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ART. XIII.—THE APOSTLES' CREED.

*II.—Its Inward Constitution and Form.*

To estimate properly the merits and claims of the *apostolical symbol*, it is not enough to be acquainted with the facts of its history outwardly considered. We need still more to understand its interior history; its rise and progress under an inward view; the idea which is developed in its constitution, and the manner in which the development is to be regarded as taking place.

In the first place, the Creed is no work of mere outward *authority*, imposed on the Church by Christ or his Apostles. It would help its credit greatly in the eyes of some, no doubt, if it could be made to appear under this view. Their idea of christianity is such as involves prevailingly, the notion of a given or fixed scheme of things to be believed and done, propounded for the use of men, on the authority of heaven, in a purely mechanical and outward way. If there were evidence that some several of the Apostles together, or even the Apostle Paul, or the Apostle John alone, had formed the Creed as it now stands, and handed it over in this shape as something finished and complete, to the keeping of the Church, it would be looked upon, of course, as at once a

## ART. XV.—KIRWAN'S LETTERS.

*Letters to the Rt. Rev. John Hughes, Roman Catholic Bishop of New York. By Kirwan. First Series 1847. Second Series 1849. New York.*

THE two small tracts which go under this title, have obtained, as is generally known, a very wide circulation. They appeared originally, as a series of communications, in the *New York Observer*, and were copied from this into a great many other religious papers. Their popularity led subsequently to their being printed as pamphlets; in which form they have been still more extensively scattered over the length and breadth of the land. They have been counted worthy of translation into other languages, and their fame may be said to have gone out to the ends of the earth. Vast praise has been bestowed upon them on all sides; to such an extent, indeed, that their author must have required no inconsiderable amount of grace, not to fall into the easy snare and condemnation of thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think. The religious press has rung the most flattering changes on the theme of his merits, one organ vying with another, apparently, in some cases, to show its own theological acumen, by heaping laudations on his head. His wit and learning have been trumpeted to the skies. He has been hailed as a second Junius in letters, more worthy of admiration in many respects than the first. All sects and parties have delighted to do him honor. A new era was supposed to have broken upon the history of Protestantism, by the bold onset of the "great unknown" on the pride and strength of the Roman Church. The whole controversy was made so level to the common understanding, so squeezed into nutshell dimensions, so shut up to the off-hand alternatives of every-day sense, so bountifully sprinkled with the vivacity of the drawing room or the exchange; it seemed as though a full end of it were taken to have been made at once, and no room could be found for any farther argument in the case. The tomes of musty learning which had been given to it in other days, might have been necessary before; but all occasion for them seemed now to be fast coming to an end.

With a shepherd's sling, and a smooth small stone from the brook, Kirwan had gone forth to battle, and the philistine of Gath lay dead at his feet. To believe the puffs in the newspapers, his primers were worth, if not their own weight in gold, at least all the folios of Chemnitz and the Magdeburg Centuriators put together.

All this, of course, serves to clothe these "Letters" with importance. Their significance is not to be estimated by their size, we must look at their current reputation and credit. We feel bound also, to admit in their favor much more than a simply outward claim in this way to our notice and respect. They come, according to general uncontradicted acceptance, from a most respectable source; their author is one, whom we have long been accustomed to honor, and love, as an able and faithful minister of Christ. In the work before us, too, his general character stands in favorable contrast with much that we are doomed to meet in the current controversy with Rome, as conducted by other hands. The low bred vulgarity, the blackguard polemics, which, too, often come in our way under such form, (reminding one of the vagrant mendicancy of the Roman Church itself,) are not allowed to offend us from the pen of Kirwan. He shows throughout the air and bearing of a gentleman. As a general thing, moreover, he breathes a spirit of kindness; even when he may be unjust and harsh in fact, it is easy to see that it springs not from a directly malignant temper towards those who are wronged. He sins out of ignorance, in such cases, more than out of fanatical hate. He ceases not to be good-natured, however we may feel too often that he is neither sufficiently earnest nor fair. His frivolity carries with it a certain dignity, and sets upon him with well bred ease. It is not such as delights in the companionship of fools. His style abounds with sprightly vivacity and wit, and is well adapted to popular impression; though not exactly with an eloquence and earnestness to remind us, as his partial editor and *copy-right holder* remarks "of some of the most celebrated passages from the Irish bar." There is besides a tolerable amount of true and solid thought, embraced in the general argumentation of his Letters: which, it is to be hoped, may not fail to exert a good influence

where they are read, and from whose value and force we have no wish certainly to detract. A certain degree of glory also has been reflected upon the whole position of the writer by the palpable advantage he has had over Bishop Hughes. This gentleman managed his part of the controversy badly, displaying in it but little of the tact and skill which he is generally supposed to possess. He could never have intended seriously to follow Kirwan in the details of his attack. Still, he seems to have felt it necessary to take notice of it in some way, at least indirectly. This, however, gave him the aspect, before the public, of one who had accepted the challenge he was here called to meet; and when the demonstration ended as it did, without being carried out apparently to its own proper end, it seemed naturally enough to betoken a sense of actual confusion and defeat, in the particular controversy he was thus found to waive. Such was, of course, the construction put upon the whole proceeding, by Kirwan and his friends. Bishop Hughes, the great champion of the Pope in America, was held to have been fairly silenced, because he had nothing whatever to say. He was taken all a-back by the prodigious novelty and power of this assault, and published his own shame by going to Halifax to hide it. All this, we say, has contributed to invest these Letters of Kirwan with a halo of glory, such as few pamphlets of the same size have ever been able to win and wear. The author comes before us like a conquering chief, with laurels on his brow, and roses in his path.

Kirwan's Letters, then, may be considered a very fair and respectable representation of the whole popular style of Protestantism, in whose interest they appear; and, in this view especially, they challenge respectful criticism, while they furnish at the same time a desirable opportunity for exposing at least some of the flaws and defects, under which this popular system labors. In dealing with Kirwan, we have to do, in fact, not with a couple of twelve penny pamphlets simply, but with the reigning tone of Protestant thought as it stands at present in this country; he has the mass of opinion and feeling, in all directions, on his side; this is the great secret of his popularity and credit. And all will admit, that the reigning fashion in this respect could not

well find a more worthy spokesman, to stand forward in its name. It can have no right to complain of any criticism, which lights upon it fairly, through its knightly representative in the person of Kirwan.

We shall endeavour now to show, that the championship of Protestantism here offered to our view, is wholly inadequate and unsatisfactory. With all its brilliancy and eclat, it must be counted a failure as regards its own cause. Whether viewed as a vindication of the Protestant faith, or as a polemic assault upon the Church of Rome, it falls far short of what such high argument legitimately requires. It is unfair and unjust to both the interests, between which it pretends to mediate with chivalric lance and sword. Romanism and Protestantism are alike wronged by its intervention. As Rome was not built in a day, so neither is it likely to fall by a flourish of trumpets, and if the Church of the Reformation is destined to endure and prevail, it must be on far other ground, than the foundation laid for it in Kirwan's Letters.

A fatal presumption against them is found, at the very outset, in the air of easy overweening confidence, with which they address themselves to their work; implying, as it does, an utter miscalculation of the strength and power of the opposite cause. A sling in the hands of David may prevail over the shield and spear of Goliath; and the walls of Jericho, if God so please, may fall before a blast of ram's horns. But it will not be by imagining the giant, in the first case, into a lilliputian dwarf; nor by mistaking the walls, in the second, for a barricade of pasteboard. We lay it down as a settled axiom, that no warfare upon the Roman Church can be of any true force or weight, which begins and ends with the assumption that it is a pure fiction throughout, which must crumble into ruins, or dissolve into thin air, on the first application to it of a little common sense.

This assumption reigns, in most of our popular attacks on Popery. To hear such crusaders talk, one might suppose that all the powers of ignorance and sin had combined to work out, in the Roman system, a hellish diabolical satire on the world and its Maker, such as is to be found nowhere else in the whole range of history besides. Here is a vast huge organization, fa-

vored by accident against God's proper plan, reaching through long centuries of blank chaos, filling the universal Christian world with its power, folding the tendencies of all modern history in its bosom, which yet, if we are to believe the view now noticed, is so full of absurdity in one direction, and so diametrically opposed to the Bible and all true religion in another, so void at once of all reason and all piety, that we need the conception of something like bedlam for the holy Church catholic, to understand how it could possibly subsist for a single day.

Kirwan, we are sorry to say, with all his general courtesy, is completely carried away also with the power of this wholesale fancy. It reveals itself as a sort of fixed idea, through his whole argument. He has been praised for his great urbanity towards Bishop Hughes; and it is easy enough to see, that he wishes to treat him with respectful politeness throughout. In reality, however, his style of address, on the score now mentioned and as measured from the position of the man addressed, must be regarded as insolent in the extreme; so that we wonder not in the least at the offence created by it in the bishop's mind. It is as though some English aristocrat should stand before us, and with cavalier genteel freedom allow us to see and feel every moment, through phraseology polite, that he took all Americans to be either knaves or fools. Romanism is for Kirwan a compound of miserable delusion and deceit, manufactured from the start by the joint activity of Satan and wicked priests; without any good design; in full opposition to the Bible, and in defiance of all common sense. *How* so bald an imposture should have come to such vast power on so poor a basis, he does not pretend to show, not even probably to inquire; much less does he think it necessary to explain, *why* Christianity should have been doomed to such dreadful captivity for a thousand years. Enough that we have the fact staring us in the face. Confession, absolution, transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the mass, the celibacy of the clergy, &c., are all without a shadow of authority or sense in their favor. The case is taken to be so plain, that any child might see it. Everywhere Kirwan is ready to find with all ease, in this way, "a priestly device, to ensnare the conscience and to enslave men." All the peculiar doctrines and usages of the

Roman Church are referred to cunning policy and contrivance, on the part of bad men, for the purpose, consciously, of keeping the world from the knowledge of the truth, and binding it in chains of error. The Church has been plainly a hell-born conspiracy, to hold men in ignorance, and deprive them of their native rights, from the beginning. And all this, at the same time, under a form of such blunt and forward stupidity, as may be said to expose itself, by its very weakness, to scorn and contempt, as soon as it comes to any attentive consideration. All enlightened priests, of course, *know* that their religion is a sham and a lie. Bishop Hughes, in particular, it must be courteously taken for granted all along, is quite too well informed, and has too much American life in him altogether, to be at all honest or in earnest with his priestly trade. "What an outrage upon the common sense of the world to have men, dressed up in canonicals, teaching things as true, of which the beast that Balaam rode might well be ashamed." Bishop Hughes is no ass, we may charitably trust, and must, therefore, pass for a hypocrite. "Permit me to say, my dear sir, in reference to yourself," so Kirwan *graciously* speaks, "that I have far too high a regard for your intelligence to admit for a moment, that you believe in the absurd doctrines which your Church teaches. Like the ancient priests of Egypt, you must have one class of opinions for the people, and another for yourself. Will you say that this is harsh and uncharitable? None knows better than yourself that history affirms it of popes, cardinals and bishops, that have lived before you. On no other ground can I possibly account for your remaining one hour in the Roman Catholic Church." So throughout, the bishop is respectfully begged to lay aside the priest, the acted part, and make room for his own honest convictions as a man.

All this, as we have said, is prodigiously insulting. It is not, however, in such view particularly, that we here make it the subject of notice. We refer to it, as illustrating the sense of immeasurable superiority, with which evidently the whole argument of these Letters is conducted against the Church of Rome. This, we say, constitutes a powerful presumption, from the start, against the force of the argument itself. Kirwan finds it quite too easy,

to end and settle forever this great controversy. He takes it for granted, that he can bring it within the compass of an egg-shell, and get to the bottom of it with a common tea-spoon. With the aid of the Bible, and his own common sense simply to explain it, he feels himself strong enough to storm all the entrenchments of Romanism, as so many towers of ice cream or gingerbread. They are felt, in his mind, to be creations only and wholly of ridiculous folly and shame. All this, however, only shows that he is not properly prepared for the task he has here taken into his hands. He has no right acquaintance with the history of the Roman Church; he is ignorant of its true genius and life; he has never mastered, to any extent, its interior economy and sense. No man who understands the Roman Church, and whose voice deserves to be heard in opposition to its claims, can ever think, or speak of it as a pure Satanic fiction. It is not in such view, indeed, that even the errors of heathenism itself can be rightly understood. They become intelligible, only as they are admitted to include some fragments, at least, of religious truth, and are studied in this way as comparative approximations towards religion in its perfect form, rather than as the denial in full of its power. But if the history of religion, in such universal view, be thus possessed of reason and order, how shall we dare to question their presence to a far greater extent, in the history of Christianity itself, under the form it is found to carry in the old Roman Catholic Church? To conceive of this as taking the place of the pure primitive faith, without any reason and in the way of sheer Satanic corruption, by the art and craft of cunning, wicked priests, to such an extent as to bind the whole Christian world for centuries in bonds of nonsensical impious falsehood, defeating the promise of Christ and virtually driving him from the world; to conceive of all this, we say, as the true whole sense and meaning of the Roman Catholic Church, is such an outrage on reason, and such a libel on God's Providence, as no one, who is brought to look at it rightly, can endure with a moment's patience. Away with the thought that such a system as this, so magnificent and gorgeous in its whole structure, which has nursed so many nations into maturity, which fills so large a space in the history of the world's life, which has bred such a



multitude of souls for heaven, which so many of the profoundest minds, in different ages, have bowed down to with veneration and respect—away with the thought, that such a system should be, after all, the product only of chance or blind irrational wickedness, cunningly studying its own ends. The whole imagination is monstrous, and becomes more so always, in proportion as it is weighed in the balance of serious thought. It overthrows all faith in the Church. It turns all history into chaos. If our defence of Protestantism is to be at all solid and sound, it must proceed throughout on a different view of the Roman Catholic Church. Kirwan ruins his own cause, by making thus light of the system he undertakes to oppose. Romanism is not mere nonsense, to be put down with an anecdote, or a pun. It means something; means, in truth, a great deal. Every doctrine it teaches has its bright side, as well as that which may be dark. Only one who has felt its inward life in some measure, and is prepared thus to do it justice, can ever be fully qualified to combat its pretensions and claims. This is not the case with Kirwan. True, he was raised in the Roman Church. But he never understood its proper historical life, the peculiar meaning of religion in the catholic form; and he has no understanding of all this now. If he had, he would have managed this controversy in a very different style.

We can all see, readily enough, the vanity and weakness of such sweeping prejudice, when exercised towards Protestantism on the side of zealots for the cause of Rome. Such can allow no sense or truth of any sort, in the Reformation. They will have it, that it was all a work of blind wickedness, coming, not from above, but from beneath, by the instigation of the devil and the bad passions of unholy men. Zuingli, Luther, Calvin, were all influenced, in their view, by the worst motives, and lent themselves consciously to the service of a lie. So the history of Protestantism since, is taken to be wholly a blank, or a wild horrid dream, in the world's life. It includes, in such view, no reason, carries in its bosom no truth, contributes nothing to the cause of religion and human happiness, in any way; and so, of course, is destined, in due time, to lose itself forever, like a mountain torrent dispersed on all sides over a desert of sand.

Every such easy overweening imagination on the part of Romanists, we say, is enough of itself, to cut the sinews of any argument against Protestantism with which it may be joined. The movement of the sixteenth century is too grand; the crisis involved in it for religion too clear; the epoch constituted by it, too vastly significant; the actors, by whom it was brought about, take quite too central a place in the drama of human life, and are quite too imposing in the colossal proportions of their intellectual and moral strength; the consequences of the convulsion are altogether too deep and broad, and far reaching, for the entire life of the modern world, its literature, art, science, politics, and social character; the entire course of Protestantism, in one word, shows itself too profoundly *historical*, carrying along with it evidently the grand central stream of the world's civilization, and embracing in its bosom evidently the most active and powerful elements by which this civilization is to take a still higher form hereafter: the whole fact of the Reformation and its results down to the present time, is too impressively overwhelming for any truly thoughtful mind, to be capable of being *rationaly* treated in any such summary way. We must thrust out our own eyes, and lose all faith in history as God's work, and abandon all manly trust in Christianity itself, to admit that Protestantism is without meaning and power for Christ's kingdom in the world. Romanists must learn to do justice to its actual greatness, before they can expect to be heard patiently in opposition to its claims. One champion like the learned and pious Mæhler, now with God, who knows how to admit the historical significance of the Reformation, while he still tries to show that it was unnecessary, who can speak respectfully and honorably of such men as Luther, Melancton, and Calvin, while he holds them guilty of great wrong, who takes pains to understand and represent fairly the Protestant doctrines, which he yet labors to confute; one *such* champion is worth, on that side, a full score of Auduns and Brownsons, who can see in Protestantism no worth or meaning whatever. And just so, on the Protestant side; any argument against Romanism must be comparatively powerless in the end, that refuses to do justice to its historical significance. The Roman Catholic Church is a

great fact too, which only the blindness of bigotry can fail to see and acknowledge. It is just as monstrous to stultify the history of the Church, and make it mean nothing, or worse than nothing, from the ninth century to the fifteenth, as it is to abuse in the same way the period reaching from the age of Luther to the present time. How much more power, immeasurably, in defence of Protestant faith, is exhibited by such a man as Ullmann, the admirable and accomplished author of the "Reformers before the Reformation"! One *such* writer, we say here again, is of more account for the interest on whose side he stands, than a hundred tongues and pens let loose against Rome in the usual anti-popery style.

Kirwan's polemics are made up largely of particular facts discreditable to the Church of Rome, and *ad captandum* appeals to common sense. His facts are furnished, in considerable part, from his own experience and observation in Ireland. There can be no question that disgraceful exemplifications of Romanism, in the form of ignorant priests and irreligious superstitious practices in the name of religion, may be found in that unhappy country, to almost any extent. We may find large store of such argument also in Mexico, as well as in other lands; and it is easy to gather it in almost any quantity, from the history of christianity in past ages. We admit, too, that it is not without force when properly used. The corruptions in the Roman Church, in the sixteenth century, led to the Reformation, and may still be appealed to for its vindication. The comparative tendencies of Romanism and Protestantism, as exemplified in the history and present state of the countries in which they have respectively prevailed, furnish a very fair ground of argument against the overbearing pretensions of the first, and in favor of the moral superiority of the second. It requires, however, a very profound and comprehensive survey, with due regard to all circumstances and conditions, to conduct such a comparison to anything like a scientific issue; and then its results must be taken as of relative, rather than absolutely conclusive force, in regard to the main question. Much turns here on nationality and outward relations. Admitting it to show the superior power of Protestantism, that it falls in with the genius of the more active nations, and binds them

to its service, it will not follow that the want of such spirit of action has been owing in all cases heretofore, or that is wholly attributable among any particular people now, to the want of Protestantism. No difference of this sort is sufficient to explain the difference between Mexico and New England. Institutions may be, to a certain extent, good in one age, that cease to be so altogether in another. It must ever be unsafe, in the case before us, to argue either the absolute corruption of Romanism, or the absolute perfection of Protestantism, from a comparative view of their tendencies at the present time. Especially must it be unsafe to lay such stress on isolated, fragmentary proofs and illustrations. The history of the Church abounds with abominations, we may say, from the beginning, which a writer like Gibbon can easily put forward in such style, that they shall seem to throw all her virtues into the shade. There are besides, abominations belonging to Protestantism itself, taking it in the broad sense, which agree as little with true christianity as the worst errors of Rome; and seem clearly enough to show, at all events, that however superior it may be to the other interest, it is by no means entitled still to look upon itself as exclusively in possession of all truth. It is wholly unsatisfactory to bring forward particular abuses, however gross, which are found connected with Romanism in certain quarters of the world, and at once build upon such ground a sweeping and final conclusion against the whole system to which they belong; as though this must be held responsible for every corruption wrought in its name, and as though all had been contrived and designed in its case, just to run to such bad end. The premises are much too narrow for so broad a conclusion.

We mean not then to undervalue the argument from facts here, in its proper form; for we believe it to be, in truth, of great force. Neither do we dispute the importance of Kirwan's facts, in their right place. We say only that they fall far short of establishing legitimately, what they are employed to establish in his hands. He does not use them to exemplify simply the capabilities of evil that are lodged in Romanism, its wrong tendencies as springing from its wrong constitution; but applies them, directly and immediately, as tests of universal character, as though they were, as a matter of course, the very aim and drift of the

system throughout. This is shallow. It proves nothing, except as it takes for granted all it proposes to prove from the start. It goes on the broad coarse supposition, that the whole structure of Romanism, is the senseless fabrication of wicked men and devils in league to deceive the world; which we have already seen to be absurd.

Kirwan's use of "common sense," is much of the same order with his use of "facts." It lies all on the surface, and turns on the most bald, first-best, hap-hazard apprehension of its objects. No pains are taken to reach the interior sense of anything; all is estimated by the way it strikes the mind, under its first, most naked and outward presentation. It is easy to make almost anything ridiculous, by sundering it from its proper connections, and placing it in a false light; and the manifold abuses and superstitions that caricature, in every direction, the institutions of the Roman Church, may be said to lay them specially open to this mode of attack. Most easy is it in this way, to dispose of the doctrines of purgatory, penance, extreme unction, transubstantiation, and any other that is turned to bad purpose in the hands of ignorant or corrupt men; but our theological earnestness must be small indeed, if we can feel that we have gone by any such argumentation to the bottom of the subject, in any case, or disposed of it at all according to its true intrinsic merits.

Take it altogether, this *common sense* is a very ticklish and uncertain tool to work with, in matters of theology and religion. It is not the same thing in all hands. It is more like the weathercock that goes by the wind, than the steady compass turned always towards the same point. The common sense of the Quaker, sees only mummery and folly in all religious forms; that of the Baptist, derides the sprinkling of babies; that of the Unitarian, finds only the wildest contradiction in the doctrine of the Trinity, and the holy mystery of the incarnation. It is, indeed, where thought becomes most earnest and deep precisely, that common sense, in its ordinary acceptation, is least to be trusted as a guide. It plays sad havoc with philosophy, and we are warned against it in the Bible as the enemy of all sound religion. *Common sense*, the off-hand outside judgment of the natural mind, is no safe measure at all of spiritual christianity; it cannot

discern the things of the Spirit of God, but is ever ready to cry out against them as foolishness. We mean not, of course, to say a word against the use of intelligence and reason, in the service of religion. God can never be pleased with the sacrifice of *fools*. We object only to the fashion of appealing, in Kirwan's style, to the first sense that comes to hand in the common mind, as conclusive on questions of religious faith and practice. No such standard is safe; no such judgment can be secure.

It needs no great depth of thought, to discover the insufficiency of this sort of argument, as actually managed in the hands of Kirwan. Where his appeals to common sense are most direct and bold, we find them, in some cases at least, most undeserving of all confidence and respect. So, for instance, in some of his interpretations of Scripture. He makes much of the Bible, as we all should. "With *me* the teachings of all your councils," he says, "weigh not a feather; give *me*, if you can, Bible authority.—With *me*, the authority of your popes and councils is not worth a penny. I would rather have one text of Scripture bearing upon the point, than the teachings of as many such as you could string between here and Jupiter." All very well. That sounds big and independent. But the man needs pretty heavy ballast, in the way of knowledge and sense, who thus plays off his own use of the Bible against that of the whole world besides, and holds the judgments of all councils more light than a feather as weighed against one text expounded by himself. He requires, if not downright infallibility, yet something not far from it, to justify such vast confidence; and we may well be struck with the inconsistency, if after all, his interpretations of Scripture betray no very profound insight into its sense. Kirwan, we are sorry to say, is by no means thus infallibly safe in this business of explaining the Bible. He will not allow the authority of popes and councils to be of the least value, for unlocking its meaning; but thrusts into our hands for this purpose, the key of his own common sense. To our view, however, this last pope is just as little to be trusted as any of the rest. He makes himself indeed, to be identical with the Bible, the personification of the divine text itself; but who does not know, that all other popes, and all councils too, have affected to do, more or less, the very same thing?

Kirwan finds no difficulty whatever, in getting at once in full to the bottom of the Lord's supper. The words of institution are plain, and it is only strange that the subject should ever have cost any body the least trouble. All resolves itself into the common-place thought, that the bread was to be a sign merely of Christ's body and the wine an emblem of his blood. "Just see," our cunning Daniel exclaims, "how a little common sense simplifies every thing!"—Simple of a truth, and no less *flat*.

The grand and solemn passage, Matt. xvi. 15–19, is disposed of in similarly facile style. Upon this *rock*, that is the confession of Peter that he was the Son of the living God, Christ engaged to build his Church. "How simple and common sense," cries Kirwan. Again, the kingdom of heaven means the visible church, and the *keys* are simply the power of admitting proper persons into it and excluding improper persons from it. "How simple and common sense is all this," once more cries Kirwan. To bind and loose is a figurative expression, to represent the instructions and regulations of the twelve apostles, for the use of the Church. "This, Sir, I believe,"—that is, *I*, Kirwan, who count all popes and councils as lighter than a feather over against my own dexterity in the use of Bible texts—"this *I* believe to be the common sense, the fair and just interpretation of a passage on which your Church has built up a priestly power, that has overshadowed the earth and enslaved nations. Where now, sir, is your supremacy of Peter—your power of the keys—your power of absolution? Gone, like the morning cloud before the sun. Blessed be God, you have not yet turned your keys upon the common sense of the world." Summary work of it, indeed, is made by this potent talisman, the world's common sense! It puts one in mind of the "*veni, vidi, vici*," of the old Latin general, so swift is its progress, so easy its triumph. But, alas! how it belittles all that is sublime, and turns the magnificent poetry of heaven into the tame prose of the most trivial every-day life!

Our limits, however, forbid details. It is more of account, besides, to direct our criticism towards what is general. In this view, we go on to say that the whole position of Kirwan, in these Letters, is such as to place him in a false relation to the truth. Whatever may be the justice of his cause as against the Pope

and bishop Hughes, it is so managed in his hands as to become most unjust to Christianity. His defence of Protestantism, goes forward at the cost of the ancient faith; and his war upon Rome, to a fearful extent, is a war at the same time on all that is comprehended in the idea of the Holy Catholic Church.

The most general acquaintance with church history, is sufficient at once, to show that, in many cases at least, his argumentation proves a great deal too much. Instead of stopping with the proper Roman abuse, it runs back into the very life and heart of the early Church. It seems indeed, to proceed throughout on the assumption that the system it opposes, came in violently and abruptly, one tyrannical contrivance after another, displacing and superseding a quite different order of things which had prevailed before. "Yours is not the oldest religion," Kirwan says in his address to Irish Roman Catholics: "I could here give you the time, did the limits of a letter permit, when the distinguishing doctrines of your Church were introduced. The celibacy of the clergy came into the Church in the fourth century, purgatory appeared in the seventh, &c." There is room, certainly, for arguing against the errors of the Roman Church, on the score of their comparative novelty; and the subject is so important, that it would have been well to *force* more time into the task of doing it some sort of justice; but the argument is one, which to succeed at all, requires a most careful discrimination between all such corruptions and the earlier forms of church life, of which they are to be taken as an abuse. With Kirwan, as with the school in general to which he belongs, this discrimination is wanting altogether. He just lumps the whole argument into a single easy proposition, which his readers are then asked to accept as true on his own infallible authority. Romanism is a novelty, introduced by usurpation into the seat of ancient christianity, and all its institutions here condemned, are to be regarded as the product, root and branch, of this violent diabolical revolution. Never was there, in fact, however, a more untenable hypothesis applied to the course of church history. It cannot bear a moment's examination.

Take, for instance, the celibacy of the clergy. It came in, says Kirwan, in the fourth century. That itself is pretty far



back, for a purely *popish* error. But the root of the thing lies a great deal farther back still. The idea of a peculiar merit or spiritual worth in celibacy, adopted for the more unreserved service of Christ in the Church, falls back beyond all controversy, to the very dawn of Christianity, and meets us in full force in the second century. "A bishop *must* be the husband of one wife," according to Paul in the hands of Kirwan. But the early Church took that text differently; italicising not the "must," but the "one," and seeing in it the exclusion of a second marriage; as a widow, in parallel case, (1 Tim. v. 9,) was to be the wife of one man; and, on this very ground, it was held improper for a priest to marry after taking orders, however he might be allowed to continue a marriage into which he had entered before. Kirwan, not to be outdone by the Council of Trent, hurls his anathema against the whole business, as "a doctrine of devils," forcing the "common sense exposition," as he calls it, of 1 Tim. iv. 3, into the face of Bishop Hughes, to reduce him to reason. It is not, indeed, quite clear, how a regulation, making celibacy a qualification for a certain service, which men are as free to enter, or avoid, as a military or mercantile expedition to China, is tantamount at once to a Gnostic prohibition of marriage itself, as something universally unclean. And one is bewildered still farther in the case, when it is remembered, that the very same Church, which has thus magnified the merit of celibacy, from the beginning, as voluntarily embraced by the few for the sake of the many; so far from falling in with the Gnostic condemnation now mentioned, with no less emphasis from the start has always denounced this, as contrary to the truth, and at full war with the spirit of the New Testament; carrying her zeal for the sanctity of marriage so far indeed, as finally to raise the institution into the character of a divine sacrament. With all this, however, we have here no immediate concern. Our object is simply to illustrate the way, in which the rapier of Kirwan's common sense, as plied against Romanism, runs itself too often, up to the very hilt, in the bowels of primitive Christianity. As an idea, or tendency at least, the institution of celibacy meets us from the earliest days of the Church; and some regard must be had to this fact, before we can pretend rationally to have disposed of it in a truly rational way.

In the same manner, it would be very easy to show that the opposition made by Kirwan to Roman baptism, confession, absolution, transubstantiation, &c., is so conducted as to extend, for the most part, to realities that were held to be of sacred authority in the early Church. Whatever may be the *peculiarities* in the case that deserve to be stigmatized as strictly Roman inventions, abuses that are fairly chargeable to *popery* as a system in the way of defection from the earlier faith, no proper pains at all, are taken here to sever them out for our notice; but, as a general thing, they are confounded with forms of thinking that were notoriously in force from the earliest times before, by which means these are sweepingly involved in the same uncompromising censure and reproach. The argument at last, has regard, not so much to the Roman *form* of thinking, separately taken, as to the whole primitive substance, which it is found to caricature and misrepresent. In the case of baptism, for instance, it is not simply the superstitious accompaniments that attend it in the Church of Rome, that turn it into a fiction, (although, even in such view, the fiction would amount to a nullification of the Church since the third century); the whole idea of baptismal grace, as it has reigned in the Church most clearly from the time of the Apostles, is treated with derision. So the mystery of the holy eucharist. So the conception of supernatural powers belonging to the Church, in every form and shape. All, with Kirwan, is superstition and nonsense; "which," he says, "excite my wits as I may, I cannot understand; it is addressed to my ignorance." This may be all true enough; and our business, just now, is neither to explain nor vindicate any part of the mystery. We simply hold up to view the fact, that these things all entered into the faith of the early Church, and cannot be assailed therefore as exclusively popish. The argument, or declamation rather, of Kirwan, proves a great deal too much. In almost every case, it lays the axe at the root of an old catholic idea, while pretending only to lop off a Roman superstition, so that we are forced to cry out: Woodman, spare *that* tree! Let us not, to use a German proverb, tumble out the child with the bathing tub. Or, if that be our purpose, let us, at all events, see what we are about, and not pretend to be doing the one thing only, while we are, in truth, at the same time doing also the other.

It is quite likely, indeed, that Kirwan would not be greatly intimidated, if he even knew himself in this case to be at issue, not simply with the Pope and his servant Bishop Hughes, but with the whole ancient Church. The man, for whom one text of scripture, seen in the mirror of his own mind, is of more weight, than a string of ecclesiastical decrees reaching to the planet Jupiter, need not be much disturbed by the authority of all the fathers from Barnabas to Bernard. This, however, is not the ground, on which he openly professes to stand, in these Letters. He affects rather, to make common cause with primitive Christianity, as it reaches from the first century to the fourth; assailing the institutions and practices of the Roman Church, as wholesale innovations, having no shadow of reason in the proper life of the Church as it stood before. This broad-faced assumption requires to be met with flat contradiction. However true it may be that Romanism is something widely different from the christianity of the first three centuries, it is equally certain that this finds no proper representation whatever in Kirwan's Letters. Neither Irenaeus, nor Tertullian, nor Cyprian, nor Origen, nor a single father of all that galaxy of worthies that meet us from the age of Chrysostom and Augustine, could at all take him by the hand as a true champion of the christianity for which *they* stood ready, every one of them, in their own time, to go joyfully into prison and to the stake. Most emphatically, rather, might they all be expected to exclaim: "Non *tali* auxilio; the faith of martyrs asks the *same* faith, for its vindication and defence!"

This brings us to a still more serious reflection. It would be strange indeed, if such disagreement with the early Church involved no actual defect in the system to which it belongs; for arm ourselves as we may, in the panoply of the Bible and our own common sense, it is not easy to admit the feeling that the vessel of Christianity, with Christ at the helm, missed its own true course out and out, from the very start. The whole supposition is monstrous; and the virtual consequence with which it stares out upon us from Kirwan's argument, at once enables and compels us to fix a charge of error on himself. One whole side of christianity never comes properly into his view; its sacramental, mystical side, namely; that by which it carries in itself the

character of an objective, historical union of divine and human powers, in the form of the *Church*. Here, to our mind, is a grand defect, which like a dead fly, corrupts the whole odor of these famous Letters. Kirwan, as we read him, has no faith in the Church. Let us not be misunderstood. We know and admit that he professes the contrary, and we are willing to take this profession just at its own value. What we mean, however, is this, that he has no faith in the Church after the old church sense, as we find it expressed in the Apostles' Creed, and woven into the whole texture of christian thought during the first centuries. This he takes pains himself, unwittingly, to make clear, in a whole letter devoted expressly to this subject. The *idea* of the Church as it is presented to us in the Creed, is conditioned by its relation through the Holy Ghost to the mystery of the incarnation on one side, and to the full compass of the new creation on the other: As the object of *faith*, it is the real comprehension of supernatural powers under an outward historical form: It carries its own attributes with invincible necessity in its constitution, one holy, holy, catholic, and apostolical. So the entire ancient Church believed, in her own favor; and this faith is found entering, with broad ramification, into all her institutions and ways. She held that she was founded in very truth on the rock, not of a bible doctrine only, but of Christ's living word itself, incorporated into her own constitution; that she was the pillar and ground of the truth; that she was the organ and medium, by which God's presence was brought to tabernacle among men; that a true prophetic and priestly power, as well as a true kingly power, was lodged in her hands; that her ministerial acts were divine; that her sacraments conferred grace, her baptism being for the remission of sins, and the body and blood of Christ mystically at hand on her altar serving as food unto everlasting life. All this, we say, is comprehended in the article of the *Church*, as it stands in the ancient christian Creed; it is no product of popery, however it may be found to underlie all that is most nonstrous in the pretensions of this system; on the contrary, these pretensions become intelligible only when the faith now mentioned, is allowed to have been in full force before. But now of this faith, the living sense of a divine Church with su-

pernatural powers, according to the Creed, we seem to find no trace whatever, in Kirwan.. The Church, as he takes it, is either an abstract word only to represent the general fact of religion under a christian form, or else an outward simply human organization, or multitude of organizations rather, which Christ has directed his people to form as a convenient apparatus for religious ends. The marks of the Church unity, catholicity, apostolicity, and infallibility, he finds to be a fiction in the case of the Roman Church; but the fiction is so exhibited and exposed, that it is virtually made to hold of the whole Church, as this has stood from the beginning; no allowance being made, as it would seem, for the difference between her actual history and her ideal inward constitution. "My Bible tells me, sir," we hear him saying, "that whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved. The sincere believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether in your church, or in other churches, or in no church, form a part of that Church which Christ will present to the Father, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." The amount of this is, that the church is to be considered something outward and accidental altogether to the christian salvation; Christianity stands essentially in the transaction of souls privately and separately with God, through the medium of the Bible; the idea of a divine power going along with its general outward constitution, in any real way, deserves only desision. Kirwan has no conception of a true union between the visible and the invisible, in the constitution of the Church, the very form of existence under which she is made to challenge our faith, as a part of the general christian mystery, in the Creed. In this respect, he has fallen away, not only from the old catholic ground, but from the original ground also of his own denomination. He ceases to be a Presbyterian, and stands before us as a Baptist or Quaker.

There is no room, of course, for sacraments, in their true sense, where the Church is thus shorn of her proper supernatural character. The very idea of a sacrament is, the union of an outward sign and the grace represented by it, in such a way, that the second shall be felt to be bound to the first mystically as its actual body. Outward and inward enter conjointly into its constitution, with like necessity and reality. Kirwan, however, knows of no

such sacrament. His artillery played off against transubstantiation, reaches *through* that to the very substance of the old catholic mystery on which the error rests. Baptism sinks with him into the character of a mere human sign or pledge. The notion of a real mystical grace in it, he turns into ridicule, as something that lies beyond his common sense; not considering, that it would be quite as easy to turn to ridicule, in the same way, the "brazen serpent" in the wilderness, or the "tree of life" in the garden of Eden. We marvel not, that bishop Hughes should pronounce him rationalistic, irreverent and profane; though our knowledge of the man, and the allowance we are bound to make for his position, make it easy for us to exercise a more tolerant judgment. The early fathers, of course, however, from Ignatius to Augustine, would be much of one mind here with bishop Hughes; and Luther himself, the immortal father of the Reformation, could not fail, as we all know, to throw the full power of his voice, were he now living, into the same scale.

An interesting, we might say somewhat amusing, exemplification of the wrong position of Kirwan, as now noticed, in regard to the Church, has been furnished by the little controversy into which he has fallen latterly with the Baptists, as represented by Dr. Cote of the Grand Ligne Mission in Canada, and the New York Recorder. Dr. Cote, himself a convert from Romanism, and a great admirer of Kirwan, was led in the simplicity of his heart, to quote the *argument* of this last against Roman baptism, as equally valid against the "sprinkling of babies" in every shape. "The apostles administered baptism," Kirwan had said, "to those who expressed faith in Christ; and through this sacrament we obtain a place and a name in the visible church. This all men can understand; but how you, or any mortal man, by the application of water in any or all ways, can wash away the original and actual sins of the sinner, infuse into his soul the habits of grace, and give him a title to heaven, I cannot comprehend." This, of course, says Dr. Cote, excludes the baptism of infants, who can make no such confession; the thing is without Bible authority, a mere tradition of the Roman Church; and Kirwan, to his credit, virtually unchurches all who use it, as having no true baptism at all. This, however, was more than Kirwan

VOL. I.—NO. III. 17°

himself saw proper to admit; as he took pains to inform Dr. Cote, and the world, by a letter, more tart than strong, in the New York Observer. He complains of a *hocus pocus* mystification of his Letters; repudiates the unchurching dogma, in every form and shape; and welcomes to his communion table any and every friend of Christ, papist or protestant, baptist or paedobaptist. He treats the whole baptistic question as a "hobby;" a mere external; an accident of christianity at best, that should be held at arm's length from the true life of it, under its proper *unchurchly* form. The point really at issue, he leaves wholly untouched. No wonder, the Baptists should be put quite out of humor by such cavalier treatment. The Samson, that seemed so strong before, was suddenly shorn of his locks. It was plain that he was not fit to write about the Baptists at all. "For the sake of our common Protestantism," cries the New York Recorder, "we hope he understood Popery more truly when he wrote about *that*. A most unwelcome suspicion would come over us, as to that point, were not his representations corroborated by others who were born and nurtured in Romanism like himself, and who sustain his testimony by their own." This last reflection is soothing. The Recorder, in conclusion, still insists: "The passage quoted by Dr. Cote, from the Letters to Bishop Hughes, expresses precisely the faith of Baptists, and cannot be reconciled with that of the Presbyterian Church. Kirwan has adroitly passed that passage without an allusion, in his letter to the Observer." Quite recently, we have Dr. Cote himself again on the field, taking his "*dear Kirwan*" to task, more roughly still, in the same style; though with great regret, "on account of his laurels won in the controversy with Bishop Hughes." He knows not how to account for the sad change which has come upon him: *there* so strong, *here* so very weak. He seems to be Samson now, just up from the lap of Delilah—that "*perfidious tradition* of the Church of Rome," has turned the slayer of the Philistines into a common man. "When I came to read the fourth division of your letter, the paper fell several times from my hands, and as it dropped upon my desk, I said to myself: Were we to judge of the accuracy and correctness of Kirwan's assertions against the Church of Rome, by what he says so unjustly and so ungroundedly against the Baptists and their sentiments, certainly the verdict

of public opinion would be against the man, to whom Bishop Hughes found it so difficult to respond." "The mightiness of your strength was never so well exhibited, as when, in your letters to Bishop Hughes, you demonstrated to that prelate the absurdity of his creed, and the contradictions of the tenets of his Church. But next comes *your* turn to expose your weak side, Kirwan, when you try to grapple with and overthrow the scriptural doctrine of believers' baptism; and when I behold your contradictions and misrepresentations, I must be allowed to exclaim, with an unfeigned regret: Kirwan! Kirwan!! O Kirwan!!! How is the mighty fallen."—"I feel sorry that your earlier Romish education, and your later Presbyterian training, allow you to fall into a strain of half-sarcastical and half-jeering expressions, when speaking of the mode of an ordinance established by Him, whose minister and servant you profess to be. I would like to find words strong enough to show you the undignified manner with which you treat so lightly, what so large a number of your Presbyterian brethren confess to be the original mode of administering baptism. What a powerful arm you have thus lent to Bishop Hughes, in your letters to whom you profess to have so much reverence for all the doctrines taught in the Holy Bible. Solemnity and respectful language would have been preferable to scoffing and light words. Really, I feel abashed, that a Presbyterian brother could expose himself in the way you have done." We are not sure, after all, that the levity thus castigated by Dr. Cote, differs materially from the "great courtesy, urbanity, and sprightly humor," which have been placed to his credit in the controversy with bishop Hughes. But in this last case, the sport was with Romanism *only*, while in the other case, game is made of the whole Baptist denomination. Circumstances, of course, alter cases. So much for the history of this rather curious affair.

There is not the least doubt, we think, but that Dr. Cote and the Baptist Recorder are right, in claiming the argument of Kirwan as legitimately and fully on their side. On his own principles, and with his own style of warfare, he can never make head successfully against their attacks. If the Church be no more than he supposes; if the sacraments are of such purely outward significance; if all is to turn so mechanically on the letter of the



Bible, with so little room for the authority of Christianity as a living constitution; it were better to yield this whole question at once, and pass over in form to the Baptist ranks. The very style in which he talks about it, shows how little earnest value it has in his eyes. He stands, in truth, himself on baptistic ground; his theory of christianity is baptistic; his idea of the Church is baptistic; and it is only by *tradition*, accordingly, that infant baptism still keeps its place in his system. It is not a principle with him strictly, but as Dr. Cote styles it, retorting upon him his own term, a "hobby," which he holds against himself, in the way of concession to the Romanists. The concession is two-fold. Infant baptism cannot be established, in the first place, by direct Bible proof; in the second place, it has no meaning aside from faith in a divine grace-bearing Church. Kirwan will have Bible proof, chapter and verse plump to the point, for every position; his motto is, the text, the whole text, and nothing *but* the text; and yet here we find him, in a most important case, insisting upon a doctrine and practice, for which he is able to urge no text whatever. If infant baptism be at all taught in the Bible, it is by the sense and spirit of it, and not by the letter of a single passage separately considered; and the sense and spirit of it, in such view, are made out for us by the presumptive practice of the Christian Church in the age of the Apostles, authenticated by the known practice of the same Church in the age following. But this is not all. Kirwan allows no sacramental grace in the old sense, no Church as an object of faith according to the Creed, no mystical objective power consequently in baptism under any view. His conception of the Church, is that of a purely mechanical organization added to the proper substance of christianity from without, and of no real force any farther than this substance is supposed to be already at hand, in the way of christian experience, under a different form.\* Christianity is strictly for *believers*, and for such only; the entire world of infants accordingly

\* Hear his own language:—"There is one other point to which I would direct your special attention, because it is one upon which you have been greatly deceived; I mean the Church. Every effort has been put forth by your priests to mystify this topic, and to deceive you in reference to it. All

is excluded from it, by original insurmountable disqualification. God may save infants that *die* such, if he see proper, in some other way (by the mere magical *fiat* of his own will); but not by any real comprehension of them, as a living component part of our redeemed humanity, in the new creation brought in by Jesus Christ. *This*, Kirwan makes to be throughout, for "believers," and for such only. His church has no room in it for infants, except *catachrestically*, by making itself into a mere "pedagogium" for educational purposes. Thus the *idea* of infant baptism, at once falls completely to the ground. If infants cannot be comprehended organically in Christ, in the new order of life, introduced by the mystery of his incarnation, in the true living compass of his mystical body, the Church; why in the name of all "common sense," we may well ask with the unsacramental Baptists, should we so trifle with a divine institution as to apply to them the holy *sign* of baptism? The sign in their case, has no significance; while it goes directly, for this very reason, to foster the Roman imagination of its being something *more* than a sign only. Infant baptism is truly part and parcel of the old catholic idea of the Church, and without this is of no force whatever.

Kirwan, of course, has no power to be true and fair, in his

who truly believe in Jesus Christ, and practice the precepts of his word, are reconciled to God. They are adopted into the family of God; they are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. A connection of such with any branch of the visible church, does not interfere with their connection with the family of God. No good man is lost, and no bad man is saved, because of their connection with any church. As a man may be a true Papist, and be a Jesuit or a Jansenist, or a monk of La Trappe, or a shorn friar, so he may be a true Christian, and a member both of the visible and invisible church, and be a Protestant or a Papist, and a member of any of the sects into which they are both divided, which hold to the true atonement of Jesus Christ."—How very roomy and convenient! Why not add: Let such a good christian include in his canon of scripture, *all* the books of the Bible, or only half of them, or only two or three, or even none at all, *provided* he do but hold fast still to the atonement of Christ, and all will be well. Strange Presbyterianism, of a truth; much like that which Dr. Potts once undertook to *defend*, to the edification of all concerned, in his memorable duel with Wainright.

controversy with Romanism. With the utmost honesty of intention in his own mind, his whole position is such as to disqualify him for understanding correctly, or representing justly, the system he undertakes to expose. His own theory of christianity is one-sided and defective; he has no sympathy with catholic ideas; his notion of history is fantastic; the interior sense of Romanism lies for him away out of sight. Hence the force of what is true and good in his Letters, is greatly weakened by the way in which it is mixed up continually with what is false and bad.

Take one broad, and truly glaring, illustration of this defect. To prove Romanism false, all pains are taken to make it out the systematic enemy of liberty and knowledge—a favorite topic, as we all know, with ordinary haranguers on this subject. As the foe of civil liberty, it has required nations and kings to hold its stirrup; as the tyrant of the mental world, it has not allowed men to suit the Bible to their own sense. And then what has been the effect of popery upon human *knowledge*? Kirwan answers: “When Christianity, like a new sun, rose upon the world, there was much that might be called education in the Roman Empire. The obvious effect of Christianity was to extend it. After the lapse of some ages, popery by gradual stages crept, serpent like, to the high places of power. How soon afterwards the lights of learning go out; how soon the dark ages commence and roll on as if they were never to end! And those centuries of darkness form the golden age of your Church. And what spirit did it manifest on the revival of learning in England, after the sacking of Constantinople, and at the Reformation? Leo X. prohibited every book translated from the Greek and Hebrew, &c.” Again: “When the Reformation occurred, the retrograde movement of the world towards ignorance and barbarism and idolatry, had almost been completed. Had it not occurred, a radiance might continue to gild the high places of earth after the gospel sun had set—a twilight might be protracted for a few ages, in which a few might grope their way to heaven, but each age would have come wrapped in a deeper, and yet deeper gloom, until impenetrable darkness had fallen on the world.”

When one reads such stuff, and hears it echoed on all sides as

the shout that laid flat the walls of Jericho, he may be excused for calling to mind, at least, the indignant blunt remark of Johnson: "Let me tell you, Sir, no Church in the world has ever been so slandered as the Church of Rome!"

Could there well be a more gross insult put upon Christianity, than to make its triumph lead to the downfall of the old Roman culture and civilization? Even Gibbon has ventured on no assertion so bold as that. It does not help the case at all, to say: Christianity was indeed at first favorable to learning, but Popery came in stealthily under its name, and accomplished this great ruin. The Christianity, under whose presence the old Roman life fell, call it by what name we please, was the same substantially that conquered the empire in the fourth century, and that gave birth to the brilliant theology of the following period. It was, besides, the only Christianity in the world, the legitimate succession of all that had gone before, the whole Church as it then stood. And are we to be told, that this was the power which extinguished the lights of science for the ancient world, and thus made room for the dark night of ignorance that was to follow? Kirwan seems never to have heard of the universal revolution wrought in the Roman empire at this time, by the barbarous population poured in upon it from the North. Must we tell him and those who are forever harping on the same key, that the old civilization was overturned by Paganism, and not by Christianity; that the foundations of society were completely broken up, in the awful process; that universal chaos took possession of Europe; that a wild, tumultuating, savage life, prevailed on all sides; that a new course of culture was to be commenced; and that the Church was the ark, in whose bosom mainly was preserved all that was still left of value for this purpose, from the wreck of that great time which had gone before. Then follow the *incunabula* of modern society; the nations of Europe in swaddling clothes; the vast and mighty elements of a new civilization, wrestling not without terror towards the accomplishment of their great problem. Such a process of new creation, was never before seen. Still it goes forward. And in the whole of it the Church takes the lead. The world is again outwardly conquered, in the name of Christ, with a victory fairly equal to

that which won the throne of the Caesars in the beginning. Dark ages indeed are to be gone through; a long night, comparatively speaking, of ignorance and superstition, violence and wrong; for nations are not born in a day, and the great problems of history ask centuries for their solution. But what then? Is the Church to be held responsible for this necessity? So Kirwan would seem to think. Because she was not able to compress the work of ages into as many hours; because barbarous nations did not at once become wise, and learned, and politically free, under her magic hand; because her own constitution was shaped and moulded, more or less, by the power of the rude life with which she was called to deal; because, in one word, the light and liberty, and institutions generally, of the nineteenth century were not anticipated, under her auspices, in the ninth; she is held up to reproach, as the very *mother* of all the darkness and sin, through which the course of her history lay. What is bad, is laid unsparingly to her charge; while all good is regarded as going forward by some other force, and in spite both of her power and will. Nay, we are told that no such onward movement can be allowed, in truth, to have taken place. It was all one grand "retrograde" march, from the days of Alfred the Great and Charlemagne, down to the sixteenth century; at which time fortunately the Reformation occurred, to arrest the downward tendency; just in season, apparently, to save the world from universal barbarism, and a total extinction of the blessed light of Christianity. So this precious theory runs!

It never entered Kirwan's head probably, seriously to compare the actual civilization of Europe in the fifteenth century, with what the same Europe was in the ninth and tenth centuries. Had he done so, he would have found the rate of difference quite as striking, in the way of advance, as any which has been created by the progress of society since. The life of Europe, in all that time, was neither stationary nor retrograde, but powerfully onward.

The entrance of the Middle Ages, as they are called, was in the midst of universal chaos. With their going out, we behold the presence of a new world; Europe reclaimed from barbarism; forests cleared; lands cultivated; nations tamed and brought

under law ; art, science, politics, trade, all actively awake ; life as a whole, we may say, in universal motion. Academies and schools had multiplied on all sides. Of universities alone, as many as sixty-six were established before the year 1517, the date of the Reformation. Some of these were almost incredibly large. That of Paris formed a sort of commonwealth or state, within its own limits. Students and teachers were congregated there from all nations. Thought had acquired prodigious force, and stood ripe for the most brilliant exploits in literature and science. To talk of the revival of classic letters, the art of printing, the discovery of America, and other such agencies, as *originating* the scientific spirit of modern Europe, is infantile simplicity. Such powers were themselves possible only through the action of mind already awake, and only for such mind could they have been of any account. It required some culture, to welcome the learning of ancient Greece and Rome, when it was again brought to light. Men on the verge of barbarism take no pleasure in reading Plato ; the songs of Pindar have no particular music for their ear ; neither the strength of Thucydides, nor the grace of Herodotus, are apt to engage their taste. No importation of letters from Constantinople or anywhere else, would raise into enthusiasm the torpid mind of Mexico or China. "The very fact of the Reformation itself," as a distinguished Roman Catholic ecclesiastic has said, "presupposes a time, whose leading representatives occupied a very high grade of intellectual life ; a period less awake, and possessed of only small furniture in the way of knowledge, could neither have produced it nor met it with proper support. Let any one compare with the Protestant Reformation the later dissensions of the Greek Church, and he must almost loathe their insignificance and want of character. The separation which took place from the Latin Church in the sixteenth century, on the contrary, both in the objects it sought, and in the principles from which it sprang, reveals something grand and full of meaning, reflecting thus a brilliant light, against its own will, on the Church it left behind, and in its very blame covering her with praise. Who can survey, without admiration, the polemic powers brought into action on both sides ? Indeed the writings of Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Chemnitz

and Beza, on the one side, and the works of an Eck, Catharinus, Cochlaeus, Albert Pighius, Sadolet, Fisher, Thomas More, Reginald Pole, Vega, Andrada, and Bellarmine, on the other, in point of keen intelligence, eloquence and learning, afford a rare treat, which were it not embittered by other considerations, might be counted perfect. We know moreover, that the Reformers did not drop at once from heaven, when they first undertook to set the world right. It is no secret, where Luther went to school, whose instructions were enjoyed by Melancthon, who it was that put Calvin, still a little boy, into the use of a benefice, that the talent he saw in him might not go without means for its proper cultivation. The papal legate too is not unknown, to whom Zuingli was indebted, at the close of his academical studies, for a yearly pension, enabling him to enlarge his library.”\*

This way of looking at the subject, as it is infinitely more rational, seems to us also, we confess, to be vastly more complimentary to the Reformation itself, than the view we have just seen taken of it by Kirwan. The Reformation would be a very small affair, if it had sprung up like the mushroom of a night, from such a compost of pure ignorance and corruption, as his theory supposes the whole Church to have been before. The true glory of it, and its only sure vindication in the end, are found just in this, that it did *not* fall from the clouds, nor creep forth from a corner (the valleys of Piedmont for instance); but that it was the product of the old Catholic Church itself, and the very channel in which was carried forward the central stream of its history, the true significance of its life. The notion that all was dark before the sixteenth century, and that then all suddenly became light, however generally current at one time, is now fairly exploded. It is a fiction worthy only of the nursery, which, in truth, kills itself, and must sooner or later be hissed out of the world.

So far is it from being true that the Roman Church stood opposed systematically to learning, her zeal for it was urged against her at times, as implying a want of true interest in religion. Her

\* Mæhler's *Schriften und Aufsätze*. Vol. II. pp. 12, 13. Considerations on the state of the Church in the fifteenth century and first part of the sixteenth.

theology was held to be too scholastic. Even Melancthon himself, at one time complained of the attention given to Plato in christian schools. It is generally made the reproach of Leo X. and his cardinals, that their taste for the classics spoiled all their relish for the Bible. The pope, at all events, ranked first among the patrons of polite learning. He it was, the scholar of Politian and Chalcondylas, the friend of Picus and Marsilius, who sent the Greek, John Lascaris, back to his own country, to purchase up manuscripts of the classics and of the Greek church fathers; who invited young men of talent, in large numbers, from Greece into Italy, to give instruction there in their native tongue; who made it his business to encourage so many deserving men, by pensions and in other ways, to devote their lives to the cause of science. The revival of letters was not a consequence strictly of the Reformation; just as little as we can say that our modern civilization in general, starts from it as its ultimate cause. It contributed powerfully, no doubt, to the whole course of mind since, and may be taken, indeed, as the indispensable condition of its universal progress; but the necessity for such progress lay far back of this particular revolution itself, in the previous state of the christian world. Europe could not wake into full life, without the Reformation; but the waking itself, was something more broad and deep, which simply came to its most signal expression in this great fact.

“A *reformation* in the higher sense of the word,” it has been finely remarked by Ullmann, “is always a vast historical result; the outlet of a spiritual process that has extended through centuries; a deep all-constraining necessity, brought to pass indeed by the free action of great men as its chosen organs, which yet in its essential character rests on a comprehensive mass mind, that cannot be produced at will, but gradually forms itself with irresistible force out of the inmost wants of life. In such a continuous spiritual formation process, however, there must be before all things, an actuating positive soul or centre; for what is merely negative, doubt, rejection, the denial of what is at hand, is not sufficient by itself alone, to unite the minds of men in this massive way, and to hold them thus in tension through centuries, moving in a fixed direction. Neither in the physical world, not



in the moral, can any organic and enduring creation ever take place, except from the ground of a living fruitful germ, which holds in itself previously in the way of real power, all that is actually unfolded from its life; and this germ is always something positive, which first asserts its own existence, and only *then*, in order to win room for free growth, opposes and thrusts aside what is foreign and obstructive to its own nature. This general law we perceive also in every movement, that can at all lay claim to the dignity of a reformation in the sphere of religion. Reformation is a forming over again, a restoration of life. But in the conception of such a religious life-restoration, three things are essentially involved. *First*, it is a going back to something already given, and original; for a reformation, as distinguished from the first founding of a religion or ecclesiastical constitution, seeks not to make something entirely new, but only to renew what is already made; it moves always, accordingly, in a fixed historical sphere or tract, and loses its character when this tract is forsaken. *Secondly*, it is not a mere going back, a passive acknowledgment of the original, or a desire towards it, but above all an active *bringing* back of its power, a real renovation of that old faith in the form of life; this particularly constitutes its practical positive nature; it is a great historical fact, but one that rests on a given ground, clearly understood and acknowledged in the general consciousness, and which, for this very reason, forms itself again the foundation for farther development, new spiritual superstructure. *Lastly*, however, it lies also in the nature of a reformation, that it contends against what is false and sets aside what is out of date, that its "position" takes the form also of "opposition;" for the idea of renewing an original, implies that this original has in the course of time undergone distortion and falsification, that corruptions cleave to it which need to be removed; and to have free room for the new growth, what has run its course requires to be pruned away. Still a reformation, of the right sort, is never mere destruction as such, but always *creation*, involving destruction only as its unavoidable accident and condition." All these requirements meet, according to Ullmann, in the religious revolution of the sixteenth century. It was no accident, but an act which proceeded from the inmost

and deepest life of the world, and formed the grand turning point of its universal modern history. Such an act is not rationally conceivable, without vast presuppositions. "A world-historical epoch of this sort requires, like a gigantic oak, deep, far reaching roots, and firm solid ground, out of which to have grown. It betrays a poor sense of history, to seek the explanation of all here in single personalities or transient interests. These elements, indeed, must not be overlooked; but the truly great, the general, the enduring in history, springs from other and deeper grounds. Individuals make it not; they serve it rather, and become great just by this, that they do so with clear conscious conviction and full resolution, and the greater and more powerful always, in proportion as that is the case." The grandeur, and glory, and world-wide significance of the Reformation, stand precisely in this, that the forces which finally brought it to pass, had been maturing their strength and struggling in the same direction, for centuries before; so that the sense of ages might be said to become complete in the end by its presence.

In conclusion, with all becoming respect for the worthy author of these Letters, and the fullest confidence in the integrity of christian purpose with which they have been written, we are bound to say that we think them suited to do harm rather than good. We like not their anti-catholic temper and tone, disguised under the show of opposition merely to Popery and Rome; the rationalistic, nay, even radical, affinities and tendencies, that to our mind at least, make themselves painfully prominent in their whole character. We deprecate the spread of such views and feelings, in the holy name of Protestantism. We must say, in all solemn earnestness, we wish no such atmosphere of thought ever to reach the education of our own children. We would train them rather to faith in the idea of the Church, and sympathy with the articles of the ancient Creed. "Would to God that you could see things as *I* see them," Kirwan exclaims in one place, not without feeling, to Bishop Hughes. The bishop would say with equal earnestness, no doubt: "Would that *you* could see them as they appear to *me*." It is very certain, that they move in different worlds, with little power on the part of either to understand truly the position of the other. The bishop

sees Protestantism in a false light; dwelling only on its abuses and errors; having no eye for the vast world of truth which it reveals, no sense by which to appreciate properly its inward significance and power. But it is no less clear, that Kirwan is full as much in the dark, as it regards the opposite side. The fundamental meaning of the Roman Catholic Church, is hid from his view. There is a whole region of Christianity there, which he has never yet been brought to explore or comprehend. He confounds Catholicism perpetually, as we have seen, with the abuses heaped upon it by Popery. However valuable his own form of piety may be, (and we wish not to dispute its worth,) there is another style of piety altogether, forming a complete *terra incognita* to his experience and beyond the horizon of his thinking, which we are yet bound to acknowledge as of high and necessary account also to the complete conception of the christian faith. The most comprehensive and significant designation for this order of religion, is found in the term *Catholic*; as we may employ the term *Puritan*, on the other hand, to express what we mean by religion under the opposite type. We use both terms in an honorable sense, and simply to express in brief the general distinction now noticed. Catholicism stands in the sense of the outward and objective in Christianity, as a supernatural constitution actually at hand in the world under a historical form; the idea of the Church, as the bearer of heavenly powers; submission to authority; resignation of individual judgment and will to the apprehension of a divine rule, embodied and made concrete in the Church as a whole; sympathy with the symbolical, mystical, sacramental interest in religion. It will not do to treat all this as an obsolete fiction. It has too much countenance from the Bible; it finds too much to appeal to in the inmost depths of our religious nature. Any scheme of piety, however excellent it may be in other respects, which breaks in full with the faith and devotional life of the entire early Church, eviscerates the Creed of its true force, and makes it impossible for us to feel ourselves at home in the society of such men as Ignatius and Polycarp, Irenaeus and Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Anselm, Fenelon, and the ten thousand others whose saintliness had been more or less like theirs from the beginning; any scheme

of piety that goes thus virtually, by its pretensions, to sap the very foundations of the Church itself, must be in its own nature defective and insecure. Puritanism must learn to do justice to Catholicism, before it can do full justice to itself. Its proper mission will be complete, only when the two forms of thinking are brought in some way to flow together, excluding on both sides all that is found to be incompatible with the idea of such a marriage.

We know full well, and have not forgotten for one moment, in all this review, that there is a Charybdis here as well as a Scylla, which we are bound on vast peril to shun and avoid. These Letters of Kirwan lie all on one side, covering at no great depth the treacherous *rock* we have now tried to expose; at some future time, if God permit, we shall take notice of the *whirlpool*, in an article, not on Bishop Hughes, but on "Brownson's Quarterly Review."

J. W. N.

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#### ART. XVI.—ZUINGLI NO RADICAL.

THE following extract is translated from Professor Ebrard's great work, on the History of the Doctrine of the Lord's Supper. It forms part of a somewhat extended vindication of the general character of the Swiss Reformer, against certain injurious views which have been entertained of it, in Germany particularly, and in the bosom of the Lutheran Church. He has been held up to reproach, as a man whose zeal for the Reformation was more bent on pulling down than on building up; and who was ruled by the cold mechanical abstractions of the understanding, more a great deal than by proper power of the christian faith. It has been the fashion widely to associate with his name, the idea of a somewhat rationalistic and revolutionary tendency in religion; which is supposed also by the high Lutheran school, to have communicated itself, as a reigning permanent distinction, to the entire Reformed Church. This whole supposition Dr. Ebrard meets, as being in the case of Zuingli, no