

A remarkable pamphlet on the Rights and the Wrongs of the Papacy (1) has just been published in French under this title. It is the work of a Protestant theologian in whose mind the ideas to which he has thus given publicity have been working for many years. Having felt the need of fixing for himself the true position of the Papacy in the Christian world, as the mariner determines and fixes on his chart the position of a sunken rock, and being convinced that the Pope is neither the Antichrist of the extreme Protestants, nor the infallible vicar of Christ of the Ultramontanes, Doctor Petavel believes that he has found the true solution of the problem in the parable of the steward reported by Matthew (xxiv. 45-51) and Luke (xii. 41-46). At first sight it will certainly excite astonishment that a Protestant should suggest that the Pope has been established in his office by God Himself; but the explanation is found in the fact that in the Bible God is often said to do that which He permits, and in Paul's declaration that "the powers that be are ordained of God;" and the author is careful also to apply the Biblical corrective of that much-abused principle in the equally authorized right to withhold obedience to the power when it involves disobedience to God. Whatever may be thought of the arguments on that point, it is certainly remarkable how closely the seven verses of the parable in Matthew correspond with seven successive stages in the history of the Papacy. In fact, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to put that history into so concise a form and so small a compass as it is found in the parable, at the same time indicating its moral lessons. This correspondence is brought out with great clearness in Dr. Petavel's pamphlet, wherein it is shown that while the early Bishops of Rome were, like the steward in the parable at the beginning of his career, both faithful and skilful, and so were, like him, entrusted with greater authority, yet afterwards, during the Lord's continued absence, by personal misbehaviour and by ill-treatment of fellow-servants, like the steward again, the Popes, too, have incurred the just judgment of the Lord, and have had to suffer accordingly. It may be thought that Dr. Petavel makes too many concessions, and goes too far in some of his admissions, as, for example, that Peter may have been at Rome, and that the Popes may be considered his successors; but if the Pope, or any one of his obedient subjects, should be induced by these early concessions to admit that this is the right application of the parable, he would soon discover that in the hand of Dr. Petavel it is a weapon that cuts both ways, and he will find himself