have been obliged to admit its want of authenticity. As Gibbon says, "In the revival of letters this fictitious deed was transpierced by the pen of Laurentius Valla, an eloquent critic and a Roman patriot.

His contemporaries of the fifteenth century were astonished at his boldness ; yet such is the silent and irresistible progress of reason that before the end of the next age the fable was rejected by the contempt of historians, though by the same fortune which has attended the Decretals and the Sibylline oracles, the edifice has subsisted after its foundations have been undermined."

Whether Bishops and Cardinals, as well as monks, were engaged in framing this document we have no means of ascertaining ; we find the same unanimity in the Roman Church as in the Greek and Reformed Church in proclaiming it to be a forgery. In all probability Romanists would still have endeavoured to maintain its authority, if they had not been reminded that they thus represented Constantine, instead of our Lord Jesus through St. Peter, as giving to the Pope supremacy over the churches. A mere man might invest him with power over certain cities and territories, but Jesus alone could decree that the patriarchates should be subject to his jurisdiction. For this, and for no other reason, Romanists, after having for seven centuries derived infinite advantage from a belief in the authenticity of this document, have now denounced it as an egregious imposture, and have declared that they do not wish to make use of it as one of the title-deeds of the Popes to their inheritance. But thus men often cast away the ladder by which they have ascended to greatness. The Church of Rome is now compelled to argue for her temporal power from its antiquity, as compared with that of the dynasties around her, and to affirm that it was by the special appointment of Providence that Pepin and Charlemagne put her in possession of it. But she seems to forget that, on this principle, she shows by her loud cries of indignation against those who have deprived her of it that she is rebelling against a Divine appointment ; that she has incurred the woe denounced in Scripture on those who " build their house by unrighteousness and their chambers by wrong," and that it has been by an act of the same Providence that the territories over which the Popes have borne rule for ages have been taken away from them, and have become part of a united Italy under the dominion of the late Victor Emmanuel.

I must now give an account of the Decretal Epistles. No volume ever published has exercised a more injurious influence on vital Christianity or on the destinies of states and empires. Long before its appearance a rumour had been propagated that a book had been discovered containing the epistles of the Popes from the first to the seventh century. They were stated to be public documents, embodying the judgments of the Popes on various matters which had been submitted to them.

Those who were interested in its circulation attached to it the name of Isidore, Bishop of Seville, hoping that by imputing it to him it would obtain circulation, as he had published a collection of authentic pieces of history.¹ The rumour travelled from country to country, from city to city, from monastery to monastery, till at length it reached Rome. The Pope was most anxious to possess a copy of it, but was never able to see it; all the world had seen it before him. At length it came into his hands, and was received with rapturous applause. With a haste which seemed to show that he was not so great a stranger to it as he wished to be considered, he placed it on an equality with the Holy Scriptures, and declared that it was written by the "inspiration of the Holy Ghost."

The See of Rome was at this time occupied by Nicolas I. (858-867). He was a man of unbounded ambition, and surpassed all his predecessors in the boldness of his designs. His desire was to cause the supremacy to assume the form of an absolute monarchy. The circumstances of the times enabled him to veil his wish for self-exaltation upon the pretext of an honest desire to redress the wrongs of society. The kingdoms founded on the partition of the empire of Charlemagne had proved, like Jonah's gourd, which sprang up in a night and withered in a night. Civil war had laid waste the most fertile provinces of Europe. This was an age of oppression, disorder, and rebellion against constituted authority; the fountains of the great deep of society seemed to be broken up. The clergy suffered from the lawlessness of the times. The persecution of the Church had reached a height without precedent in the history of former ages. The sanctity which protected their persons and property no longer existed; the Metropolitans alone were safe from the violence of the oppression. They tyrannized over the Bishops and the inferior clergy, or, at any rate, they did not exert themselves to defend them from the royal tyranny which plundered them of their property and sent them forth needy dependents on the precarious charity of strangers.

Nicolas had often stood forth as the champion of the weak against the strong; thus he carried the opinion of mankind with him, while every step which he took tended to the exaltation of the Papacy. He had compelled Lothaire to respect the sanctity of the marriage-bond, and to take back the wife whom he had unjustly repudiated; he had fulminated

¹ The pseudo-Isidorian collection is printed in vol. cxxx. of Migne's "Patrologia." A new edition by Fliashius has been published in Germany.

anathemas against Metropolitans who had tyrannized over the Bishops and the inferior clergy, and had persevered in a systematic course of violence and wrong; he had annulled the decisions of Councils which contravened the eternal and immutable principles of truth and justice. Hitherto he had endeavoured, in the same manner as his predecessors, to curb the lawlessness of arbitrary power; but now a new weapon was placed in his hands, which he gladly deposited in his arsenal, to be drawn forth, when occasion required, to smite down the oppressors of the Church. Others had, in fact, aided him in his ambitious struggles for pre-eminence. *They*, as well as *he*, thought that every effort must be exerted to restore to the clergy the sanctity which had hitherto surrounded their persons and property, and that a court of appeal must be established against this secular and ecclesiastical tyranny. The false Decretals supplied them with the means of accomplishing their object. The alleged judgments of the Popes in former ages, in unbroken succession from St. Peter, supplied them with everything which they could require to establish the sovereignty of the Popes over the monarchs of the earth, and their authority over the doctrines and practices of the Churches of Christendom. Rome was, in fact, stated to be the tribunal to which they were to appeal against the exactions of arbitrary violence. One great object of theirs was to protect Bishops from their Metropolitans and other authorities, so as to insure complete impunity by establishing the superior authority of the Bishop of Rome.

The Bishops were, as we shall see directly, much favoured by the Decretals. The issue, however, has been that they have been placed in absolute subjection to the Pope. Another object was to elevate the priesthood, and to secure for it immunity from the charges of the laity. It was decreed that a layman should not bring an accusation against a priest, nor any inferior priest against his superior priest; that a Bishop could only be condemned on the testimony of seventy-two witnesses, whose qualifications are so defined as to make a successful complaint impossible, a Cardinal-priest on the evidence of not less than forty-three, or a Cardinal-deacon of not less than twenty-seven witnesses; and that anyone in an inferior position in any way connected with the Church could not be condemned on the testimony of less than seven witnesses. Besides, there were directions as to dogma, as to the spoliation and usurpation of Church property, as to the rites and ceremonies of the Church, and extravagant statements, as we shall see hereafter, as to the power of the Pope over the Bishops and sovereigns of Christendom. Personal incidents, too, are found in the Decretals which are calculated to give

an appearance of truth and reality to this fiction. Maxims of vital religion are found throughout the compilation, which impart an air of reverence, as well as of specious purity, to the epistles, and seem to evince the anxious desire of the Popes whose names they bear to promote the Divine glory and to advance the best interests of the human family.

This remarkable volume came on the stage about the middle of the ninth century. Its author or authors are unknown. No one at the time appears to have thought that it was a fiction. Eichorn almost alone maintains its Roman origin. The city of Mentz is designated as the place where it was first promulgated. The suspicion has been expressed that Pope Nicolas had something to do with the compilation of it. We should have thought that as he could not find the least vestige of the decrees among the Archives at Rome, and as he knew that they had never been heard of there, he would at once have pronounced them to be a fraud. But, on the contrary, we find that, so far from expressing indignation against the forgeries, he artfully vindicated their authority and gave them the weight of his sanction.¹ By this act, and by taking advantage of other opportunities, he was enabled to do more than any of his predecessors to extend the Papal prerogative. Perhaps the author deluded himself with the sophistry so common in the Church of Rome, that he was engaged in a hallowed undertaking in restoring the power of the clergy, while, by the moral precepts above referred to, expressed in the language which passed for religion in the Middle Ages, he seemed to evince his desire to promote their progress in holiness. Great skill was shown in the construction of this volume. A few genuine epistles in it seemed to give circulation to the larger proportion, which were forgeries. It would be difficult to give an idea of their extent without a repetition which would be wearisome. Suffice it now to observe that from St. Peter to the Council of Nice there are only *seven* genuine epistles, two of which are those of St. Peter in the New Testament, and *sixty-five* forgeries.

The authority of this volume was supreme till the time of the Reformation. It has done more than anything else to mould the Roman Catholic Church and the Papacy during the Middle Ages. The decrees were calculated, when they could be carried into effect, to place the kings of the earth and the Churches of Christendom in abject submission at the feet of the imperious successor of the fisherman of Galilee.

¹ See Planck, iii. 135-137, and Dean Milman, ii. 379, who thinks the Pope's share in the matter even worse than that of the forger.

The Popes, by quoting them without the least hesitation, gave their direct sanction to this great historic forgery. No one but the clergy, during the dark ages in which this volume had its birth, could unveil the imposture; and they, of course, would not do so because it was advantageous to them. The expression of doubt as to its genuineness was regarded in those days as equally sinful with the assertion that the Holy Scriptures are nothing more than a cunningly devised fable. But when the Reformers laid open the secret chambers of iniquity, this volume was subjected to the most searching criticism, and it was discovered that this was the most successful fraud which had been perpetrated in the domain of literature. The learned divines of our own Church, including our own Bishop Jewel, and the learned of the Greek Churches, denounced the Decretals as forgeries. The leading controversialists of the Church of Rome for some time after the Reformation struggled hard to maintain their authority. The evidence against them, however, was so overwhelming that they were obliged at length to allow that they were an imposture. The fraud was admitted by Pius VI. in 1789 in his answer to the demands of the German Archbishops. In recent times the Jesuits at Paris have gone still further. Father Regnon now confesses that "the impostor really gained his end, and altered the whole constitution of the Church as he desired, but did not hinder the universal decay. God blesses no fraud: the false Decretals have done nothing but mischief."¹ Thus we see that they are now condemned by the universal voice of Christendom. The following extract from the works of Dupin, of the Sorbonne, one of the most learned of the Roman Catholic controversialists, sets the question of their genuineness at rest for ever.

"All these Decretals were unknown to all the ancient Fathers, to all the Popes, and to all the ecclesiastical writers who wrote before the ninth century. Now, what rational man can believe that so vast a number of epistles, composed by so many holy Popes, that contained so many important points in relation to the discipline of the Church, could be unknown to Eusebius, to St. Jerome, to St. Augustine, to St. Basil, and, in short, to all those authors who have spoken of the writings of the Popes, or have written concerning the discipline of the Church? Could it possibly happen that the Popes, to whom these epistles were so favourable, would never have cited nor alleged them to raise their reputation? Who would ever imagine that the decisions of these Decretals would never be so much as quoted in any Council or any

¹ "Études de Théol.," par les P.P. Jésuites à Paris. November, 1866.

Canon? He who will seriously consider with himself that, since these Decretals have been imposed on the world, *they have been cited in an infinite number of places by Popes and by Councils, and often copied by Canonists*, will easily be persuaded that they would have gained a mighty reputation, and been quoted by antiquity, if they had been genuine and true."

After having stated that the Scripture cited in these epistles is from the Vulgate translation of St. Jerome, so that they could not have been written, as we have been led to suppose, by the Popes who lived long before his time; that their matter is not at all agreeable to the age of those Popes, since there is no mention in them of persecutions, of martyrdoms, or of the doctrine of the Church in opposition to the first heretics; that they are all in the same style, so that they could not have been written by different Popes, living in different ages, but must have been composed almost at the same time and by the same person—Dupin examines every one of them in detail, and shows in the most masterly manner that all and every one of them in turn were written after the death of the Popes to whom they are ascribed.¹ He concludes with the following remarkable words:

"There are passages taken out of the Fathers, Popes and Councils more modern than the very Popes by whom they are pretended to be written, and in which many things are to be found that do not agree with the history of those times, being purposely said to *favour the Court of Rome, and to favour her pretensions against the rights of Bishops and the liberties of the Churches*. But it would take up too much time to show the falsity of these monuments, which are now rejected by common consent even by those who are most favourable to the Court of Rome, who are obliged to abandon the patronage of these epistles after they have done a vast amount of service *in establishing the greatness of the Court of Rome and ruining the ancient discipline of the Church, especially in relation to ecclesiastical judgment and the rights of Bishops*."

This is strong language from one who has always been considered as one of the brightest ornaments of the Roman Catholic Church. He has well stated the objects for which these epistles were forged. But during the period of the degradation of the Papacy in the tenth century, when men who outraged all laws, Divine and human, were elevated to

¹ A remarkable proof of spuriousness not given by Dupin is a strange anachronism: a Pope living in the second century corresponds with a Bishop of Alexandria more than 200 years after him.

the Papal throne, they were never used, as the Popes had neither leisure nor inclination to prosecute their schemes of aggrandizement. At length Pope Gregory VII. drew them forth from the Papal arsenal, and applied them to the purpose for which they were intended. He thought that they would aid him in his design of welding the States of Europe into a priest-kingdom, of which he should be the head. He was the first who attempted to introduce by new means a new constitution of the Church. Anselm of Lucca, between 1080 and 1086, in obedience to his commands, threw into a convenient form everything in the Isidorian Decretals which tended to establish the absolute power of the Pope. The Gregorian superstructure was erected on the foundation of the Decretals. Whatever present exigencies required was selected from them, and applied without hesitation to the purpose just referred to. Isidore had made Pope Julius, about 308, write to the Eastern Bishops: "The Church of Rome, by a singular privilege, has the power of opening and shutting the gates of heaven to whom she will." On this declaration Gregory built his scheme of dominion. Now, should he not be able to judge on earth, on whom will hang the salvation or damnation of men? By means of this right of binding or loosing the Papacy was able to establish many of its claims. Thus, when Gregory, who was the first to assert that the power of dethroning kings belonged to the Papacy, wanted to depose the German Emperor, he said: "To me is given the power to bind or loose on earth or in heaven." By the same power he absolved subjects from their oath of allegiance, and gave away the property of others; for he declared, at the Roman Synod of 1080: "We desire to show the world that we can give or take away at our will kingdoms, duchies, earldoms—in a word, the possessions of all men, since we can bind or loose."

Isidore also contributed another very sharp weapon to Gregory, which greatly aided him in his struggle for domination. He had made the earlier Popes declare that no speech could be held with an excommunicated man. This pretended assertion was assigned by Gregory as the reason for declaring that no man could, even in matters of business, hold intercourse with Kings and Emperors if excommunicated, and that they must therefore be deposed from their high dignity. Gregory, though he was well aware that this extension of the idea was unknown to the ancient Church, yet at the Synod of 1078 grounded his claim exclusively on the decrees of his predecessors. He and his party borrowed also from Isidore an alleged rule of Pope Urban I. that even an unjust excommunication by a Bishop must be respected. Thus he

made his spiritual arms irresistible, and mowed down his enemies on the right hand and on the left.

We see, then, how this spiritual autocrat used this volume for the accomplishment of his object. We can have no hesitation in saying that if there had been no Decretals there would have been no Gregory. They were the broad foundation on which he raised his superstructure. But as his designs extended even beyond those contemplated in them, he was obliged to improve on these inventions by new forgeries. Anselm and Deusdedit, whom Gregory appointed to assist the former in working out his new system of Church law, could indeed, as the forger made Pope Julius write in 342 in two spurious epistles that the Apostles and the Nicene Council had stated that no Council could be held without the Pope's jurisdiction, bring forward his authority for the decree vesting the summoning of the Council and the decisions on the good pleasure of the Pope; but they could not simply by means of these epistles remove Synods of particular Churches out of their way altogether, and yet they felt that this removal was indispensable to Papal absolutism, as they were the means of "preserving the independent Church life which they were most anxious to destroy." Accordingly, by a wilful perversion of language, they represented Julius as declaring that no one ever had been or ever could be permitted to hold a particular (not Œcumenical) Synod. Again, a direction of Pope Agatho, at a Roman Synod in 680, that all the English Bishops were to observe the ordinations made in former Roman Synods for the Anglo-Saxon Church, was converted by Deusdedit into a decree issued by Agatho to all the Bishops in the world that they must receive all Papal orders as though they were attested by the voice of St. Peter, and were therefore infallible. Again, they made the medieval Canonists believe that St. Augustine had placed the Decretal Epistles of the Popes on an equality with Scripture by altering the passage "Those writings of the Bible were pre-eminently attested which Apostolical Churches had first possessed" into "Those epistles belong to Canonical writings which the Holy See has issued." Thus, then, the work of forgery was deliberately carried on by the Gregorian party in the interests of the Papacy. Their object was, by the forgeries just mentioned, to establish the Pope's universal jurisdiction over the whole Episcopal order. He would not himself systematically take part in those forgeries; but I do think that, in his eagerness for dominion, he appealed to the first forged document which came to hand in support of his pretensions. He treated, for instance, the "Donation of Constantine," now almost universally admitted to be a

forgery, as a valuable and important document. He occasionally, too, distorted facts so as to show his adherents in what manner to make particular passages bear a totally different meaning from that properly expressed by them. Thus, he has done evil that good might come, and instead of healing has opened wider the wounds of society. His real design was to withdraw the clergy from the control of the secular power, and to reign as a single spiritual despot over the Churches, as well as over the monarchs of Christendom.

Gratian's work, called the "Decretum," while issued from Bologna, the first school of law in Europe in the middle of the twelfth century, became afterwards the great manual for the guidance of Roman Catholic theologians. For six centuries it ruled all questions of difficulty as to the canon law. During that period references to Gratian are made as frequently as in the present day references to Scripture in a work of theology. In the Roman courts Gratian's code was acted on; in Bologna it was taught. Even the Emperor Frederick I. had his son instructed in it. So great was the importance attached to this work, that the Fathers at the Council of Trent resolved that there should be a new and authentic edition of it. A band of learned editors, two of whom afterwards became Popes, was appointed, who gave sixteen years to the work, and published the result of their labours in 1580. The Papal Bull which accompanies the publication concludes with those awful words with which St. John closes the sacred volume: "It shall not be lawful to make any addition to this work, or to change or transpose anything in it, or add any interpretation to it; but as it is now printed in this our city of Rome, let it be preserved incorrupt for ever."

This work was always the great authority for the canon law in the Church of Rome, which was received in every nation before the Reformation. No book has ever exercised so much influence in the Church. In fact, this system of law constitutes the Papacy. It regulates the powers over Kings and states—when they are to be excommunicated, when their subjects are to be absolved from their oaths of allegiance, and their kingdoms are to be given to another; it settles the rights of the Popes over the Bishops and clergy, as well as the prerogatives of the two latter, and their freedom from the penalties of the civil laws and the national courts of the realm; in fact, it contains all the laws which relate to the Roman Catholic Church, and to the establishment of the supremacy of the Pope over the Churches and monarchs of Christendom. Now, this book, the main support of the system of the Papacy, is founded on the false Decretals, and

on the fabrications of Gratian and of the others. To the first four centuries there were ascribed 107 Decretal Epistles of the Popes, of which 84 were forgeries and 23 were genuine. Gratian has quoted as authority 65 of the forgeries and 1 of the genuine epistles; 324 of his canons are deduced from the former, and only 11 from the latter.

But I have other proofs that the Popes have not done with these forgeries. The next book in the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church is "The Decretals of Pope Gregory IX." It is a book of higher legal authority than the "Decretum" of Gratian. The latest canonist, Archbishop Devoti, says of it, and of the other book which followed it, "Whatsoever is contained in them makes law." Now, we might hardly think of looking for the forged epistles of the earlier Popes in these Decretals of Pope Gregory IX., because that book was intended to be a collection of the later Decretals, as Gratian had already given the former. But we can see that a few of the earlier Decretal Epistles have been introduced into it: (1) One attributed by mistake to Sixtus II., but really the epistle of Sixtus I.; (2) another from Stephen I.; (3) another from Stephen II.; (4) another from Felix II.; (5) another from Felix I. All these five epistles are in a book having a very high authority in the Church of Rome. Let not, therefore, anyone maintain that the Popes and the Roman Catholic Church have altogether repudiated the false Decretals.

But we have not yet exhausted our subject. It was found that the early history of the Christian Church could not be reconciled with the statements of this work. Accordingly, with deliberate purpose, it was falsified by writers in the interest of the Popes, whose works are studied by canonists along with the "Decretum," in order that it might be made to establish the superiority of the Popes to the Emperors. The Roman Catholics of later ages have been forbidden to examine that history, lest they should discover how grossly it has been falsified in the interest of the dominant system. Thus, like the addition of fresh materials to a building, layer after layer of forgeries has been piled up in the Church. The forgery of the Donation of Constantine and of the Isidorian Decretals is now nearly universally admitted, as we have seen, by Roman Catholics themselves. The foundation has disappeared, but the building still rises before us. The advocates of the system, finding that they cannot argue for it in the same manner as heretofore, have been content to fall back upon tradition, and have asserted that the possession of the supremacy and the rights which the Papacy has claimed through past ages, is an indisputable proof of her right to

the continued enjoyment of them. Thus, then, she converts the iniquity of her fathers into an evidence of right, and refuses to withdraw claims which she knows to be founded on the grossest literary forgeries in the history of the world.

ARTHUR R. PENNINGTON.



ART. II.—"O WOMAN, GREAT IS THY FAITH."¹

THIS was addressed to one who was reckoned among the unbelievers, and spoken by Jesus when He visited the heathen coasts, or borders, of Tyre and Sidon. These formed that part of the Promised Land which had never been conquered by the Hebrews. It had been allotted to the tribe of Asher, who had failed to occupy it, and thus the people there were still Canaanites. The clamorous woman of Canaan was at home among them, but the disciples of Jesus would seem to have felt themselves in danger from her fellow-countrymen. "Send her away," they said, "for she crieth after us." She was drawing perilous notice to them, as to Jews among Gentiles.

But though the remnant of the Canaanites was alien, or even hostile, to the house of Israel, reports of the wonder-working Jesus had reached them, and He seems to have been commonly spoken of among them as the "Son of David." That was how the woman of Canaan addressed Him. She was in sore distress, and, like the wayside beggar at Jericho, would not let Him go by without prayer for help.

At first He answered her not a word. This appears strange, but Jesus would seem to have explained His silence by saying: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Such an explanation, indeed, may be taken to interpret the apparent severity of a later utterance, when He said: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs"; for to the Israelite such were the Canaanites. But this woman breaks through all the barriers of creed, caste, and nationality, and gains praise for the greatness of her faith from Jesus Himself.

The story of the suppliant in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon holds a very marked place in Gospel history, and many are the thoughts or lessons to which it gives rise.

For one, it shows Jesus in touch with that outer world which was abhorred by His nation. Tyre and Sidon were

¹ Matt. xv. 28.