

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE DOGMATISM OF THE STATIONARY PERIOD.

IN speaking of the character of the age of commentators, we noticed principally the ingenious servility which it displays;—the acuteness with which it finds ground for speculation in the expression of other men's thoughts;—the want of all vigor and fertility in acquiring any real and new truths. Such was the character of the reasoners of the stationary period from the first; but, at a later day, this character, from various causes, was modified by new features. The servility which had yielded itself to the yoke, insisted upon forcing it on the necks of others: the subtlety which found all the truth it needed in certain accredited writings, resolved that no one should find there, or in any other region, any other truths; speculative men became tyrants without ceasing to be slaves; to their character of Commentators they added that of Dogmatists.

1. *Origin of the Scholastic Philosophy.*—The causes of this change have been very happily analyzed and described by several modern writers.¹ The general nature of the process may be briefly stated to have been the following.

The tendencies of the later times of the Roman empire to a commenting literature, and a second-hand philosophy, have already been noticed. The loss of the dignity of political freedom, the want of the cheerfulness of advancing prosperity, and the substitution of the less philosophical structure of the Latin language for the delicate intellectual mechanism of the Greek, fixed and augmented the prevalent feebleness and barrenness of intellect. Men forgot, or feared, to consult nature, to seek for new truths, to do what the great discoverers of other times had done; they were content to consult libraries, to study and defend old opinions, to talk of what great geniuses had said. They sought their philosophy in accredited treatises, and dared not question such doctrines as they there found.

The character of the philosophy to which they were thus led, was determined by this want of courage and originality. There are various

¹ Dr. Hampden, in the *Life of Thomas Aquinas*, in the *Encyc. Metrop. Degerando, Hist. Comparée*, vol. iv. Also Tennomaun, *Hist. of Phil.* vol. viii. Introduction.