

**OF THE POWER OF THE KEYS; OR,
THE AUTHORITY TO BIND AND TO
LOOSE, TO REMIT AND TO
RETAIN SINS, COMMITTED BY
CHRIST TO HIS CHURCH**

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Of the power of the keys; or, The authority to bind and to loose, to remit and to retain sins,
committed by christ to his church by Humphrey Lloyd

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HUMPHREY LLOYD

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BY

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P R E F A C E .

THE following Tract is an enlarged edition of a pamphlet on the *Doctrine of Absolution*, published anonymously in the year 1871. All that the Author has since read, in connexion with this important subject, has strengthened his conviction of the truth of the view therein advocated. He therefore ventures to present it again to the public, in what he believes to be an improved form, and with additions which throw further light upon it.

It is needless to urge the importance of a right understanding of those words of Christ, in which He bestowed upon His Church the "power of the keys," or the authority to bind and to loose, to remit and to retain sins. They were among the latest of the commissions of the Great Head of the Church, delivered upon an occasion of deep solemnity; and they intimately concern

man's happiness or misery. And it is no small additional incentive to the desire to comprehend their true meaning, that a perversion of that meaning has given the chief support to the sacerdotal power, which has weighed like a nightmare upon the spiritual life of Christendom.

And the confusion in which the subject is involved is no less great than its importance. In proof of this, it is only necessary to refer to the diversity of views respecting it—views for the most part so unlike, that we are led to ascribe them rather to the tones of thought which prevailed at the periods of the world's history at which they took their rise, than to a critical examination of the language of the original message.

The doctrines relating to the Church's power to remit and to retain sins may be reduced to three principal, which, for brevity, are here styled the doctrines of the Primitive, the Mediæval, and the Reformed Churches, respectively. Of these the Author believes that one, which he holds to have been the primitive doctrine, to be also the true one; and he has endeavoured to prove this from an examination of our Lord's words themselves, and from the sense in which

they seemed to have been understood by His Apostles. The writer whom he has generally followed, in this discussion, is the learned Hammond, whose treatise *On Binding and Loosing*, published in 1647, is a model of sound and able exegesis.

But this view has been supplanted in succession by two others, now held, for the most part, by the two great sections of the Western Church; and it is evident that this fact alone must interpose a serious obstacle to its acceptance, if the origin of the later theories could not be reasonably accounted for. Accordingly, in the second chapter of this Tract, the Author has endeavoured to trace the successive steps by which the Western Church descended—first by ritual *additions*, and afterwards through ritual *changes*—on the road to Tridentine dogma; while, in the third, he has sought to show in what manner the Reformers, starting from what was best and purest in Mediæval doctrine—the views of Gregory the Great, and of the schoolmen—may have been led to modify them.

In the account of the discipline of the Church, the Author has, of course, referred continually to the elaborate work of Morinus *De Sacramento*

Pœnitentiæ,—to the Histories of the Christian Councils,—and to the great work of Martene *De Antiquis Ecclesiæ Ritibus*. The short and excellent treatise of Marshall on *The Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church*, published in 1714, contains, however, much of the materials required in this branch of the subject. It is needless to add, that the well-known work of Bingham on *The Antiquities of the Christian Church* has been continually referred to, although with the views of that writer upon the main question—as well as with those of Archbishop Ussher from which they are taken,—the Author is unable to concur.

The *Sylloge Confessionum*, published at Oxford, and the valuable treatise of Winer on *The Confessions of Christendom*, supply a great portion of the materials needed in relation to the views of the Continental Reformed Churches. The Church of England has given no authoritative exposition of her views in reference to the Power of the Keys, beyond that contained in her 33rd Article. The statements contained in the catechisms of King Edward VI., and of Dean Nowell, and in the second Book of the Homilies (which differs from the other two), cannot be placed in the same category.

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