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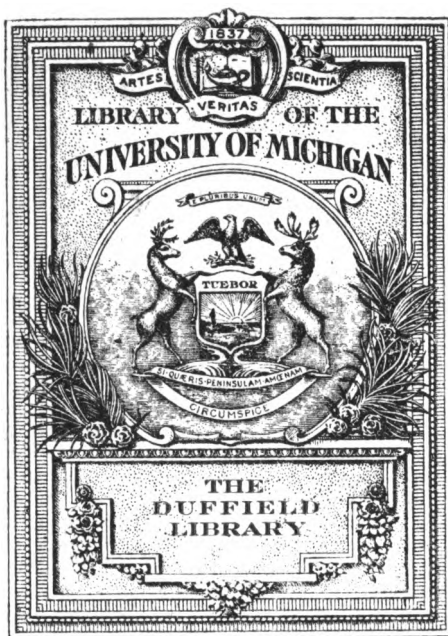
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DISSERTATION

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ON THE

RULE OF FAITH;

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BY

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DISSERTATION.

It is indispensable to the force of persuasion and argument, that there be some acknowledged standard, by which they may be put to the test. In moral science, it is essential that this standard be one endorsed by unerring wisdom, and bear the seal of infallibility.

Are men in possession of such a standard? and if they are, where is it to be found? For centuries, this subject has been one of erudite and grave discussion; and though we had hoped it was long ago an answered question, and could never again be regarded as one of the debatable points in theology, the time has obviously come when it must again receive the attention of thinking men. The object of the present dissertation is to discuss this important subject—a subject which none may deny is vital to the cause of a common Christianity. It is not a subject selected by the writer, but one assigned to him by the associated friends and patrons of the Bible in this land, and which was originally assigned to a much abler and more experienced advocate of the Bible cause. I cannot express, in a single sentence, the entire compass of the following observations better than by saying, that the design of them is, to *compare the fallibility of the church of Rome, with the infallibility of the sacred Scriptures, as a Rule of Faith.*

It would seem desirable, at the outset, briefly to PRESENT THE DIFFERENT VIEWS OF ROMANISTS AND PROTESTANTS ON THIS GREAT QUESTION.

They are sufficiently diverse not to be misunderstood. The rule of faith, with an intelligent, consistent Romanist, is the received faith of the Papal church. No principle is better established in the church of Rome, than that which she receives to be true is the infallible criterion of truth. Her faith is not only the true faith, but the rule of faith. Nothing may be added to it, and nothing may be taken from it; nor may it be subjected to any modification. Men are bound to believe her doctrines, not because they are found in the divine oracles, but because her decisions are themselves oracular.

At the same time, Rome professes to reverence the Scriptures. She maintains that the instructions of Christ and his Apostles were originally committed to her keeping, to be guarded by her councils and authority, and by her alone handed down, as the only authorized Scriptures, to future generations. She also claims the exclusive prerogative of judging of their import; and claims infallibility for her judgment, because she alone knows what they are, and has the revealed promise of unerring guidance from above.

Her pretensions are also the more bold, from the hypothesis that she possesses a *traditionary standard of doctrine*, committed to her by the Apostles, by which all doctrine, not excepting the Scriptures themselves, is to be brought to the test. This ancient and venerable creed, she affirms to have been drawn, not from the New Testament, but from the oral instructions of the Apostles, and to have existed before the New Testament was written. While, in her view, it is said to have been held in such reverence, that it was considered no slight

crime in the early church, to question its superiority to the written word.

That these are no distorted views of the Papal church appears from her own representations. The celebrated Council of Trent, in the "Decree of the Edition and Use of the Sacred Books," declares that "no one confiding in his own judgment shall dare to wrest the sacred Scriptures to his own sense of them, contrary to that which hath been held, and still is held, by holy Mother Church, whose right it is to judge of the true meaning and interpretation of Sacred Writ; or contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers." The scarcely less celebrated Creed of Pope Pius IV. embodies the same thought, and with almost the same precision of language. The church of Rome regards the *Christian Fathers* as the only safe interpreters of the word of God; and it is one of the principal pillars of her lordly system, that their authority is sacred and decisive. Father Buffier, a learned Jesuit, and a standard author among the Romanists, affirms that "the Christian religion is no other but the body of the faithful, or the church of Christ, which testifies what God has said, or commanded."* Hermannus declares that "the Scriptures are of no more value than Æsop's Fables without the authority of the church."† Balius says he should "give no more credit to St. Matthew than to Livy, unless the church obliged him."‡ Tiletanus, the Bishop of Ypres, says, "this is the only way of distinguishing between canonical and apocryphal Scrip-

* Buffier's "First Truths," App. 372.

† Jones on the Canon of the New Test. refers to Hermannus's Controversy with Whitaker.

‡ See Jones, where the reference is to Balius ad Scrip. Sac.

tures.”* Pighius, Echius, Bellarmine, and many of the most celebrated writers in the Roman church speak to the same purpose.† *Cornelius Mussius*, the Bishop of Bitonto, uses the following bold apostrophe: “O Rome! to whom shall we go for divine counsels, unless to those persons to whose trust the dispensation of the divine mysteries has been committed? We are therefore to hear *him* who is to us *instead of God*, in things that concern God, as *God Himself*. Certainly, for my own part, I had rather believe one single Pope, than a thousand Augustines, Jeromes, or Gregories, that I may not speak of Richards, Scotuses, and Williams; for I believe and *know*, that *the Pope cannot err in matters of faith*, because the authority of determining all such things as matters of faith resides in the Pope.”‡ Among the more modern Romanists, the authors of the celebrated Oxford Tracts, while they boldly deny the right of personal judgment, maintain the authority of the church in all ages as binding and conclusive. Bishop Hay of Edinburgh asserts that the “authority of the Roman church is the supreme judge of controversy, and the sacred rule of faith.”§ Bishop Chaloner, Vicar of London, declares that “the Catholic judge in controversies is the church of God—from whose decisions no appeal is allowed to the dead letter of Scripture.”|| While Mr. Lingard, in his *Lectures on Marsh’s View*, does not hesitate to say, that “of all the possible forms under which a rule of faith

* See Jones on the Canon, and the references there made.

† The principal writers on this subject are referred to by Campegius Vitringa, “*Doctrina Christianæ Religionis per aphorismos summatim descripta*.” Vol. I. De Scriptura Sancta, caput secundum, p. 74.

‡ Dailé on the right use of the Fathers in matters of Controversy. Part ii. ch. vi.

§ Hay’s Sincere Christian.

|| Chaloner’s Grounds of the Old Religion.

could have been published to mankind, the New Testament is, as such, the most incongruous and confused, and what no sensible man could ever have adopted." In our own day, also, a Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church has decided, that "the Holy Scriptures, as they were interpreted by the Church during the first two centuries, constitute the only sure basis for us to rest upon."* It is not an easy thing, therefore, for us to make any exaggerated representations of the Romanists which shall depreciate the estimate in which they hold the Scriptures, as a rule of faith. If no interpretation of them is to be admitted "contrary to the *unanimous* consent of the Fathers;" if they "are of no more value than *Æsop's Fables*, without the authority of the Church;" if we are to "give no more credit to St. Matthew than to Livy, unless the Church obliges us;" if "the Church is the sacred rule of faith," and "no appeal is allowed from her decision to the dead letter of Scripture;" if, "of all the possible forms under which a rule of faith could have been published to mankind, the New Testament is, as such, the most incongruous and confused, and what no sensible man would ever have adopted." to what purpose has God given to mankind a revelation of his will, and of what value are the Scriptures to the world, more than any other book which may contain the counsels of wisdom, or gratify the researches and curiosity of literary men?

It is scarcely necessary to say, that to all these views Protestants are directly opposed. They deny every one of these positions; and it shall be the object of this discussion, under the favour of Divine Providence, to meet them at every point. Protestant Confessions of Faith,

* Bishop Brownell's "Errors of the Times."

and Protestant writers, with perfect unanimity, declare for the absolute supremacy of the Bible as "the only infallible and sufficient rule of faith." With them antiquity is nothing, any farther than it serves to illustrate and confirm the declarations of the Bible; and novelty is nothing, any farther than it subserves the same purpose. Neither the decisions of Councils, nor the decrees of Popes, nor long venerated Confessions, nor the most unquestioned traditions, however carefully preserved and handed down, have the least effect in superseding the authority of the written revelation.

With this brief exhibition of the views entertained by Romanists and Protestants on this great question, we proceed to several distinct considerations which may assist us in establishing the position, that **THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS ARE THE ONLY INFALLIBLE RULE OF FAITH.** As Protestants, we hold ourselves bound to "give a reason" for this conviction; and while we hope to do it honestly and without embarrassment, we also desire to do it with "meekness and fear."

We remark, in the first instance, that in our inquiries for a rule of faith—of religious faith—and for a rule that is infallible, we find it *in a revelation from heaven.* This single consideration, simple as it is, is of vital importance in this discussion. We may not be guided by any other principle than this, unless we renounce Christianity, and become deists or infidels. We say not now *how this revelation is given*, but only affirm that it must be a revelation from heaven. Be it oral, or written, it must be an authenticated revelation. Human reason has shown itself to be an insufficient and blind guide to fallen man in his course to eternity. And so have the lights of nature and providence. The entire field of religious and moral inquiry, when entered upon with no other guides than

these, is a wilderness of dark problems and wild conjecture. The deeper you plunge into it, the deeper the darkness; and it were marvellous, if, when you have terminated your speculations, it be not at the loss of those great landmarks, those first principles of belief, which guided you at the outset. Such is the experience of all religious systems that are merely human; of all the schools of philosophy, of all the ages of the world. The history of philosophy teaches nothing more plainly, than that the mere researches of human wisdom, where the mind surrenders itself to them without great precaution, lead to questions of terrible import; questions in view of which the most gigantic intellect staggers, and feels that it is overshadowed by midnight, and on the brink of a precipice. The strong-hold of Protestants is, that God has given to men a *supernatural revelation*, the great object of which is to guide the lost. Why else was it given? This is the object at which it professes to aim, and which it never loses sight of, from beginning to end; and if it be not secured, then have the divine wisdom and goodness been defeated in one of the noblest and most benevolent designs they ever formed.

Our confidence in a supernatural revelation depends on our confidence in its Author. His revelation must contain a complete and perfect system of truth, because it is his. It must be an unerring guide, a perfect standard of truth, because it is his. Not only are its teachings in general to be relied on, but all and every particular of its instructions. If a supernatural revelation be any rule of faith at all, it must be a perfect and infallible rule. I repeat the thought, therefore, that our confidence in a supernatural revelation depends on our confidence in its Author. It is in that unchanging truth and integrity, which are like "the great mountains," in that infinite

goodness, which has no inconstancy, no fickleness, and no disposition to deceive; and in that knowledge and wisdom, which have no mistakes to acknowledge, and which led the great Apostle to exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" It is not the intuition, nor the demonstration of the exact sciences, nor is it the observation and experience which prove the truths of philosophy, nor is it the testimony of fallible men, on which we here repose our faith. It is *the testimony of the God of truth*. This is the basis of all confidence in the instructions of a supernatural revelation. When once we are assured that we have a revelation from heaven, our confidence in its Author leads us to go to it as the only original source from which religious truth is to be drawn, and to commence and pursue our inquiries by implicitly yielding ourselves to its divine teaching. "Human reason decides, and decides intuitively, that the word of the God of truth is to be believed." When once his testimony is given, be the manner and form in which it is given what they may, it is conclusive. We have only to ascertain that we possess *his revelation*, in order to be shut up to it, as a rule of faith. *Has God spoken?* and *what* has he spoken? are the only questions which it is befitting short-sighted man to propose.

Though it would seem the veriest truism, yet is it of some importance to remark, in this part of our discussion, that the existence and authority of a supernatural revelation are in no way dependent on the opinions of men. If God has spoken, the fact that he has spoken depends not on their impressions of the fact; much less is the authority of that revelation dependent on the opinion they form of that authority. If he is able to give a revelation to men, he is undoubtedly able to make them

know that it is his revelation; and to make it in a manner so peculiar to himself, and so distinguished above all other communications in the world, as to carry convincing evidence to every reasonable mind that it comes from God. If there be those who deny it, their denial does not alter the fact that a revelation has been made. Or if there be those who deny that what he has revealed is clothed with supreme authority, their doubts do not invalidate the authority by which he has spoken. The authority with which his revelation is invested is not from earth, but from heaven. It is not from the views which men entertain concerning it, but from the purpose of its great Author in giving it to the world. It is not from the decisions of men, in their individual or associated capacity, as laymen or as ecclesiastics; but from the infallible decisions of the High and Lofty One, whose thoughts are above their thoughts, far as the heavens are above the earth. Men may have different views of its import and authority; but there it stands, and nothing can alter its everlasting claims. The words of men are but vapour, issued from lips of clay. When once they are uttered, they disappear; and who shall gather them up? While the words of God, once uttered, vibrate to remoter worlds, leave impressions that can never be lost sight of with impunity, and "though heaven and earth may pass away, shall never pass away." Angels veil their faces when God speaks. "The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high." When he speaks, the universe should bow in adoring silence. There is no reason superior to the reason of the infinite mind, no argument above the deductions of unerring intelligence, no decisions superior to the decisions of the "God only wise." To set up any other in-

fallible standard of faith than his revelation, were to encroach upon the prerogative of the Deity. It were not merely to put forth unhallowed hands to the ark; it were to aspire to the throne. It were to exhibit a striking accomplishment of the prophecy respecting a certain anti-Christian power, which, while it reigned in the palace of the Cæsars, should "oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, *showing himself that he is God.*"

In regard to the necessity of a supernatural revelation, it may perhaps be conceded that Protestants and Romanists are agreed; though we should not have occupied even the short space we have occupied with the remarks just made, did Romanists, in our view, give them their proper place and importance. The diverging point of difference between us relates to the manner in which that revelation is given. We remark therefore in the next place that, it is an important principle with Protestants that, in order to be an infallible rule of faith, THIS REVELATION MUST BE A WRITTEN, AND NOT AN ORAL, OR A TRADITIONARY REVELATION. There is no absurdity in supposing it a mere oral revelation, handed down in the form of a well authenticated tradition from age to age. There is no absurdity in supposing it to be partly oral, and partly written, while both might be amplified and interpreted by one another. This is the position for which the Romanists strongly contend, and with some degree of plausibility. The Council of Trent affirms that the gospel is "contained in written books and unwritten traditions, which have come down to us, either received by the Apostles, from the lips of Christ himself, or transmitted by the hands of the same Apostles UNDER

THE DICTATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.* The celebrated Bossuet remarks, that "Jesus Christ, having founded his church upon the *preached* gospel, the *unwritten* word was the first law of Christianity; and when the Scriptures of the New Testament were collected, the *unwritten word* did not, on that account, lose its authority."†

Let us look at this matter impartially, and just as the facts exist. The divine testimony may be given to men in various ways. The time was when God revealed his will by the personal appearance of Him who was afterwards incarnated for the salvation of men; by visions; by the ministry of angels; by dreams; by audible voices; by the supernatural agency of his Spirit upon the mind, producing the conviction of divine intercourse; and by Urim and Thummim. Before his word was reduced to writing, these various communications were narrated, treasured up in the memory, and became a *traditionary* revelation. In early and rude ages, and before the invention of the arts of carving, painting, and writing, oral tradition was the only vehicle of religious knowledge. In the longevity of the ancient Patriarchs, the providence of God made provision for handing down from generation to generation, those great facts and truths which formed the basis of that subsequently *written volume* which contains the entire revelation of his will to men. And who does not see the indispensable importance of such a written revelation? The obvious superiority of written documents over mere oral tradition and unwritten laws and history, it is needless to illustrate. Men are not wont to be so heedless of their affairs as to leave them to the

* See the Decree of the Council of Trent, on the Canon of Scripture.

† See "Exposition de la Doctrine de l'Eglise Catholique." *Œuvres de Bossuet*. Tome cinquième, p. 402. Paris ed. 1836.

treachery of memory. Legislators do not confide in oral laws; nor are title deeds, nor important contracts, left without being reduced to writing. The patriarchal age and the unlettered ages of the world soon passed away; and oral tradition proved itself an imperfect and fallible guide. The experiment of educating men for eternity without a *written revelation*, issued in vapid and absurd theories, and in the most debasing idolatry and unbridled corruption. Long before the introduction of the Christian dispensation, therefore, the Author of revelation took measures with a view of reducing it to a written, definite and permanent form. He inscribed his law with his own finger on tables of stone; he required Moses to engross the revelations made to him in "a book;" he raised up learned men, "ready scribes in the law of the Lord," to collect together and set forth a correct edition of the Divine Scriptures up to the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon; and he committed them, for preservation, to a particular tribe among the Hebrews. You have but to turn to your English Concordance, and examine those numerous passages to which it refers in relation to this point, in order to be convinced that the Scriptures regard this arrangement as of the first importance; and that there is emphasis in the declaration of the Psalmist, when he says, "These things shall be *written* for the *generation to come*; that the people which *shall be created* may praise the Lord."*

* For the best argument I have seen in favour of the views of Romanists, the reader may be referred to the controversial writings of that very learned and elegant writer, *Bossuet*. On the other side of the question, he will find much to interest and instruct him in "Prideaux's Connections;" in a "Lecture on Oral Tradition," by the late Dr. Fletcher, of London; in the Essays of the late Dr. Ewing, of Glasgow, on "The Authority, Scope, and Consummation of the Law and the Prophets;" in an Essay by John Glass on "Unwritten Tradition;" and in Calmet's Dictionary, in loco.

Notwithstanding this, there were not wanting among the Jews those who added to the written revelation their own burdensome *traditions*, and endeavoured to make them the true and infallible interpreters of the written word. They speak of these traditions as the *Oral Law*, and pretend that God gave them to Moses, at the same time when he gave him the written Law on Mount Sinai. Moses, they affirm, taught and committed them to the elders of the people as a sacred deposit, to be by them transmitted from generation to generation. It is true that the entire Jewish nation did not yield to this extravagant veneration for their traditional law. After their return from Babylon, this question shook and divided the nation. On the one side, there were those who adhered exclusively to the *written* word, and who contended that in the observance of that alone they fulfilled all righteousness; and from this portion of the church proceeded the Samaritans, the Sadducees, and the Karaites. On the other side, there were those who superadded to the written law the "traditions of the elders," and, by way of supererogation, rigidly devoted themselves to the most minute observances which these traditions required. From these sprung the sects of the Pharisees and the Essenes; the former, the absorbing sect of the nation, comprising not only the scribes and learned men in the law, but the mass of the common people; and the latter composed of those who were more rigid than the Pharisees, and whose system was a sort of refinement upon Pharisaism itself, and, like some orders of Romanism, boasting of all the peculiarities of personal and social abstemiousness. The practical result of this veneration for a traditional revelation was just what might be expected. Recreant to their own principle, they found it necessary

to *commit their traditions to writing* ; and to the present day, the *Mishna* of Rabbi Judah Hakkodesh, together with the commentaries upon it, a work of twelve volumes in folio, is one to which they pay much greater regard and devotion than to the written Scriptures. They corrupted the Jewish religion, just as the Romanists have the Christian ; and they annulled the authority of the Old Testament, just as the Romanists have annulled the authority of the New—"by their traditions." When the Saviour was upon the earth, he did not hesitate to express his views of this whole system of human fabrication. There was no class of men whom he rebuked with more severity than these very men. "Why do ye transgress the *command of God* by your *tradition*?"—"Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips ; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, *teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*."—"Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye *may keep your own tradition*."—"Making the word of God of none effect, through your *tradition* which ye have delivered : and many such like things do ye !" I confess I see not with what face men can be advocates for an oral and traditionary revelation, after such unsparing and withering rebukes as these from the Saviour of men.

Let us now advert to a few facts and principles of the same general character under the Christian dispensation. The Saviour appeared among men as a *living* teacher. We have no evidence that His personal instructions were delivered to the Apostles in writing, or that the preaching of the Apostles was in any other way than orally. On the other hand, we do not deny that

both Christ himself and His Apostles uttered many and important truths that were never committed to writing. This must have been the fact from the nature of the case. Paul says to the Thessalonians: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the *traditions* which ye have been taught, whether by *word*, or by our *Epistle*." His preaching was in accordance with his Epistles; and it was important that they should remember both what he had written, and what he had uttered. What he uttered from his lips was worthy of all confidence and obedience, and his hearers were exhorted to hold it fast, because they themselves heard it and knew what it was. But how preposterous to draw the inference, that men in subsequent ages can know what he preached, except as his instructions are written! The ancient fathers acknowledged the authority of the apostolic traditions, unwritten as well as written; but, as we shall hereafter show, they not only never pretended that the churches must blindly receive as apostolical traditions all that may be put upon them as such, but urged the obligation of bringing them to the test of the written revelation. So of the instructions of the Saviour. They were all of the highest importance, whether written or unwritten. Some of them, which were not written by the Evangelists, have been preserved and handed down in writing by the Apostles. Some of them *may* have been taken down from his lips while he was speaking; some of them may have been reduced to writing shortly after he uttered them, and subsequently made use of by the Evangelists in composing the Gospels. But there is no evidence that any of them, or even any of the books of the New Testament were written, until years after his ascension to heaven. Such were the labours and perils of the Apostles in executing their commission to preach

the gospel to all nations, that they had little opportunity or leisure for any other service, until Christian societies were formed. The Saviour's instructions could not be reduced to a permanent written form, after his death, and especially with unerring accuracy, without a *miracle*. Before He left the world, He therefore made provision for the accomplishment of this great work. He gave the promise to His Apostles, who were selected to be His own amanuenses, that they should receive a plenary and unerring guidance from heaven. He assured them, "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into *all* truth: for He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come." Faithful and able as they were, it is not to be supposed that they would be able to *recollect* even the substance of His instructions, so as to give them to the world with unhesitating confidence. And to obviate this difficulty, the Saviour gave them the assurance that the Holy Spirit should "bring all things to *their remembrance*, whatsoever He had said unto them." There are two facts in relation to this work of the Spirit which deserve here to be noticed. The first is, that this divine Agent should reveal many things in *addition* to those which the Saviour Himself taught. "I have many things," said He to the Apostles, "to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them *now*. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into *all truth*." Hence there are many truths revealed in the Apostolic Epistles which are not found in the recorded instructions of the Saviour, as well as several important principles of the Christian system merely suggested and affirmed by him, which the Apostles more amply illustrate and defend. The second circumstance to which I refer, is one the

direct opposite of this; and that is, that *all* the oral instructions of Christ were *not* thus inserted by the Evangelists. His miracles were abundant, and so was His preaching, almost even to redundancy. They could not have been reduced to writing, without swelling the Scriptures to a bulk and form that would have made them an unfit book for the mass of the people; nor indeed without multiplying books to an almost inconceivable extent. This thought is clearly expressed by the Apostle John, at the close of his gospel, and in strong and hyperbolical language. "And there are also," says he, "*many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.*" The design of God, in giving men a written revelation, was to furnish them with a volume sufficiently full and ample to guide them in the paths of holiness and life. Common sense and common piety would naturally conclude that, in superintending and dictating a written revelation, while it would be needless to record every thing, the Holy Spirit would see that enough was recorded to be the object of faith and the guide to eternal salvation.

These views are confirmed by the sacred writers themselves. The language of Paul to the Corinthians is, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I *write* unto you are the commandments of the Lord." On the Mount of Transfiguration, we are told that the Saviour gave important and interesting instructions to three of His disciples, in relation to the "decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." And yet no living man knows what they were. They made a deep and lasting impression on the mind of the Apostle Peter; but from

his own account of that wonderful scene and interview, not so deep an impression as the written word; for in adverting to them he says, "We have also a *more sure* word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place." Paul also solemnly cautions the Colossians to "beware lest any man spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit, after the *traditions* of men, after the *rudiments of the world*, and not after Christ." And the Apostle John, as though his object were forever to put the vexed question at rest, with regard to the comparative claims of a written and a traditionary revelation, makes the following emphatic observation: "Many *other* signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are *not written* in this book. But THESE ARE WRITTEN"—why?—"that ye MIGHT BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that, believing, ye MIGHT HAVE LIFE through His name." The written word, in opposition to that which is unwritten, is here declared, in language too strong and intelligible to be perverted or misunderstood, to be a rule of faith that is both sufficient and unerring.

It seems to us, therefore, that we stand upon strong ground, when we say that an infallible rule of faith, and one that is designed to control the successive generations of men, is a written and not a traditionary revelation. It is the documentary testimony of the living and true God. It is a revelation made by a Being "acquainted with the powers and operations of the human mind, possessing a full comprehension of the powers of human language," and of the various modes of address which will most effectually accomplish the end of giving a revelation to the world.

If Rome possesses a digest of the oral and unrecorded instructions of Christ and his Apostles, it is easy

for her to exhibit them, that they may be compared with the "more sure word of prophecy." Or if they have, for eighteen centuries, been floating on the memories and imaginations of men, may we not be excused for not regarding them as infallible? We do not deny that truth may be found in the traditions of the Church; nor do we deny that it may be found in the schools of philosophy; nor do we deny that it may be found in the Alcoran. But if it be so found, it is only so far as these traditions, and this philosophy, and the pretended divine communications of the great impostor, are in accordance with God's written revelation. Truth does not consist in the traditions of the Church, but in her correct traditions. It does not consist in the opinions of philosophy, but in her correct opinions. Its doctrines are not opinions, nor fables, nor traditions; but *facts*. They can neither be made, nor unmade, nor modified. The proof of their reality is the written testimony of their Divine Author, taking the place of all antecedent, coeval, or subsequent communications. All the oral traditions in the world may not shake our confidence in the written word. Tradition is of no authority whatever, where it is at variance with the divine oracles. If the traditions of Rome accord with the written record, it is well; if they differ from it they are false, and their mystical pretensions are no more than the wands of the magicians, who "did so with their enchantments," and were swallowed up by the rod of Aaron. The divine oracles contain no error; they never did contain any; and though it be found in all the creeds and traditions of Christendom, it is error still. The mere circumstance that it is the creature of tradition, though for a thousand generations, no more transforms it into truth, than the unbroken tradition of

centuries proves that the solar system, as taught by Ptolemy, is true, and the Copernician false. "Tradition proves that certain doctrines have been believed; tradition alone proves no more." The doctrines may be true, and they may be false. Where there is no countervailing testimony, tradition may furnish presumptive evidence of their truth; while the truth of them rests on their own simple verity, and the evidence of that verity, and not on the fact that they are either believed or rejected. There is most palpable error in the reasoning of the Romanists, in regard to the authority of human tradition. They seem to have lost sight of that great principle in moral science, that there is such a thing as *truth*, irrespective of the views of men. They teach the doctrine that "truth becomes truth *because it is believed*;" and that it is *first believed and then true*: whereas, independently of its being believed, it has an unchanging and everlasting existence; and no decrees of Councils, or ages of tradition, can render it half so worthy of confidence as the written testimony of its Author.

All that is said by the Roman Church, as well as not a few High-church Episcopalians, on the *authority of the Fathers*, is liable for the most part to the same objections which are here made to a traditionary revelation. There is very little of the writings of the Fathers of the first three centuries extant; and what we have of them is upon matters foreign from the Roman controversy. A greater portion of them are spurious and forged, and many of them that are genuine, corrupted by ignorance and fraud. Their authority is contradictory; and it is impossible to ascertain what their true views were in regard to the points of difference between Papists and Protestants. In addition to

this, the Fathers have not always held the same doctrine; nor is it an easy matter to ascertain what their opinions were, as a class of writers, or as representatives of the whole ancient church. They so express themselves as to show that they often mistrusted their own opinions, and had no intention of being considered as *authority* in religious matters. In matters of great importance they have contradicted one another; and in a multitude of instances the Church of Rome herself rejects their authority.*

We might rest our argument here, but for the assumptions of Rome in relation to the written revelation itself. It is necessary that we proceed a step farther, and show that THE VOLUME WHICH WE CALL THE BIBLE, CONTAINS GOD'S WRITTEN REVELATION. Since Protestants claim these Scriptures as the only infallible rule of faith, it becomes them to yield to no doubtful testimony that they constitute the true and unadulterated revelation. Rome, as we have seen, contends that the fact, that these Scriptures are the word of God, rests exclusively upon her testimony; and that the canonical authority of the sacred books is proved and handed down from her alone as the infallible oracle. Her high boast is, that the appeal of Protestants to the Bible is a virtual appeal to *her*; because, as she is pleased to affirm, it is by her inquiry and decision, that the various books that compose it were ascertained to belong to the divine record, and through her decree, that they derive their oracular authority.

There is so little force in this reasoning, that it

* See these propositions proved and illustrated by Daillé, in his valuable treatise on "The right use of the Fathers in deciding religious Controversies." Philad. edition. Published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication.

scarcely deserves to be called sophistry. For the sake of argument let this claim be conceded. It does not follow that *her decision* is the rule of faith, nor that it does any thing more than *indicate what that rule is*. The decrees of the Council of Trent affirm, that the sacred writings are contained in certain specified books; so that, by her own showing, *these books* are her only rule. What if the Church of Rome had first invented the mariner's compass; would it follow that the tendency of the magnetic needle to the pole depended on her invention? A certain mathematician of Greece produced the evidence, that in any triangle, the sum of all the angles is equal to two right angles; but it does not follow that the philosopher *originated* this truth, and that the three angles specified were not equal to two right angles before. If Rome has decided correctly what books belong to the sacred writings, it was upon evidence that existed independently of her decision, and because they antecedently belonged to the scriptural canon. She did not give them a place among the sacred books; *that* they had by a previous divine revelation. And when, by an induction of facts, she satisfied herself that God had already given them that high place and character, she announced her conclusion to the world. Is it so, that there was no revelation from God to men, during the long period before the ecclesiastical councils of Rome decided in what books that revelation is contained? The fact itself, that these are the veritable books which constitute God's revelation, was not, and could not be affected, either by her belief of it, or her decree. It was a fact before she announced it; and her announcement, if true, rested on the fact, and not the fact on her announcement. Rome therefore may not establish her claims by the assertion, that she

alone has decided the canonical authority of the Scriptures, even were that assertion true.

I say, *even were that assertion true*, because the assertion itself has nothing to sustain it. The canonical authority of the Scriptures was ascertained by the *primitive church of God*, during those early ages in which she remained comparatively pure, and long before the Roman Apostacy. The books which belong to the *Old Testament* were certainly known and acknowledged long before the church of Rome was in existence. Their authors were known at the time they were written; their writings were transferred from one generation to another, at a time when there were but few books in existence; the Jews in Palestine acknowledged them as the books from God, and wherever they were scattered abroad, carried with them this sacred deposit. The canon of the Old Testament was fixed several centuries before the Christian era. Two hundred and eighty years before that period, it was translated into Greek at Alexandria, containing the same books which the ancient Jews attested as genuine. There is no proof that they were ever corrupted; and if they had been, there were not wanting those who would have detected and exposed the corruption. The Jews were a divided people, and not a little watchful of one another's integrity. They held their sacred books in such veneration, that they scrupled to change the place of a single letter, and even enumerated the words and letters in each book, lest there might be some mistake from the negligence of the transcribers. Judah and Israel are found to have retained the same Scriptures after the division of the kingdom; and even the Samaritans, after a discord of two thousand years between themselves and the Jews proper, are found to have retained the same Pentateuch, only in a

different language. There have also been found upwards of eleven hundred ancient manuscripts of the Old Testament Scriptures, and they are all in essential harmony. And yet, in defiance of these, and a multitude of other considerations familiar to the Biblical scholar, Rome arrogates to herself, and repeats that arrogance at so late a period as the year 1546 and during the sessions of the Council of Trent, that the authority of the Old Testament rests on her decisions. There never was any difference of views in relation to the canon of the Old Testament, formally expressed, until the Councils of Carthage and Trent so arbitrarily and foolishly decided, that the books of the Apocrypha—books that lay no claim to inspiration, that were never received by the Jewish church, that are nowhere sanctioned or even referred to in the New Testament, and that contain many things at variance with the true Scriptures—form a part of the word of God.

The same is substantially true in relation to the books of the New Testament. "Before the middle of the second century," says Dr. Mosheim, "most of the books composing the New Testament, were in every Christian church throughout the known world; and were read and regarded as the divine rule of faith and practice." Eusebius, the ecclesiastical historian, born at Palestine, and made Bishop of Cæsarea, as early as the year 313, testifies that "the four gospels were collected in the time of the Apostle John;" and though it cannot be proved that the Epistles and the Apocalypse were collected into one body during the lives of their authors, "there is strong probability in favour of this supposition, from the fact that they were early known, and that there were spurious writings claiming to be of divine origin, early palmed upon the world." "These worthless productions

would have produced great confusion," says he, "had not the rulers of churches seasonably interposed, and caused the books which came from Apostolic hands to be speedily separated from that mass of trash, into a volume by themselves." The books of the New Testament were first attested as genuine, not by the church of Rome, but by the primitive church of Christ,—the true Apostolic church, of which Romanists have no substantiated claim to be the lineal descendants. There was evidence enough furnished to the immediate successors of the Apostles, that the books which we deem genuine were received as such by them. The earliest writings of the New Testament, it is believed, were some of the Epistles; nor were any of them received by the churches to which they were sent, except upon unquestionable evidence of their authenticity. The canon was not formed by any general council, of Jerusalem, of Antioch, or of Rome, or any other council; but continued to be augmented during the whole of the Apostolic age, as the evidence became more and more obvious that they were of divine authority. Copies of them were circulated and compared with the originals, until the evidence was satisfactory to the churches that they were both authentic and genuine.

Our sources of evidence therefore on this subject are not at all dependent on the church of Rome. It is a fact worthy of remark, that in the decrees of her early councils, *there is no catalogue of the sacred books whatever*. Origen, in the beginning of the third century, is the first writer who gives a complete and regular catalogue of the whole, as dispersed everywhere, and publicly read in all the churches. After him, Eusebius and Jerome, of the fourth century, give the same catalogue, perfectly coinciding with ours. The Christian world

were slow to receive every book that claimed to be of divine origin, nor did they do so except upon satisfactory evidence. Our appeal is to the earliest ecclesiastical historians; and we find a perfect agreement among them. The caution and wariness of Rome were never more questionable, than in her reasoning on this subject. She first proves the authority of the church from the Scriptures, and then the authority of the Scriptures from the church! Both cannot be true. For if the authority of Rome depends upon the Scriptures, the authority of the Scriptures does not depend upon Rome; and if the authority of the Scriptures depends upon Rome, the authority of Rome cannot depend upon the Scriptures. Romanists may choose which horn of the dilemma best suits them.

But this is not all. The divine origin of the sacred books is not proved simply, nor principally, from historical testimony. Historical testimony has its place, and it is no unimportant place in the argument. But it is not of itself conclusive. These books *speaking for themselves*, that they are not the work of men. A child of ten years of age might better be supposed to have been the architect of the Cathedral at Rome, or of Solomon's Temple, than uninspired man to have been the author of the Holy Scriptures. Some portions of this wonderful volume were composed when there were no other writings in existence. Other portions of it were written when the human mind was in its infancy; and the productions of Pagan authors, at this period, are no more to be compared with it, than a tale for the nursery with the Pilgrim's Progress. But as the most remarkable fact of all, some of them were written during ages when men of gigantic intellect appeared, to claim the homage and admiration of succeeding ages; and yet

these standards of taste, these masters of thought and language, venturing, as they often did, to instruct the world upon religious and moral subjects, wrote like the veriest children. The philosophers of Greece and Rome, when they touched upon themes which relate to God and eternity, spake and wrote with a confusion and incoherence which, compared with the productions of the unlettered fishermen and tent-makers of Galilee, were like the earth when it was "without form and void," in contrast with this fair creation as it rose in order and beauty at the command of its Creator. When we read these sacred pages, we discover something in them that man never wrote — something infinitely above human wisdom, human goodness, human purity. They bear clear and strong marks of their divine Author. We here become familiar with realities which eye had not seen, truths which ear had not heard, and had never entered the mind of man, had they not been revealed by the Spirit of God. God alone is able to reveal to us the facts and truths which these books reveal; for he alone knows them. As they claim to be, so they prove themselves to be, a revelation from heaven. And in view of all this evidence combined, our position is, that irrespective of the decisions of Rome, God's written revelation is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

But our subject requires us to take higher and somewhat different ground. We proceed to say, in the next place, that THESE SCRIPTURES THEMSELVES CLAIM TO BE THE ONLY AND INFALLIBLE RULE. From the first page of this revelation given on Sinai, to the last in the series of these wonderful communications, this Book of God asserts for itself the high and exclusive claim of having dominion over the faith of men. After the Most High

had given the Law to Moses, he said to him, "Write thou these words; *for after the tenor of these words, have I made a covenant with thee and with Israel.*" "*Thy word,*" says the Psalmist, "is a light unto my feet, and a lamp unto my path;"—light, without any mixture of darkness; "truth, without any mixture of error." Elsewhere he affirms, "The law of the Lord is *perfect, converting the soul*; the testimony of the Lord is *sure*, making wise the simple." What so infallible, as a *converting* and *sure* testimony? "The entrance of thy word *giveth light.*" "The word of the Lord *is tried.*" "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto, according to *thy word.*" "Let my heart be sound in *thy statutes*, that I be not ashamed." "Forever, O Lord, *thy word is settled in heaven.*" "Thou, *through thy commandments*, hast made me wiser than mine enemies; for they are ever with me. *I have more understanding than all my teachers*; for *thy testimonies* are my meditation." "Through *thy precepts*, I get understanding." "*Thy testimonies* have I taken as an heritage forever." "Thy word is *very pure*; therefore thy servant loveth it." The sacred penmen profess to have written the Scriptures under the immediate and unerring guidance of God himself; and therefore claim exclusive infallibility. Every thing they reveal is endorsed by, *Thus saith the Lord.* "No prophecy of the Scriptures," says the Apostle Peter, "is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." "*All Scripture,*" says Paul, "is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be *perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Hence, when the Jews sought counsel

from diviners and Pagan oracles, the Prophet was directed to say to them, "*To the law and to the testimony* ; if they speak not according to *this word*, there is *no light* in them." And to the same effect, another Prophet says, "The *wise men* are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken ; lo, they have rejected *the word of the Lord*, and *what confidence is in them* ?"

If it be objected that these, and similar declarations refer to the *Old Testament* only ; we reply, that if these things may be affirmed of the Old, much more may they be affirmed of the New, which is confessedly in advance of the Old. There is no ambiguity in the New Testament in relation to its infallibility. "My doctrine," says the Saviour, "is not mine, but his that sent me." "The words that I speak unto you, they are *spirit and they are life*." If the Scriptures were written, not merely under the general superintendence of the Holy Spirit, preserving the writers from error ; not merely under that elevating influence which communicated a divine impulse to their minds, and raised their natural faculties to an unusual degree of activity and vigour, but by an influence that directed them to every thought and every word ; then is there no superior, no equal standard of truth. Every doctrine is to be tried, every doubt is to be solved, by them, and by them alone. There is no appeal from the Scriptures to tradition, or to human reason ; but the appeal lies from tradition and from reason to the Scriptures.

The only exception in the Scriptures, intimating that they are not a *sufficient*, as well as an infallible rule of faith, is one which the Romanists have seized upon with great avidity. It is found in the decision of the Apostolic council, with the presbyters of the Church at Jerusalem, as related in the Acts of the Apostles. It is con-

ceded by Protestants that the decisions of this synod are a rule of faith ; and the Romanists urge it as a divine warrant for the infallibility of their own councils. There are two circumstances which refute this Conclusion. The first is, that at the time the Council of Jerusalem was held, the entire instructions of the New Testament, and especially those which relate to the external organization of the Church, were not committed to writing, and the churches needed further instructions. *Now*, they are committed to writing, and the decisions of this Council are included in the sacred record. The second is, that there is a special reason for the infallibility of this Council which no subsequent Council can urge ; and that is, its decisions claim to be directed by the immediate agency of the Spirit of God. In the letter missive to the churches, giving a narrative of the deliberations of that body, and stating the conclusions to which it had arrived, and their binding obligations upon the churches, there are these remarkable words :—"IT SEEMED GOOD TO THE HOLY GHOST AND TO US to lay upon you this burden." The presence of the Spirit of all truth and grace, Himself the great Author of the Bible, gave these decrees their infallibility. When Rome can furnish the same evidence that this infallible Guide presides over the decisions of her Councils, we will place them upon a parity with other revealed decisions of this great Teacher. Those who have acquainted themselves with the interior of their sacred conclaves, and taken, though but a glance, at these secret chambers of imagery, may form some opinion of the supernatural influence by which they were directed. The history of the Council of Trent by Jurieiu, a Protestant professor of theology at Rotterdam, or even by Father Paul, himself a Romanist, and the history of the Council of Constance by L'En-

fant, carry strong conviction to the mind of the reader, be he Protestant or Romanist, that whatever agencies of a different kind may have influenced these Councils, there was little of that Presence that presided over the deliberations of the "Apostles, and Elders, and brethren at Jerusalem."

There is but one way of repelling this claim to the exclusive infallibility of the Scriptures themselves; and that is, that the *sole right of interpreting them belongs to Rome*. This arrogant pretension suggests another general observation in our argument, equally at war with the views of the Romanists.

One of the most important principles revealed in the Scriptures is, that THE RIGHT OF INTERPRETING THEM BELONGS TO ALL THOSE TO WHOM THEY ARE GIVEN. It is difficult to say, with precision, on what basis the Church of Rome rests her exclusive right of interpreting the divine Oracles, unless it be that referred to in the first part of this discussion. It cannot be her antiquity, for both the church at Jerusalem and at Antioch were older than the church at Rome; while the Greek church, the Abyssinian church, and the churches in Asia, all existed independently of her, and acknowledged no ecclesiastical relation with her whatever. The history of the early churches, both in the Apostolic age, and the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles, furnishes no evidence that any one church, or any great branch of the church, ever arrogated the exclusive prerogative of scriptural exegesis. So far as I understand the claims of Rome, she first assumes that she herself is *the only true church*, and then affirms that *the promises of divine guidance, because given to the church, are given to her alone*. Now both these positions are untenable. The *true church* of Jesus Christ is a spiritual community. While the

church visible may contain the church spiritual, they are by no means identified. "All are not Israel that are of Israel." There are tares among the wheat. There is nothing in the original organization of the Church of Rome, and nothing in the character developed by the history of those who profess to be lineally descended from her, that proves that she ever did, or does now, contain the only regenerated and spiritual community. We grant that there are promises of divine guidance made to *the church*, but we do not grant that there are any promises of *infallibility*. That the true and spiritual community of the faithful have the promise of preservation from essential and fundamental error, no one can question; because such preservation is indispensable to its existence as a true church. During the four thousand years in which a true church was preserved under the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, there is no evidence that she was *infallible*. Facts show us, also, that subsequent churches, the Asiatic churches of Ephesus, of Smyrna, of Pergamos, of Thyatira, of Sardis, of Philadelphia, and of Laodicea, were not preserved in a state of *infallibility*; for they are all the objects of severe rebuke, and have all long since become extinct. Besides, there is no promise of divine guidance, or of any other blessing in the covenant of grace to the *merely visible* church. The supposition that there is, is the rock on which Rome has split and foundered. There is no principle in the Bible more clearly revealed, than that "all the promises are *in Christ*," and made only to those who are in Him by a living and true faith. True believers in every age, and wherever they are found, who profess their faith in Christ, form the community, and the only community, to which the promise of divine guidance is made. God has nowhere promised, even to them,

that he "will guide them into *all* truth;" for many of them are left in partial ignorance and error. *This* promise, the promise on which the Romanists place so much reliance, was, as we have seen, given exclusively to those who were to be employed in reducing the Holy Scriptures to writing, that these Scriptures, and they alone, might be infallible guides. And that this is the true construction of the promise is obvious from the scope and design of the passage, and from a multitude of undeniable facts.

The position, therefore, which we maintain is, that God has given the promise of guidance to *all* and *every one* constituting his true church, and in the honest and faithful exercise of those faculties and opportunities of divine knowledge which his providence has furnished them. I say to *all*, and *every one*, because there is individual responsibility in this matter. It is a fearful responsibility; and because it is so, the God of all grace shares it, if I may so speak, with every man who sincerely endeavours to perform this reasonable service. If men will go to his word with a right spirit, and to him for direction, he has promised that "the meek he will guide in judgment, and the meek he will teach his way." It is not more true that he has given to *his church*, however great or small the company of which it is composed, and however separated by lines of external organization, the promise of preservation from fatal error, and of advancing knowledge, than that he has given the same promise to *every individual* of his true followers. Nothing can be more in point to prove this than declarations like the following. "If *any man* lack wisdom, let him *ask of God*, who giveth liberally and without upbraiding, and it *shall be given him*." "If *thou* criest after knowledge, and liftest up *thy* voice for

understanding; if *thou* seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt *thou* understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

It is with such encouragements as these that this holy book teaches us, that the great duty of rightly interpreting the word of God rests on every man's conscience; and that for the proper exercise of this right the sovereign Lord holds him accountable. He may avail himself of all the helps within his power; but after men, and ministers, and books have done all they may to enlighten him, he must form his own judgment. He is, no doubt, bound to use great caution and circumspection in so doing. He may not "handle the word of God deceitfully," nor wrest it from its plain and obvious meaning; lest, like "the unlearned and unstable," mentioned by the Apostle Peter, "he wrest it to his own destruction." Deference is due to the word of God; and it may never be distorted and disjointed in order to fall in with our own preconceived and pre-adopted views. There may be dark and doubtful passages; but they are very few compared with those that are plain and intelligible. The Bible is a plain book and easily understood. "A scorner seeketh knowledge and findeth it not; but knowledge is easy to him that understandeth." God gave His word to men of every capacity, and he has revealed its most important truths in a way that makes them level with the lowest understanding. There is no book of the same magnitude that is so easily comprehended. Such is the connexion between the various parts of it, that when one great principle of it is understood, it leads to a right understanding of all those great principles that are essential to faith and obedience. It does not require so much intellect, as heart, to under-

stand them. "None of the wicked shall understand, but the *wise* shall understand." "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Men find it difficult to understand the Bible, only because their hearts are opposed to it; and when their hearts are opposed to it, it is not wonderful that its simplest and plainest truths should be perverted. Men of common honesty and common discernment cannot fail to understand the great and fundamental truths God has revealed. They do understand them; and quite as well as the more learned and philosophizing. And this is the reason why the Bible, above all other books, exerts such prodigious influence over the minds of men. They do not go to Rome to inquire what it means; but make their inquiries at the divine oracles themselves. They gradually become acute in the detection of error, and are slow to be "carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and the cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive." They distinguish truth from error; and the darker and more pernicious the heresy, the brighter and more precious the truth. And thus they discover their character, and show that they *choose* the way of life, and not the way of death. For no other purpose in the world has God given men understanding and conscience so much as for this. No man has, it is true, *a right to form a wrong opinion*; and yet must he form opinions for himself, and on his own responsibility. The right of private judgment is an unalienable right, if it exist at all. Men either possess it, or they do not possess it. If they do not possess it, whence is it that others possess it for them? If they do possess it, whence is it that others may exercise it in their place? One of the last rights in the world that may be abandoned, is the right which every man has

of forming his own opinions of the true import of what God has revealed. No man may judge for him, or so dictate to him as to have dominion over the judgment and faith which he himself forms. No man may hear, or read for him, or collect and weigh evidence in his behalf, with any other view than that of better enabling him to form his own independent judgment under the direction of the only infallible standard. Individual responsibility not only implies the right and privilege of expounding the Scriptures according to the best conclusions to which the individual can arrive, but the *duty* of so doing. Men may wave the privilege, but the duty they cannot wave, and enjoy a peaceful conscience, or the approbation of God. If the slothful servant wrap his talent in a napkin, and hide it in the earth, he is condemned out of his own mouth.

Something like these, if I mistake not, are the views of the Bible, on the right of personal and private judgment. Like every right, it is capable of abuse, and when abused men must answer for it. "Every one of us," says the Apostle, "must give an account of *himself* unto God." To form just impressions of the truth of God is a personal thing. "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for *thyself*; and if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." "*Judge ye*," says Paul, "what I say." Again he says, "*Prove* all things: hold fast that which is good." "*Search the Scriptures*," says the Saviour. "*Try the spirits*," says John, "whether they be of God." It was a noble testimony of the still "more noble" Bereans, that while they received the word with all "readiness of mind," they *searched the Scriptures* daily, "whether these things were so." "Let your faith stand," says the great Instructor of the Gentiles, "*not* in the wisdom of men, but in the power

of God." This is the Christian's privilege. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself *is judged of no man.*" No man is the keeper of another's conscience, because no man can stand in his place, take his crown, or endure his woes.

There is something wonderfully ensnaring, and even fascinating, in the notion that the trouble and vexation of religious inquiry belongs to the priests, and not to the people. Any man acquainted with Catholic countries knows the fearful and ruinous influence of this capital error. All classes in society throw this responsibility on their religious teachers, with the most quiet and tranquil conviction that, should they happen to be in error, they have nothing to apprehend in the day of reckoning. They sail on an ocean that requires a sure pilot, and their only guide is a voyager like themselves.

In all other departments of knowledge, the interests of truth are promoted by the spirit of inquiry. And so they are in religion. Nothing has established the truth of God upon so firm and immovable a basis, as free discussion. Infidels and heretics have been driven from the field by free discussion. "Discussion," says Lord Bacon, "is the winnowing of truth from error." Truth may indeed suffer for a time, by rashness and impatience, and vain curiosity and pride; but in the end, it stands upon a firmer foundation, for having been honestly and thoroughly investigated. The cause that will not abide investigation, is rotten at the core. And here is the difference between Protestantism and the faith of Rome. Protestantism invites discussion; Rome cannot endure it. The faith of Rome must be received implicitly, or not at all. The only safety of her wicked system is to keep the world in darkness. I say wicked system, because it is a system that destroys the soul. There is

too much reason to fear that that single axiom, so inseparable from the Papacy, "to doubt is to be damned," is in too many instances, but to be damned *without* doubting.

There is an additional consideration on this branch of the discussion, and that arises FROM THE TESTIMONY OF THE FATHERS, AND THE BETTER PART OF THE ROMANISTS THEMSELVES. The primitive church, in the earlier centuries of the Christian era, however silent on other points of the Papal controversy, taught the same doctrine in relation to the supremacy of the Scriptures as a rule of faith, which is maintained by Protestants. The early Fathers believed just as the Reformers believed. In support of this assertion, we adduce the fact, so familiar to those who are acquainted with the writings of Dr. Lardner, that from the time of Barnabas, Clement, Hermas, and Polycarp, who were cotemporary with the Apostles, down to Theophylact, who flourished in the eleventh century, the great body of them were in the habit of referring to the books of the Old and New Testament *in proof of the doctrines of Christianity*. "The blessed Paul," says Clement, in writing to the Corinthians, "did verily admonish you, *by the Spirit*." "We have received," says Irenæus of the second century, "the method of our salvation from no others but from them by whom the gospel came to us; which gospel, the Apostles first *preached*, but afterwards, by the will of God, delivered in *writing*, to be for the future the *pillar and foundation of our faith*." Speaking on the subject of oral tradition, Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, and the most eminent Latin Father of the third century, says, "Whence have you that tradition? Comes it from the authority of the *Lord*, and the *gospels*, or from the *Apostles*? For God hath testified that we are to do those things that *are written*. If it be

commanded in the *gospels*, or contained in the *epistles*, then let us observe it as a divine and holy tradition." Nor was Rome herself always so corrupt as she is now; nor, even in the more corrupted ages of her history, have all her teachers called in question the exclusive authority of the Scriptures as a rule of faith. Hilary, the Bishop of Poitiers, in France, whose efforts were so successful against the Arian heresy, and who lived in the time of the Emperor Constantine, commends that Emperor, for "regulating his faith according to *those things that are written*;" and adds, that "he who refuseth this, is *Antichrist*, and he who dissembles on this point is anathema." Basil, who lived in the latter part of this century, in defence of the Christian Doxology used in his days, remarks, "We have received it from our fathers; but *this is not enough for us*; for they followed the authority of *the Scriptures*, and make its testimonies the principles on which they built." The celebrated Augustine, in writing against the Donatists, has the following language: "The Holy Scripture fixeth *the rule of our doctrine*, and is a *divine balance for weighing it*." In his controversy with Maximinus, he says, "Neither ought I now to allege the Nicene Council, nor you that of Ariminum; for neither of us is bound by the authority of the one, or the other. Let us both conduct our controversy under *the authority of the Scriptures*, which are witnesses common to us both. And in writing to Jerome, he says, "I do not believe that thou expectest that we should read thy books, as we do those of the Prophets and Apostles; of the truth of whose writings, as being *exempt from all error*, we may not in any wise doubt." Again he says, "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, having been confirmed in the Apostles' time, and since by the Bishops who succeeded them, and

the churches which have been propagated throughout the world, have been placed as it were upon a high throne, to which every faithful and godly understanding must be subject." Cyril, the Bishop of Jerusalem, of the fourth century, and whose lectures are said to be "the most complete system of theology," and to be "an invaluable treasure," observes, "It behoveth us not to deliver the *very least thing* of the sacred mysteries of faith without the *Holy Scripture*. This is the security of our faith—not what is delivered of our own inventions, but what is demonstrated from the Holy Scriptures. Believe me not," says he, "unless thou find the things that I shall speak demonstrated out of the Holy Scriptures. For the confirmation and establishment of our faith is not grounded upon the eloquence of language, but rather upon the proofs that are taught out of the Divine Scriptures." Jerome, who survived twenty years of the fifth century, a monk, and a presbyter at Bethany, who was distinguished for his proficiency in sacred literature, and whose edition of the vulgar Latin Bible is sanctioned by the Church of Rome, speaks of "those things which, without the authorities and testimonies of the Scripture, men invent of their own heads, *as from Apostolic traditions*, and are smitten of the sword of God." He quotes also with approbation, a remark of Theophilus Alexander, that "it comes from a demoniacal spirit, that men follow the sophisms of human minds, and think any thing divine, that wants the authority of Scripture." In writing to Theophilus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, "I know," says he, "that I place the Apostles in a distinct rank from all other writers; for as for them, they always speak truth, but as for others, they speak sometimes like men, as they were." Gerson, an illustrious French Romanist, who was Chancellor

of the church in Paris, and a member of the Council of Constance, expresses views on this subject in as strong and decisive language as Luther himself. "It is first and principally to be considered," says he, "whether a doctrine be conformable to the Holy Scripture. Because the Scripture is delivered to us as *a sufficient and infallible rule*, for the government of the whole ecclesiastical body to the end of time: so that any doctrine not conformable to it is to be renounced as heretical." Again he says, "What mischief, what danger, what confusion has happened, through contempt of the Holy Scripture, which is *surely sufficient* for the government of the Church, else Christ must have been an imperfect Lawgiver." There is also a very significant representation of the truth on this subject by Optatus Melvitanus, of the fourth century, and who wrote extensively on the schism of the Donatists. In his controversy with Parmenianus he observes, "You say that such a thing is *lawful*: we say it is unlawful: the minds of the people are doubting and wavering between your *lawful*, and our *unlawful*. Let no man believe either you or us; we are all contentious men. We must seek, therefore, for judges between us. If Christians are to be our judges, both sides will not afford such. We must seek for a judge abroad. If he be a *Pagan*, he cannot know the secrets of Christianity; if he be a *Jew*, he is an enemy to Christian baptism. Therefore there is no judgment of this matter can be found on earth. We must seek for a judge from heaven. But to what end do we solicit heaven, when we have *here in the gospel a will and testament*? And because here we may fitly compare earthly things with heavenly, the case is just as if a man had many sons: While he is present with them, he commands every

one what he will have done ; and there is no need as yet of making his last will. So also Christ, as long as He was present on earth, though neither now is He wanting, for a time commanded His Apostles whatever was necessary. But just as an earthly father, when he feels his death approaching, fearing lest after his death the brothers should fall out and quarrel, calls in witnesses, and translates his will from his dying heart into *written tables*, that will continue long after him : now, if any controversy arises among the brothers, they do not go to his tomb, but consult his *last will* ; and thus he, while he rests in his grave, *does speak to them* in those silent tables, as if he were alive. He, *whose Testament we have*, is in heaven ; therefore, we are to inquire His pleasure in the Gospel as in His *last Will and Testament*." The great Chrysostom, of the fourth and fifth centuries, has the following remarks, selected from his "Homilies :"
 "All Christians ought to have recourse to *the Scriptures*. For at this time, since heresy has infected the churches, the *divine Scriptures alone* can afford a proof of genuine Christianity, and a refuge to those who are desirous of arriving at the true faith. Formerly it might have been ascertained by various means, which was the true church ; but at present, there is no other method left to those who are willing to discover the true church of Christ, but by *the Scriptures alone*. And why ? Because heresy has all outward observances in common with her. If a man, therefore, be desirous of knowing the true church, how will he be able to do it amidst so great a resemblance, but by the Scriptures alone ? Wherefore our Lord, foreseeing that such a great confusion of things would take place in the latter days, orders the Christians to have recourse to *nothing but the Scriptures*. Let us not attend to the opinions of the

many;—especially as we possess THE MOST EXACT AND PERFECT RULE AND STANDARD by which to regulate our several inquiries—I mean the REGULATIONS OF THE DIVINE LAWS. Therefore I could wish that all of you would neglect what this or that man asserts for truth, and that you would investigate all these things *in the Scriptures*.”*

Such were the views of the ancient Fathers, and of some of the more intelligent and ingenuous Romanists themselves, on the subject of the exclusive infallibility of the sacred Scriptures. The nearer the age of the church to that of its Divine Founder, the more closely did she look to His word as the only unerring Oracle. The greater her reverence for its authority, the less imminent had she with man’s devices, and the more entire exclusion of all pretensions to human infallibility.

There is one more consideration which may set the preposterous claim of Rome in a light that reflects its true baseness. Some writer has remarked, that “if you can once trace error to its source, you are sure to kill it.” It so happens that this claim to Papal infallibility can be traced to its source. The Council of Nice, as it was the first, so it was the most venerable and illustrious general Council ever assembled previous to the Reformation. The Emperor Constantine was at its head, and it numbered among its members some of the most distinguished men of that, or of any other age. It was a Council held in most religious reverence by the church of Rome, and its decisions were instead of all other arguments to prove the truth of the doctrines it taught. It

* See “Lardner’s Credibility of the Gospel History”—Archbishop Tillotson on the “Rule of Faith”—Chillingworth’s “Discourses”—Fletcher’s “Lectures on the Principles and Institutions of the Roman Catholic Religion”—a Sermon on “The Reasons of the Protestant Religion,” by Rev. John Pye Smith—and Daillé on the Right Use of the Fathers.

was therefore a matter of the first importance to the advocates of Roman infallibility to be able to refer to the decisions of that Council as not only countenancing their views, but giving them the indelible sanction of its high authority by an express and unequivocal decree. The African Bishops, it is well known, strenuously resisted the supremacy of Rome; nor was it until two Bishops of Rome, Zosimus and Boniface, made their appeal to the *canons of the Council of Nice*, nor until that appeal was many years after urged by Pope Leo, in a letter to the Emperor Theodosius, that the infallibility of Rome was at length acceded to by so large a part of Christendom. But these alleged canons of the Council of Nice were *actually forged* by Zosimus and Boniface, about the beginning of the fifth century. The Greek Fathers complained of this *pious fraud* of these two Bishops, and charged it upon them in the face of the world. No such decisions could ever be found in any of the authentic copies of the Council of Nice. The African Bishops sent to Constantinople, to Alexandria, and to Antioch, for the best authenticated copies, and they were found to contain *no such canons*. Nor do the canons and acts of that Council at this day, not excepting the collection of them most approved by the Romanists themselves, nor any other genuine copy of them, ancient or modern, contain any such thing. They were deliberately *forged*, and wickedly inserted among the decrees of that Council, for the purpose of deceiving the world, and giving currency to a favourite dogma of Rome, as a legitimate canon of that Council, when after the most careful investigation, it is ascertained that that Council says not a word on the subject. Such is the origin of Papal infallibility—a parent every way worthy of such an

offspring—a base falsehood, traced, as it should be, to the “father of lies.”*

We think we may say, without presumption, therefore, that the Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith. We hope the position has been demonstrated, and in some measure illustrated, as we have proceeded with the proof, and only regret that the time allotted to the present exercise, does not permit greater enlargement on this branch of the discussion. We must pass from this part of the subject,

To a consideration of THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRINCIPLE which it has been our object thus far merely to illustrate and establish.

Sober men, and especially Christian men, will not dispute about matters of secondary moment. On no principle can the Protestant Reformation be vindicated, or the reformers be held guiltless of the most uncalled for schism that ever rent asunder the visible church, if it be of minor consequence, whether the Oracles of God or the decisions of Rome are the rule of Faith. We hold the question to be of vital moment, both in theory and practice, and one that is of great importance to the church and the world. On this part of the discussion I purpose to call your attention to several distinct topics, and begin by remarking,

That the great Protestant principle, that the Scriptures are the only sufficient and infallible rule, is OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO THE EXCLUSION OF ALL MERELY HUMAN SYSTEMS IN RELIGION. The difference between Rome and Protestantism in this great article of belief is a very wide difference. It is the all-absorbing question, and decides every thing. There is, there can be

* Daillé's Treatise on the Right Use of the Fathers, chap. iii.

no system more dangerous than that which, while it professes veneration for the Scriptures, sets aside their supreme authority. There is no possible security against the encroachments of error, when once this principle is adopted. *Where is it?* Do you reply, in the integrity of the church? The church is in error; and what then? The Hebrew church was often reformed for her errors, and so were the different churches in the New Testament, and called upon to repent and reform; and because they did not do it, their "candlestick" has long since been "removed out of its place." We make no pretensions of unerring integrity for the churches of the Protestant Reformation; and we inquire again, *Where is it to be found?* You tell us in the Church of Rome. "Cursed is the man who putteth his trust in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." The prospects of the world are dark and gloomy to the last degree, if it rests with men—fallible men, to decide what is true and what is false in religious doctrine. Never was there a more mischief-working principle than this. No good has ever come of departing from the Scriptures, as the only infallible rule of faith. The Church of God would never have been divided as she now is, nor human systems have ever taken the place of a pure Christianity, but for the preposterous appeal to other standards than the Bible. If the decisions of Rome and the oral traditions of the church are to be preferred before the written records of divine inspiration, we see no protection for the cause of truth, and no refuge "when the enemy cometh in like a flood." Rome herself well understands this. She insists on the claim of reviewing the decisions of unerring wisdom, because she well knows that in this tremendous engine for evil,

lies the secret of her strength. This is her right arm of power, and the lever by which she has done so much to overthrow the fair fabric "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Those in whose way it has fallen to acquaint themselves somewhat with the Papal controversy, cannot but have observed, and observed with interest, that the ablest and most subtle, as well as the weakest and most disingenuous defenders of Romanism, from the Cardinal Bellarmine down to some modern sciolists, have exhausted their subtlety and vigour on the question respecting the rule of faith. No subject within the range of theological discussion has called forth the application of their best powers so frequently, as the infallibility of a traditionary revelation and the Papal decrees. This is just as we should expect it to be. The difference between Romanists and Protestants hangs on this single question. No matter what view is taken of it—whether it be that there is a rule of faith antecedent to the Scriptures, or one that is a mere additional revelation—whether it be that the decisions of the Church are superior to the Scriptures, or upon a parity with them—or whether it be the apparently more modest claim that the Church of Rome is the infallible interpreter of divine truth; this question once decided, decides every other. If the Bible is the infallible rule, truth is triumphant; but once abandon the supreme authority of the Bible, and there is nothing to defend the purity and simplicity of the gospel against the corrupted institutions of men; and no limit to errors introduced and defended under colour of God's truth.

Nor may these be deemed bold assertions. In this single principle of Rome, there has been every thing

but truth at work in the formation of her doctrines. I do not know a system of folly or impiety which, as a religious system, can be compared with that which this prolific principle of error has produced. The doctrine of *Transubstantiation and the Sacrifice of the Mass*, without any visible or sensible change effected in the appearance and properties of the consecrated elements of bread and wine, can be accounted for only on the admission that what the Church of Rome declares is true.* The *exorcising rites before the act of baptism; the salt, and the oil, and the saliva used in the act of baptism itself*, find a sanction nowhere but in the Roman rubric.*

* The doctrine of transubstantiation is thus expressed by the Council of Trent:

DE TRANSUBSTANTIATIONE.

Canon I. "Si quis negaverit in sanctissimæ Eucharistiæ sacramento contineri vere, realiter et substantialiter corpus et sanguinem una cum anima et divinitate Domini nostri Jesu Christi, ac proinde totum Christum; sed dixerit tantummodo esse in eo ut in signo, vel figura, aut virtute; anathema sit.

Canon II. "Si quis dixerit in sacrosancto Eucharistiæ sacramento remanere substantiam panis et vini una cum corpore et sanguine Domini nostri Jesu Christi, negaveritque mirabilem illam et singularem conversionem totius substantiæ panis in corpus, et totius substantiæ vini in sanguinem, manentibus duntaxat speciebus panis et vini: quam quidem conversionem Catholica ecclesia aptissime Transubstantionem appellat: anathema sit.

Canon III. "Si quis negaverit in venerabile sacramento Eucharistiæ, sub una quaque specie sub singulis cujusque speciei partibus, separatione factâ, totum Christum contineri; anathema sit." Concil. Trid. Sess. 13. Cap. 8.

† "The following is as nearly as possible the form used in Baptism in the Church of Rome. The Priest first asks the sponsors what sex the child is of—whether they are its true god-fathers and god-mothers—if they are resolved to live and die in the true Catholic faith—and what name they intend to give it? After an exhortation, he calls the child by the name given it, and asks, What dost thou demand of the Church? To which the god-father answers, *Faith*. After several other inquiries, the Priest breathes three times upon the child's face, saying, 'Come out of this child, thou evil spirit, and make room for the Holy Ghost.' This being done, he makes the sign of the cross on the child's forehead, and afterwards on his heart, repeating at the same time, 'Receive the sign of the cross on thy forehead and on thy heart.' He then blesses the salt, if it was not blessed before, which being

The inherent efficacy of outward rites to communicate grace, was never asserted by Jesus Christ or his Apostles. Penance, extreme unction, and matrimony, find no place among the sacraments they instituted. The invocation of saints, and the use of images for the purposes of religious worship, and the invocation of the Virgin Mary, glossed over as they are by some intelligent Romanists, and rendered venerable as they are by the inventions of art and the magic power of genius, are authorized only by the breviaries and missals of Rome. Whence are derived those views of the Ro-*

done, he takes a little of it and puts it into the child's mouth, saying, 'Receive the salt of wisdom.' After this he puts his thumb in his mouth, and having dipped it in spittle, rubs it over the mouth of the child. The next thing is to strip the child naked on the upper part of his body, while the Priest prepares the holy oil. The god-fathers and god-mothers hold the child over the font, with the face toward the East. After some questions, the Priest pours the water twice on the child's head, in the form of a cross, mentioning at each time one of the Persons of the Trinity. He then anoints the top of the child's head in the form of a cross, with the sacred oil, and puts over it a piece of white linen, to denote that it is cleansed from all its impurities."—Hurd's Rules and Ceremonies, page 255-6.

* "The noblest heathen temple now remaining in the world is the Pantheon or Rotunda, which, as the inscription over the portico informs us, having been impiously dedicated of old by Agrippa to Jove and all the gods, was piously re-consecrated by Pope Boniface the Fourth, to the blessed Virgin and all the saints. With this single alteration, it serves as exactly for all the purposes of the Popish, as it did for the Pagan worship, for which it was built. For as in the old temple every one might find the god of his country, and address himself to that deity whose religion he was most devoted to, so it is the same thing now. Every one chooses the patron he likes best; and one may see here different services going on at the same time at different altars, with distinct congregations around them, just as the inclinations of the people lead them to the worship of this or that particular saint. And as it is in the Pantheon, it is just the same in all the other heathen temples that still remain in Rome. They have only pulled down one idol to set up another; and changed rather the name than the object of their worship. Thus the little temple of Vesta, near the Tiber, mentioned by Horace, is now possessed by the Madonna of the Sun; that of Fortuna Virilis, by Mary, the Egyptian; that of Saturn, where the public treasure was

manists concerning the nature and demerit of sin, and the partial merit and sufficiency of the Saviour's atonement, which lead them to hold the doctrines of *supererogation, purgatory, and prayers for the dead?* Whence the pretensions of her *hierarchy*, exhibiting in all its character, and form, and history, so minute an accomplishment of the Prophecies respecting the "Man of Sin?" Whence the pretension that the seal of heaven is visibly fixed to her credentials, and that the miracles of Ignatius Loyola, and Francis Xavier, and St. Dominic, and a multitude of others—to say nothing of the relics of the cross, and the preserved drops of blood which flowed from him who was crucified, and the identical and wonder-working stones which the devil tempted the Saviour to turn into bread, all so marvellously endued with miraculous power—are proofs stronger than holy writ, of divine authority? Whence but from the decisions of Rome herself, and the ridiculous and legendary tales of Roman history? It is not surprising, that for these, and a multitude of such like things, men must go somewhere beside to the Bible. Disgusting as are these and other errors of Rome, the harlot-parent, the mother-monster of this whole earth-born progeny, is the single principle that her decisions are superior to the word of God. The Cardinal Bellarmine, than whom there are few higher authorities in the Roman church, and whom Bayle affirms to have "carried the first pen of his age," gravely taught that "if the Pope should *command vice* and *prohibit virtue*, the church would be *bound to believe vice to be good and virtue to be evil, unless she should sin against conscience!*"

anciently kept, by St. Adrian; that of Romulus and Remus, in the Via Sacra, by two brothers, Cosmus and Damianus; and that of Antonine the godly, by Laurence, the saint."—Dr. Middleton's Letters from Rome.

The most subtle and intrepid enemy of God and righteousness does not desire greater latitude than this. It sanctions every form of error, in the worst of men, and in the worst ages of the world. And Rome has needed it, lest with all her errors "she should sin against conscience." It matters not who challenges a supremacy above the written revelation, or however hallowed their pretensions; it is a claim comprehensive of all evil.

But the principle for which we contend is not less important, in the next place, TO THE SUPPRESSION OF INFIDELITY. The religion of Rome, I am firmly persuaded, has had more to do with the infidelity that has existed in the world, than the great body of men have been wont to believe. Her claim to supremacy as a rule of faith, as exhibited in the early part of this dissertation, is itself, in my humble judgment, nothing short of infidelity. What must we say of men who soberly entertain the conviction that "the Scriptures are of no more value than Æsop's Fables, without the authority of the church;" and that "of all the possible forms under which a rule of faith could have been published to mankind, *the New Testament is, as such, the most INCONGRUOUS AND CONFUSED, and what NO SENSIBLE MAN would ever have adopted;*" but that they are INFIDELS! What could Voltaire or Thomas Paine have said more! Not only is it infidelity, but of the most subtle and imposing kind. That man is not less an infidel, who, while he professes to believe in the authority of divine revelation, and at the same time claims a superiority for some other standard of faith; than that man is an idolater, who, while he professes to believe in the Divine existence, and to reverence the divine Being, at the same time affirms that there is a Deity above Him. There is NO CONFIDENCE in God's revelation, where there is not supreme confidence. "He that

is not with me, is against me." It is the veriest trifling in the world, for men to profess respect for the Scriptures as a rule of faith, while they respect the decisions of the Papal church more. The Scriptures do not ask, and they do not receive any thing less than supreme confidence; nor is it possible for that confidence to be given to another, without discarding the word of God. An open and declared infidel does no more.

Nor is this speculation. Facts, melancholy facts show, that Romanism is not only to a great extent the religion of infidels, but that it has done more to promote infidelity than any other device of man, or of the great adversary. The radical cause of infidelity is the moral depravity of the human heart. Men "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Fallen by their iniquity, they are sufficiently prone to reject the Scriptures. Caricatured, as the beautiful system of truth they reveal has been by Rome, it is not strange there should have been those who discovered in it no evidence of a divine origin. They could not recognize the authority of the church to *declare* it as such; and when they inspected the system itself, they saw it habited in a garb never taken from the wardrobe of the upper sanctuary. Not only, thus habited, did they discover in it the work of man, but one of the most marvellous expressions of human weakness and folly the world has ever beheld. And they revolted from it, as too odious to bear the image and superscription of the Deity. Like all other men, until renewed by the Spirit of God, they were, at heart, infidels before. Now, they threw off the mask. The church could no longer bind them to the Bible. Forms and ceremonies, absurd dogmas and foolish rites could not bind them to the Bible. They had been taught that the Bible was the servant of the church, and

not her master; and the bonds of the master broken, they cared not for the servant.

For nothing were the "dark ages" to be more pitied, than for regarding as Christianity such a wretched system as Romanism. When wicked, and at the same time shrewd and thinking men threw off this intolerable bondage, it is no marvel, that their liberty degenerated into licentiousness, and that in ceasing to be Romanists they became infidels. There was no apology, but there was this occasion for their infidelity. They had inquired for the religion of heaven, and the inquiry was responded to by the oracles of Rome. They mistook the malaria of the Pontine marshes for the pure atmosphere of Christianity; and when disgusted and sick at heart with the very name, because they had unhappily identified it with Rome, in the prostration of their hopes and in the paroxysm of their madness, they forgot to inquire for another and an uncorrupted gospel.

Nor have the dark ages stood alone. The progress of the human mind from Romanism to the faith of the gospel, has, for the most part, been a slow progress, and too often as circuitous as slow. With few exceptions, it has been dark and chill, and hung round with formations of spectral and ghastly aspect. The great adversary has been there, and sepulchral voices and dark spirits have flitted across the gloom. It is no unusual occurrence in the moral history of men, that when they cease to follow the *ignis fatuus* of Rome, and just begin to feel their way out from her damp and misty vaults, they wander so long and so far in the labyrinths of infidelity, that generations become buried in atheism before they find their way to the quiet and verdant vales of Zion. France would never have become a nation of atheists, but for Rome. Debased, corrupted, blinded, and deceived by

Rome, and ignorant of the true Christianity, she was shut up to the alternative of Rome or Reason. And Reason became her Deity. By solemn, legislative enactment, she declared that Reason was God, and worshipped her in the desecrated temples of her capitol.

Regarded *as a system*, the Papal religion is fitted to make men infidels. It has made them so, and will make them so. It is too absurd a system to be believed. Nor is it believed by great multitudes of Romanists themselves. "O how *profitable*," exclaimed Pope Leo X., "has *this fable of Jesus* been unto us!" Papists themselves are not blind to the absurdities of their own system. Nowhere is it, at the present day, more the object of ridicule and scorn than in the States of the Pope. And as with the States of the Pope, so with other lands. Whatever land it overruns, it sows with tares. And therefore I say, that the principle for which we are contending is important for the influence it exerts in the suppression of infidelity; and that its antagonist principle is one which ought to be regarded with deep solicitude. Other enemies may be compared to enemies without the citadel. They may throw ramparts around its walls, and employ every engine against it which their ingenuity can invent, and do little more than make here and there a breach in those parts of it which are most exposed and vulnerable. This is the foe within the fortress, secretly undermining its strong foundations, and aiming a blow that is felt on bulwark and palace, and on every tower and turret.

The principle we are considering is also of no less consequence TO THE ATTAINMENT OF EVERY THING LIKE CERTAINTY IN RELIGIOUS OPINIONS. The human mind reluctantly rests short of certainty. Indeed, without this, it does not *rest* at all. It has none of that absolute

composure and peace which it pants after. I say, none of that absolute composure and peace which it pants after, because there are few states of mind more unhappy, and none more unsafe, than that in which a man cannot absolutely affirm or deny the truth in relation to the great subjects of his immortal destiny. Darkness here is "darkness that may be felt." Doubt and uncertainty here are nearly allied to inveterate unbelief, or absolute despair. There are few states of mind that discover looser habits of thinking and reasoning, or more of the power and subtlety of the great adversary, than this state of mental agitation and perplexity.

And yet is it a state of mind which exists to a much greater extent than is generally imagined. Great multitudes who have been religiously educated, and more who have not been so, while they have a prevailing belief that the Scriptures are a divine relation, have by no means the *convictions of certainty* on this great subject. Not a few labour under the mistaken notion, that no Christian can *certainly know* that the Scriptures are divinely inspired, or that any of his religious sentiments are *certainly true*. Mischievous as this thought is, it is a most insinuating and artful thought. It is a state of mind to which men are greatly exposed in almost every stage of their investigations upon moral and religious subjects. Most men, at one period of life or another, and especially educated men, pass through this fiery ordeal—this narrow frith—and along this iron-bound and precipitous lee shore:—a trial in which the faith and hopes of so many are consumed; a strait that conducts so many beyond the impassable gulf; a shore on which so many are wrecked for eternity.

This is not the place to prove the inspiration of the

holy Scriptures. Suffice it to say that, as Protestants, our conviction of this great truth is as certain as evidence can make it. It is as full assurance of mind, and as great exemption from doubt, as can exist upon any subject whatever. Nor is this the place to prove the truth of their doctrines. It is enough for us certainly to know that they are true, and that the Scriptures warrant and demand this certain and undoubting assurance. It is a delightful relief to a mind, agitated by its inquiries after truth, to be satisfied that he may find it in the Bible. It is refreshing to hear Paul say, "*I certify* you that the gospel which was preached by me is not after man;" and when he speaks of his own experience, to declare, "*I know* whom I have believed." It is delightful to observe the perfect and assured confidence with which holy men of old spake of the truths they uttered, and of the implicit credence they gave to the infallible testimony of the "faithful and true witness." "*I know* that my Redeemer liveth;" it is "given to you to *know* the things of the kingdom of God;" if "any man will do his will, he shall *know* of the doctrine whether it be of God." One of the sacred writers affirms explicitly, that the great object of his writing was to produce the assurance of knowledge in the minds of those to whom he wrote. "Have I not written unto thee excellent things, in counsels and knowledge, that I might make thee know THE CERTAINTY OF THE WORDS OF TRUTH?" And to all true Christians the Apostle John declares, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye *know* all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye *know* it, and that no lie is of the truth." This is not the language of conjecture; there is no hesitation here. The traditions of men, the

opinions of the Fathers, and the decisions of Councils, cannot originate confidence like this ; nor is it authorized by any thing short of the Bible. The man who implicitly receives the Scriptures as the infallible rule of faith, cannot doubt whether any of his religious opinions are true. He may not be *acquainted* with *all* the truth ; but his knowledge is not the less certain because it is limited in extent. So far as his knowledge extends, it is certain knowledge ; he feels bottom, and knows that he stands on solid rock.

I need not inform the intelligent reader, that one of the strong objections of the Romanists to the Protestant faith, is, that it is so *devoid* of certainty ; and that from the mere fact of recognizing no supremacy but the Scriptures, it is, and ever has been, a variable faith : while on the other hand, from a confident reliance on her own infallibility, the faith of Rome has been uniform and unchanging. The celebrated Bossuet, in his *History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches*,* (speaking of which, Hallam, in his "*History of Literature*," says, "there is nothing perhaps in polemical eloquence so splendid,") undertakes, with great research, to show that the difference in religious opinions in Protestant churches is a natural and necessary result of abjuring the supremacy of Rome, and of the unembarrassed exercise of personal judgment in their appeal to the Scriptures as the only infallible rule of faith ; while the infallibility of Rome has preserved the Papal church from all these conflicts and variations in religious opinion. But the blindest bigotry is not more blind than the misguided spirit which can find, either in the history

* See *Histoire des Variations des églises Protestantes*, Œuvres complètes de Bossuet, Tom. 15 et 16.

of the Protestant or the Papal church, any verification of this sweeping statement. When, after the Reformation, differences of opinion began to exist among the Protestants, the clamour from the Papists was, "Let the Protestants alone; they will soon quarrel with the same acrimony among themselves, as that which they have already shown toward us: and it will presently appear that there can be no criterion of religion, or peace in Christendom, but in the bosom of Mother Church!" While we freely admit, that in religious communities where there is unrestricted freedom of inquiry, it is not unnatural there should be some difference of views, more especially in the minor points of Christian doctrine; it is at the same time true, that there is a remarkable uniformity in the views of Protestants on the great and fundamental doctrines of Christianity. The *Thirty-nine Articles* of the Church of England—the *Confession of Faith of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster*—the *Savoy Confession*—and the Symbols of the Reformed Churches in *Holland and France*, as well as the published works of the continental, English, Scotch, and Dutch Reformers and their followers, in this and other countries where the Reformed religion obtains, present a coincidence of views, with which, for its extent and importance, the boasted uniformity of Rome furnishes us no comparison. It is worthy of remark too, that the most important differences in the Reformed churches existed before the Reformation; and had their foundation in errors with which the great mass of Protestants have no sympathy, and which find no place in their accepted Formularies. The Pelagian and Arian heresies, were not originally Protestant, but Roman heresies, and broke out in the fourth and fifth centuries; while the various forms and phases of these two here-

sies, the anabaptist error only excepted, constitute the principal grounds of difference in religious sentiment throughout the Protestant world.

What is the boasted unity of Rome? Let the changes in her doctrine and discipline, from the fourth to the seventeenth centuries, answer the question. Let it be answered by the history of the Jansenists and the Jesuits; by the voluminous correspondence between Madame Guion and Bossuet, and by the long and sharp controversy between Bossuet and Fenelon. Let Massillon and Pascal answer it; both boldly maintaining doctrines too scriptural to be in conformity with the opinions of Rome. It is a well known fact, that on the requisition of his Holiness, a portion of the most valuable writings of Fenelon were deemed so heretical as to be committed to the flames.* Facts upon facts have been brought to show, that the traditions of the Church of Rome, and the decisions of her Popes and Councils, are at variance with one another. Edicts issued by one Council have been revoked by another, and Bulls issued by one Pope have been revoked by another. Controversies almost endless have existed among themselves about the meaning of their own standards. Nor, what almost every Protestant in this controversy has demonstrated, and what, to my knowledge, has received no reply from their antagonists, has it ever yet been decided, *where the prerogative of infallible decision resides*; some affirming that it is in the body of the church, in general—others, that it is in the clergy united with the Pope—others, that it is in the Pope himself—and others, that it is in a select convention of ecclesiastics, with his Holiness at their head. The

* See Hallam's *History of Literature*.

Western branch of the church at the city of Rome differed from the Eastern branch at Constantinople; and the dissension issued in the mutual excommunication of them both. At one period there were two Popes, one residing at Rome, the other at Avignon, who employed their time in anathematizing each other. During what the Roman Catholics themselves call the *Great Schism*, from 1377 to 1417, there were two, and at one time three rival Popes, cursing each other and their respective adherents; each claiming infallibility, and filling Europe with the misery of their contentions. Nothing is more a matter of historical record than that the famous Council of Trent, the last general Council, and the one which is supposed to have given unchanging uniformity to the views of all Romanists, were so divided in sentiment, that it was impossible for them to come to an unanimous result without adopting the most ambiguous and indefinite language. The decrees of that Council furnish internal evidence of this observation; and Jurieiu, in his history of it, remarks that the Pope's Legate, Cardinal Santa Croce, "applied all his pains and skill in composing these decrees, and laboured in it with so much success that he gave content to all; because he worded them with so much ambiguity, that every party found their opinions therein. But this was not done without trouble; for there were above a hundred congregations, as well as divines and prelates, who held about it, and from the beginning of September to the end of November, there passed not a day wherein the Cardinal did not peruse his decrees, altering something in them." Nor were even these famous decrees held in uniform reverence. In a speech delivered by Bossuet, as the Bishop of Meaux, as late as the year 1700, to a convention of the Catholic clergy

in France, he says, "I am ashamed, that in a matter so clearly decided by the Council of Trent, by the Popes, and by the most solemn decrees, still to find so many contradictions that it is necessary for me to suppress them by a severe censure, in order to maintain the order of the hierarchy and the peace of the church."* The unity of the Papal church is a unity of the most jarring materials. This is her policy, and the secret of her extension. She gathers every thing into her bosom that consents to the Romish hierarchy; and finds fault with none whose faith, be it what it may, is sufficiently effective to reach their purses in the support of its claims. Saving the belief of one God and the Deity and incarnation of Jesus Christ, her unity is not the unity of truth, but of error. There is not a religious community on the earth made up of more discordant materials than the Church of Rome.

I pity the poor Catholic. He believes he knows not what. Bellarmine extolled the faith of the collier, the anecdote of which is related by Dr. Campbell in his Lectures on Ecclesiastical History. "An ignorant collier when asked what he believed, answered, *I believe what the church believes*. The other rejoined, *What, then, does the church believe?* He replied readily, *The church believes what I believe*. The other, desirous if possible, to bring him to particulars, once more resumed his inquiry: *Tell me, then, I pray you, what is it which you and the church both believe?* The only answer the collier could give, was, *Why truly, Sir, the church and I both believe the same thing*." We smile at this; and well we may. But we might weep over it too. It is but to suppose the tables turned, and the ignorant Catholic

* See *Extraits des Procès Verbeaux du Clergé*, Tom. 12, p. 6.

oppressed with a sense of his sins, inquiring of Bellarmine, "*Sir, what must I do to be saved?*" and the only answer is, "*Believe what the church believes.*" Is he instructed, satisfied? No; he goes away in grief. His conscience tells him with unerring certainty his exposure; but the way of escape is covered with a mist. It leads back and forth; it turns and doubles upon itself. It is broad—yes, broad enough; but it is not straight. By the way-side stands many an antiquated finger-post, many a mouldering board all marked as infallible guides; but they are difficult to decipher, their meaning is uncertain and contradictory; they point with the wind. And if he travels on, it is only to weep at his helpless and desolate condition.

As it is with individual men, so is it with communities. There have been several strongly marked periods in the history of our race, when the mass of mankind were distrustful of their own religious opinions. Just before the birth of Christ and the introduction of Christianity, the thinking part of the world had proceeded just far enough to discover that they were wrong, without discovering any way of retracing their steps and striking on the true path. So, just before the Protestant Reformation, a vast multitude of minds were convinced of the utter futility and absurdity of the Papal faith, without finding any thing on which to rest beyond it. So it was, after the Reformation, and as late as the seventeenth century, when, notwithstanding the favourable auspices under which the Reformers commenced their great moral contest, it was still doubtful on which side victory would alight. The fabric of Papal infallibility was shaken. Generations which, for centuries, had groaned under the iron yoke of superstition, had begun to break their chains. The religion of the Refor-

mation was, for a series of years, securely established on a firm basis; and, in abandoning the tenets of Rome, men had not found a refuge in the true faith of God's most holy word. The thorny controversy between Papacy and Protestantism grew sharper and more virulent. Now there was "a sudden revival of the Papal power, and then a manifest recession of it." The question, whether the Fathers or the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament should be the umpire of religious belief, was agitated by some of the ablest and most learned men which Europe has ever known. While, just in this state of things, men like Herbert and Hobbes, Bolingbroke and Voltaire, were not wanting in their efforts to unsettle all religious opinions; and it seemed, for a season, that the enlightened intellect of Europe was destined to pursue its dark way interminably, and with no solid and firm convictions of truth and certainty. Nor was there then, nor is there now, any refuge or relief from such a state of agitation or uncertainty, save in the single principle, that the word of God is the only infallible rule of faith. This single principle saved the mind of Europe from shipwreck. To say nothing of the noble efforts on the continent, it was during this period that the Anglican church stood up so manfully and powerfully in defence of this great truth; and Chillingworth and Tillotson, Taylor and Barrow—and, a little after them, the immortal and persecuted Hoadley—united in asserting that "THE BIBLE IS THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS." "The Bible," says Chillingworth, "is our religion. I profess that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot but upon this rock of ages. There is no sufficient certainty but Scripture only, for a considering man to rest upon."

There is another view in which this principle must.

be regarded as one of high importance : I mean ITS TENDENCY TO PROMOTE A PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION IN THE HEARTS OF MEN AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. Just in the proportion in which the doctrines of men are imposed for the truth of God, a false and spurious religion is substituted for the true. Nor need there be the least hesitation in affirming that, just in the measure in which the religion of Rome advances in the world, the religion of Christ must decline. There are several views of this general position.

True religion consists in believing the doctrines and obeying the commands which God has revealed in the Scriptures. It begins with giving the understanding and heart to God. The connexion between truth and piety cannot be severed. The truths of the Bible are the foundations of the Christian's faith, the source of his fondest hopes and comforts, and the natural and divinely appointed aliment of all his graces. They constitute the richest treasure of the Church ; her spiritual wealth, adornment, and glory. True religion is, therefore, an enlightened religion. No man loves truths with which he is not acquainted, nor can he act in conformity with truths which he does not know. The path of life, so far as he walks in it, must lie plainly before the eye of his mind. Though it is not the province of human reason to invent or discover it, it is the province of human reason diligently and prayerfully to ascertain what it is. No man loves the truth, nor loves to obey it, any farther than he understands it. Never was there a more palpable error than the maxim of the Roman Church, that " ignorance is the mother of devotion." God himself has declared, that, " for the soul to be without knowledge is not good." He utters the complaint, " My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." He requires

them, "as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby;" and makes it obligatory upon their consciences to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." There must be an intelligent acquiescence in the claims of God's truth, or there is none at all.

The truths of the Bible are also the objects of faith. They disclose realities of which men had been ignorant, but for a revelation from heaven; they give presence to things as yet future, and invest with substance and vividness, that spiritual world which no man hath seen, or can see, and live. They are therefore the objects of implicit faith *in the testimony of their Author*. This is the great characteristic of the faith of the gospel, and that which gives it its spiritual character, and clothes it with so many of the co-ordinate graces. We are no believers in the doctrine, that the faith of the gospel is a necessary act of the mind, and has no moral character. The Scriptures distinguish it from that faith of devils, who believe in one God, because they cannot help believing. They represent it as one of the "fruits of the Spirit," and as the revealed condition of salvation. The state of mind with which the divine testimony is investigated, and received or rejected, is the true index of the moral condition of the soul, and the most emphatic internal expression of religious or irreligious character. That testimony calls into exercise the integrity, the meekness, the self-denial, the humility, the prayer, the complacency in God and holiness, that are the uniform characteristics of true piety where it exists; as well as the disingenuousness and dishonesty, and the proud bearing of the carnal mind to God and godliness, where, though apparently dormant, they maintain controlling power. Not only, therefore, are the truths of divine revelation, where

they are received at all, received on the testimony of their Author, but they are not received on any other authority. The whole scope and spirit of the Bible teach us, that *such* a reception of the truth is *essential* to faith, and that this high-born act of the soul consists in confidence in the divine testimony and in *nothing else*. The notion that men may confide in the testimony of God, from an implicit confidence in the testimony of their fellow-men, is a palpable absurdity. No man ever did, nor ever can, believe in God, from the paramount motive and impulse of faith in men, any more than he can at heart obey God from a higher regard to mere human authority. God looks on the heart. The motive and disposition are every thing with him. The *principle* of a man's faith and obedience decides the character of his religion. This, it is obvious, may not be a regard to men. True religion may pay respect to the decisions and authority of men from a higher respect to the divine authority; but it cannot respect the divine from a higher regard to the human.—In the religion of the Bible, God stands first. "Thou shalt have no other gods *before me*."

If these principles and observations are just, then is there no true religion, where men set aside the supreme authority of God's word. There may be the most superstitious reverence for men, but there is none for God. There may be confidence in the testimony of men; but there is none in the "testimony of God, which is greater." There may be the religion of form, of custom, of tradition, of outward respect and service; there may be the religion of beads, and crosses, and holy water; but it is "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." There may be much that is magnificent, and venerable, and time-hallowed, and all that is imposing in gorgeous vestments

and sculptured decorations; but it profiteth nothing. There may be fasts and penances, and solitude, and self-inflictions without number that have the semblance of self-denial; where there is no more of the religion of the Son of Mary and Child of the Highest, than in the ritual of the darkest Paganism.

There is no temptation more artfully addressed to fallen men, than that which would persuade them to substitute the religion of the imagination for the religion of the understanding and the heart. Such most emphatically is the religion of Rome. Addressing itself to the self-complacency and self-righteousness of men, it produces precisely that class of emotions which sensitive minds mistake for the love of God, and the cordial reception of his truth. It is the religion of the fine arts, but not the religion of the Bible. It is poetry, but not piety. It is rhetoric; it may be tenderness and tears; but when the charm is over, and the sensibilities become cold, the heart is empty and barren, because it finds itself "without God in the world." Though moved to tears, it is not moved to penitence. It feels; but it is not right feeling. Peradventure, it has strong emotions; but it is emotion that is not sanctified. It has the form of godliness, but nothing of its power. The late venerable Dr. Dwight, of Yale College, remarked in my hearing, that he was once called to visit an intelligent Roman Catholic a few days before he died. Having expressed the hope that he had found peace with God, he inquired of him, "What led you to doubt your former faith?" He replied, "It was reading the first chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah. When I read the passage, 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands to tread my courts?' I saw that *such*

was the religion of the Roman Catholics." Some of us who minister at the altar have witnessed scenes not less instructive and affecting. And not unlike this, and similar scenes which we have witnessed, would probably be the narrative of most if not all the instances of conversion from Romanism to the true faith and the true charity.

It is never unfair reasoning to test the truth by its moral influence. "*The tree is known by its fruit.* Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles." What then is the moral influence of Romanism? It were easy to fill a volume in replying to this question. Let any man read Bower's and Ranke's History of the Popes, and the Catholic Historian, Alban Butler, and he has the answer. Let him canvass the character of such men as Pope Leo X., the great promoter of the execrable system of Indulgences, and himself an exemplification of its corrupting influence; of Pope Innocent VIII., so infamous for his conspiracy against the King of Naples, and boasting with such unblushing effrontery, of the living fruits of his licentiousness; and more than all of such a man, if a man he may be called, as Pope Alexander VI., or Roderic Borgia, that monster of profligacy, who added to all his avarice and want of good faith, and general voluptuousness, crimes for which language should have no name. *Platina*, who was himself an ecclesiastic, and was appointed librarian of the Vatican by Pope Sixtus IV., and who would not wantonly vilify the heads of his own church, thus speaks of the Popes who successively occupied the chair of St. Peter, in the close of the ninth and the early part of the tenth century—a period so strongly marked by quarrels and depositions, that between Nicholas I. and John XIV., a period of about eighty years, there were no less than

twenty-eight Popes. "The Church of God," says he, "was now grown wanton with its riches, and the clergy quitted severity of manners for lasciviousness; so that, there being now no Prince to punish their excesses, *such a licentiousness of sinning obtained in the world*, as brought forth *these monsters, these prodigies of wickedness.*" If Romanism were the only true religion, it might well be expected, that the venerable and mitred heads of it would be distinguished for their personal excellence of character. But it is a fact, which no Romanist will deny, that the Popes of Rome, as a body of men, have been a dishonour to the human race. It would be natural too, if Romanism were the only true religion, that it should be marked for its spirituality and heavenliness, and its practical obedience to the laws of God, in other ranks of society beside its Priesthood. It were natural to look for the fruits of it in its own native soil. We might reasonably expect that they would there grow in all richness and maturity, refreshed by the breezes and watered by the dews of heaven. But what is the melancholy fact? Let the irreligious and immoral character of Italy, to which the pages of such a multitude of historians and travellers have given such inglorious notoriety, answer this question also. What has been the fact for a thousand years? What is it now? To have just views of Rome, she must be seen near and naked. Were it not the veriest *burlesque* to say, that the moral history of Italy presents an exemplification of primitive Christianity? What is the religion of Rome, at best, but a splendid mausoleum; "a religion lying in state, surrounded with the silent pomp of death"—a mass of moral putrefaction which excites disgust and grief in every honest and virtuous bosom?

We do not deny that there is impiety and wicked-

ness among Protestants. Nor do we deny that there is among them, undue reverence for the opinions of men; nor do we doubt there is ignorance among them; nor do we question that there is to be found among them the religion of custom and form. But these things, every candid Romanist must grant, are no part of their Protestantism; but exist rather from a wilful negligence of all the principles which Protestantism inculcates. Nor do we deny that there is piety among Romanists. But it is no part of their Romanism; but rather in defiance of their Romanism, and found in men to whom God himself has revealed his truth as unto babes, while he has hidden it from the wise and prudent.

The principle of the Papal Church, therefore, that the Holy Scriptures are not the only, and sufficient, and infallible rule of faith, is their great error; because, in addition to other evils, its natural and legitimate tendencies are to produce a spurious religion, and one that will not abide the test when God trieth the spirits of men. It is "of the earth, earthy." If truth may ever be tested by its moral influence, never was there greater reason to believe that Mahomet is Antichrist, than Rome.

But the principle we have endeavoured to establish, is also important TO A SETTLED AND PRACTICAL REGARD FOR THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. The views of the Romanists must necessarily produce a disregard of the sacred Volume. To ascribe infallibility to any other standard of truth than the Bible, is itself casting the Bible into the shade. Two infallible standards of faith there cannot be; since if they differ, one must be wrong, and if they do not, they are the same thing.

If Romanists were satisfied with the position, that the faith of the Roman Church is infallible, *so far as it ac-*

cords with the Bible, Protestants would no longer have any dispute with them, so far as the rule of faith is concerned. The decisions of their Councils, like the Confessions of Faith of all Protestant churches, would then be open to inquiry; would allow, and even challenge investigation, and be fearlessly brought to the infallible test of God's word. But this is exclusively the position of Protestants, and the only ground on which the existence of their standards can be vindicated, or on which any enlightened Protestant desires that the standards themselves should be vindicated for an hour.

The Protestant symbols of faith magnify God's word. And so do Protestant preachers, and Protestant Christians, and Protestant churches, and the Protestant Bible. Such is the tendency of their whole system, whether it be of individual or associated efforts for the promotion of Christianity. The history of Protestantism is the history of the Bible; and the successes of Protestantism are the successes and triumphs of the Bible; while the history of Rome is the history of her own Councils, and her triumphs the defeat of the Scriptures.

It would be an instructive proof and illustration of these assertions to advert to the deliberations of the Westminster Assembly and the Diet of *Augsburg*, as contrasted with those of the Council of Constance and the Council of Trent. Nor could the most bigoted Romanist be so blinded as not to see and acknowledge whether, in such a review, Protestants or Romanists most honoured the Bible. In all their public and synodical deliberations, Protestants have anxiously brought their standards of doctrine to the test of the Scriptures; while, with equal solicitude, Romanists have made their last appeal to previous Councils and the writings of the Fathers. Protestants have formed,

and modified, and changed their standards, in order to make them conformed to the Bible ; while it is a melancholy and disgraceful fact that Romanists have altered, and amended, and so, mistranslated the Bible, as to render it conformed to their own standards. There is no greater disrespect for the Scriptures than this, and few acts of impiety more perilous. The Rheimish Testament and the Doway Bible are very different books from the pure and unadulterated word of God. Even of the vulgate copy of the Scriptures by Jerome, the copy formally sanctioned by the Council of Trent, the learned Mr. Glass has said, "I would seek no other New Testament Scripture to satisfy me of the great corruption and apostasy of Rome, than its own Latin translation of the Scriptures."* The edition of this work, corrected by Clement VIII. in 1592, and which is now the standard edition in the Roman churches, has not only "altered many old texts, but added some new ones to countenance and confirm the Catholic doctrine."

Protestants also make it a matter of conscience to become acquainted with the Bible. They introduce it into their families, and schools, and churches. They put it into the hands of the common people in the vernacular tongue, and "without note or comment." And they translate it into different languages, and disseminate it far and wide throughout the earth. They have no fears of its corrupting influence, or dangerous tendency, and only desire that it may be more extensively read and understood. The name of Protestant will ever be deemed a name of honour or reproach, as a man is a friend or an enemy of the Bible. On the other hand, the wicked policy of Rome is to keep the people in ignorance of it ;

* Glass's Works : four vols., 8vo. Edin., p. 366, vol. iii.

to exclude it from families, schools, and churches, and to prohibit the reading of it without the expressed permission of the priesthood. For a long period, they locked it up in a dead and unknown language; nor would they publish it in the vernacular tongue until, by their own confession, they did so because they saw that if they refused, Protestants would do it for them. The fact is also notorious that, on the introduction of the art of Printing into England, the prelates and clergy complained to the Pope that the faith of the Church was in danger, because the laity "were exhorted to read the Scriptures, and to pray in their vulgar tongue."

The reply of the Romanists to such representations as these, is, that their objection to the dissemination of the Scriptures, extends not to *their own version*, but only to the *version of the Protestants*. This is sufficiently disingenuous. It is in ill keeping with their avowed and published *principles*, that the Bible is a useless and dangerous book, except in the hands of the clergy. "The promiscuous reading of the Bible," says one of their own bishops, "is not calculated, nor intended by God, as the means of conveying religious instruction to the bulk of mankind." It is in ill keeping with the recorded decisions of their own Councils. One of the Rules enacted by the Council of Trent, and approved by Pope Pius IV. in a bull issued on the 24th of March, 1564, is in the following language: "Inasmuch as it is manifest from experience, that if the Holy Bible, translated into the vulgar tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to every one, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it, it is on this point referred to the judgment of the bishops or inquisitors, who may, by the advice of the priest or confessor, permit the reading of the Bible translated into the vulgar tongue by *Catholic authors*, to those

persons whose faith and piety they apprehend will be augmented, and not injured by it ; and *this permission they must have in writing*. But if any one shall have the *presumption* to read or *possess* it, without such written permission, he shall *not receive absolution* until he have first delivered up such Bible to the ordinary. Booksellers, however, who shall sell or otherwise dispose of Bibles in the vulgar tongue, to any person not having such permission, shall forfeit the value of the books, to be applied by the bishop to some pious use ; and be subjected by the bishop to such other penalties as the bishop shall judge proper, according to the quality of the offence. But regulars shall neither read nor purchase such Bibles without a special license from their superiors." Decisions like this show what confidence is to be placed in the public assertions, that the Church of Rome objects only to the dissemination of the Protestant version of the Scriptures. Such declarations are easily made, but those who make them should not forget that "all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with brimstone and with fire." They are equally in ill keeping *with facts* ; for the Romanists have refused to disseminate their *own version*, and do refuse still, as events in South America and these States, of no remote occurrence, show. And they are in ill keeping with the instructions of their standard authors, to whom reference might easily be made.* If the Romanists have in this respect changed their ground, we are glad of it. If they are willing that their *own copy* of the Scriptures should be freely circulated among their own population, will they tell us so ? We ask them if they will throw no obstructions in the way of disseminating their own version, without note or comment ?

* See the writings of Bossuet, sparsim.

There is no want of evidence, that the views of Romanists are productive of a practical disregard of the Holy Scriptures. It is a remarkable fact, that the tongues of their most distinguished orators, so warm on other themes, are cold on this. Why is it so, unless the Bible, in the view of Romanists, is a very different book from what it is in the view of Protestants? Time was, when to be convicted of reading the Bible would sentence the offender to the walls of the Inquisition. Time was, when to be found in possession of it was conclusive evidence of being a heretic. Tyndal was burnt at the stake for translating the Scriptures. Nay, the time was, when it would seem the very existence of this sacred book was a deadly crime, charged on the book itself, and to be atoned for only by its being burnt by the common hangman.

The Scriptures *must* be depreciated, where they are not regarded as the only infallible standard. Let men place any thing even upon a parity with the word of God, and that moment do they perpetrate the impious deed of giving it a place above God's word. Be it Calvin, or Wesley; be it the Confession of Westminster or the Book of Common Prayer; men will insensibly lose their veneration for the Bible, and make the decisions of men their last resort. The great question in dispute, in the days of the Reformers, regarded the supremacy of the Scriptures; nor did Rome herself doubt, that when once the supremacy of the Scriptures was established, the proud superstructure of the Papacy would crumble to the dust. In all the public discussions between Luther and his learned adversaries, the point to be first decided was, whether the Scriptures should be the umpire. "I can endure any thing," says Luther, "except to abandon the Holy Scriptures." "It is of

little use," replied his adversaries, "unless you consent to submit your cause without reserve to the decision of a Council." "I consent," rejoins the Great Reformer, "on condition that the Council should decide according to the Holy Scriptures!" "Submit to the Diet," said they. "No," replied Luther, "I will allow no man to exalt himself above God's word." "At least, retract some articles," said the Archbishop. "I will do so," answered Luther, "provided they be not those which the Council of Constance has condemned." "Alas!" replied the Archbishop, "I fear it is precisely those." "Then far sooner take my life," said Luther; "rather would I be deprived of my limbs than give up the plain and sincere word of God."* This is but a single example of the spirit of the Reformers. Truth has no other shield than the word of God; while error, however infuriate and formidable its attacks, retires from the field before the awful majesty of the God of truth, speaking in His word. "If the people clearly see what is true," said Zuingle, "they will at once discern what is false." "By God's help," said he to the Pope's Legate, "I mean to preach the gospel, and that will shake Rome." In no other way are the Scriptures regarded as they should be, than by regarding them as the *only* infallible rule, and feeling ourselves at liberty to listen to the voice of their Author, unechoed, unaccented by created lips. This gives them their place, and assigns to them a position and an authority, as far above the decisions of men as the heavens are above the earth. God pledges his truth for no conclusions of men. He did not reveal it in "words which man's wisdom teacheth," but in "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." The Bible is his

* History of the Great Reformation, by J. H. Merle D'Aubigné.

book, containing his thoughts, his affections, his designs, uttered in his own language. It is God himself that we discover in the Bible, and not a fallible and sinful worm.

There is another remark in illustration of the importance of the principle we have considered; and it RESPECTS ITS BEARING UPON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY. True religion is a matter of conviction, and not of force. When Austin the monk was sent by Pope Gregory into ancient Britain for the purpose of converting the Saxons to Christianity, he had a personal interview with Ethelbert of Kent, who, though himself a heathen, had married a Christian princess, and, at the close of the interview, the King addressed him in the following language: "I cannot consent suddenly to quit that religion I have so long professed, together with the whole English nation. Yet because ye are strangers, and come a long journey, and as it seems would impart to us the knowledge of that religion ye believe to be best, WE WILL NOT GIVE YOU THE LEAST MOLESTATION, BUT RATHER WILL PROTECT YOU, AND TAKE CARE THAT ALL THINGS NECESSARY SHALL BE PROVIDED FOR YOUR MAINTENANCE; NEITHER SHALL WE PROHIBIT YOU FROM GAINING AS MANY AS YOU CAN TO THE BELIEF OF YOUR RELIGION." This was the true idea of religious liberty, though from the lips of a Pagan prince. So far from coercing the consciences of men, the New Testament actually *cautions* them against making a rash profession of Christianity. It tells them to "count the cost" of so doing. It inquires, "Are ye *able* to drink of the cup that I drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" It premonishes them that it "is through much tribulation" that its disciples enter into the kingdom of their Lord, and that no man can be his disciple who does not "take up his cross and follow him." The early churches had no human laws to make men

Christians ; no penalties to drive them into the church ; but rather urged the most solemn and affecting considerations to keep them out of it, unless they were true and honest Christians. Our blessed Lord would not pluck up even the "tares," lest the "wheat" should be plucked up with them, but suffered both to "grow together till the harvest." He had no penalties but the sanctions of *truth*. He did not come to execute civil penalties or temporal judgments. "If any man," says he, "hear my words, and believe not, I *judge* him not ; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not *my words*, hath one that judgeth him ; the *word that I have spoken*, the same shall judge him in *the last day*." The fact of binding the conscience by any thing short of divine authority is the very definition of intolerance. The religious community that arrogates to itself the exclusive right of *deciding* what is truth, will naturally claim the right of coercing men into a conformity with its own opinions. No matter what religious community it is, the whole history of the Church shows that such a prerogative is false to religious liberty. When one class of Christians talks about *tolerating* the views of another, the language itself is sufficiently indicative of intolerance. "*Honestum nomen imponitur vitio*." Toleration implies a tolerating power, a legalized *ascendancy*, of which the Church of God knows nothing. "I cannot conceive what mode of religious persecution may not come within the methods of preserving an *ascendancy*. In plain old English, it signifies *pride and dominion* on the one part of the relation, and on the other, *subserviency and contempt*—and it signifies nothing else. Liberty under a connivance ! Connivance is a relaxation from slavery, not liberty. What is connivance, but a state under which all slaves

live? What a picture of *toleration*! What a picture of religious liberty."* *Toleration* is a word which ought to be stricken out of the vocabulary of the Church of God. Conscience has her *rights*; rights that do not ask to be tolerated, but rights that religious liberty respects and secures. In a religious view, it were just as absurd to talk about dissenters tolerating an establishment, as an establishment tolerating dissenters.

The position we are concerned to illustrate is, that the coercive measures of the Papal Church are a true and natural exemplification of her claims to exclusive infallibility. We have only to ask that the Rheimish New Testament and the Douay Bible, with the notes appended to them may be *read*, in order to convince the most inveterate unbeliever in the intolerant and persecuting spirit of Rome, of the existence and virulence of that spirit, as the natural growth of her principles—or rather of the single principle that her decisions are of higher authority than the Scriptures. "*Toleration*," says Bossuet, "is not a mark of the true Church." I cannot advert to any one of the tenets of Rome which naturally generates and fosters the spirit of persecution, except the one on which I am animadverting. This accounts for it, and is sufficient to account for it. This single feature of her system has made her religion "a cruel religion."

The first expressions of her severity were in the form of the milder ecclesiastical censures. The next was the formal sentence of *excommunication*. We, in our day, and in this Protestant land, know little of the terrors of this sentence. Mosheim, in his *Ecclesiastical*

* Edmund Burke's Letters to his Son, and his Speech in Parliament on the Bill for the relief of the Protestant Dissenters.

History,* says, "Excommunication received that infernal power which dissolved all connexions. Under this horrid sentence the king, the ruler, the husband, the father—nay, even the *man*—forfeited all their rights, all their advantages, the claims of nature, and the privileges of society." Southey, in his "Book of the Church,"† speaking of this sentence, says, "In the forms of malediction appointed for this blasphemous service, a curse was pronounced against the obnoxious persons, in soul and body, and in all their limbs, joints, and members, every part being specified, with a bitterness which seemed to delight in dwelling on the sufferings it imprecated. They were cursed with pleonastic specification, at home and abroad, in their goings out and their comings in, in towns and in castles, in fields and in meadows, in streets and in public ways, by land and by water, sleeping and waking, standing and sitting, lying, eating and drinking, speaking and holding their peace, by day and by night, and every hour, in all places and at all times, everywhere and always. The heavens were adjured to be as brass to them, and the earth as iron; the one to reject their bodies, and the other their souls. God was invoked, in this accursed service, to afflict them with hunger and thirst, with poverty and want, with cold and with fever, with scabs and ulcers, with blindness and madness; to eject them from their homes and consume their substance, to make their wives widows, and their children orphans and beggars. All things belonging to them were cursed, the dog which guarded them and the cock which wakened them. None was to compassionate their sufferings, nor to relieve or visit them in sickness. Prayers and benedic-

* Book III., part II., ch. 2.

† Vol. I., p. 190.

tions, instead of availing them, were to operate as further curses. Finally, their dead bodies were to be cast aside for dogs and wolves, and their souls to be eternally tormented with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Judas and Pilate, Ananias and Sapphira, Nero, and Decius, and Herod, and Julian, and Simon Magus, in fire everlasting." I know not whether to weep or smile at these horrible and ingenious imprecations. I cannot but smile at them as idle and impotent ravings, and as ridiculous as they are impious. Nor do we wonder at the quaint remark of a celebrated writer, that "his heart would not let him curse the devil himself with so much bitterness."

Nor were such anathemas allowed to rest in verbal curses merely. Rapin, the historian, informs us, that "spiritual penalties, not being sufficient to conquer the obstinacy of hardened sinners, it was necessary for the glory of God to make use of temporal punishments to force them to obedience." "If, within forty days after excommunication, the party excommunicated did not sue to be reconciled to the church, the magistrate, upon the bishop's complaint, should be obliged to cast him into prison, and confiscate his estate."* Then followed the tremendous deed of delivering over the culprits to the power of the civil arm, and the frightful Erastian doctrine, that the State was to carry into execution the sentence of the Church. And then came the instruments of torture, and the faggot, and the sword; and blood flowed, as it did for four hundred years in Wales, in the civil wars in France, in the thirty years' war in Germany and Bohemia, in the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and at the revocation of the edict of Nantz.

* *Rapin's History of England*, Vol. I., p. 348, fol., Tindal's translation.

The blood shed by the Duke of Alva and the Jesuits, in the Low Countries, the cruelties of the Inquisition, the martyrdoms in England under the famous writ, *de comburendo heretico*, and the memorable act of Parliament under the Fourth Henry, by which, without judge or jury, and at the arbitrary command of the bishop, the sheriff was required to commit heretics to the flames, it is not too much to say, are honest interpreters of the intolerance of Rome. The unhappy "Act of Uniformity" never would have disgraced the annals of the English nation had not Charles II. been at heart a Catholic. Individual Romanists there have been, who, like Fenelon, have protested against these cruelties. But the Creeds and Councils of Rome, as such, are the true indices of her spirit and principles. And what is their language? In the fifth Council of Toledo, the holy fathers say, "We promulge this decree, pleasing to God, that whosoever after shall succeed to the kingdom, shall not ascend the throne till he has sworn, among other oaths, to permit no man to live in his kingdom who *is not a Catholic*; and if, after he has taken the reins of government, he shall violate this promise, let him be anathema maranatha in the sight of the eternal God, and become fuel of the eternal fire." When Luther proclaimed, that "errors in faith were not to be suppressed or extirpated by fire and sword, but confuted by the word of God," the Pope replied, that "this designing heretic would destroy all authority and order under the sanction of Christian liberty."* The Council of Lateran, under Pope Innocent III., decreed that "all heresy and heretics should be anathematized, and these being condemned, must be left to the secular power to be punished."† We have al-

* Merle D'Aubigné.

† Fletcher's Lectures.

ready seen what is the frightful import of the anathema in the Church of Rome. And what will be thought of her spirit when I say that, so late as the sixteenth century, and during the sessions of the Council of Trent, this sentence was pronounced by that council more than one hundred and twenty times, against all who deviate from their own creed. When that council was closed, the Cardinal of Lorraine, being in the chair, uttered the words, "Let all heretics be accursed!" to which the council responded, by acclamation, "Let them be accursed! let them be accursed!"

I have no desire to revive the recollection of such scenes as these. But we may not forget that this is Rome in principle and Rome in practice. I cannot deem it ungenerous, therefore, when I endorse the sentiment, that the religion of Rome is a CRUEL RELIGION. There is no cruelty like the cruelty of Rome. We shudder at the enormity of the midnight assassin, whose feet are swift to shed blood, and at the cruelty of the freebooter, who plunders and then destroys his victim to conceal his crime; we follow with sadness the bloody path of the conqueror, as he advances to fame and power, attended by all the forms of misery and death; but with a deeper loathing do we view the cruelty of Rome. Her crimes are plotted at the altar of mercy. With one hand she waves the banner of redemption, and with the other she waves the sword and the axe, and lights the destructive faggot. And what fills the mind with wonder unutterable is, all this is done by the community that calls herself the Church of God. It is her zeal for the cause of truth and godliness. It is her maternal discipline toward her wandering children, "chastening whom she loves!" It is religion. It is the *only* religion—the religion that breathes "peace

and good will to men"—the religion that once spread out its suppliant hands on the cross, and from lips parched with thirst and quivering with agony, exclaimed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" But no; it is the incarnate Spirit of Darkness roaming over the world, seeking whom it may devour, laying waste its valleys and its hills, and drenching them with the blood of its slain. The Saviour drove out the defilers of his temple when they were but "changers of money;" and will not God take the scourge again into his own hand and chase them thence, now that they have become butchers of their fellow-men?

There is but one other thought to bring to a close this already too tedious discussion. We have an interest in the principle that has been considered, as freemen and as American citizens. The great truth that THERE IS NO EARTHLY AUTHORITY SUPERIOR TO THE AUTHORITY OF GOD AS REVEALED IN HIS WORD, IS OF UNTOLD IMPORTANCE TO THE CIVIL LIBERTIES OF THIS FAIR LAND.

The influence of a man's religion upon the operations of his mind, upon the vigour and independence of his opinions in all that makes up his character as a citizen, cannot be too highly estimated. "Christianity," remarks Bishop Warburton, "naturally inspires the love both of civil and religious liberty; it raises the desire of being governed by laws of our own making, and by the conscience which is of God's own giving. Either the foul spirit of tyranny will defile the purity of religion, and introduce the blind submission of the understanding, and slavish compliance of the will in the church; or else the Spirit of the Lord will overturn the usurpation of an unjust despotic power, and bring into the State, as well as the Church, a free and reasonable service." If

the conscience is enslaved in spiritual matters, it will easily become so in those that are secular. And if on the other hand, religious liberty degenerates into licentiousness, and throws off divine as well as human authority, civil anarchy soon follows, and laws and order are broken up into a wide-spread chaos. Thus far in the history of our world, civil liberty has stood abreast with religious toleration. What is civil liberty, but the triumph of intellect over imbecility, of knowledge over ignorance, of religion over superstition and infidelity, of virtue over crime? What is it but the government of laws, and laws that are good and equal? It is but for the thousandth time repeated, when we say, that its only true basis is the intelligence and virtue of the people. But whence are the intelligence and virtue of the people, without that independent thinking which grows out of a sense of personal responsibility, in religious matters, to God alone? It betrays great ignorance of human nature, not to perceive that minds controlled by the authority of men in religious matters, are in a fit state to bow down before the most absolute civil despotism. Bishop Burnet, in speaking of Charles II., says, "He could not help speaking against the liberty that, under the Reformation, all men took of inquiring into matters of religion. For, from their inquiry into matters of *religion*, they carried the humour farther, and inquired also into matters of *state*." He often said, "that he thought government was a much safer and easier thing, where the authority was believed to be infallible and the faith and submission of the people was implicit." The Protestant principle, that "God alone is Lord of the conscience," has done more to give the human mind power, and to strike off its chains, than any principle of mere secular policy in the most perfect "Bill of rights." A commu-

nity imbued with this truth, cannot fail to examine with jealous scrutiny its own rights, nor will it submit to any encroachment of them without redress. If tyrants gain their ends by suppressing the spirit of inquiry among the people, much more certainly do they gain them by making use of those religious and ecclesiastical influences which teach men that the spirit of inquiry is impious.

The proof of these remarks lies in the records of the past. At the close of the ten bloody persecutions under Pagan Rome, which terminated in the exhausted fury of the Emperor Dioclesian, the kind providence of God furnished protection to his people by the power of a Christian Prince. But it was a protection which the Church most unhappily abused. Her external prosperity degenerated into a splendour in ill keeping with the professed spirituality of her character, and she became as one of the kingdoms of this world. She was a secular community, no longer apart from this world, but identified with its wealth, its principles, its aims, its aggrandizement and power. Nay, she aimed at empire, and herself occupied the same place on the throne of the Cæsars that had been occupied by a discarded Paganism. The consequence was that innovations and offices never known to primitive Christianity were for the first time recognized as of divine original. The progress in degeneracy was rapid. The Church first courted the State, and then the State courted the Church: till, in the course of events, the unhallowed alliance was formed between Church and State, which has ever been the bane of civil liberty. On Constantine's accession to the throne, he published his imperial edict, securing full religious liberty both to Christians and to Pagans. But unhappily he did not long continue of one mind, but soon enacted laws for the suppression of Paganism, and the

establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Empire. He was himself the persecutor of Paganism, and made the Church a persecutor. In the indulgence of this same arbitrary spirit, it was his sovereign will also to assert his control over the Christian church, and introduce into her government, laws and penalties which were unknown in her primitive history. The clergy submitted to his domination, because they had not independence enough to resist it, and because they were easily bribed to that submission. The reins of power were in his hands; he prescribed the faith of the world; and the Church sat at the foot of his throne. He coerced the conscience, and men became Christians, not by voluntarily yielding their understandings and hearts to the truths of the gospel, but from the force of human authority. Nor was it until this period, that the Church lost her Apostolic character and became emphatically the *Roman Church*, gradually becoming more and more corrupt till in a few years her light became extinguished, and her glory departed.

Religion has always prospered most unembarrassed by any such alliance. To the close of the third century, the British churches had no such alliance, and yet they lived and flourished. Christianity does not *refuse* the patronage of the civil government, so long as the civil government recognizes the full measure of her rights; while she accepts *nothing* of the powers of this world that in the least interferes with her own divine charter. The idea of incorporating the church with the state, as a political community, is alike injurious to religion and liberty. Facts show that civil despotism and spiritual domination have ever had a community of interests, and have issued in plans of alliance and mutual support which they have pursued with

wonderful success. The spiritual power has tyrannized over the consciences of men, that the civil power might more easily make them slaves; while the civil power in its turn has made them slaves, in order to extend and perpetuate the power spiritual. The two systems for ages grew up together, till the church became the state, and the state became the church.* In its first organization, the church was wholly independent of the state. There she ought always to have been left. Neither Pagan nor Christian princes have any thing to do with her, except to obey the laws of her great Head, and, while she "renders unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," themselves to "render unto God the things that are God's." The nature of man and melancholy experience show us that whenever the church of God becomes a *political community*, she is but a predominant faction, and her government the very essence of despotism. The best form in which such a government ever existed is under the British Constitution. And what is it there, but that "partial freedom," which in the language of Edmund Burke, "is *privilege and prerogative, and not liberty*. A liberty made up of penalties! a liberty made up of incapacities! In what does such liberty differ from the description of the most shocking kind of servitude?"† The worst form under which such a government ever existed is the Hierarchy of Rome, "possessing the throne, swaying the sceptre, and brandishing the sword of her discarded rival."‡ It was not all at once that the tyrannical usurpations of the Papacy became so disastrous to the civil rights of rulers and citizens, nor that the Pope aspired to supreme authority over the nations.

* For some valuable facts on this subject, see "*Hallam's History of the Middle Ages*, Vol. I. ch. 7, and Brook's *History of Religious Liberty*.

† Burke's Letter to his Son.

‡ Brook's *History of Religious Liberty*.

The progress was slow and gradual, till from the middle of the thirteenth to the middle of the fourteenth centuries, the Roman Pontiff had his foot upon the neck of "a prostrate world." Princes early found it for their advantage to conciliate the formidable power of the Church of Rome; and the Church of Rome found it for her advantage to conciliate the power of reigning Princes. While Princes undertook to be the defenders of the Church, they at the same time took care that the Church should defend *them*, and while she became the defender of Princes, she took care that Princes should be *her defenders*.

Civil liberty is opposed, not merely to civil, but to religious tyranny. The Council of Calcuith, holding its session in England in the year of our Lord 785, "exhorts Princes to govern their kingdoms by the direction of the Bishops, to whom the power of binding and loosing is delivered."* Card, in his *Life of Charlemagne*, remarks that "this Monarch seems to have thought the clergy most capable of maintaining his absolute authority by employing in his favour the thunder of the Church, if ever the spirit of anarchy and revolt broke forth." Pepin, the King of France, and all his successors, with the exception of Lewis the Debonnaire,† were consecrated to their thrones by the Pope's legate. By this priestly unction, performed in the name of the Holy See, a supposed sacred character was communicated, which gave to kings a superiority over their nobles, not possessed even in the feudal ages, which rendered their persons inviolable, and their office divine. Monarchs might violate the rights of the people with impunity, and were accountable only to Rome. The power which the Popes thus acquired, they took care not

* Spelman, Vol. I. p. 294.

† Gifford's History of France.

to relinquish : for it is a well known fact, that they and the Councils of Bishops assembled by their legates "claimed the full right of making and unmaking kings." Hence Gregory III. excommunicated and deposed the Emperor Leo. When the sons of Lewis I. rose in rebellion against their father, Gregory IV. menaced with the thunders of the Church all who should refuse to take up arms against their sovereign, and were not in favour of the rebellion. A Council of Bishops deposed Charles the Bald. The Council of Mante, consisting of Archbishops and Bishops of France, "assembled in the name of the Lord God, and by inspiration of his divine Majesty," elected and crowned Duke Boson king of Provence, and thus despoiled the two sons of Lewis II. of the fairest part of their dominions. A band of Bishops accompanied Lewis IV. against his rebellious princes, and excommunicated the Duke of Normandy and the Count of Vermandois. "This extraordinary interference of the ecclesiastical powers," says Gifford, "and the effect which it produced, are strongly characteristic of the spirit of the times. The rebels, alarmed at their threats, remained in suspense. The laws of honour, ever sacred; the obligation of an oath, the firmest bond of society; the love of justice; a regard for their duty—all these potent considerations had proved insufficient to deter them from taking up arms against their sovereign; while the fear of excommunication, the motives for which were probably unjust, checked in a moment the uplifted arm of rebellion." "Sir, do not threaten," said the Pope's Nuncio to Henry II., "we fear no threats; for we are of a Court that has long been accustomed to give laws to Emperors and Kings."

Henry VII. had recourse to the most disgraceful

means of establishing himself on the throne, by the authority of the Roman Pontiff. "He was so little satisfied with his own title," says Hume, "that he applied to Papal authority for confirmation of it; and Innocent III. granted a bull in whatever terms the King was pleased to desire." When William the Conqueror, at an earlier period, usurped the crown of England, he gained over to his interest Pope Alexander II., who sent him a consecrated banner, a golden *agnus Dei*, and one of St. Peter's hairs set in a ring; whilst he attacked his adversary Harold with the artillery of the Church, and denounced excommunication against him and all his adherents, and "the conqueror came in with the Pope's banner, and under it won the battle which got him the garland." Blackstone says, "The then Pontiff having favoured Duke William in his projected invasion, by blessing his host and consecrating his banners, he took that opportunity, also, of establishing his spiritual encroachments." When, however, he was subsequently requested to own himself a vassal of the Holy See, he replied, "I hold my kingdom from none but God and my sword." This rude Norman achieved more for the cause of freedom simply by confining religious functionaries to their own appropriate employment, and keeping the judicial administration of the kingdom out of the hands of ecclesiastics, than could have been achieved, in that age of the world, in any other way. Still Rome retained her influence. With little interruption England continued under her usurpation, from the time of William down to Henry VII. When Henry VIII. cast off his authority, the Pope declared him to have forfeited his crown, put the kingdom under interdict, absolved the people from their allegiance, and asserted his authority over all the kings of the world. Who does not know

that the laws of England, for a long period, were framed with a view to resist the encroachments of Rome upon her civil liberties? The *Statute of Provisos*, passed in the year 1352; various subsequent statutes in the reign of Richard II., the first of which was passed in 1379, and the last in 1390; as well as the memorable *Statute of Premunire*, were all designed to resist her overbearing pretensions. Nor were they needless. Rome has upheld or put down thrones, as thrones have executed or resisted the edicts of Rome; while the liberties of the people have been tossed back and forth between them, as the policy of Princes, the caprice of Pontiffs, or the spirit of the age might require. And hence the degradation of the people. The Romish Church is their bitterest foe. The genius of her religion is unfriendly to liberty. It is a proud hierarchy. It recognizes no community of brethren; no power in the Church except its Head; no brotherhood in the world; no rights of the common people. The very right of thought it takes away; and that it may do so the more effectually, it gives no time to think. God's day of holy instruction and rest it turns into a day of pleasure; the times and seasons commemorative of its patron-saints, are memorable only for folly and dissipation; while its ingenuity has been exhausted in devising amusements for the people, in order more imperceptibly to forge their chains. Even conscience is silenced by her voice, and that innate guide and arbiter which has the seal of its authority from heaven, is subjected to human control, or swayed and bound in fetters. And what tyranny is like this! And for what servitude does not such tyranny prepare men! It was a noble declaration of Napoleon to the Pro-

testant deputies, after his accession to the throne, "My empire ends, where the empire of conscience begins." Despots have thrown their chains upon the limbs, have constrained the speech and actions of mankind; but it was reserved for Rome to fetter the thoughts. It is true she does not interfere with the liberties of men any farther than the liberties of men interfere with her. But their very nature is opposite. When as individuals, or as communities, they challenge her claim, then, so far as her influence extends, their liberties are at an end. The late Dr. Geddes, himself a Roman Priest, uses the following language in relation to the political influence of Rome: "I make no hesitation to affirm, that the Popish religion has been, mediately or immediately, the cause of almost all the political disturbances in Europe, since the days of Gregory the Seventh." Comment is needless on such testimony. The fact is prominently before the world.

It will not be denied, that among the more important personal rights, secured to every man by every good government, is the right of *property*. The Church of Rome has been distinguished in her whole history, from the time of Constantine to the present hour, for the most rude and unwarrantable encroachments upon this great right. For the first three centuries of the Christian era, the church was supported by the free-will offerings of those whose devotions and charity inclined them to this reasonable service.* During the reign of Constantine, a law was passed, still extant in the Theodosian and Justinian code, which not only encouraged great legacies to the church, but which also settled upon the clergy

* See Prideaux on Tithes. Selden on Tithes, ch. 4. See also this position controverted in the *Quarterly Review*, No. 58, p. 530, &c.; and No. 83, p. 120, &c.

a standing allowance out of the public treasury.* In-
testate estates, and the estates of persons who died with-
out heirs, became also, by different laws, the property
of the church. In his controversy with the Donatists,
Constantine not only deprived them of their places of
worship, and confiscated them to the treasury of the
Empire, but even sequestered their private property.†
The Emperor Honorius, in the year 412, made a decree
giving to the Catholic Church all “heretical conventicles
and their revenues.” In the progress of time the Church
claimed no inconsiderable portion of the property of her
members as her *right*, and the decrees of her councils
enforced the right by penalty and excommunication.‡
Such was the formidable power of the Church of Rome
that the most powerful princes found it for their interest
to make severe exactions of property from their own
subjects for the purpose of replenishing her treasury.
It would require volumes to furnish in detail the facts
which would illustrate the general position that *the*
people, both on the continent of Europe, as well as the
islands, have actually been made poor by the amount of
property wrung from them by the Church of Rome.
No reader of English history can be ignorant of the
means by which that Church possessed herself of one
third part of all the lands in England. At the death of
Edward the Confessor, twenty-eight out of sixty parts
of all the real estate, are recorded in Domesday Book, a
book containing the records of all the real estate in the
kingdom, in the name of the Church. England was

* See Burgham's Antiquities of the Christian Church, B. 5, ch. 4.

† Brook's History of Religious Liberty, from the propagation of Chris-
tianity in Britain, to the reign of George III.

‡ A Canon to this effect was made in the second Council of Mascon, in
the diocese of Lyons, A. D. 585. Also at Seville, in Spain, A. D. 590. Also
at Friuli, A. D. 791, for Italy.

nearly drained of its wealth by the exactions of the Roman Pontiff. In the eighth century the abominable doctrine became rife in England, that liberality to the Church made atonement for every species of crime. "Bounty to the Church atoned for every violence against society."* It was during this century that *Offa*, the murderer of *Ethelbert*, was pardoned by Pope Adrian, on condition that he would be liberal to the churches and monasteries; and that *Ina*, the King of Wessex, laid a tax upon every family in his kingdom, the tax commonly called *Peter's Pence*, for the education of English ecclesiastics at Rome. Nothing is more obvious than that the immense wealth of Rome was extorted from the common people by the authority of the Church, and that these exactions subsequently assumed the form of legal enactments by the State, under the influences of princes who were dependent for their power on Rome. The great and the opulent, and even monarchs themselves, in the course of time, came under these rigorous exactions. The fruits of their plunder, and rapine, and murder, were consecrated to the Church as the price of their absolution; and not a few monasteries and churches are now standing, once enriched with overflowing treasures, and associated with all that is memorable in the merits of these pretended saints. We have but to acknowledge the claims of Rome, and the rights of property are but a name. Men have never enjoyed less security in this great and well-earned title, than during those periods of her history when the Church of Rome was either the ally, or the engine of secular power.

That the views of the Roman Hierarchy have not been more disastrous to the liberties of this Western Continent, is to be attributed, under the favour of a kind

* Hume.

Providence, to the fact that our government was founded by men who were jealous of its influence because they had felt it in the parent countries. The instruments by which here to establish an empire of Freedom were chosen with wonderful wisdom by the God of nations. The Puritans of England and their brethren of the Established Church, whom bitter political animosities divided at home, here stood side by side, foremost in one common cause. Others, foreign to us in language alone, the Huguenots of France, and the Protestant exiles of the Low Countries, came up to the contest to wrestle for civil, as they had before wrestled for religious freedom. In asserting the rights of conscience, they had been trained to liberty of thought; and to hardihood they had been trained by persecution. In such hands, the strife could scarcely be doubtful ere it began. More than all, they had one common rule of faith. That rule **WAS THE BIBLE**. They were conversant with that Book, and imbued with its spirit. They found their liberties there, and there their duties. And they could not be slaves. Though they loved their sovereign, and were proud of their loyalty, yet did they, after a conflict of ten long years, dissolve the tie of that allegiance, and "with unexampled deliberation and solemnity," declare themselves free and independent. Had they been Romanists, who can doubt that we should now have been bondmen? It was not the wide ocean, nor the vast continent, nor the iron-bound shore, nor Eastern hills, nor Western vale that made us freemen. It was **THE BIBLE**—the **UNFETTERED Bible**. The Bible is the religion of the *people*. "To the poor the gospel is preached." Others there were on these Western shores, who had, and others there are who still have, all these physical advantages, but they were not, and are not yet freemen.

Compare the civil liberties of the descendants of the English colonists at the North, with the servitude and anarchy of the descendants of the Spanish conquerors in the Southern portions of this continent, and remember with what motives and with what auspices they sought this newly discovered world. The former were impelled by their regard for the rights of conscience, the latter by their thirst for gold—the former by their self-denying devotion to a religion of which the Divine Oracles are the only standard, the latter by a blind submission to Papal decrees—the former landed upon these shores with the Bible in their hands and in their hearts, and the latter made their descent upon the Southern coasts with only the crucifix and the sword. We may read the history of both. It publishes a solemn lesson to the world, and teaches us under what auspices Faith, Hope, or Charity may best transmit the civil liberties we enjoy to after ages. Such is the importance of the principle, that the divine Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith.

It is no mean foe with which the combined forces of truth and piety are called to contend, in contending with Rome. If we read the prophecies of Daniel, the epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians, and his first epistle to Timothy, and the Apocalypse, we shall discern the features of Papal Rome, portrayed by a master's hand. She is no other than the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition, Babylon the Great, and the empire of that Pontifical King, that combination of ecclesiastical and political power which was gradually to push its way over the ten kingdoms of the Latin empire. In vain do you look in the history of the past for the "blasphemous" Power that has "persecuted the saints;" that has "changed times and laws;" that has established

its see upon "the seven mountains;" that has covered the entire territory of the "fourth beast;" and which, because it was destined to "subdue three Kings," to the present day wears the triple crown; if not to Papal Rome. Where, if not to Rome, shall we look for the one "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness?" What power has existed in the world, whose "look was more stout than his fellows," if not that of the Roman Pontiff, at whose feet the proudest monarchs have bowed, and at whose hands they have received their crowns? This is the Power with which the Protestant world is called to contend; and from the same prophecies that mark its character, we learn as distinctly that the time has not yet come in which it is to be overthrown. It is a most remarkable fact, that such a power should have existed so long in the world, by such means; but it is a fact not less remarkable, that its continuance, and by just such means, is predicted in the word of God.

The struggle with Rome is not over; and good men of every name are loudly called on to make less of the things in which they differ, and more of those in which they agree, for the purpose of uniting against the common enemy. It is only by our united, strong, and bold attachment to the truth as it is in Jesus; by that love to our divine Lord, and to one another, which is stronger than death; and by united prayer for our enemies, and all watchful and wise efforts for their salvation, that we are destined to prosper. Nothing has given Rome so much the advantage, as the disunion of Protestants. And nothing, under the favour of Almighty God, would be so ominous of her overthrow, as their cordial union in the great truths of the gospel, and the love of the

Spirit. Just at the onset of this great conflict, the Protestant world is a divided empire, and if the external pressure which we are beginning to feel does not cement us, the controversy will be of disastrous issue.

Never let it be forgotten, that the "weapons of our warfare are not carnal." At the close of this fearful conflict, the Apostle "heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, AND BY THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY; AND THEY LOVED NOT THEIR LIVES UNTO THE DEATH." These are our weapons. Rome will not alter her method of warfare. It will be deception and violence. It will be by scattering her emissaries over every land; by introducing her shrewdest men to every Court, and Cabinet, and Legislature, and bench of Justice; by establishing her religious orders in every State; by artfully monopolizing the education of the rising generation; by the power of her Confessional; by the splendour of her worship; by her connivance at the wickedness of men; by her preponderating influence in every doubtful struggle of political parties; by her refusal of the Holy Scriptures to the people, and by her bitter persecutions, "wearing out the saints of the Most High." Ours is a different mode of attack and defence. It is THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB—the great doctrine of the cross. It is the WORD OF OUR TESTIMONY—the pure and unadulterated word of God. It is the meekness of wisdom, the patience of suffering, and LOVING NOT OUR LIVES UNTO THE DEATH. Here is the armour; and those who put it on will be "terrible as an army with banners." The bitterness of the foe may be

traced to his malignant hostility to the truths of God. It is "the enmity of the carnal mind" with which we have to contend; and our great weapon is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Nothing will do such execution in this warfare, as the great truths of the gospel; and nothing will so certainly secure the presence and favour of our Redeeming God and King.

"When the enemy cometh in like a flood, the SPIRIT OF THE LORD lifteth up a standard against him." "It is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts." We look for copious effusions of the Holy Spirit upon our churches before this great conflict is terminated. For these we must look, and "pray always with all prayer." We know not that the existing generation will be called into this great arena, stained as it will be with the blood of martyrs; but it becomes us to be prepared for it, by "putting on the whole armour of God." Let our *young* men, and especially those who have in view the Christian Ministry, see to it that they are clad in this celestial panoply, and stand ready and firm for the day of trial. The note of alarm is sounded so distinctly, that they will be greatly at fault if they prepare not the way for the coming of their Lord, and for the manifestation of His power, either in the conviction or destruction of His and their enemies. "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker that hath stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth!" The time is at hand when Rome will no longer hurry abandoned nations to perdition. Before the earth groaned under the birth of this mighty Monster, it was foretold that he should stretch his gigantic form, and vomit out his flood of waters; but it was at the same time foretold that a safe refuge should

be provided from its fury, and that the tempest should break silently upon the shore. "If God be for us, who is he that can be against us?" He who "puts his *word* in our mouth, covers us with the shadow of his hand."

Twenty years ago, few would have believed that a discussion of this subject would have been called for in this Protestant country. But even here, in a land consecrated to Protestantism, the features of Rome have begun to look out upon the world under the veil of a purer faith; and men are not wanting among us, both among the clergy and the laity, who publicly endorse some of her most obnoxious errors. This activity and boldness are a rebuke to the listlessness and inactivity of Protestants, which, if they do not feel, will be among the mournful indications that darkness is to spread rapidly over this fair land. We cannot be too deeply convinced that the question we have now discussed is the turning point in the controversy. I would say to my countrymen, Hold fast to the Bible. I would say to my fellow Christians of every name, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not again entangled in the yoke of bondage." A day of battle is at hand. It needs not the eye of a seer to discern its coming. Its notes of busy preparation already pierce our ear. What mean these hostile sounds blown from the trumpet of the Vatican? What means the echo from walls long since sundered from that proud and colossal temple? Yes; a day of battle is at hand.

I say not these things in *fear*, but in admonition—more rather in hope. We have no fears in a controversy with Rome, if, by the grace of God, we are enabled to carry a Christian spirit into the contest. Rome demands our sympathy, but not less our vigilance. I pray God

that His people may come out of her, and not be partakers of her plagues! Protestantism has for its defence the shield of a mighty and Divine Leader. He himself was the first protester against "the Man of Sin," delineating his character, giving him his name, foretelling his overthrow. His protest is its destiny—its inevitable doom, to be "consumed with the spirit of his mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of his coming."

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