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A
CONCISE VIEW

OF

THE PRINCIPAL POINTS OF CONTROVERSY

BETWEEN THE

PROTESTANT AND ROMAN

CHURCHES:

CONTAINING,

- I. A Letter to the Roman Catholics of the City of Worcester in England.
- II. A Reply to the above Address, by the late Archbishop Carroll.
- III. An Answer to the late Archbishop Carroll's Reply.
- IV. A Short Answer to the Appendix to The Catholic Question, decided in New-York in 1813.
- V. A few Short Remarks on Dr. O'Gallagher's Reply to the above Answer.

BY THE REV. C. H. WHARTON, D. D.

RECTOR OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, BURLINGTON, (N. J.) AND MEMBER OF THE
PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF PHILADELPHIA.

NEW-YORK :

PUBLISHED BY DAVID LONGWORTH, NO. 11 PARK,

Clayton & Kingsland, Printers.

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1817.

THE HISTORY OF THE

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P R E F A C E.

THE two first and the third of the tracts here published, have for some years past been frequently called for, and the author has been repeatedly solicited to allow a new edition of them. Motives of delicacy only, have prevented his compliance. He was unwilling to renew any uneasy feelings in the breast of the venerable writer of the "Address to the Roman Catholics in the United States of America," for whom, notwithstanding many illiberal insinuations in this address, he never ceased to entertain sincere esteem and attachment. By the decease of Archbishop Carroll, every disinclination and obstacle to the republication of these tracts, is removed. They who may now enter the lists against them, will not be able to advance any thing unnoticed by him, and therefore no dread is entertained of their being refuted. If it should be said, that publications of this nature are only calculated to nourish the acrimonious spirit of controversy, which Christian charity should rather strive to suppress, let the reader turn to "the Appendix to the Catholic Question," published at New-York in 1813, and candidly determine whether such a wanton attack upon the Protestant faith, did not call for more severe animadversion than that which it received.

A pamphlet in support of this publication, and written by a Dr. O'Gallagher, was put into my hands last fall. With the exception of some coarse abuse, and an arrogant affectation of theological superiority, it contains little or nothing, which was not refuted in the *Short Answer to the Appendix*. My friends, however, advised me to notice it, and I have done so accordingly. The malignity of the Doctor's remarks, meets the pity of the writer of these sheets, and is freely forgiven; although, if unrestrained, he has no doubt, that, by some fiery bigots, it would be extended to personal persecution. As an evidence, that such feelings exist, he will take the liberty of presenting the reader with the copy of a letter which he lately received from a Romish Priest, together with his reply to it. The letter was written in French, and is literally translated. The original is with the printer. The spirit which dictated it, is, I hope, confined

only to few of that communion ; but, however limited it may be, it is fraught with such malignant and mischievous materials, that no attempt to keep it under, can be unseasonable or superfluous. It is hoped that the present publication may contribute something to this effect.

THE LETTER.

Baltimore, 30th March, 1816.

SIR,

I WROTE to you about two years ago.* With equal simplicity I will write to you again—solely for the good of your soul, and for the glory of God and his church. I never mentioned the first letter to any person, nor shall I mention this. The same secrecy I have a right to exact from you, until it shall be violated by some infidelity on my part. You are very old. Mr. Carroll, your friend, has died first. He has borne before God the testimony of the scandal, which your renunciation of his church, and of your sacred priesthood, has occasioned in his diocess ; of the scandal of writings so outrageous, from your apology, down to that Theological Magazine in the first number of which, you begin by venting such strange effusions of hatred against your Mother, the church ; saying, for instance, in the eulogium on Fenelon, that ignorance only can embrace, and cruelty only propagate her doctrine—thus violently insulting those of your former friends, whom not being able to pronounce either ignorant or cruel, it remained only to consider as hypocrites ; (Mr. Carroll at their head) asserting again, that charity is incompatible with the Catholic faith ; that Fenelon, like Fra. Paulo, was nothing more than a Protestant in disguise : He, who wrote so many controversial treatises against the Protestants, and the Jansenists ; the Missionary of Poitou, which continued Catholic during the French revolution ; the confessor, for ten years, of the new female converts ; the friend of the Jesuits and of St. Sulpice, societies so decidedly Catholic ; nay, further, the antagonist of the liberties of the Gallican church, and even jealously attached to what is called, in France, the ultramountain, or Italian system. Alas ! was it reserved to you to make Fenelon also a hypocrite, than whom no man ever enjoyed a higher reputation for sincerity ? Rather read, O wretched Priest ! his beautiful treatise upon the ministerial functions, or his eight letters to a Protestant, and

* This letter was equally insolent, and was burnt without being answered.

the rational retractation which they occasioned. How dare you; how dare you, I say, go to death and to judgment in your present melancholy situation? What account will you have to render to Jesus Christ, of your conduct against his church? You are imposed upon by the caresses of the sect you have embraced. I have seen with grief, on your account, their efforts to entangle you to the last, by proposing you as Bishop of New-Jersey. A Bishop, indeed! A Bishop, on whose account? A Bishop! O miserable Priest, a priest at present without *faith*, without *sacrifice*. I say, without even *faith*; for among all the Protestant sects, what choice can be made, one opinion being as good as another, whether it be Luther's, or Calvin's, Fox's, Wesley's, Socinus's, Priestley's, or any other *non-descript* society.

At Mr. Carroll's death, I was struck with the desire of writing to you: at present this desire occurs very forcibly, and I yield to it with simplicity, nay, with excessive emotion. Return to the fatal moment of your separation. Remember poor Lucas;* imitate his repentance; abandon the fatal courage to die in your apostacy, and plunge into despair. Reflect, old man, still respectable for your age, and the excess of your wretchedness, reflect on the good which your return would yet do, and the true consolation it would impart to yourself. I do not expect that you will answer me, but ponder before God, what you had best do. Do not die in this manner—rather follow to the other world your favourite Fenelon, than the apostate Luther. A spirit of indifference, the dissenters, the Bible Societies, are hastening on the ruin of the *establishment* of Henry VIII., Elizabeth, and Edward; and Unitarianism, new commentaries, liberality, &c. threaten Christianity itself. Membership with the only church in possession of the promises, is the duty of every enlightened and sincere Christian: how much more so of the miserable Priest who has had the misfortune to betray his divine priesthood. Does not an edifying return become urgent? Ah, do not be so dreadfully courageous, as thus to die in your apostacy. In thinking myself bound to give you my name, I am not afraid of dishonouring it. My intention is pure, and I disavow any unnecessary affront.

A. BRUTÉ, (I believe,)

President of St. Mary's College.

The Rev. Mr. Wharton, Burlington, New-Jersey.

* Of this person I know but little. I am glad, however, to find that he died a penitent for his immoralities. I never heard that he became a Protestant. Ed.

ANSWER.

Burlington, April 20th, 1816.

SIR,

IN answering yours of the 30th ult. I will begin by sending you a parody of a celebrated letter written by the great Dr. Samuel Johnson, to Mr. James Macpherson, whom he considered as a literary impostor, and by whom he was threatened with a personal assault.*

“ I received your foolish and impertinent letter. Any arguments against my religious opinions, I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself against bigoted abuse, my friends will do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from abandoning what I think an error, by the denunciations of a fanatic. What would you have me retract? I thought your church unscriptural in many points, and I think so still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I dare you to refute. Your unprovoked resentment I defy—your pity I reject. To judge from your letter, your abilities are not formidable; and I am not sufficiently acquainted with your erudition, to pay regard to what you can say, but what you can prove. You may show this to whom you please, or print it, if you will.”

This parody will probably appear uncourteous language to the President of a College; but when a president throws off the gentleman, and condescends to dabble in the dregs of bigotry, he has no right to expect any other. The feelings which your letter excited, would not have partaken of any thing like resentment, had you not mentioned my venerable relative and former friend, Archbishop Carroll, as countenancing your denunciations and abuse. I knew him well. I loved him during his lifetime, and shall revere him during my own. Were he still among us, I would have transmitted your letter to him; where, I am confident, it would have met the reception it deserves. He was too well acquainted with the sacred rights of conscience, and the anomalies of the human mind, to condemn the exercise of the first, or wish to regulate the latter by the standard of his own opinions; much less would he have presumed to consign them both to perdition. Sir, we Americans are better taught in these matters; and it must stir our bile to hear arrogant foreigners, presuming to vilify the most numerous classes of Christians in our country; to find them, when scarcely es-

* See Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. ii. p. 133. Boston edit.

caped from the fury of Jacobinism, breathing among their kind receivers the spirit of Inquisitors. On every occasion, both in public and private, I have uniformly treated my former connexions with respect. In abandoning some of their doctrines, I still entertained for their persons and virtues the most tender attachment, and have never, for a moment, harboured the presumption of passing condemnation on them for opinions, which to profess myself, would be a sinful prevarication. If you had understood our language, you could not have mistaken what is said of Fenelon in the Theological Magazine. It is merely asserted, that although a member of the Roman church, he was, in some sense, a Protestant; and, was not this the case, when he protested against propagating religion by the sword, a practice zealously advocated by Bossuet, and most Roman Catholic divines, as emanating from religious intolerance, and a holy incompatibility, as they call it, with any other Christian societies—a practical doctrine, involving the very essence of heretical pravity, and calling loudly for the anathemas of an infallible church, unless, indeed, she regard practical errors, most destructive to society, beneath her notice, when compared with speculative tenets, which seem to shock the dictates of reason, and invalidate the evidence of all our senses. These true principles of the church of Rome, viz. *intolerance* and *persecution*, which she has always professed, and frequently realized, when possessing civil power, these principles, I repeat, “cruelty alone can disseminate, and ignorance alone receive;”^{*} and should such principles be maintained by any other church, which never can be proved, all we can say, is, that they merit the same unqualified abhorrence. Of the sincerity of the amiable and saintly Fenelon; of your late learned and venerable Archbishop, and of innumerable other worthies of your communion, I never entertained a doubt. It is the duty of all real Christians, to “judge not before the time, lest they be judged.” Who, then, art thou, Mr. President, “that judgest another man’s servant,” or rather a man devoted to the service of Christ? Abandon this crying sin, my good sir. But if you deem it an essential mark of your church to anathematize all, who dissent from her tenets, permit me, in return for your menacing entreaties, (nay, I am willing to suppose, your charitable exhortations) to abandon my *apostacy*, to beseech you to ponder in the presence of God, and with a free and unshackled mind, the reasons of Protestants for their separating

^{*} See Theol. Mag. No. 1, p. 22.

from your church, and then, perhaps, you may be induced, by a similar act of apostacy, "to come out of her, lest you partake of those plagues," which you presume to pronounce so confidently against me. At any rate, you would oblige me by withholding the honour of any more of your letters, the disposal of which you can have no right to control, as you seem to imagine. When received, they become my property; but it is a property which I do not covet. Such letters stir up angry feelings, which I wish to forget, and they pick my pocket without an adequate consideration. They may, moreover, and probably will be mentioned, in a manner that may prevent Protestant parents, from exposing their children to instructors of this description.

With respect to your kind cautions against the caresses of my new friends, as you are pleased to style them, and their exertions to raise me to the Episcopate of New-Jersey, they are entirely superfluous; as I was never a candidate for that sacred and responsible office; and as to your sneers against Bible Societies, they may be entitled to some notice, when the declaration of the Apostle shall become obsolete, that "the Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus; all Scripture being given by inspiration of God, and being 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." (2 *Tim.* iii. 15, 16, 17.) In the mean time, if the dissemination of scriptural knowledge should overthrow any Protestant churches, either in Europe or America, the sooner they fall the better. It might, however, be probably more wise to transfer your idle forebodings, respecting other churches, to well-founded apprehensions for your own, arising from such a circumstance. At any rate, if, as you flatter yourself, Bible Societies are calculated to destroy the church of England, and her sister church in America, it evidently becomes your bounden duty to support them. You tell me, in finishing your letter, that you give me your name without fear of exposing it. Sorry I am, that neither my friends, nor myself, are able to decypher it. Turned every way, it remains unknown to us all. Mine is that of your sincere well-wisher,

CHARLES HENRY WHARTON, D. D.

*and Presbyter of the Apostolical Protestant Episcopal
Church in the U. S. of America.*

A

LETTER

TO

THE ROMAN CATHOLICS

OF THE

CITY OF WORCESTER,

FROM

THE LATE CHAPLAIN OF THAT SOCIETY,

MR. C. H. WHARTON,

STATING THE MOTIVES WHICH INDUCED HIM TO RELINQUISH THEIR COMMUNION, AND BECOME A MEMBER OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCH.

“Give me understanding, O Lord, and I shall keep thy law : Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.” Psalm cxviii. 34.

“Make me to go in the path of thy commandments ; for therein do I delight.” Verse 35.

“Any private man, who truly believes the Scripture, and seriously endeavours to know the will of God, and to do it, is as secure as the visible Church, more secure than your the Roman Church, from the danger of erring in fundamentals: for it is impossible that any man so qualified should fall into any error which to him will prove damnable. For God requires no more of any man to his salvation, but his true endeavour to be saved. Lastly, abiding in your churches communion is so far from securing me or any man from damnable error, that if I should abide in it, I am certain I could not be saved. For abide in it I cannot, without professing to believe your entire doctrine true : profess this I cannot, but I must lie perpetually, and exulcerate my conscience. And though your errors were not in themselves damnable, yet to resist the known truth, and to continue in the profession of known errors and falsehood, is certainly a capital sin, and of great affinity with the sin which shall never be forgiven.—Chillingworth’s Religion of Protestants a safe way to Salvation, 4th Edition, p. 215.”

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A
LETTER
TO
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AT a period of life, when discernment should be ripe, when passions should be calm, and principles settled, if a man relinquish the opinions of his youth; if he break through the impressions of early education, and the habits of thinking with which he has been long familiar; if he abandon connexions, which he has cherished from his infancy, to throw himself among strangers and begin the world anew; surely a consciousness of duty, or some unworthy principle must be the spring of such extraordinary conduct. In this case, a decent respect to his own character; to the connexions, which he quits; and those, which he embraces, seems to call aloud for the motives of so important a change.

I am well aware that the public in general is but little concerned at the fate of individuals. Their success, their uneasiness, their struggles, their distress are felt only by a few, who, formed in a softer mould,

take delight in being interested in the welfare of humanity. To such of those exalted few of your society, or of any other description of men, who may chance to know me, I beg leave to address myself.

It is not my design to enter upon the wide field of controversy, nor to combat the tenets which I have rejected, by the shafts of ridicule or the full power of argument. Truth does not require, nor does generosity allow us to blacken a system because we abandon it. What appears conviction to me may seem folly to you. It would therefore be equally absurd and unjust to censure you for opinions, which you think it your duty to admit, as for you to blame *me* for rejecting such, as *I* deem unsupportable and false. Wherefore my sole intention is to send you an apology for *my own* conduct, not to throw the most distant reflection upon yours. I mean to countenance, as far as I am able, the candour of those, who may still wish to esteem me, or silence in *some degree*, the voice of prejudice, and *zeal without knowledge*.

If nevertheless, in the course of this letter, any arguments should occur, that may tend to unhinge the security of your minds, you will be candid enough to refer it to the nature of the subject, not to any intention to disturb and perplex you.

Were your belief, indeed, grounded solely on the authority, and credit of your teachers, on the prejudices of education, on the dictates of fear, the allurements of interest, or the horrors of a conscience perpetually harassed with the idea of disobedience and heresy, you probably might be staggered to see one of your ministers, who, you had *some* reason to imagine, made religion his study, departing from a sys-

tem, which you are taught to venerate as infallible. But if your faith proceed from conviction, and *knowledge of the cause*, if it be the result of mature deliberation, and rational inquiry, you can have nothing to fear even from a deliberate attempt to raise doubts in your minds. God requires no more of any man, than his true and hearty endeavours to be saved; and *their* endeavours can never be ineffectual, whose reason and conscience tell them, they are in the way to salvation. If these faithful guides speak such a language to your hearts, continue to listen to their saving lessons; continue to be happy. But let no security whatever, no conviction of your *exclusive* happiness so warp your understandings, or exulcerate your hearts, as to make you pronounce condemnation upon those who, after consuming years in unbiassed inquiries, can discover no *unerring* authority delegated to man, nor admit many doctrines, which that authority proposes. For *your sakes*, I deprecate such unchristian usage, as well as for my own. Yet I fear alas! that happy period is still at a distance when the charity, *that behaveth not unseemly, that thinketh no evil*, shall compose the jarrings of religious antipathy. The pride of opinion is too firmly riveted upon the human mind to admit of any apology from those, who oppose it. A desertion from a favourite system bears too hard upon the abandoned cause to be easily forgiven: and the man, who is bold enough to adopt such a measure, will soon find himself a profane object of abhorrence to the persons whom he most esteemed, or by whom he had been most tenderly beloved.

For it is a lamentable truth, that on every occasion similar to the present, unjust suspicions and illiberal

censure are indulged without remorse. They find their way into minds, which, in other respects, are accustomed to startle at the very shadow of evil. The most advanced in the habits of Christian meekness and forbearance, too often mistake the workings of animosity for sentiments of pity towards an unfortunate brother. Men of sense and education too often make a merit of sacrificing their temper and understanding to the blind ardour of their zeal. The most eloquent and powerful champion of the English Roman Catholics; the professed advocate for unlimited toleration, could not so far abandon his original prejudices, as to think favourably of any one, who leaves the communion he belongs to.* What grounds have *I* therefore to expect any *partial* indulgence, any *unusual* exertions of charity and candour. No, my fellow Christians, I am not bold enough to flatter myself, that such will be my lot. If, however, contrary to my expectations, any among you should be found generous enough to answer the voice of obloquy, and assert my sincerity, to such I shall ever be happy to make my gratitude known. Under many distressful feelings, it will be a comfort to reflect, that my slender endeavours have operated in the minds of some among you, a revolution so congenial to the mild spirit of the gospel.

Perhaps, were you acquainted with the painful struggles, which this public declaration of my sentiments has caused me, your pity on this occasion, would be unmixed with resentment. You would see the

* State and behaviour of the English Catholics, by the Rev. Mr. Berington, page 132. In the second edition of this spirited work the author softens his censure of those, who may abandon his communion; but the original sense of it remains nearly the same.

cruel impropriety of being angry with a man, who has endeavoured to discover the truth of your doctrines, and striven with all the powers of his soul to believe them; who calls heaven to witness, that he has weighed every argument for and against your mode of religion with the same impartiality, as if the world contained no Being but God and himself.

I pretend not to any uncommon powers of reasoning, or quickness of apprehension—I feel myself subject to prejudice and mistake—I am too well acquainted with the instability of my own heart to boast of any exemption from the usual frailties of man. But among the weaknesses to which I plead guilty, none, I trust, ever argued indifference to religion, contempt for morality, forgetfulness of honour, or any propension to that lowest stage of depravity, which makes men act habitually the parts of hypocrites.

There was a time, when, like you, I gloried in my religion; I daily thanked God, that *I was not, like other men, heretics, schismatics and infidels*; I subscribed with unfeigned sincerity to that article of your belief; “That the Roman church is the mother and mistress of all churches, and that out of her communion no salvation can be obtained.”* I was persuaded, that the arguments of her adversaries were lighter than chaff; though, at the same time, I should have deemed it an impiety to weigh them in the scales of impartiality and candour. Common sense informed me, that inquiry implied a doubt, whilst the voice of the church was loud in proclaiming, that to doubt of any doctrinal point was to be no longer a Roman Catholic.

* See the famous creed of Pope Pius IV. the present standard of orthodoxy in the Roman church.

Under such a dilemma the inquisitive faculties of the mind must remain in a state of torpid acquiescence, or be exerted only after a previous and definitive judgment has been passed upon the truth, or falsity of the doctrines in debate. I was, therefore, soon convinced, that no *consistent* Roman Catholic can be a candid inquirer in matters of religion. He cannot set out with that indifference to the truth or falsity of a tenet, which forms the leading feature of rational investigation; and yet, at the same time, it was painful to conclude, that an honest search into the truths and nature of religion could be any-wise offensive to its merciful author. “I could never perceive why in religious inquiries our reason should be particularly restrained; as the subject is of singular importance, it seemed that even greater latitude should be allowed us.”* To “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good,” was the important advice of an inspired apostle.† I regarded it as an essential duty of a minister of religion “to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear.”‡ In a word, the positive injunction of the beloved disciple of Jesus, “not to believe every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God,”§ was a sufficient voucher for the lawfulness and expediency of inquiry.||

* State and behaviour of the Roman Catholics, page 139.

† 1 Thess. v.

‡ 1 Pet. iii. 15.

§ 1 John iv. 1.

|| Not to mention *many* other ancient fathers, who advise us to have recourse to the scriptures in all our doubts about religion, I will only lay before the reader two remarkable passages of St. Chrysostom. This eloquent doctor shall speak for all the rest. “When you shall see an impious heresy,

My connexions, moreover, with many valuable Protestants, with whom I lived in habits of intimacy and friendship, served not a little to enlarge my ideas, and wean my mind from the narrowness of a system. In proportion as I became acquainted with their persons, I ceased to view their principles through the medium of prejudice. If “pure and undefiled re-

which is the army of antichrist, standing in the holy places of the church; then let those who are in Judea betake themselves to the mountains: that is, let those who are in Christendom betake themselves to the scriptures. For Christendom is the true Judea, the mountains are the writings of the prophets and apostles. But wherefore ought *all* Christians, at this time, to have recourse to the scriptures? Because at this time, since heresy has infected the churches, the divine scriptures *only* can afford a proof of genuine Christianity, and a refuge to those who are desirous of arriving at the truth of faith. Formerly it could be evinced by various means, which was the true church of Christ, which the church of the Gentiles; 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 *only*. And why? Because heresy has all outward observances in common with her. If a man, therefore, be desirous of knowing the true church of Christ, how will he be able to do it amidst so great a resemblance, but by the *scriptures only*? Wherefore our Lord foreseeing, that such a great confusion of things would take place in the latter days, *orders* the Christians who are in Christendom, and desirous of arriving at the firmness of faith, to have recourse to *nothing* but the scriptures; for if they should look up to *any thing else*, they will be scandalized and will perish, as not understanding which is the true church.” *In Matth. c. 24. hom. 49.* Here I cannot help asking, whether such would now be the advice of a Roman Catholic doctor to a person labouring under similar doubts? Would not such a person be rather discouraged from consulting the scriptures, and referred to the decisions of Popes and councils? Again, *in 2 ad. Corinth. hom. 13.* “Let us not attend to the opinions of the many; but let us inquire into the things themselves. For it is absurd, while we will not trust other people in pecuniary matters, but choose to count and calculate our money ourselves, that in affairs of much greater consequence, we should implicitly follow the opinions of others; especially, as we are possessed of the most exact and perfect rule and measure, by which we may regulate our several inquiries, I mean the regulations of the divine laws. Wherefore 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.” How one of the most enlightened doctors of antiquity could write this passage, and yet regard the doctrine of *private judgment* as heretical, is a paradox, which all the fine-spun subtleties of modern schoolmen would find it difficult to unravel.

ligion with God and the Father" be this, "to visit widows and orphans in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unstained-from this world,"* I think I know several who have a good claim to this religion.

It soon became painful to regard such fellow Christians, some of whom are very near my heart, as straying widely from the only road to happiness, by refusing to submit to a church, out of the pale of which no salvation can be had. I dismissed the cruel idea with contempt and indignation; but with it a leading principle of my former belief was abandoned. I know that some of your late ingenious apologists in England, where a writer must affect to be liberal, if he mean to be read, have laboured hard to palliate the severity of this unpopular tenet. Others have rejected it, as no article of *their* creed. But neither the sophistry of the former, nor the inconsistency of the latter, can do away a doctrine so expressly delivered in every public catechism and profession of faith. Neither *transubstantiation*, nor the *infallibility* of the Roman church, are taught more explicitly as articles of faith, than the *impossibility of being saved out of the communion of this church*. That Roman Catholics profess some tenets supernumerary, and inimical to Christian faith, *may* be the *opinion* of a Protestant: but that Protestants of sense and education are in a state of damnation, *must* be the *religious belief* of a *consistent* Roman Catholic. Look into any one of your own writers upon controversy, and you will find this argument repeatedly made use of: "Protestants allow salvation to Roman Catholics; but Roman Catholics do *not* allow salvation to Protestants: there-

* James i. 27.

fore, the Roman Catholic religion is the safest of the two.”

In the history of the follies and depravity of man, there does not occur a stronger instance of both, than that such an article should be interwoven into the texture of his belief. Nor can the effrontery of false reasoning offer a greater insult to common sense, than to plead the uncharitableness of a tenet as an argument for its truth. But when we consider further, that this barbarous tenet laid the first foundations for the cruel heresy of the persecutors,* who, under pretext of compelling men into the only road to heaven, and saving their souls, inflicted on them torments, which humanity shudders to relate, that, notwithstanding the enormities occasioned by this tenet, it was promulged under horrid anathemas by the pretended vicar of the meek and humble Jesus, was adopted by *Christian* princes and bishops, enforced by canonized saints with all the horrors of the inquisition,† justified by law, and sanctified in pulpits; the mind is bewildered in the contemplation of this *mystery of iniquity*. The wild enthusiasm, that first broached such a doctrine, and the stupid credulity, that believed it, is equally a matter of indignation and astonishment. You will pardon the warmth with which I speak upon this mischievous tenet: its baneful influence upon the dearest interests of society, and the happiness of indi-

* If any doctrine can be contrary to the religion of Jesus Christ, and consequently *heretical*, it must be that which teaches the justice of persecution for conscience' sake. If it be said, that this doctrine has been taught and practised by Protestants, my answer is, that among *Protestant Catholics*, as well as among *Roman Catholics*, heresies may arise.

† St. Dominick was the first inquisitor-general against the Albigenses.

viduals calls for every exertion to exhibit its deformity and falsehood.

Nor will the colours of this picture, hideous as they are, reflect any odium upon you in the eyes of your fellow subjects. From my own observation I am happy to assure them, that the Roman church in this, as well as in many other particulars, is daily undergoing a silent reformation. The dark monsters of persecution and bigotry are retreating gradually before the light of genuine religion and philosophy. Mankind begin to blush, that near fifteen centuries have been necessary to convince them, that humanity and toleration are essential branches of the religion of Jesus. Among you, few are apprized of the mischiefs with which the tenet I am speaking of is pregnant. The more enlightened reject, or explain it away. Even the most orthodox give it so faint an assent, that, except among a few of unusual ignorance and bigotry, its influence is but trifling upon the harmony of society.

The absurdity and uncharitableness of believing with the assent of *faith*, that the members of no *Christian* church but our own can be saved, is, therefore, to me quite palpable and evident. Yet no sooner do reason and religion sap the foundations of this master-error, than the fabric raised upon it must totter and fall. Even the boasted infallibility of a living authority is no more, when salvation is allowed to Christians who reject such a privilege. For, whoever admits this authority as an undoubted article of Christian religion, *must* necessarily pronounce condemnation upon those who *wilfully* reject it. To refuse passing such a sentence amounts to a tacit renuncia-

tion of the authority itself. But in this, as in many other instances, it is happy for mankind, that consistency of opinion is not always to be found. The uncorrupted feelings of the human heart will frequently set consequences at defiance, while their pernicious principles are deemed sacred and irrefragable. This must always be the case with the humane and virtuous, who ground their belief upon authority alone; who seldom inquire into the relations which the several branches of a system bear to each other; or who, though qualified by nature and education, esteem it an impiety to think for themselves, or to harbour the least suspicion concerning notions which they have been taught from their infancy to regard as infallible.

For my own part, no sooner had I relinquished this unwarrantable tenet, than doubts began to arise concerning some others, with which it is so nearly connected. I experienced very singular satisfaction in regarding my Protestant brethren as fellow travellers in the same road to happiness, as entitled to the same grace and benefits of redemption with myself. In proportion as the dead weight of authority was removed, the mind recovered its natural spring and energy, and indulged itself in the warm feelings of expanded benevolence, which had hitherto been chilled by early infusions of bigotry. To trace each religious truth to its genuine sources of reason and revelation, I considered as the most noble and important employment that can possibly occupy the faculties of man.

Scarcely, however, had I entered upon this glorious task, when I felt the whole force of Solomon's observation: that "he, who increaseth wisdom, in-

creaseth sorrow." I foresaw the difficulties to which this undertaking would expose me. I knew, that to seek religious information in the writings of Protestants, was to incur the severest censures of the church I belonged to.* I was persuaded, that from such an inquiry doubts would naturally arise, that might destroy the texture of my former belief: and that I was bringing upon myself a series of long and painful conflicts between ancient habits of thinking and future conviction. As I was determined to acquiesce ultimately in the authority of revelation, the light of reason, and the dictates of conscience, I anticipated in my mind the various disagreeable, and distressful sensations, which a dereliction of former principles would unavoidably occasion. The loss of reputation with a respectable set of people, who, from calling me *friend*, would style me an *apostate*; the imputation of inconstancy; the suspicions attending the very name of *convert*, which, with some of *all* parties, is become a term of reproach; the mortification, affliction, and perhaps aversion of kind and tender relations, who used to regard me as doing some credit to my connexions; pity from the benevolent, and abuse from the zealous, were the certain consequences of a change in my principles. To a mind not callous to the importance of a good name, to the endearments of friendship, to the affections of consanguinity, and disclaiming any pretensions to the apathy of a stoic,

* Whoever reads any books written by heretics, (or Protestants,) containing heresy, or treating about religion, without permission of the holy see, by virtue of the *Bulla Cœnæ*, incurs excommunication *ipso facto*. Whoever retains, prints, or defends them is subject to the same dismal penalty. See *Arsdekin's Theology, resolutiones practicæ ad hæresim edit. Antwerp, pag. 147*. And every Roman Catholic divine.

such bitter reflections could by no means be indifferent. A dreary prospect opening at the same time from a different quarter, served not a little to enhance the gloomy prospect before me. Held back from my native country and property by a long, distressful, and iniquitous war,* destitute of connexions, to whom I might look up for assistance, and with a constitution that promised but a slender share of health, I could not reasonably hope for any situation in life equally eligible with that which I might determine to relinquish. A decent appointment, a comfortable house in a beautiful and elegant city, and a plentiful table with a virtuous, disinterested colleague.

* These sentiments began to arise, when there was little probability of the author being able to return quickly to his native country in North America, where his whole property lies. He was sent to Europe when very young, and after passing through some years of very rigid discipline in a foreign academy, secluded from society, and debarred from every species of information, that could make him acquainted with himself or the world, he was induced to take orders among a body of men equally distinguished by their eminence and their fall. Whatever aspersions they may lie under of ambition, or avarice, the first raised very few of them to any dignities in the church, nor was the second directed in procuring the delicacies that pamper the holy indolence of many other conventuals. The scanty revenues of their establishments have been discovered; the phantom of their imaginary treasures is no more, and their bitterest enemies have never impeached the purity of their morals. Cut off by the power, in defence of which they were ever prodigal of their labours, and their blood, they fell pitied by *many*, who abhorred the object of their zeal; and must be considered by *all*, as an additional monument of the ingratitude and tyranny of Rome. Under the eye of the pretended father of the faithful, they were oppressed by calumny, and stript of their possessions, without being allowed to appeal to the tribunal of the public, or the laws of their country. The Bull, that pronounced the suppression of their order, forbids them, or their friends, under pain of excommunication, to utter or write a syllable in their defence. Such is the tender mercy and justice of a church, which styles herself the *holy mother*, and mistress of all others. The humane reader will excuse this slender tribute of gratitude, which the author pays to the memory of an unfortunate society, in which he received the first lessons of virtue, and principles of religion. The first, he trusts, he shall never forget: although conviction obliges him to abandon some of the latter.

were advantages which I could hardly meet with elsewhere. Neither ambition, avarice, nor pleasure could have any charms for me. The humble walk of a Roman Catholic missionary, and the indigent obscurity usually attending his vocation in England, had taught me early in life to contract my expectations within very narrow limits. No opening either to dignities or affluence could make any change, at this time, on the temper of my mind; nor could I be influenced in any degree by the allurements of pleasure. However I might depart from the principles of my belief, the code of my morality was to remain always the same. No inquiry can alter the eternal laws of virtue; no sophistry can justify the cravings of vice. If any should say, (and I expect it will be said,) that I was tired of the law which obliged me to live single, and was willing to unite myself to a more indulgent community, I can only refer such declaimers to the littleness of their own minds, where, perhaps, they will discover the ungenerous source of so illiberal a reflection. I make no scruple, indeed, here publicly to acknowledge, that for some time back, I have considered the law of celibacy as a cruel usurpation of the *unalienable* rights of nature, as unwarrantable in its principle, inadequate to its object, and dreadful in its consequences. The various mischiefs arising from it must be obvious to every man, who will allow himself to reflect dispassionately upon this very absurd and tyrannical institution.* Had this, however, been the only exceptional injunction of your

* The curious reader will find this subject treated with much impartiality and erudition in an *Essay on the Law of Celibacy, &c.* Printed at Worcester in 1781, and sold by Rivington and Bew, London.

church, I think I can declare before the God who is to judge me, that as I should have found it my interest, so I should have thought it my duty not to abandon her communion. No action of my life *ever* authorized you to suspect, that any gratification whatever could induce me to part deliberately with my peace of mind, my honour, and my conscience. How circumstances may determine me to act, in this particular, is very uncertain at present; this however is evident, that when a person withdraws himself publicly from any society, the discipline of that society must cease to be binding.

Withheld by the difficulties which I have mentioned, on the one hand, urged on by the irresistible force of truth, on the other, I remained for some time in a state of wretched, though I confide, not guilty suspense. To sit down contented with the faith of the poor collier, so highly appreciated by Roman Catholic ascetics, and by Bellarmin himself;* who, when questioned about his creed, answered, “that he believed what the church believed, and that the church believed what he believed,” appeared such an insult upon reason, that I could by no means digest it. If a man’s belief be not rational; if he submit to human authority without weighing or understanding the doctrines which it inculcates, this belief is not *faith*—it is credulity; it is weakness. With equal merit might he be a Jew, a mussulman, or an idolater, as each of these grounds his principles upon authority, whose decrees he deems sacred, whilst he neglects to examine them.

* *De arte bene moriendi*, lib. 2. cap. 9.

Convinced, at length, that in *my circumstances** inquiry was become a duty, daily matter springing up for doubting of former notions; persuaded that *cold and negative assent* was insincere and nugatory; and confident, that the grace of God would accompany an attentive and upright pursuit after truth, I determined resolutely to discard all inferior considerations, and to be influenced solely by the result of my researches.

With this view, I had immediate recourse to the fountains of information, which the bounty of providence has laid open to man. I read, I studied, I pondered the old and new testament with unremitting attention. In the latter it was easy to discover the *great fundamental and necessary* doctrines of the Christian dispensation. In both there appeared a perfect code of morality calculated to render us virtuous and happy. But I could find in neither the *discriminating doctrines* of the Roman church.

After the volumes that have been written by Protestant divines, to show the slender claim of these doc-

* They whom neither education, nor abilities, nor leisure, qualify to enter upon such inquiries, must rely principally on the authority of their teachers. Turbam, non intelligendi vivacitas, sed credendi simplicitas "tutissimam facit." *S. Aug. contra epis. Tund.* I beg leave to transcribe in this place the rule, which the present learned and pious bishop of Chester lays down for the lower sort of people. "Let each man," says he, "improve his own judgment, and increase his own knowledge as much as he can: and be fully assured, that God will expect no more. In matters for which he must rely on authority, let him trust those who, by encouraging free inquiry, appear to love truth, rather than such as, by requiring all their doctrines to be implicitly obeyed, seem conscious, that they will not bear to be freely tried. But never let him prefer any authority to that, which is the highest authority, the written word of God. This, therefore, let us all carefully study, and not doubt, but that whatever things in it are necessary to be believed, are easy to be understood. *This* let us rely on, and trust to its truth, when it declares itself "able to make us wise unto salvation, perfectly and thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 *Tim.* xiii. 17. *Brief confutation of the errors of the church of Rome.* 1782.

trines to so sacred an origin, it would be useless to dwell any longer upon the subject. It is, besides, a matter of so extensive a nature, that it would carry me infinitely beyond the limits of this short address. It would plunge me headlong into the ocean of controversy, which, as I stated above, it is my wish to avoid. Moreover, it must be obvious to every man, who is but moderately acquainted with Roman Catholic polemics, that Protestant writers have thrown away much erudition and ingenuity in refuting pretensions, which were never claimed by their most learned opponents—I say the most celebrated controvertists of the Roman church acknowledge, that some of her essential tenets are not to be found *at all* in the scriptures, or are delivered in them with great obscurity. This, perhaps, is a fact which you never suspected; I beg leave, therefore, to instance it briefly in a few particulars.

Transubstantiation, or “the conversion of the whole substance of bread into the body, and of the whole substance of wine into the blood of Jesus Christ,” is an essential article of the Roman Catholic religion. But is this article clearly and evidently delivered in any passage of the Bible? Hear what your own most eminent doctors have written upon the subject: “Scotus says, that there is no text of the scripture so explicit, as evidently to claim our assent to transubstantiation, without the decision of the church; and this is not at all improbable: for although scripture may *appear* to us so evident, as to command the belief of a dispassionate man, yet it may be reasonably doubted whether it be *so in reality*, since men of the greatest learning and penetration, among whom Scotus is emi-

nently conspicuous, have thought otherwise.”* The elegant and learned Melchior Canus, bishop of the Canaries, mentioning “several particulars belonging to faith, which are not expressly delivered in the scriptures,” instances, among others, “the change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.”† Alphonfus de Castro, an orthodox and mighty name in scholastic theology, has these remarkable words; “Indulgences are not to be despised, because the use of them was lately introduced into the church. Many things are known to the *moderns*, of which *ancient writers* were totally ignorant. For in *old authors*, there is seldom any mention made of the transubstantiation of the bread into the body of Christ.”‡

Since the decision of the council of Trent, it is become an article of your faith, “that a priest has power to forgive sins.” But Peter Lombard, the famous *master of the sentences*, the Newton, the Aristotle of scholastic divines, was so far from discovering this prerogative in the scriptures, that he rejects it at large, and is supported in his opinion by almost all the ancient schoolmen of his time.§ Their doctrine is thus compendiously delivered by cardinal Hugo, who lived at that period: “the priest cannot bind or loosen the sinner *with* or *from* the bond of the *fault*, or the *punishment*; but only *declare* him to be bound, or loosened: as the Levitical priest did not infect, or cleanse the leper, but only declared him infected or clean.”||

You will not, I presume, question the authority of

* Bellarm. de Euch. l. 3. cap. 23.

† Loc. commun. lib. 3. fund. 2.

‡ Vocab. indulg.

§ Lib. 4, sentent. dist. 8. e. f.

|| In Matth. 16.

Fisher, the famous bishop of Rochester, who sealed with his blood the doctrines he professed. Hear how faintly he discovers the revelation of purgatory in the scriptures. "As it is necessary," says he, "that the doctrine of purgatory should be known by all, *we must presume*, that it can be proved by scripture."* Hence it follows, according to this learned prelate, that unless the tenet be found in the Bible, it is not necessary that it should be known to all men. But supposing it to be an essential point of the Christian religion, from what passage of the scripture can it possibly be proved? The books of Maccabees were not acknowledged for canonical scriptures by St. Hierom, Rufinus, Epiphanius, Athanasius, Gregory, and many other ancient and eminent fathers. And the texts usually alleged from other parts of the Bible,† have been all rejected so expressly by several of your own doctors, that an impartial man may safely regard them as very doubtful sources of this extraordinary tenet. That the Greek church could never discover the proofs for purgatory in the scriptures, and that even the churches of the West have lately become acquainted with these cleansing flames, is the decided opinion of the prelate above mentioned. "Let any man," says he, "read the comments of the ancient Greeks, and, in my opinion, he will find no mention of purgatory, or very rarely. Neither was the truth of this matter known to all the Latins at once, but only by degrees, *pedetentim*."‡ And again, "to this very day purgatory is not believed by the Greeks."§

* Art. 18. adversus Luth.

† Matth. 5. 22. 25. Luc. 16. 9. Act. 2. 24. 1 Cor. 3. 11. 1 Cor. 15. 1. Pet. 3. 19.

‡ Ibidem.

§ Ibidem.

I could easily prosecute this argument through a variety of instances ; I could show you, that some of your most celebrated divines have acknowledged, that neither the *supremacy of the Roman church*, nor the *invocation of saints*, nor the *worship of images*, nor the precise number of *seven sacraments*, with several other important articles of your communion, can be proved from the scriptures. Was it therefore unreasonable to assert, that *I* could never discover them there, since they escaped the notice of such acute and interested inquirers.

It becomes, then, necessary to acknowledge, that these *discriminating* doctrines derive their whole claim to your assent from the infallible authority of the church you belong to. Or, in the words of your catechism, “You must believe these things, because God has revealed them to his infallible church.” But where is this revelation to be met with ? Not in the scriptures, as you have already seen. God, therefore, has revealed these points by *unwritten* traditions. But how can I know, that such traditions are from God ? If you answer me, that the infallible authority of the church has pronounced them to be so ; then the whole matter rests ultimately upon this *infallible authority*. This being once admitted, all controversy must cease : but if it be rejected, then must the only rule of our faith be looked for in the Bible.

I am not ashamed to confess, that it was this claim to infallibility, which prevented me so long from examining the tenets of the Roman church. Sheltered under the garb of so gorgeous a prerogative, impressed upon the yielding mind of youth by men of sense and virtue ; backed, moreover, by the splendour of suppos-

ed miracles, and the horrors of anathemas, opinions the most absurd and contradictory must frequently dazzle and overawe the understanding. Amidst the fascinating glare of so mighty a privilege the eye of reason becomes dim and inactive—nothing can dispel the darkening film, but the more steady and powerful irradiations of truth; these, however, are so often blunted by the mists of ignorance, the enchantment of prejudice, by indolence, or the fear of disturbing ancient notions, that they only find their way into the minds of a few, who are bold enough to embrace the hardihood of wisdom, and disregard all authority that clashes with reason.*

Should it be said, that reason tells me to submit to an infallible church—my answer is, that reason tells me also, that such submission is weakness, unless this infallibility be demonstrated. Show me the proofs of this pretension, and if I do not admit them with every faculty of my soul, you have my leave to brand me with the pride of Lucifer. Should you urge, that reason must tell every unprejudiced man, that some texts in holy writ go to prove the infallibility of the Roman Catholic church, may I not answer with confidence, that reason and experience tell me much more forcibly, that several articles are incredible and groundless, which rest solely on that infallibility? Does not reason, for instance, assure me with greater evidence, that the Almighty requires not our belief of a doctrine, which stands in direct contradiction to the *only means* he has allowed us of arriving

* “Reason tells those who are virtuous and truly philosophers to honour and appreciate truth only; and not to suffer themselves to be enslaved to the opinions of the ancients, if they be erroneous.” *Justinus Martyr, Apol. II.*

at truth—I mean our *senses* and our *understandings*? Do a few controverted texts of the scripture make infallibility as evident to reason, as it is plain to the most ordinary capacity, that two bodies cannot be in the same place at once; that the same body cannot be in a million of different places at the same time; that whiteness cannot exist without a body that is white; nor weight without a body that is heavy; nor liquification without a body that is liquid; that the eternal God is not to be shut up in boxes, nor devoured *corpōrally* by vermin? * Does not reason assure me with greater evidence, that *no* creature is to be invocated, and honoured with religious worship; that public service ought *not* to be performed in an unknown language; that the beloved servants and friends of God will *not* be punished after death in the flames of purgatory; that there is *no* common storehouse, in which are laid up the superfluous merits of

* These absurdities and contradictions, with many others, follow evidently from the doctrine of *transubstantiation*. I beg leave to mention in this place two *negative* arguments, which seem to prove to a demonstration, that *transubstantiation* was unknown to the ancient church. The first is this. “If the ancient church had believed this doctrine, and paid the same *supreme* adoration to the holy sacrament, as Roman Catholics now do; is it not probable, nay, is it not evident, that this tenet and practice would have been urged by the Catholics against the Arians, as an incontestable proof of the divinity of Christ? This argument, however, was never alleged by any one of the numerous and learned doctors during the Arian controversy. A convincing proof that such an argument was unknown.” Again, “Is it not reasonable to think, that the heathen writers, among their many charges against the ancient Christians, would have retorted upon *them* the accusation of idolatry in adoring a bit of bread, in reserving their God in gold and silver chalices, boxes, &c. had the practice or belief of the church given any room for so plausible an argument.” I beg leave to add, moreover, that the fathers of the second council of Nice expressly confirm the opinion that Christ’s body in Heaven is not flesh and blood: how therefore can bread and wine be changed into his body, if they become flesh and blood? See L’Abbe Conc. Nic. 2 Act. T. 6. page 541.

the saints, to be drawn from thence by the pope, and applied, as he thinks proper, to the benefit of the living and the dead?—Such to me is the language of reason, which was never yet rejected with impunity—She will be heard—she must be respected—her claim to our reverence and attention, arises from the superiority of her counsels to those of fellow mortals:—Every human being must listen to her voice, or cease to be *rational*. Created for us, and acting within us, she speaks to us after the manner best suited to our several characters, abilities, and duties—Becoming all to all, she addresses herself with gentleness to some, and with energy to others: but when passions are silent, and prejudice suspended, her language must ever be the language of truth. Religion and reason can never be at variance, because the most rational religion must always be the best. You remain Roman Catholics, because you think your reason tells you, that yours alone is the true church of Christ. You think it *reasonable* to believe, that at these words, “This is my Body,” pronounced by a priest, a bit of bread is changed into the true natural body of Jesus Christ, and is to be adored as the eternal God, because your reason convinces you, that Christ spoke these words in a *literal sense*, and because your church understands them in this manner. But when reason assures me, that innumerable arguments evince their meaning to be *figurative*; am I not bound to open my mind to the light of conviction, and discard the infallibility which enforces the absurdities of the opposite opinion?

If from reason you appeal to revelation, the plea to infallibility will be found equally unsupported. You

will tell me, doubtless, that the ancient fathers *unanimously* interpret some scriptural passages in this sense. But, I apprehend, that upon inquiry, such an assertion would appear very hazarded indeed. Let an *impartial* man read the fathers upon this, and some other subjects, and I will defy him to declare, that he has met with this boasted uniformity among them. But the Catholic church has decreed such to be the meaning of the fathers, and every Christian is bound to acquiesce in her decisions. So that in fact, the whole argument comes to this. The church is infallible, because her infallibility is gathered from scripture by the unanimous consent of the fathers; and this unanimous consent of the fathers is asserted, and established by the very infallible authority which, in the first instance, it was alleged to demonstrate. Or, in other words, the church of Rome is infallible, because she herself has so determined. Here is a circle of false reasoning, out of which no advocate for infallibility can ever extricate himself to my satisfaction. It is an old, and hackneyed argument, but not less conclusive on that account.*

* It is very remarkable, that all Roman Catholics are bound to admit an infallible authority, yet few of them agree *where*, or in *whom* it resides. Some, nay, almost all the old schoolmen have taught the infallibility of the pope. But some popes, viz. Liberius Honorius, John 22. &c. having unfortunately subscribed heretical opinions, this doctrine is at present almost out of date. Some place infallibility in a general council. Others in the pope and the council received by the whole church. But when all is said that possibly can be said, the pope must be acknowledged by *consistent* Roman Catholics as the sole depository of infallibility. For since the council of Trent, it is unanimously taught in all Roman Catholic churches, that a council can decree nothing without the assent of the pope; that he alone has a right to interpret the council and explain its decisions; and that those tenets only are of *faith* which he determines to be so. Thus it is evident, that infallibility rests ultimately with the pope. The council declares the meaning of some passage in scrip-

As to the few scriptural texts which seem to countenance infallibility, they appeared no longer conclusive than I refused to examine them. The divine author of the Christian religion promised, it is true, *to teach his disciples all truth*; (John 14, 15, 16.) and he undoubtedly did so. But where did he so far ensure the faith of their successors, whether presbyters, bishops, or popes, as to secure them from building *wood, hay, and stubble*, upon the foundations of the gospel? Does not St. Paul pronounce that such would actually be the case? (1 Cor. 3. 12.) He promised to *be with his disciples to the end of the world*. (Matth. 19, 20.) And who denies it? He is with his church by his protection, by his grace, by the lights he communicates to her, by the strength which he exerts in supporting her against violence and temptation. But cannot he be with his church without rendering her infallible? Is he not with every just man? Yet who would hence infer, that such a man is secured from every error, beyond a possibility of being at any time deceived?

ture, or of some point of tradition, and then the pope pronounces infallibly upon the sense of this declaration. This ultimate decision of the pope is supposed to be inspired by the spirit of God. But is the Christian, who has no means of coming to the knowledge of this decision but by reading it, or hearing it read, equally secured from error by the spirit of God? If he be, then no private Roman Catholic can ever misapprehend the meaning of any tenet; and of consequence, he is as infallible as the pope himself with regard to the right apprehension of any religious truth. If he be not secured from error, then he may as well build his faith upon the words, of scripture, which he is certain was written by divine inspiration. A Christian, therefore, may mistake the words of a pope, when he hears, or reads them, as easily as he can mistake the words of scripture. Why, therefore, not content himself with what all parties agree to be the word of God; in humble confidence, that if he read, or hear it with due attention, diligence, and sincerity; he will be as effectually secured from any dangerous error, as if he had read, or heard the formula of faith published by Pope Pius IV.

Besides, why should the presence of Christ render the church infallible, rather than impeccable? Are not vice and error equally inherent in the corruption of man? Is not the former as formidable an enemy to religion as the latter? Is not the Christian system as perfectly calculated to make us good men, as orthodox believers? Would not the church be equally overthrown, should either of these evils become universal? Why then was it not as necessary to secure her against the one as the other? But the fact is, neither partial vice nor partial error destroys the foundations of the Christian religion, and therefore it was unnecessary to fence against either. "That the gates of Hell, or rather of death," (as the word *hades* manifestly imports,) "shall never prevail against the Christian church," (Matth. 16. 18.) is an article of my belief, as well as of yours. But the obvious meaning of Christ's promise is only this, "That neither the subtlety of infernal spirits, nor the passions of men, nor the violence of both, shall ever succeed in overturning *his* religion, to which he has been pleased to annex *perpetuity*. However feeble and disordered his church may be at times, the powers of death shall never overcome her. She shall then only cease to exist, when time shall be no more." The text, therefore, does not even insinuate, that the Christian church should never teach any articles, besides such as are *fundamental* and necessary, or that some overbearing society of Christians should not hold out many erroneous opinions as terms of communion to the rest of the faithful. Against these *great* and *essential* tenets, expressed in the Apostles' creed, and adopted through every age by the most numerous body of Christians;

the *gates of death, nor of hell, will never prevail.* The enemy may sow weeds and tares among this heavenly grain; he may build structures of straw upon these unshaken foundations; the ignorance, and passions of mankind may exhale around them some noxious vapours of superstition and immorality; but they will ever retain sufficient light to conduct each upright and pious believer to all points of his duty, upon which his salvation depends.*

The narrow limits within which I mean to restrain this address, forbid me to dwell any longer on this fruitful argument. The little I have said, could not, with any propriety, be omitted. It is impossible to apologize for deserting old opinions without slightly mentioning the reasons that prove them to be groundless. I shall only beg your attention to one more consideration of this plea to infallibility, and I have done.

Every person who is but moderately conversant with the history of the church, must have remarked, that at some periods of time, several points of doctrine were defined as belonging to faith, which at others were debated as matters of opinion. The *Mille-*

* The works which I have chiefly made use of on this and other subjects are, *the Religion of Protestants a safe way to Salvation*, by William Chillingworth. *An Answer to a Challenge made by a Jesuit in Ireland*, and a treatise *de successione et statu Christiano ecclesiæ*, by Archbishop Usher. *Defense de la nouvelle traduction du concile de Trent*, par le Pere le Courayer. *Albertinus de sacramento eucharistiæ.* *Defense de la reformation*, par Mons. J. Claude. *Bishop Hurd's Discourses on the Prophecies.* These I have read with all the attention I am capable of. And to these, especially to the first, which Mr. Locke pronounces the masterpiece of logic, I refer every impartial Christian, who desires to find the great truths of the gospel delivered in their genuine simplicity, supported by astonishing powers of reasoning, and effectually winnowed from the chaff of modern corruptions.

narian system, or the opinion that, after the renovation of the world, Christ will reign a thousand years with his saints upon earth, was maintained as an article of the Catholic faith by almost every father who lived immediately after the times of the apostles.* This doctrine the Roman church deems heretical at present. The *necessity*, and *divine institution* of auricular confession, now principal points of Roman Catholic faith, were discussed with great freedom by many ancient writers, and centuries were requisite to settle this practice in its present form. The learned Alcuin, who lived in the court of Charlemagne during the ninth century, tells us expressly,† “that some said it was sufficient to confess our sins to God alone.” In a very ancient and authentic copy of the Penitential of Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, who died in 690, which archbishop Usher says he transcribed in Sir Robert Cotton’s library,‡ we meet with these very remarkable words: “It is lawful, that confession be made to God alone, if it be requisite:” and again, “Learned men think differently upon this matter, because the doctors seem to have delivered various and almost opposite opinions upon it.” The great canonist Gratian, who wrote the *Glossa*, or comment

* See this particular clearly and learnedly demonstrated by Dr. Burnet, in his very ingenious treatise *de statu mortuorum et resurgentium*, cap. 10. It was likewise the decided opinion of almost all the primitive fathers, that the souls of good men did not enjoy the beatific vision previous to the general resurrection. Dr. Stapleton, a Roman Catholic divine, cites St. Ireneus, Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Oecumenius, Theophylact, Ambrose, Clemens Romanus, and St. Bernard as advocates for this doctrine, (*Defens. Auct. Eccl. l. 1. cap. 2.*) which, however, was condemned as heretical by the council of Florence.

† Epist. 26.

‡ See Usher’s answer, &c. *art. confession*, page 107.

upon the famous *Decretals*, speaks very explicitly upon the matter in question—"some maintain," says he, "that forgiveness of sins may be obtained without any confession made to the church, or a priest." He then cites St. Ambrose, Austin, and Chrysostom, as patronizing this opinion. We have little reason, therefore, to be surprised at what Maldonatus the Jesuit tells us:* "That *all* the canonists, following their first interpreter, maintain, that confession was introduced by ecclesiastical institution; which opinion," continues he, "is now sufficiently declared to be heretical by the church." During the same deplorable era of superstition and ignorance, "an era," says Sigonius,† and other Roman Catholic historians, "surpassing the darkest and most profligate ages of antiquity, as well by the infamy of its princes, as the madness of the people;" when the slender stock of knowledge possessed by the clergy was employed in compiling the most contemptible legends, or involving the plain meaning of the scriptures in the clouds of allegory, and the jargon of the schools; when bishops sat as judges at councils, who were unable to write their own names;‡ when the lamp of science was nearly extinguished in the western empire, and the extravagance of a tenet was its best recommendation to the credulous multitude; at this woful period of the degradation of reason and prevalence of vice, the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist began first to be agitated. The term *transubstantiation* was yet unknown to the Catholic church.

* Disput. de Sacram. de Confess. cap. 2.

† Lib. 6. de Regno Italiæ.

‡ See Nonv. Traite de diplom. tom. 2. p. 424. Par deux Benedictins.

An obscure bishop,* who lived eleven hundred years after the time of the apostles, was the inventor of this mysterious word, which has proved for several centuries the test of orthodoxy among some Christians, and the scandal to others. The doctrine conveyed by it was no article of faith prior to the council of Lateran, held in 1215, as Scotus assures us.† It was towards the beginning of the ninth century, that Paschasius Radbertus, first a monk, then abbot of Corbie, published his treatise upon the *corporal presence of Christ in the Eucharist*, and as Bellarmin tells us, was the “first who wrote seriously and copiously concerning it.”‡ This monk, however, informs us himself, that his doctrine was by no means *universal*, or *settled*. In his letter to Frudegardus, speaking of the corporal presence, “You question me,” says he, “upon a subject, about which many are doubtful.”—Nay, this is so very evident, that Rabanus Maurus, who is styled by Baronius the *brightest luminary* of Germany, about the year 847 wrote expressly against the novelty of this doctrine in a letter to Heribaldus, bishop of Auxerres: he tells him, that “some of late, (meaning Paschasius and his disciples,) not having a right notion of the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord, said that this is the body and blood of our Lord, which was born of the virgin Mary, and in which our Lord suffered upon the cross, and rose from the dead; *which error*,” continues he, “we have opposed with all our might.” I could show you further with what zeal and erudition this growing error

* Stephen, bishop of Autun.

† Bellarm. lib. 3. de Euchar. cap. 23.

‡ Bellarm. de Scrip. Eccles.

was confuted by other famous men who lived in that century, and especially by Ratramus, or Bertram, employed expressly by *Charles the Bald* to oppose it. His work is still extant, and proved to be genuine by the learned Mabillon.

Thus we see, that the doctrine of the *carnal presence* was no sooner openly maintained, than some of the most celebrated doctors of the time arose to combat it; without incurring any suspicion of heresy from their opponents. A convincing proof that, at the period I am speaking of, it was regarded merely as matter of opinion. And such, in fact, it continued to be for two hundred years; when so extravagant a censure was passed upon those who denied it, by pope Nicholas and a council assembled at Rome, that *unless*, as the comment upon the canon law cautions us, "we interpret it in a sound sense, we shall fall into greater heresy than that of Berengarius himself."*

What I have hitherto said, was meant only to convince you, that the Roman church regards some doctrines, at present, as *articles of faith*, which for many ages were debated as *matters of opinion*. Now, from this fact, once admitted, an argument arises against the system of infallibility, to which I could never discover a satisfactory answer. For it must be granted, these doctrines were delivered by Jesus Christ and his apostles as *essential*, or not *essential*. If the first be said, then it is evident, that the church has forfeited her claim to infallibility by omitting for many ages to teach doctrines as *essential*, which Christ and his apostles delivered as *such*. If they were *not* deli-

* Glossa decret. de consecrat dis. 2, incap. *Ego Berengarius*.

vered as *essential*, what are we to think of that church's infallibility, which enforces doctrines as *necessary and essential*, which the author of Christianity did not teach, nor she herself for many centuries conceive to be so? To such dilemmas are the advocates of this system reduced. In order to maintain a uniformity, and catholicity of opinion, they imagine it necessary to erect an infallible tribunal. But do they reflect that such a uniformity is entirely chimerical, and that every solemn decision of this tribunal overthrows the unity it was meant to establish? For how is it possible for a church to be *one* in point of doctrine, which believes to-day, as *an article of her faith*, what she yesterday conceived to be matter of *opinion*.

It follows, moreover, from admitting such a living authority, that the number of necessary tenets must increase as decisions are multiplied. It will be in the power of bishops and councils to frame new articles of faith, by deciding ultimately upon fresh matters of dispute, whether important, or not; whether countenanced by the scriptures, or otherwise. What was not a doctrinal point yesterday may be so to-day. Every age will give birth to new tenets, and thus, instead of a uniformity of testimony, constant variety must for ever take place, to the no small confusion and prejudice of our belief. The preaching of Jesus and his apostles, so far from being the *rule of faith* to succeeding ages, will be regarded only as the imperfect draught of a religion, which looks for perfection from human decrees. For the church must possess the same authority for ages to come, as she has enjoyed in those that are passed; so that if, as opin-

ions become fashionable, she be authorized to erect them into *articles of faith*, as has frequently been the case, your creed, perhaps, is still in its infancy, and the belief of succeeding ages, swelled with the additions of some future pope Pius, may be as different from yours, as is that of the primitive Christians and apostles. Under the specious pretext of recurring to a living judge, in order to fix the principles of our faith, these divines render it still more wavering and uncertain. They are perpetually introducing a succession of opinions into the system of religion, as unsettled as the fancies that produced them, as doubtful as the authority upon which they rest, as various as the imaginations of those who have embellished them, and as transient as time which gave them birth, and will, sooner or later, put a period to their existence.

After what has been said, it would be needless to lay before you *my profession of faith*. By relinquishing opinions which I have striven in vain to reconcile to reason or revelation, I trust, I cease not to be a *Christian* and a *Catholic*: Both these appellations belong surely to the man who believes and professes, as I solemnly do, every point of *Christian faith*, which at *all times*, and in *all places*, has constituted the creed of *all orthodox believers*.* This *universal Christian Catholic faith* is delivered compendiously in the apostles' creed: whoever subscribes to this *in its full extent*, must be a member of the Catholic church.† The

* Ille est verus et germanus Catholicus, qui in fide fixus et stabilis permanens, quicquid universaliter antiquitus ecclesiam Catholicam tenuisse cognoverit, id solum sibi tenendum, credendumque decernit. Vinc. Lerin. Common. c. 25.

† It will here be objected by many, that if we admit the apostles' creed in *its full extent*, we must believe in the holy Catholic church with the same as-

apostles, or their immediate successors, in drawing up no other profession of faith, discovered clearly what they intended should be the belief of their disciples. By adhering solely to this *universal belief*, which alone possesses the sanction of *all times, all places, and all churches*, no man can be said to embrace a *new religion*, however he may discard *some* doctrines, which at different periods of time have been engrafted upon the old one; especially if he discover, after mature investigation, that these doctrines were unknown to the best ages of the church, were conceived originally in ignorance, fostered by superstition, supported by pious forgeries, adopted by worldly policy, propa-

sent of faith with which we believe *in* God the Father, *in* God the Son, and *in* God the Holy Ghost; and that consequently we declare our implicit submission to all the decisions of this church. This argument is as fallacious as it is common and imposing; the most authentic catechism of the Roman church entirely overthrows it. The catechism of the council of Trent has these remarkable words, with which few religious instructors seem to be acquainted: "It is therefore necessary to believe, that *there is* one holy and Catholic church: for we so believe the three persons of the trinity, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that *in them we place our faith*; but now, the form of speaking being altered, we profess to believe the holy church, but *not* to believe *in it*; that by this different mode of expression, God, the maker of all things, may be distinguished from creatures." I think this passage, if well considered, might contribute much to finish all controversies between us. It behooves every Christian therefore to pay it some attention. We are taught by it from the apostles' creed, which we both admit, to believe *in* God the Father, *in* God the Son, and *in* God the Holy Ghost. *In* this holy trinity we are taught to *place our faith*, but only to *believe* that *there is one holy and Catholic church*; and the reason alleged for this difference in our belief is most strong and unanswerable: for the whole body of the church consisting of mortal men, who are all *creatures*; if we should believe *in* the church as we believe *in* the blessed *trinity*, we should not make a sufficient *difference between God and his creatures*. This is the plain and rational doctrine of your church's catechism, and if they who have the care of your souls, do not distinctly instruct you in it, but suffer you to remain in an erroneous notion, that you are to *believe in the holy Catholic church*, they certainly do not deal with you as candidly as they ought.

gated by artifice, and enforced by all the power that spiritual tyranny could exert. If you ask me, therefore, to what church I now belong, my answer is, to the *Christian Catholic church*. Of that society of Christians I profess myself a member, who adopt the holy scripture for the *sole* standard of their belief: the Protestant churches in general know no other rule: some shades of difference may subsist in their public liturgies and speculative disquisitions; but among none of the *principal* branches of the reformed churches are the latter obtruded as *articles of faith*, or the former found repugnant to reason or morality. Through the same divine Mediator they worship the same God; and from the sufferings and merits of the same Redeemer, they expect forgiveness of their sins, and happiness for evermore. In this country, where the *Christian* only is the established religion, where tests and subscriptions are unknown, where refined speculations are not likely to deform the simplicity or interrupt the harmony of the gospel, I look forward with rapture to that auspicious day, when Protestants, opening their eyes upon their mutual agreement in all the *essentials* of belief, will forget past animosities, and cease to regard each other as of different communions. Perhaps, at that happy period, Roman Catholics also may awake from their prejudices, and, disregarding the menaces of blind zeal or ignorance, may begin to think for themselves, throw off the galling yoke of old European prepossessions, and unite cordially in restoring primitive simplicity both in morals and belief. To indulge in these ideas may, perhaps, be extravagant; but to a mind of sensibility, it must surely be delightful. My religion, therefore, is that of the

Bible : whatever that sacred book proposes as an object of my faith, or a rule of my conduct, was inspired by the unerring Spirit of God, and for that reason I admit it with all the faculties of my soul.

Your religion is the *doctrine of the council of Trent* : mine the plain truths delivered in the scriptures. You shelter yourselves under the decisions of a tribunal, which you believe to be infallible : I rely *solely* upon the authority of God's word ; which, as St. Chrysostom assures us, “ expounds itself, and does not suffer the reader to err.”* You think it necessary to recur to *unwritten* tradition ; but I must demand, with St. Cyprian, “ whence have you that tradition ? comes it from the authority of the Lord, and of the gospel, or from the epistles of the apostles ? for God testifies that we are to do those things that are written, &c. : if it be commanded in the gospel, or contained in the epistles or acts of the apostles, then let us observe it as a divine and holy tradition.”† You deem the scriptures deficient and obscure ; I am satisfied with the things that are written, because all is written, “ that the writers thought sufficient for faith and morality.”‡ I ask, moreover, with St. Hilary,§ “ where is this deficiency ; where is this obscurity ? In the word of God,” continues he, “ all things are full and perfect, as coming from a full and perfect being.” You require the sanction of the church to stamp the truth of each article of your creed : I am content to acquiesce in that authority, to which alone St. Austin and Chrysostom refer us, in order to discover which

* Hom. 12. in Genesim.

† S. Cyr. lib. 12 Joan.

‡ Epist. 74.

§ Lib. 2. de trin.

is the true church of Christ.* In a word, *you* believe many articles as essential to salvation, of which no mention is made in the Bible; whereas, I am convinced, that whoever believes and practises what he discovers there, will comply with every moral and religious obligation, and rise to as high an excellency of character, as the exertions of our imperfect nature can reach. Such is the religion which, after a *long*, and, as I trust, *sincere* deliberation, I have ultimately chosen. Every day convinces me that I have chosen wisely. It is the religion of an Usher, a Wilson, an Hoadly, and a Newton, and of innumerable other worthies, whose admirable writings and Christian lives, have been unanswerable apologies for the principles they professed. This I will ever profess; according to this, through God's grace, will I endeavour to regulate the tenor of my conduct. Upon this will I stake my happiness for eternity. This will I inculcate into those whom Providence may at any time place under my direction; and for this, if circumstances should require it, I hope I should be willing to lay down my life.

And now, my fellow Christians, I must take my leave of you. *Some* of you, perhaps, will believe me, when I assure them that I do it with very painful regret. The many civilities which I experienced during my residence among you, have made a strong and lasting impression on my mind. I trust no alteration in my religious opinions will be ever able to efface it. Convinced by reason, and taught by revelation, that true and genuine religion consists more in *perfect*

* S. Aug. unit eecclæ. chap. 8. Chrys. in Matth. cap. 24. hom. 49.

union of heart than *entire* conformity of opinion, I shall still deem it my duty to cherish the sentiments of gratitude, esteem, and charity, which the worth and behaviour of several characters among you first excited in my breast. To the last of these, moreover, you are entitled, as fellow men and fellow Christians. Sentiments like these, coming from a supposed enemy, and an obscure individual, will probably be considered by many with contempt or indifference. They who cannot discriminate between the personal merit and the speculative opinions of men, will certainly rate them very low. But to persons truly candid and sincere themselves, such affections can never appear less acceptable for being cherished by a man, who, without any prospect of emolument, or promise of attention from the communion he embraces, has sacrificed a certain and comfortable subsistence, and hazarded a tolerable character among his nearest connexions, rather than incur the reproaches of his own mind, or the guilt of hypocrisy. Be this, however, as it may, it must ever prove a point of great importance to myself, not to lose sight of a commandment, which by special preference our common Redeemer calls his own; and which, as you know, is nothing more than mutual forbearance, benevolence, and love. If with these dispositions I may be allowed so to do, I subscribe myself, with heart and hand,

Your much obliged and affectionate

Humble Servant,

CHARLES HENRY WHARTON.

AN

A D D R E S S

TO

T H E R O M A N C A T H O L I C S

OF THE

U N I T E D S T A T E S O F A M E R I C A .



BY A CATHOLIC CLERGYMAN.



NEW-YORK :

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persons eminent for their knowledge and writings, concludes with an important instruction, and recommends it to be impressed upon the minds of Catholics, *that they may know, that with the church they receive their teachers, but must not with these abandon the faith of the church.**

You will not now be at a loss to account for the occasion of the present address. A letter to the Roman Catholics of the city of Worcester in England has been published here by one of their late chaplains; and had all the copies of it been transmitted to those, for whom *professedly* it is intended, I should not dedicate to animadversions on it the few moments of leisure left me from other employments incident to my charge and profession; especially with the scanty materials of which I am possessed; for I am destitute of many sources of information, and unable to refer to authorities, which I presume to have been collected on the other side with great industry. By the Chaplain's own account, he has long meditated a separation from us; and, during that time, he had opportunities of resorting to the repositories of science, so common and convenient in Europe.

But the letter not only being printed here, but circulating widely through the country, a regard to your information, and the tranquillity of your consciences, requires some notice to be taken of it. For the ministers of religion should always remember, that it is their duty as well to enlighten the understanding, as improve the morals of mankind. *You are the salt of*

* *Catholici noverint se cum ecclesiâ doctores recipere, non cum doctoribus ecclesiæ fidem deserere debere. Vinc. Liv. comm. c. 23.*

*the earth,** said Christ to his apostles, to preserve men from the corruptions of vice and immorality: and *you are the light of the world,†* to instruct and inform it.

Our duty being so clearly delineated by the divine author of our religion, if we have been deficient in the discharge of either part of it, if we have flattered your passions, or withheld knowledge from your minds, we have certainly deviated from the obligations of our state, and the positive injunctions of our church. For though you have often heard it reproachfully said, that it was both her maxim and practice to keep her votaries in ignorance, no imputation can be more groundless: and for a full confutation of it, we refer our candid adversaries to the ordinances of our councils, the directions of our ecclesiastical superiors, and the whole discipline of our church, even in ages the most inauspicious to the cultivation of letters. In those ages, indeed, the manners of the times had great influence, as they always will, on the manners of the clergy: but every informed and ingenuous mind, instead of being prejudiced by the vague imputations on monkish and clerical ignorance, will remember with gratitude, that they owe to this body of men the preservation of ancient literature; that in times of general anarchy and violence, they alone gave such cultivation to letters, as the unimproved state of science admitted; and that in the cloisters of cathedral churches, and of monasteries, they opened schools of public instruction, and, to men of studious minds, asylums from the turbulence of war and rapine. The in-

* Matt. v. 13.

† Matt. v. 14.

ference from these facts is obvious : for if the ministers of religion, agreeably to the discipline of the church, cultivated and taught letters at a time when they were generally neglected ; if the resurrection of sound literature was owing, as it certainly was, to the most dignified of our clergy ; who can impute ignorance to us, as resulting from the genius of our religion ?

I forbear to add other numerous proofs of the falsity of this charge : and I can with confidence appeal to yourselves, whether your religious instructors have not, to the extent of their abilities, and suitably to your respective situations in life, endeavoured to suggest such grounds for your adhesion to the doctrines of the church, as might make you ready always to *give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of that hope that is in you.** We tell you, indeed, that you must submit to the church ; but we add, with the apostle, that *your obedience must be reasonable.* Now, can obedience be reasonable, “ can any man give a reason of that hope that is in him without a due examination of the grounds or motives that induce him to it ? No, surely ; and therefore nothing ought to hinder you from examining thoroughly the grounds of your religion. Nay, we exhort you to examine them over and over again, till you have a full conviction of conscience that it is not education, but the prevailing force of truth, that determines you in the choice of it.”†

But is not this recommendation a mere delusion ? Can a consistent Roman Catholic be a candid inquirer in matters of religion ? Why not ? *Because,* says

* 1 Pet. iii. 15.

† England's Conversion and Reformation compared, Sect. 1.

the Chaplain, (p. 8.) *he cannot set out with that indifference to the truth or falsity of a tenet, which forms the leading feature of rational investigation.* Did the Chaplain weigh all the consequences of the doctrine here advanced? Must we then suspend all the duties of natural religion and moral obligation? Must a son divest himself of filial love and respect, that he may investigate rationally, and judge impartially, of the obligations resulting from the tender relations of parent and child? Must we neglect to train the tender minds of youth in the habits of virtue, and to guard them from vice, by the prospect of future rewards and punishments, lest they should be inclined to judge hereafter too partially of those great sanctions of natural and revealed religion? What an argument is here suggested to the impugnors of all religion; to the enemies of Christianity! Suggested, did I say, or borrowed from them? For the learned Dr. Leland, to whose writings the cause of revelation is so much indebted, has informed us, that it has been long ago made use of by them; and his answer to it, more especially as he was a Protestant, will save me the trouble of making any observations on this extraordinary assertion. "Another argument," says he, "with which he" (the author of *Christianity not founded in argument*) "makes a mighty parade, is to this purpose, that no religion can be rational that is not founded on a free and impartial examination: and such an examination supposes a perfect neutrality to the principles which are examined, and even a temporal disbelief of them, which is what the gospel condemns. But this proceeds upon a wrong account of the nature of free examination and inquiry. It is not

necessary to a just inquiry into doctrines or facts, that a man should be absolutely indifferent to them, before he begins that inquiry; much less, that he should actually disbelieve them: as if he must necessarily commence atheist before he can fairly examine into the proofs of the existence of God. It is sufficient to a candid examination, that a man apply himself to it with a mind open to conviction, and a disposition to embrace truth on which side soever it shall appear, and to receive the evidence that shall arise in the course of the trial. And if the inquiry relateth to principles in which we have been instructed; then, supposing those principles to be in themselves rational and well founded, it may well happen that in inquiring into the grounds of them, a fair examination may be carried on without seeing cause to disbelieve or doubt of them through the whole course of the inquiry; which, in that case, will end in a fuller conviction of them than before.”*

But Roman Catholics, it seems, are fettered with other obstacles to free inquiry. They cannot *seek religious information in the writings of Protestants*, without incurring the *severest censures* of their church, (Ch. Letter, p. 14.) By the *Bulla Cænæ* excommunication is denounced against all persons reading books written by heretics, containing heresy, or treating about religion. (Note *ibid.*)

It is indeed true, that the Bull referred to contains the prohibition, as mentioned by the Chaplain; and it is not less true, that in England, that Protestant country of free inquiry, severe laws and heavy penal-

* View of Deistical Writers, Vol. I. let. 11.

ties were enacted, and, if I am well informed, still subsist against the introduction, the printing, and vending of books in favour of the Catholic religion. I know, that within these last twenty years, these laws have been executed with severity. Such, on both sides, were the precautions suggested by a jealous zeal to preserve uninformed minds from the artificial colourings of real or supposed error. The heads of the respective churches considered it as their duty to guard their flocks from the poison of pernicious doctrines; and did not deem it essential to fair and full investigation, that their adversaries' objections should be stated to the unlearned, to unexperienced youth, or to the softer sex, with all the acrimony of invective, with the aggravations of misrepresentation, and powers of ridicule; weapons too common in controversies of every kind. Without examining how far this zeal was prudent and justifiable in the present instance, let me observe, that the proscription of books of evil tendency is warranted by the example of St. Paul's disciples at Ephesus, acting in the presence of, and probably by the instructions of their master. *Many of them, says holy writ, that had followed curious arts, brought their books together, and burnt them before all.** And what inference follows? *So mightily, continues the inspired writer in the next verse, grew the word of God, and was strengthened.* What good parent, what conscientious instructor, feels not the anguish of religion, when they find, that promiscuous reading has caused the rank weed of infidelity to grow in that soil, the tender minds of their children and

* Acts xix. 19.

pupils, where they had sown and cultivated the seeds of virtue ?

But, be the prohibition of the Bull reasonable or not, I will be bold to say, it was no prejudice to free inquiry. First, Because that Bull not only was never received into, but was expressly rejected from almost every catholic state. In them it had no force; the very alleging of its authority was resented as an encroachment on national independence; and, in particular, the clause referred to by the Chaplain was generally disregarded. For this I will appeal to his own candour. Throughout his extensive acquaintance with Catholics, has he not known them to read Protestant authors without hesitation or reproof? Did he not expect, that his letter would freely circulate amongst them? To what purpose did he address it to the Roman Catholics of the city of Worcester, if he knew, that, with the terrors of excommunication hanging over them, they dare not read it? In the course of his theological studies, was he himself ever denied access to the writings of our adversaries? Were not the works of Luther, Calvin, and Besa, of Hooker, Tillotson, and Stillingfleet, and all the other champions of the Protestant cause, open to his inspection? In public and private disputations, were not the best arguments from these authors fairly and forcibly stated, in opposition to the most sacred tenets of the Catholic belief? Was not even literary vanity gratified, by placing objections in the strongest light, and wresting the palm of disputation out of the hands of all concurrents? Knowing this, I must confess, that I cannot reconcile with candour the following words :
I knew that to seek religious information in the writings of

Protestants, was to incur the severest censures of the church I belonged to. (Letter, p. 14.)

May I not then say with confidence, that rational investigation is as open to Catholics, as to any other set of men on the face of the earth? No; we are told there still remains behind a powerful check to this investigation. This article of our belief, that "the Roman church is the mother and mistress of all churches, and that out of HER COMMUNION no salvation can be obtained," for which the Chaplain cites the famous creed of pope Pius IV. (p. 7.) makes too great an impression of terror on the mind, to suffer an unrestrained exertion of its faculties. Such is the imputation; and it being extremely odious and offensive, and tending to disturb the peace and harmony subsisting in these United States between religionists of all professions; you will allow me to enter fully into it, and render, if I can, your vindication complete.

I begin with observing, that to be in the *communion of the Catholic church*, and to be a *member of the Catholic church*, are two very distinct things. They are in the *communion of the church*, who are united in the profession of her faith and participation of her sacraments through the ministry and government of her lawful pastors.* But the *members of the Catholic church* are all those who, with a sincere heart, seek true religion, and are in an unfeigned disposition to embrace the truth whenever they find it. Now, it never was our doctrine, that salvation can be obtained only by the former; and this would have manifestly appeared, if the Chaplain, instead of citing pope

* Bellarm. de Eccl. milit. l. 3. c. 2.

Pius's creed from his memory, or some unfair copy, had taken the pains to examine a faithful transcript of it. These are the words of the obnoxious creed, and not those wrongfully quoted by him, which are not to be found in it. After enumerating the several articles of our belief, it goes on thus: *This true Catholic faith, without which no one can be saved, I do at this present firmly profess and sincerely hold, &c.* Here is nothing of the *necessity of communion* with our church for salvation; nothing that is not professed in the public liturgy of the Protestant Episcopal church; and nothing, I presume, but what is taught in every Christian society on earth, viz. that Catholic faith is necessary to salvation. The distinction between being a member of *the Catholic church*, and of *the communion of the church*, is no modern distinction, but a doctrine uniformly taught by ancient as well as later divines. *What is said, says Bellarmine, of none being saved out of the church, must be understood of them, who belong not to it either in fact or desire.** I shall soon have occasion to produce other authors establishing this same point: "We are accused of great uncharitableness in allowing salvation to none but Catholics. But this also is a mistaken notion. We say, I believe no more than do all other Christian societies. Religion certainly is an affair of very serious consideration. When therefore a man either neglects to inform himself; or, when informed, neglects to follow the conviction of his mind; such a one, we say, is not in the way of salvation. After mature inquiries, if I am convinced, that the religion of England is the only

* Bellarm. de Eccl. mil. l. 3. c. 3.

true one, am I not obliged to become a Protestant? In similar circumstances, must not you likewise declare yourself a Catholic? Our meaning is, that no one can be saved out of the true church; and, as we consider the evidence of the truth of our religion to be great, that he, who will not embrace the truth when he sees it, deserves not to be happy. God however is the searcher of hearts. He only can read those internal dispositions on which rectitude of conduct alone depends.* Let any one compare this explanation of our doctrine with the doctrine of Protestant divines; and discover in the former, if he can, any plainer traces of the savage monster intolerance, than in the latter. Dr. Leland is now before me, and after transcribing from him, I shall spare myself the trouble of collecting the many other similar passages, which I remember to have read in Protestant divines. "It seems to be obvious," says he, "to the common sense and reason of mankind, that if God hath given a revelation, or discovery of his will concerning doctrines or laws of importance to our duty and happiness, and hath caused them to be promulgated with such evidence, as he knoweth to be sufficient to convince reasonable and well-disposed minds that will carefully attend to it, he hath an undoubted right to require those to whom this revelation is published, to receive and to obey it; and if, through the influence of corrupt affections and lusts, those to whom this revelation is made known refuse to receive it, he can justly punish them for their culpable neglect, obstinacy, and disobedience."†

* The State and Behaviour of English Catholics.—London 1780. (p. 155—6.)

† View of Deistical Writers, Vol. I. let. 10.

Where then is the uncharitableness peculiar to Catholics? Where is the odious tenet that dries up the springs of philanthropy, and *chills by early infusions of bigotry the warm feelings of benevolence?* (Letter, p. 13.) I am ready to do justice to the humanity of Protestants; I acknowledge with pleasure and admiration their many charitable institutions, their acts of public and private beneficence. I likewise, as well as the Chaplain, *have the happiness to live in habits of intimacy and friendship with many valuable Protestants;* (Let. p. 9. ;) but with all my attachment to their persons, and respect for their virtues, I have never seen nor heard of the works of Christian mercy being exercised more extensively, more generally, or more uninterruptedly, than by many members of our own communion, though the Chaplain thinks our minds are *contracted by the narrowness of a system.* (Let. *ibid.*) Let him recall to his remembrance the many receptacles he has seen erected in Catholic countries for indigence and human distress in every shape; the tenderness and attention with which the unfortunate victims of penury and disease are there served, not by mercenary domestics, as elsewhere; but in many places by religious men, and in others, by communities of women, often of the first nobility, dedicating their whole lives to this loathsome exercise of humanity, without expectation of any reward on this side the grave. Let him remember how many men of genius he has known to devote themselves with a like disinterestedness to the irksome employment of training youth in the first rudiments of science; and others encountering incredible hardships, and, as it were, burying themselves alive, to bring

savages to a social life, and afterwards to form them to Christian virtue. To what society of Christians does that body of men belong, who bind themselves by the sacred obligation of a vow, even to part with their own liberty, if necessary, by offering it up instead of, and for the redemption of their fellow Christians groaning under the slavery of the piratical states of Barbary? How often has the Chaplain seen the bread of consolation and the words of eternal life carried into the gloomy mansions of the imprisoned, before the humane Howard had awakened the sensibility of England to this important object? Need I mention the heroical charity of a Charles Borromeo, of a Thomas of Villanova, of Marseilles' good bishop, and so many others, who devoted themselves to the public relief, during dreadful visitations of the plague, *when nature sickened, and each gale was death?* The Chaplain's recollection will enable him to add greatly to these instances of *expanded benevolence*; and I would fain ask, if the virtues from which they spring, are not formed in the bosom of the Catholic church. Can a religion, which invariably and unceasingly gives them birth and cultivation, be unfriendly to humanity? Can so bad a tree bear such excellent fruit?

You may perhaps think, that enough has been said to free you from the imputation of uncharitableness in restraining salvation to those of your own communion. But you will excuse me for dwelling longer on it, conceiving it, as I do, of the utmost importance to charity and mutual forbearance, to render our doctrine on this head as perspicuous as I am able.

First, then, It has been always and uniformly asserted by our divines, that baptism, actual baptism, is

essentially requisite to initiate us into the communion of the church; this notwithstanding, their doctrine is not less uniform, and the council of Trent (sess. 6. ch. 4.) has expressly established it, that salvation may be obtained without actual baptism; thus then it appears, that we not only *may*, but *are obliged* to believe, that *out of our communion* salvation may be obtained.

Secondly, With the same unanimity our divines define heresy to be, not merely a mistaken opinion in a matter of faith, but an obstinate adherence to that opinion: not barely an error of judgment, but an error arising from a perverse affection of the will. Hence they infer, that he is no heretic, who, though he hold false opinions in matters of faith, yet remains in an habitual disposition to renounce those opinions, whenever he discovers them to be contrary to the doctrines of Jesus Christ.

These principles of our theology are so different from the common misrepresentations of them, and even from the statement of them by the late Chaplain of Worcester, that some, I doubt, will suspect them to be those palliatives he mentions, to disguise the severity of an unpopular tenet, to which, he says, our *late ingenious apologists in England* have had recourse, (p. 10.) But you shall see, that they were always our principles, not only *in England*, but throughout the Christian world; and I will be bold to say, that so far from being contradicted *in every public catechism, and profession of faith*, as is suggested in the same page of the Chaplain's letter, they are not impeached in any one; so far from our teaching the impossibility of salvation out of the communion of our church, as much as we teach transubstantiation, (Letter p. 10.) no divine, worthy to be called such, teaches it at all.

I will set out with the French divines, and place him first, whose reputation, I presume, is highest. Thus then does the illustrious Bergier express himself, in his admirable work, entitled, *Deism refuted by itself*:—"It is false, that we say to any one, that he will be damned; to do so, would be contrary to our general doctrine relating to the different sects out of the bosom of the church. First, with respect to heretics" (the author here means those who, though not heretics in the rigorous sense of the word, go under that general denomination) "who are baptized and believe in Jesus Christ, we are persuaded, that all of them, who with sincerity remain in their error; who through inculpable ignorance believe themselves to be in the way of salvation; who would be ready to embrace the Roman Catholic church, if God were pleased to make known to them, that she alone is the true church; we are persuaded, that these candid and upright persons, from the disposition of their hearts, are children of the Catholic church. Such is the opinion of *all divines* since St. Augustin."*

The bishop of Puy, whose learning and merits are so much known and felt in the Gallican church, writes thus: "To define a heretic accurately, it is not enough to say, that he made choice of his doctrine, but it must be added that he is *obstinate* in his choice."†

The language of German divines is the same, or stronger, if possible. "Heresy," says Reuter, "in a Christian or baptized person, is a *wilful* and *obstinate* error of the understanding, opposite to some verity of faith.—So that three things are requisite to constitute

* Bergier, *Deisme refuté par lui même*—1. par. let. 4.

† *Instruct. pastorale sur l'heresie*—page 67. edit. in 4to.

heresy: 1st. In the understanding, an erroneous opinion against faith. 2dly. In the will, liberty and obstinacy." The third condition is, that the erring person be a baptized Christian; otherwise his sin against faith is called infidelity, not heresy. After which our author thus goes on: "The obstinacy requisite to heresy, is a deliberate and determined resolution to dissent from a truth revealed, and sufficiently proposed by the church, or some other general rule of faith."* The same doctrine is delivered by all the other German divines to whom I now can have recourse, and they cite to the same purpose Suarez, &c.

If the doctrine imputed to us could be found any where, it would probably be in Spain and Italy: But you have just heard Suarez, the first of Spanish theologians, quoted to disprove it; and with respect to Italy, Bellarmine's opinion has been stated; to which I shall add that of St. Thomas of Aquin, whose great authority and sanctity of life have procured him the title of the angel of the school. He teaches then, "that even they, to whom the gospel was never announced, will be excused from the sin of infidelity, though justly punishable for others they may commit, or for that in which they were born. But if any of them conduct themselves in the best manner they are able," (by conforming, I presume, to the laws of nature and directions of right reason,) "God will provide for them in his mercy."†

* Reuter theol. moral. p. 2. trac. 1. quæes. 3.

† Si qui tamen eorum fecissent, quod in se est, Dominus eis secundum suam misericordiam providisset, mittendo eis prædicatorem fidei, sicut Petrum Cornelio. *Comm. in cap. 10. epis. ad Rom. lect. 3.*

You will observe, that in the passage quoted from Bergier, he says that the doctrine delivered by him *has been the opinion of all divines since St. Augustin.* This holy father, who usually expresses himself with great force and severity against real heretics, requires nevertheless the same conditions of obstinacy and perverseness, as the divines above mentioned. "I call him only a heretic," says he, "who, when the doctrine of Catholic faith is manifested to him, prefers resistance."* Again: "They are not to be ranked with heretics who without *pertinacious animosity* maintain their opinion, though false and mischievous, especially if they did not broach it themselves with forward presumption, but received it from their mistaken and seduced parents; and if they seek truth with earnest solicitude, and a readiness to retract when they discover it."†

To these decisive authorities of St. Augustin might be added others, as well from him, as from Jerom, Tertullian, &c.; but surely enough has been said to convince you, that we have no need to shelter our doctrines under the covering of modern glosses, and that the language of English and other divines of our church, has, in this respect, been perfectly uniform.

Yet in spite of this uniformity, we must still have obtruded upon us the doctrine of confining salvation to those only of our own communion; for, without it,

* Nondum hæreticum dico, nisi manifestatâ doctrinâ Catholicæ fidei, resistere maluerit. De bapt. contr. Donat. lib. 4. c. 16.

† Qui sententiam suam, quamvis falsam atque perversam, *nulla pertinaci animositate* defendunt, præsertim quam non audaciâ præsumptionis suæ perpererunt, sed à seductis atque in errorem lapsis parentibus acceperunt, quærunt autem cautâ sollicitudine veritatem, corrigi parati cum invenerint, *nequaquam sunt inter hæreticos deputandi.* Aug. epis. 43. ad Glorium & Eleusium.

the *boasted infallibility of a living authority*, that is, of our church, *is no more*. (Let. p. 12.) Why so? Because, “whoever admits this authority as an undoubted article of Christian religion, must necessarily pronounce condemnation upon those who *wilfully* reject it.” (Let. *ibid.*) Therefore, we must likewise pronounce condemnation upon those who reject it through *ignorance and inculpable error*. Is this inference logical? And yet, must it not follow from the premises, to make any thing of the Chaplain’s argument?

When I come to consider how a man of genius and extensive knowledge, as he surely is, could bring himself to think, that we hold the doctrine imputed to us, I am at a loss to account for it. He received his education in a school, and from men who have been charged, unjustly indeed, both by Protestants and some Catholics, with giving too great latitude to the doctrine of invincible, or inculpable ignorance. He heard from them, that, in certain cases, this ignorance extended even to, and excused from, the guilt of violating the law of nature.* Can he then imagine that

* I will set down two propositions, which the Chaplain will remember to have been generally taught in the schools of theology, which we both frequented. 1. *Possibilis est ignorantia invincibilis juris naturæ quoad conclusiones remotiores a primis principiis.* 2. *Ignorantia invincibilis juris naturæ excusat a peccato.* I will take this occasion to thank my former friend for the justice he has done (p. 15. note) to the body of men to which in our happier days we both belonged; and whom the world will regret, when the want of their services will recall the memory of them, and the voice of envy, of obloquy, of misrepresentation, will be heard no more. I am sorry he mixed one word with their commendations, which cannot be admitted; and that he should ascribe ironically to the *tender mercy and justice of the church* those oppressions and acts of violence, in which she had no part, and which were only imputable to the unworthy condescension, and, I fear, sinister views of an artful and temporizing pontiff.

we deem it insufficient to exempt from criminality the disbelief of positive facts, such as the divine revelation of certain articles of religion?

For all this, he still labours to fix on us this obnoxious tenet, with a perseverance which carries with it an air of animosity. He says, that our controvertists make use of the argument cited in his 10th page, Protestants allow salvation to Catholics; Catholics allow it not to Protestants; therefore the religion of Catholics is the safest. Hence he infers, that we deny salvation to all, but those of our own communion.

If his inference were conclusive, I should have cause to bring a similar charge of cruelty and uncharitableness against Protestants. For their great champion Chillingworth, answering the very objection stated by the Chaplain, expressly teaches, *that Catholics allow, that ignorance and repentance may excuse a Protestant from damnation, though dying in his error*; “and this,” continues he, “is all the charity which, by your own (his opponent’s) confession also, the most favourable Protestants allow to papists.”* To this I shall add, that both Chillingworth and the Chaplain appear to misapprehend the argument of our controvertists; which is this: You Protestants allow our church to be a true church; that it retains all the fundamental articles of religion, without teaching any damnable error; your universities have declared, on a solemn consultation, that a person, not pretending to the plea of invincible ignorance, may safely leave the Protestant church, and become a member of ours, because it

* Chillingworth’s Religion of Protestants, &c. ch. 7. p. 306.

is a safe way to salvation. The Chaplain knows, that many of the most eminent Protestant writers have asserted, that all the essentials of true religion are to be found in our communion; and surely the possibility of obtaining salvation is one of these essentials; he knows, that on a great occasion this was the determination of the Protestant university of Helmstadt. But on the other hand, Catholic divines always teach, that the true church of Christ being only one, inculpable error alone can justify a Protestant for continuing out of her communion; and therefore that it is safest to become a Catholic. Such is the argument employed by some of our controvertists. I do not undertake to make it good, but I mean only to prove, by stating it fairly, that the Chaplain is not warranted to draw from it that odious consequence, with which we are unjustly charged.

If then we do not hold the doctrine of exclusive salvation, can the horrible tenet of persecution, which, he says, is the consequence of it,* be imputed to us? I do not indeed see their necessary connexion; but I know, that Protestants and Catholics equally deviate from the spirit of their religion, when fanaticism and fiery zeal, would usurp that control over men's minds, to which conviction and fair argument have an exclusive right.

You now see, that neither the prohibition of reading heretical books, nor our doctrine concerning the possibility of salvation, are any hindrances to free inquiry in matters of religion. If for so many years they withheld the Chaplain from making it, he was with-

* Let. p. 11, 12.

held by unnecessary fears, and a phantom of his own imagination. Another cause too concurred, as he tells us, to hold him in ignorance. *I am not ashamed, says he, to confess, that it was the claim to infallibility, which prevented me so long from examining the tenets of the Roman church.* (Let. p. 22.) Here, indeed, if he means the claim of infallibility, as it rests upon proofs of every kind, I do not wonder at its preventing him from examining minutely all the difficulties to which some of our tenets singly may be liable. For if things beyond our comprehension are proposed to our belief, the immediate consideration should be, by whom are they proposed? When the authority which proposes them claims to be infallible, reason suggests this farther inquiry, on what grounds is this claim established? Is it found to be established on solid and convincing proofs? Then certainly it becomes agreeable to the dictates of reason, and the soundest principles of morality, to assent to the doctrines so proposed, though we may not fully comprehend them, nor be able to give a satisfactory answer to every difficulty that human ingenuity may allege against them. This is the mode of reasoning used by all defenders of revealed religion; they first apply themselves to prove the divine revelation of scripture; having done this, they then infer, that its mysteries and unsearchable doctrines must be received, as coming from an unerring authority. And so far the Chaplain will surely agree with me.

I cannot, therefore, see, why he speaks so contemptuously of Bellarmine's creed, (p. 17.) that *he believed what the church believed; and that the church believed what he believed.* For what do these words import more

or less, than that he conformed his faith to that of the church; that to her decisions he submitted his judgment and belief so entirely, that the propositions recited from him were, in the language of logicians, convertible. And is not this the duty of every person who believes the church to be infallible, as that great cardinal certainly did, after examining, if ever man did, all that was written against her infallibility. Where lies the difference between this *collier-like* (Let. *ibid.*) profession of faith, and that of St. Augustin conforming his religion to that of the fathers, his predecessors. *I believe, says he, what they believe; I hold what they hold; I preach what they preach.**

The Chaplain goes on to tell the Catholics of the city of Worcester, that "if a man's belief be not rational; if he submit to *human authority* without weighing or understanding the doctrines which it inculcates, this belief is not faith—It is credulity, it is weakness."† Who doubts it? But if he submit to *divine authority*, though he do not fully comprehend the doctrines delivered, is this weakness and credulity? or is it the rational obedience of faith? From his own account of the promises of Christ, (p. 28.) his church can never fail in teaching the *fundamental and necessary* articles of religion, and the *great and essential tenets expressed in the 'apostles' creed*. Is it then weakness and credulity, or rather true wisdom, to believe with entire submission these *fundamental articles and essential tenets*? For the Chaplain has told us, that they are proposed by an authority, which the promises of Christ, so far at least, guard from error and delusion.

* Aug. l. 1. cont. *Julian* c. 5.

† Let. p. 17.

And yet amongst these tenets, there are some beyond the reach of human comprehension. The Trinity, the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, his being conceived of the Holy Ghost, his crucifixion and death, his descending into hell, are, I presume, those doctrines of Christianity which the Chaplain deems fundamental; for they are all contained in the apostles' creed. He is certainly unable to *weigh* or *understand* them. Nevertheless, he acts rationally in admitting and believing them, because he conceives them to be revealed by an infallible guide. Can it then be folly and credulity in you to believe, for a similar reason, these and all other articles of your religion?

The vainest, therefore, of all controversies, and the most ineffectual for the discovery of truth, is, to dispute on the metaphysical nature of the doctrines of Christianity. For instance, to prove the Trinity, should we set about reading lectures on the divine persons and essence, on the eternal and necessary generation of the word, &c.? This indeed would be folly, and we should speak a language unintelligible to our hearers and ourselves. In this, and all similar cases, the only rational method is, to show that the contested doctrine is proposed to our belief by an infallible authority. This undoubtedly would be the Chaplain's method in asserting against Arians, Socinians, and modern sectaries, the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the eternity of future punishments; and such likewise is the method, by which we endeavour to establish the tenets, which he calls the *discriminating doctrines* of our church.

Apply these principles to all his reasonings in his 23d, 24th, and 25th pages, and see what they will

come to. Set him in competition with a Deist, an Arian, a Socinian; and how will he extricate himself from his own arguments, when urged to subvert the infallibility of scripture, or the Christian doctrines of original sin, of the Trinity, the Incarnation and redemption of mankind? *Religion and reason can never be at variance*, will they say with the Chaplain, *because the most rational religion must always be the best.* (P. 25.) *The language of reason was never yet rejected with impunity—she will be heard—she must be respected, &c.* (ibid.) *Do then some controverted texts of scripture make the Trinity and Incarnation of the Son of God as evident to reason as it is plain to the most ordinary capacity, that three divine persons really distinct cannot be one and the same God? or that the eternal and immortal God cannot become a mortal and suffering man, which is a stumbling block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness.**

Will the Chaplain reply to the Deist, and tell him, that the infallibility of scripture warrants his belief of these *seemingly* absurd tenets? He will be answered, that he begs the question; and in his own language, that *reason assures him*, (the Deist,) *with greater evidence than the infallibility of scripture is proved, that the Almighty requires not our belief of doctrines which stand in direct contradiction to the only means he has allowed us of arriving at truth—our senses and understanding.*

Nor will the Deist stop here; he will add, that the pretended *infallibility* of scripture, *must prevent the Chaplain from examining the tenets of the Christian church. Sheltered under the garb of so gorgeous a pre-*

* 1 Cor. i. 23.

rogative, impressed upon the yielding mind of youth by men of sense and virtue ; backed moreover by the splendour of supposed miracles and the horrors of damnation, opinions the most absurd and contradictory must frequently dazzle and overawe the understanding. Amidst the fascinating glare of so mighty a privilege, the eye of reason becomes dim and inactive. (P. 23.) Can the Chaplain, or any other person, tell us, why a Bolingbroke, or a Hume, had not as good a right to use this argument against the general doctrines of Christianity, as the Chaplain had to urge it against the discriminating doctrines of the Catholic church ?

Such are the difficulties in which men involve themselves, by extending the exercise of reason to matters beyond its competency. Let this excellent gift of our provident and bountiful Creator be employed, as has been said before, in examining the grounds for believing the scriptures to be infallible ; but let it go no farther, when that infallibility is fully evinced. In the same manner, let your reason investigate with the utmost attention and sincere desire of discovering truth, the motives for and against the church's infallibility ; but if your inquiries terminate in a full conviction of her having received this great prerogative from Jesus Christ, *the author and finisher of our faith*, submit with respect and docility to her decisions. The Chaplain himself, when less wrapt in extacy with the beauties of reason, can acknowledge this : *show me, says he, the proofs of this infallibility, and if I do not admit them with every faculty of my soul, you have my leave to brand me with the pride of Lucifer. (P. 23.)*

You will not expect me to enter fully into this subject, and point out either to you or the Chaplain, the

proofs which he requires. Neither my leisure nor inclination, now allow me to undertake, what has been done by much abler hands. The Chaplain, and you too, I hope, know where to look for these proofs. Let him peruse the controversial works of Bellarmine, Bossuet, Nicole and Bergier, Mumford's Question of Questions, Manning's and Hawarden's writings on this subject; let him contrast them with Albertinus and Claude; with Chillingworth, Usher, and Bishop Hurd. There is no answering for the impressions which the minds of different men may receive from perusing the same authors. I can only say, for my own part, that as far as my reading on this subject has extended, I have generally found, on one side, candour in stating the opposite doctrine, fairness in quotations, clearness and fulness in the answers, and consistency in maintaining and defending controverted points. On the other hand, I have often met with gross misrepresentation, unfair quotations, partial answers, and inconsistency of character in the controvertist; impugning and defending sometimes on the principles of a Protestant, sometimes on those of a Socinian or Deist, sometimes pretending to model his religion on the belief of the four first ages of Christianity; and at other times finding corruptions immediately after, if not co-eval with the apostolical times.

On this subject, therefore, whatever disadvantage it may be to our cause, I shall confine myself solely to the defensive, and endeavour to satisfy you, that the Chaplain has given no sufficient reason to shake the stability of your faith, with respect to the infallibility of the church.

He observes, that the *few scriptural texts*, "which

seem to countenance infallibility, appeared no longer conclusive *than he refused to examine them.*" (P. 27.) Why he ever *refused* to examine them he is yet to explain; especially as the duty of his profession, and the particular course of his studies, called for a more attentive and fuller examination of them, than the generality of Christians are obliged to. Surely he does not mean to insinuate, that he was ever discouraged from, or deprived of the means of making inquiry. Nor do I know why he mentions only a *few* texts, as countenancing the doctrine of infallibility, since the writers above named allege so many both of the Old and New Testament. The author of the *Catholic Scripturist*, whom the Chaplain might have found an adversary worthy of his Chillingworth and Usher, enumerates thirty texts to prove this point, besides others, to which he refers. Let us however hear the Chaplain's animadversions on the *few* he has thought proper to consider.

Amongst other proofs of her infallibility, the Catholic church alleges these words of Christ to St. Peter, (Matth. xvi. 18.) *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* The Chaplain observes (P. 28.) that this text is wrongly translated, and that the Greek word *hades* MANIFESTLY imports *death*, and *not hell*. The alteration is not very material in itself, and might well pass unnoticed, were it not for the sake of showing how unsafe it is to trust to private interpretation of scripture, in opposition to the general sense and understanding of the church in all its ages. The Chaplain has taken up this interpretation from Besa, who, I believe, first suggested it. But I would fain ask

these sagacious Greek critics, whether *hell* is not meant by that place, out of which the rich man (Luke xvi.) lifted up his eyes, and seeing Lazarus, wished he might be allowed to cool with water his tongue; for *I am tormented*, said he, *in this flame*.^{*} Was not hell that *place of torments*, which he wished his brethren might be warned to avoid. (Ver 28.) Now what says the Greek text in this place? *And in hell*, ἐν τῷ ᾄδῃ, *lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off*. If I did not deem this scripture passage sufficient to prove that the word *hades* does not *manifestly* import death, I could add many others equally conclusive; and could support them with the authority of some of the best Greek authors, as well as of Calvin, and even of Besa, in contradiction to himself. Among the moderns, the Chaplain will not dispute the palm of Hebrew and Greek literature with Dr. Lowth, now bishop of London, or with his learned commentator, professor Michaelis of Gottingen. Let him read the Bishop's elegant work *de sacrâ Poesi Hebræorum, prælect. 7.*; and the professor in his annotations on that prælection, and he will find them both decided in their opinion, that the Greek word *hades*, as well as its correspondent Hebrew one, denotes not *death*, but the subterraneous receptacle of departed souls, which is pointedly expressive of the popular idea of hell.

But let us admit the Chaplain's interpretation; let Christ's words import, in their obvious sense, that the church shall never *fail*, not that she shall never *err*. Does he not know, that the church fails principally

* Luke xvi. 24.

by erring? How did she fail in the countries overrun with Arianism? Was it not by error in faith? and so in all countries corrupted by heresy. Thus likewise would the whole visible church have failed, had she proposed any error to be believed as an article of faith. "For to do this is to propose a lie, as upheld by divine authority; which is to fall no less foully than he should fall, who should teach God to be an affirmer and confirmer of lies. For whatsoever point any church held, as a point of their faith, they held it as a divine verity, affirmed and revealed by God. Therefore, if, in any age, the visible church held any error for a point of faith, it did fail most miserably."*

The Chaplain's charge of unfaithful translation of scripture being thus removed, let us examine the meaning he gives to the promises of Christ. The *obvious* one, he says, is only this, "that neither the subtlety of infernal spirits, nor the passions of men, nor the violence of both, shall ever succeed in overturning *his religion*, to which he has been pleased to annex perpetuity. *However feeble and disordered* his church may be at times, the powers of death shall never overcome her. She shall then only cease to exist, when time shall be no more." (P. 28.) If ever confident assertion stood in the place of solid argument, here surely is an instance of it. What! Does Christ's promise to his church *obviously* convey the meaning imported in the Chaplain's exposition, particularly in the first member of the second sentence of it, when there is not a single word to justify

* Mumford, *Quest. of Quest.* sect. 15.

that meaning? The promise is unlimited and unconditional; what right therefore has he to limit it? or if he have, why has not any one of us an equal right to limit Christ's promises *to teach his disciples all truth*, which the Chaplain says (P. 27.) he undoubtedly did? Why may we not say, that he taught them truth so far, as to prevent their falling into any *fundamental* error, sufficient to overturn the great principles of religion? Why may we not say, that his spirit was so far with the evangelists, as to direct them in teaching the *essential* doctrines of Christianity, but not in guarding them against errors of less consequence? And why may we not thus give a mortal stab to the authority of scripture itself, by limiting its infallibility to those things only, which it may please each man's private judgment to deem *fundamental*?

“The text,” continues the Chaplain, “does not even *insinuate* that the Christian church should never teach any articles, besides such as are fundamental and necessary; or that some overbearing society of Christians, should not hold out many erroneous opinions, as terms of communion to the rest of the faithful.” If, by overbearing society of Christians, the author mean not the church of Christ, he is certainly right; for to no such society was a divine promise ever made, of its not falling into erroneous opinions; but if he mean, as he must, to say any thing to the purpose, that it is not *even insinuated* in the promises of Christ, that his church shall never *hold out erroneous opinions as terms of communion*, I am yet to learn the signification of plain words. “For,” says an excellent author, “if words retain their usual signification, we cannot charge the church of Christ with error,

even against any one single article of faith; but we must draw this impious consequence from it, that he was either ignorant of the event of his promise, or unfaithful to it; and that after having in so solemn a manner engaged his sacred word to St. Peter, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church, he has nevertheless delivered her up to the power of Satan, to be destroyed by him."

"This consequence will appear undeniable, if we consider the two following truths: 1st. *That faith is essential to the constitution of the church*; and, 2dly. *That heresy destroys faith*. For it plainly follows hence, that, if the whole church fall into heresy, she is without *faith*, and is no more the church she was before, than a man can continue to be a man without a soul."* If the church of Christ hold out erroneous opinions as terms of communion, does she not, by public authority, establish falsehood instead of truth, and the lies of Satan for the genuine word of God? How shall we be assured that these errors are not destructive of the *fundamental* articles of Christianity? Suppose, for instance, she require an idolatrous worship, or teach those *mysteries of iniquity* mentioned in the Chaplain's letter, (P. 11.) *the denying of salvation to all out of her own communion*, and the horrible heresy of persecution; will not *the gates of hell then prevail against her*? will not the promises of Christ be vain and deceitful?

But, it seems, the promises were not made to the church: not against *her*, but "against the *great and essential tenets* expressed in the apostles' creed, and

* Manning, *Shortest Way to end Disputes about Religion*, chap. 1.

adopted through every age by the most numerous body of Christians, *the gates of death or of hell will never prevail*—*They* will ever retain sufficient light to conduct *each* upright and pious believer to *all* points of his duty upon which his salvation depends.” (Let. p. 28, 29.) So, before, in giving us the *obvious* meaning of this disputed text, the Chaplain had found out, that the gates of hell were never to succeed in *overturning*, not the church, but the *religion* of Christ. (P. 28.) Are then the *great and essential tenets of the apostles’ creed*, and the *church*, one and the same thing? Is the *Christian religion*, that is, the Christian system of belief and practice, the same thing as the *society of Christians* professing that system? When we are directed, (Matth. xviii. 16.) *to tell the church* of our offending brethren, are we to go and tell their offences to *the great and essential tenets* of Christianity, or to the *Christian religion*? It is not difficult to discover the advantage, or rather the fatal consequences to Christianity, which an able but irreligious controvertist might hope to derive from this alteration. He might lay down, as the only fundamental articles of Christian belief, some few, which offer no violence to his understanding or passions; and such, as having for this very reason been little contested, were generally admitted by sectaries of all denominations. He might then contend, that the promises of Christ refer only to the upholding of these articles, and that *the gates of hell shall never prevail* to their extinction. The religious societies professing to believe them may all perish in their turns; but the promises of Christ will abide, if a new society arise adhering to the same supposed *fundamental* tenets; she may adopt many

errors indeed, and superinduce them on the foundation of faith. But for all this, the promises of Christ would not be made void; these promises not being intended in favour of any religious society or church, however the letter of them may sound, but only of the fundamental articles of religion. It will then be immaterial, whether we unite with Catholics, Protestants, or any ancient or modern sectaries, provided they admit the few doctrines which each of us may lay down as fundamental of Christianity; and we may call this being *Catholic Christians*; though the sincere friends of Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, have deemed such principles latitudinarianism in religion, and indeed subversive of all revealed religion.

Will the Chaplain say, that he did not intend to put the charge upon his readers, and that the expressions I have noticed, fell inadvertently from his pen? Will he acknowledge that, without prejudice to his cause, the word *church* may be substituted, agreeably to the scriptural text, where he has placed *great and essential articles*? Be it so; and let not his candour be impeached. But let us now see what will come of his exposition. *Against the CHURCH, the gates of hell will never prevail—but SHE will ever retain sufficient light to conduct EACH upright and pious believer to ALL points of his duty, upon which his salvation depends.* (P. 29.) If this be true, and necessarily true in virtue of the promises of Christ, then even in the most *deplorable era of superstition and ignorance*, (Let. p. 31.) in every preceding and subsequent era, even in that of the reformation, “the Christian church retained sufficient light to conduct each upright and pious believer to *all points* of his duty, upon which his salvation depended.” Need

I point out the consequences ensuing to the first reformers from this doctrine ; and consequently to those who became their disciples ? Need I tell you, that, having separated themselves from the great body of Christians throughout the world, they broke asunder the link of unity, and left a society in which *sufficient light remained to conduct EACH upright and pious believer to ALL points of his duty?* And since this society is the same now it then was, or rather more pure, for (the Chaplain says, *the Roman church is daily undergoing a silent reformation, P. 12.*) it still retains that light, and consequently still has the promises of Christ pledged for its continuance. But what assurance has he, or any one, who leaves this society, of the promises of Christ, extended to that, which he embraces in its stead ?

Before I conclude upon this text, you will allow me to state the Chaplain's objection to the Catholic explanation of it, and to give you the answer, as I find it ready made to my hands. The objection is, that the text might be as well alleged to prove, that sin and wickedness cannot prevail against the church, as it is brought to prove that error and heresy cannot ; for *vice is as formidable an enemy to religion, as error ; and the Christian system is as perfectly calculated to make us good men as orthodox believers.* (P. 28.) "So far" the Chaplain "is in the right ; that in virtue of this, and many other promises of the word of God, sin and wickedness shall never so generally prevail, but that the church of Christ, shall be always *holy* both in her doctrine, and in the lives of many, both pastors and people, living up to her doctrine. But then there is this difference between the case of damnable error in

doctrine, and that of sin and wickedness in practice, that the former, if established by the whole body of church-guides, would of course involve also the whole body of God's people, who are commanded to hear their church-guides, and do what they teach them; whereas, in the latter case, if pastors are guilty of any wicked practices contrary to their doctrine, the faithful are taught to do what they say, and not what they do." (Matth. xxiii. 2, 3.)*

To show, farther, that infallibility in faith is not necessarily attended with unfailing sanctity of manners, let it be observed, that though in time of the Old Testament, God was present with his infallible spirit to David and Solomon, when they wrote their books received into the canon of scripture, yet he did not prevent the first from committing adultery and murder, nor the second from *going after Astaroth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Michom, the abomination of the Ammonites.* (1 Kings xi. 15.) Neither did Christ render his apostles and evangelists impeccable, though he conferred on them the privilege of infallibility. When the Chaplain has discovered, in the decrees of infinite wisdom, the true reason of this conduct, he will at the same time be able to give a satisfactory answer to his own objection, and tell us, why it may not please Divine Providence to ordain the preservation of the church from error, and yet suffer the individual members of it to be liable to sin and immorality.

I now proceed to the promises of Christ, made at his last supper, in that discourse which "is, as it

* Letter to a friend concerning Infallibility. London, 1743.

were, his last will and testament; every word whereof seems to be the overflowing of a heart filled with concern for his future church.”* These promises the Chaplain has stated compendiously enough. “The divine author of the Christian religion promised,” says he, “to teach his disciples all truth. (John xiv. 15, 16.) And he undoubtedly did so. But where did he so far ensure the faith of their successors, as to secure them from building *wood, hay, and stubble* upon the foundation of the gospel?” (P. 27.) “He promised to be *with his disciples to the end of the world*. (Matth. xix. [should be xxviii.] 20.) And who denies it? He is with his church by his protection, by his grace, by the lights he communicates to her, by the strength which he exerts in supporting her against violence and temptation.” (Ibid.)

Such, according to the Chaplain, is the explanation of these passages from St. John. His reasons for so explaining them shall be presently examined. I will first set the texts down more fully, as they stand in the gospel. Our Saviour’s words, spoken to his apostles, and recorded by St. John in his 14th chapter, are these: *I will ask my Father, and he will send you another Comforter to abide with you FOR EVER*. (John xiv. 16.) And soon after he informs them who this Comforter is to be, and to what end his Father will send him. *The Comforter, says Christ, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you*. (Ibid. 16.) This promise is again repeated in the 16th chapter, which is a continuation

* Shortest Way, &c.

of the same discourse. *I have yet many things to say unto you ; but you cannot hear them now ; however, when the Spirit of truth is come, he will lead you into all truth.*

In these texts, we see the means clearly and distinctly set down, by which the church is to be forever protected, viz. the perpetual assistance of the Divine Spirit, teaching and leading the apostles and their successors, that is, the body of pastors, into *all truth* necessary and relating to the service of God, and salvation of man.

The Chaplain denies not the sufficiency of the means ; he even acknowledges, that the Spirit of God *undoubtedly led the disciples into all truth ;* but to them he limits the extent of the promises ; the faith of their successors is left to *be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine ;** or at best, to be modelled upon their own fallible interpretation of scripture. *For where, says he, did the divine Author of our religion ensure the faith of their successors ?* (P. 27.) I answer, in the plain, unambiguous words, as I have cited them from John xiv. 16. ; for they expressly say, that the Comforter, or Holy Ghost, shall abide with the apostles *for ever ;* which, “ though addressed to them, as the whole sermon at our Saviour’s last supper was, yet, like many other truths contained in it, could not regard their persons alone ; for they were not to live for ever ; but comprehended likewise all those who were to succeed them in after ages. And that this was the intent of our Saviour’s promise appears clearly from his last words before his ascension, recorded by St. Matthew.”†

* Ephes. iv. 14.

† Shortest Way, &c. sect. 2.

These words of St. Matthew are in part cited by the Chaplain, as you have seen ; but they deserve to be set down at large. *All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whichsoever I have commanded you ; and behold I am with you ALWAYS, (in the Greek, all days,) even unto THE END OF THE WORLD.** Here surely Christ promises to be perpetually, even to the world's end, with them, who were to teach and baptize all nations. Were the apostles, to whom these words were immediately addressed, to perform that function for ever ? He orders them, and consequently their successors, in the ministry of the word, to teach *all things*, whichsoever he had commanded. Does not this evidently imply, that they were themselves to be assisted by the Spirit of God, to discover what those things are ? or did he impose upon them an obligation, without affording the means of compliance ? If they were to be assisted in discovering and teaching *all things* delivered by Christ ; if they were ordered to *teach*, and he was to be present with them in the ministry of teaching, *even to the world's end* ; does not this import a correspondent obligation in the hearers, to receive and embrace the doctrines so delivered ? Will any one say, that, before he embraces them, he must be assured that the doctrines which he hears, are the things commanded by Jesus Christ ? Will he say, that he must be satisfied, they are agreeable to the written word of God ? I will answer him, that by this proceeding he would

* Matth. xxviii. 20, 21.

render the commission of teaching, intrusted by Jesus Christ to his apostles and their successors, vain and nugatory ; he would transfer the ministry from them, and render it the duty of every person to be his own teacher ; he would destroy the divine economy of the church, in which Christ *gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* (Eph. iv. 11, 12.) The rational inquiry remaining, after a conviction of the divinity of the Christian religion is, are they, who deliver these doctrines, the lawful successors of the apostles ? Can they trace to them their line of succession ? If they can, we must *account of them as the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God,** from whom we may learn certainly the truth of the gospel. For though each pastor be not so in his private capacity, yet, as far as he teaches us in concert with the rest, I mean, inasmuch as he delivers the faith of the church, in that respect he is infallible.

The Chaplain, in his comments upon the famous passage of Matth. xvi. 18., insinuated, that, though the gates of hell should never prevail against the church, to the suppression of the points of faith, deemed by him fundamental, yet false opinions might be superinduced, and so far error might prevail. He here again would establish the same doctrine ; and though compelled, by the evident authority of scripture, to confess, that Christ communicated infallibility to his disciples, he thinks this no security, that their succes-

* 1 Cor. iv. 1.

sors will not build on the foundation of the gospel *wood, hay, and stubble*. If, by these words, the Chaplain understand corrupt doctrines in faith and manners, it is plain, from the very expressions of Christ, that he is mistaken. For *all truth* in matters of faith and salvation, into which the Spirit was to lead them, is exclusive of *all error* in the same line. In a word, either the promises of the assisting Spirit of truth, are confined to the immediate disciples of Christ, or not. If they are, then we have no assurance of the church's continuing even in the profession of fundamental points; if not, then upon what authority are the promises to be restrained to the church's being guided into *some truth*, when they expressly declare, that she shall be guided into ALL TRUTH?

But is not Christ *with his church, by his protection, by his grace, &c.*? Can he not be with her without rendering her infallible? Is he not with every just man, &c.? (Let. p. 27.) Yes, surely; he affords protection and grace; he might not have rendered her infallible; but when he informs us, that he will direct his church by the *Spirit of truth*, consequently a spirit opposite to that of error; when, in Matth. xxviii., he promises to the pastors of his church such a kind of presence, assistance, and guidance, as shall qualify them effectually to *teach all those things*, which he himself taught, and this for all times; shall we esteem him to be no otherwise with them, than with particular righteous men? Where has he ever promised these, that singular and uninterrupted assistance of the Spirit of *truth*? To private persons the Holy Ghost is given, as the Spirit of sanctification; but to the church, as the Spirit

of truth, as well as sanctification, guiding her into all truth, and directly excluding all error from her.

I hope it will now appear to you, that the proofs of the church's infallibility, from St. John and Matth. xxviii., are not invalidated by the Chaplain's objections. I have adduced no arguments to confirm you in your belief of this capital doctrine ; but meeting the Chaplain on his own ground, have only endeavoured to defend it from his objections, whom we are grieved to have for an adversary. I forbear to allege other numerous testimonies of scripture, the concurrent authority of holy fathers, and the whole conduct of church government, from the very days of the apostles, which necessarily supposes this, as an unquestionable article of Christian faith. "I know very well, that no text of holy scripture is so clear, but persons of much wit, may find interpretations to perplex it, or set it in a false light ; but the question is not, whether the texts I have produced may, with some pain and study, be interpreted otherwise than the Roman Catholic church has always understood them ; but whether, in their natural, obvious, and literal sense, they do not lead an unbiassed reader to the idea and belief of an infallible church. Now then let us suppose, that the contradictories of the texts I have quoted were found in holy writ. As for instance, suppose our Saviour had said to St. Peter, *I will not build my church upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall prevail against it.* Suppose he had said to his apostles, *I will not be with you to the end of the world. I will not send the Holy Ghost to abide with you for ever. He shall not teach you all things, nor lead you into all truth.* Would not all men of sound sense, have concluded from such

texts, that there is no such a thing as an infallible church on earth? They certainly would, because the natural and obvious meaning of them is so plain, that it is impossible not to draw that consequence from them. Now, if one part of two contradictories, cannot but force a man of an unbiassed judgment to conclude against the doctrine of infallibility, the other part is surely of equal force, to oblige him to conclude in favour of it. So that it is nothing to the purpose, whether Protestants can, or cannot strain the texts I have produced, from their natural and obvious meaning; but it is much to the purpose to consider, whether they can bring any evidence from scripture to disprove the infallibility of the church, of equal strength and clearness to the texts I have brought to prove it.”*

The Chaplain’s argument against infallibility, next to be considered, is that which he truly calls a *hackneyed* one. After reading this answer, you may likewise judge whether it be a *conclusive* one.

In the author of *the Case stated between the church of Rome and the church of England*, the argument is thus laid down: “You (Roman Catholics) believe the scriptures, because the church bids you; and you believe the church, because the scriptures bid you.” And he triumphantly adds, *that this is the old circle, out of which we can never conjure ourselves.*

Let us now first examine the principles of logic, and find out what is understood by a vicious circle. We shall find it to be that kind of argument, by which two propositions reciprocally prove each other; and

* Shortest Way to end Disputes, chap. 1. sect. 2.

neither of them is proved by any other medium; as if a man were to attempt to prove that a stone fell, because it was heavy; and that it was heavy, because it fell, without being able to assign any other reason, either of its falling or its gravity. But if its gravity were demonstrable from other considerations, then from that property its falling might justly be inferred; and if its having fallen should, for instance, be attested by credible eye-witnesses, its gravity might be deduced from its falling; the cause, in this instance, inferring the effect—and the effect proving the existence of the cause.

Having premised so much, now let us analyze the Catholic faith, and see if we reason as badly as the Chaplain asserts.

The Catholic reasoner has only to open his eyes, and he will discover, that his church is in the practice of determining controversies of faith, by the concurrent authority of the episcopal body. But this view alone, does not give him any undoubted assurance of the infallibility of her determinations. He is led, therefore, next, to consider, when the church first exercised this authority. Did she assume it in ages of darkness and ignorance? Did she usurp it with a high hand, contrary to the usage of the first ages? What information will the Christian collect in the course of this inquiry? He will find living monuments of this prerogative being always exercised, even from the days of the apostles, and throughout every succeeding age. I say, *living* monuments; for they are now subsisting; and still afford as evident proof of the exercise of the authority, as if the facts had passed in our own time, and within our own memory; or

as full proof as we have, of the courts of judicature of this state, having heretofore decided the legal controversies of the citizens thereof. For instance, the abrogating of circumcision, and other observances of the Jewish law, is a still subsisting monument of the power of deciding being claimed and exercised by the church. Such likewise is the custom of not rebaptizing persons baptized by heretics; such is the Nicene creed, and particularly the word *consubstantial*, making part of it. These monuments, to omit innumerable others, owe their existence to the exercise of the definitive authority of the church in matters of faith. The inquiring Christian will farther discover a most conspicuous monument of it, in the canon of holy scripture. Many books therein received, were some time doubted of; others were contended for, which are now rejected. The church interposed her authority, and the canon of scripture became established. On these facts, palpable, manifest, and of public notoriety, the Christian will reason thus: The church, even from the apostles' time, has always exercised the authority of deciding controverted points; her interposition would be of no avail, if her authority were not to be considered as definitive and infallible. The primitive Christians so considered it. Whoever refused submission, was cast from the church, and reputed as a heathen and publican. On these grounds will the Christian be induced to believe her infallibility; happy, that his belief arise not from a series of abstruse reasoning, but is built upon public, notorious facts, within the reach of the most common understanding. The church has always, from the first era of Christianity, exercised the right of judg-

ing in matters of faith, and requiring obedience to her decisions; the monuments attesting it are certain and visible. The exercise of such a right, without infallibility, would be vain and nugatory; therefore she is infallible. After thus discovering her infallibility upon the evidence of notorious facts, it is a subject of much comfort to the sincere Christian, as well as a confirmation of his faith, to find the same truth attested by the words of scripture; and having before believed it for the evidence just mentioned, he now likewise believes it for the authority of scripture, at the same time that he believes scripture for the authority of the church. Where now is the circle of false reasoning? Is not infallibility first demonstrated from other considerations, before it is demonstrated from scripture? And is not this alone, in the principles of sound logic, sufficient to destroy the magic of this famous circle, and the argument built upon it? But indeed this argument is many ways vulnerable, and you may find it otherwise destroyed in the authors referred to in the note.*

One word more concerning this hackneyed argument, and we will be done with it. Let it be taken for granted, that our process of reasoning runs round a circle; a Deist, an infidel, a disbeliever of scripture, might with propriety object to it. But how can the Chaplain do so, or any person professing his belief of scripture infallibility? For, admitting this infallibility, he admits one of the propositions, which reciprocally prove each other; and therefore, in arguing against him, we may logically infer the church's infallibility

* The true Church of Christ, p. 2. ch. 3. sect. 3. Shortest Way, &c. p. 2. sect. 2.

from texts of scripture; it being a common principle with us both, that scripture is divinely inspired; and no one is bound to prove a principle admitted by his adversary.

The Chaplain produces against the Church's infallibility another argument, which he might likewise have called a hackneyed one; for it has been urged with great perseverance by our adversaries. He says, that *all Roman Catholics are bound to admit an infallible authority; yet few of them agree, where, or in whom, it resides.* (P. 26. note.) When I have met with this argument in the writings of opponents, little acquainted with our principles, of whom there are many, it has not surprised me. But that the Chaplain should likewise insist upon it, is really matter of astonishment. For he must know, that in the doctrine which we teach, as belonging to faith in this point, and as an article of communion, there is no variation; and with all his reading and recollection, I will venture to assert, that he cannot cite one Catholic divine, who denies infallibility to reside in the body of bishops, united and agreeing with their head, the bishop of Rome. So that, when the Chaplain says, that *some schoolmen have taught the infallibility of the pope—some place it in a general council; others in the pope and council, received by the whole church,* (Note, *ibid.*) he is under a great mistake; for the last is not a mere opinion of schoolmen, but the constant belief of all Catholics; a belief, in which there is no variation. Some divines, indeed, hold the pope, as Christ's vicar on earth, to be infallible, even without a council; but with this opinion faith has no concern, every one being

at liberty to adopt or reject it, as the reasons for or against may affect him.

The Chaplain adds in the same place, that, since the council of Trent, many things have been *unanimously taught* respecting the pope's authority, which are, I own, new to me, and which, I confidently aver, he cannot make good. Nay, so far are they from being taught unanimously since the council of Trent, that they are not taught at all, for instance, in France; and are expressly contradicted by the maxims and solemn determinations of the Gallican clergy, in the year 1782; to which maxims and determinations the theological schools there have constantly conformed.

Nor is it only in France, that many of the doctrines are rejected, which, he says, are taught *unanimously* amongst us; but they are exploded in every Catholic country in the world. The body of bishops every where claim a divine right, in virtue of their ordination, to interpret the decrees of councils, and the ordinances of the popes. The Chaplain having discarded his former religion, appears likewise to have erased from his memory, the theological principles of our schools.

He concludes his note with a curious piece of reasoning. *A Christian*, he says, *may mistake the words of a pope*, (the meaning of the words, I presume,) *as easily as he can mistake the words of scripture*. So, undoubtedly, he may; and, for this very reason, a living authority is necessary to explain uncertainties, to remove ambiguities. But perhaps he means to carry his argument into the very heart of our principles, and deny that even a living authority can speak a language clear enough to determine doubts and convict

obstinacy. But few will be persuaded that the powers of living language are so limited; as well might he attempt to persuade us, that when parties litigate on the interpretation of the law, the judges cannot deliver sentence in terms clear enough to determine the controversy.

You have hitherto seen the Chaplain endeavour to disprove the church's infallibility, by his interpretation of certain passages of scripture, and by discovering fallacies and inconsistencies in our doctrine on this subject. Not content with thus attacking this capital tenet of our religion, he sets about to prove that the church may err, because in fact she has erred. To show it, he alleges, 1st. That she formerly taught doctrines as of faith, which she now rejects as contrary to faith. 2dly. She suppressed for a time certain tenets, which ought to have been taught at all times, or not taught at all. 3dly. She requires a belief of things which are not contained in scripture, as is acknowledged even by some of our own divines.

How does he prove the first of these charges? By asserting (P. 29, 30.) that *the doctrine of the millennium, now rejected by the church, was maintained as an article of the Catholic faith by almost every father who lived immediately after the times of the apostles.* In opposition to this very positive assertion, I will take upon me to say, that not one of the primitive fathers held the opinion here mentioned, as an article of Catholic faith and communion. At the very time of its prevalence (for it was indeed adopted by Irenæus, Justin the Martyr, &c.) it was combated by others not less zealously attached to the church's communion, as is acknowledged even by Justin himself, who, speaking of

the millennium, says: "I have already confessed to you, o Trypho, that I, and many others of the same mind with me, do think it will come to pass; but I have also signified that many *who are of pure and pious Christian sentiments* do not think so."* Do these words indicate, that the millennarian doctrine *was maintained as an article of the Catholic faith, by almost every primitive father*, as is asserted by the Chaplain? Do they not clearly prove, that even its ablest advocates, amongst whom Justin surely was, did not consider it as such, but as an opinion open to discussion and contradiction? And, accordingly, Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History, cites passages of a work written against this doctrine in the very beginning of the third century, by Caius, a Catholic priest, † the contemporary of Justin and Irenæus.

I need take no notice of what the Chaplain adds, ‡ that *it was the decided opinion of almost all the primitive fathers, that the souls of good men did not enjoy the beatific vision previous to the general resurrection*; for since he does not say, that this opinion ever became an article of Catholic faith, as it certainly never did, I may be allowed to suspend any investigation of this subject, which has been ably and solidly discussed by Bellarmine long ago. §

The Chaplain argues, secondly, that the church has erred, because *she regards some articles at present as articles of faith, which for many ages were debated as matters of opinion.* || This we freely admit; and, I hope, without any prejudice to the claim of infallibility;

* Just. Mart. Dial. cum. Tryph. p. 306. edit. Colon. ann. 1637.

† Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 3. c. 28.

‡ Note, *ibid.*

§ Bell, de Sanct. Beatitud. l. 1.

|| P. 37.

though the Chaplain thinks, that a very forcible argument arises from this fact ; for these doctrines having been delivered by Jesus Christ and his apostles, either as essential or not ; if the first, she forfeited her claim to infallibility by omitting to teach them for many ages ; and if the second, she equally forfeits it by imposing, as necessary to be believed, what neither Christ nor his apostles did so teach.

Before I proceed to a direct answer, it may be proper to premise, that the distinction of *essentials*, and *not essentials* ; *fundamentals* and *not fundamentals* in faith, to which the Chaplain so often recurs, is not admitted by us in his sense, and that of other Protestant authors. We hold all revealed doctrines, when sufficiently proposed to our understanding, to be *essential* in this respect, that under pain of disobedience and heresy, we are bound to believe and submit our understanding to them ; and the reason is, because we conceive of all doctrines so proposed, that they are revealed by God, who neither can err, nor lead into error. Now, whether the doctrine be in its own nature, or in our estimation, of great importance, or not, it equally claims our assent, if divine authority is pledged for the truth of it. In another sense, indeed, some points of faith, are more essential and fundamental than others ; for without our knowledge, or, indeed, without any revelation of some of them, Christianity might subsist ; whereas, other points are so interwoven with the system and economy of it, that the explicit profession and belief of them is implied in the very idea of a Christian. But, as I before said, they both rest upon the same authority, that is, the word of God ; and demand an equally firm assent, when suffi-

ciently proposed to our understanding. Why are we obliged to believe every fact and circumstance contained in the Old and New Testament, as soon as we come to the knowledge of it? Is it, because nothing therein is related which does not affect the very vitals of Christianity? or is it not rather, because divine authority is pledged for the entire truth of scripture?

This leads to a plain answer to the objection. All doctrines taught by Christ and his apostles, were delivered as *necessary* to be believed, whenever the faithful should receive sufficient evidence of their divine revelation. But till they had that evidence, the belief was not obligatory; and Christians were at liberty to discuss the doctrines with all freedom, provided they did so in an habitual disposition to submit to the authority established by Jesus Christ, whenever it should interfere in determining the uncertainty. So, before the holding of the first council at Jerusalem, some true Christians maintained circumcision to be necessary.* And *when the apostles and ancients came together to consider of this matter, there was much disputing.* (V. 6, 7.) But after the decision of the council, *it pleased the apostles and the ancients, with the whole church,* to issue their letter or decree against the necessity of circumcision, to which decree all were now obliged to submit, under pain of heresy. Here I would fain ask, if there were no true Catholicity of belief before this council; and whether this decision destroyed the unity of Christ's church. For after the decision, all true Christians *believed, as an article of faith, what they before conceived to be matter of opinion.*†

* Acts xv. 1.

† See Chap. Let. p. 34.

The Chaplain's formidable dilemma (P. 33, 34.) turns out therefore a very harmless one; the doctrines he refers to were delivered as *essential*, that is, I suppose, essentially to be believed, whenever they came to be sufficiently proposed, as revealed by God; but they were not *essentially* to be believed, till they were so proposed. And the church, ever guided by the Spirit of God, sees when the dangers threatening her children, from *false prophets arising and seducing many*, (Matth. xxiv. 11.) call upon her to examine the faith committed to her keeping, and preserved in holy scripture and the chain of tradition. In these perilous moments she unfolds the doctrines, and presents them to Christians as preservatives from the delusions of novelty, the refinements of false philosophy, and the misinterpretations of private and presumptuous judgment. Thus, when Arius and his followers, endeavoured to establish principles subversive of the divinity of the Son of God, to check the growth of this error, the church defined clearly and explicitly, his consubstantiality with the Father. Previous to which decision, the faithful contented themselves with acknowledging his divine nature; but that the belief of it included consubstantiality, was not yet sufficiently proposed to them, and therefore could not be an object of their faith.

The principles indeed of the Chaplain would, if admitted, clearly prove, that neither his, nor the faith of any one, who admits all the books of scripture, is the same with that of the first Christians; nay, more, that the faith of these last was continually changing, as long as the apostles were alive. For he lays it down, that if any points are believed, as essential, to-

day, which formerly were not so believed, there is no longer a unity of faith. (Let. p. 34.) Now, the apostles at distant periods of their lives sent epistles and instructions to the different churches, which they then, and we now, receive as of divine inspiration. But did they not from these writings collect information, which they had not before? and did they not believe the information given, as infallibly true? For instance, when St. Paul wrote his second epistle to the Thessalonians, did they not understand from it, contrary to what they had before conceived, that the last general judgment was not immediately to happen? If so, then was their faith (according to the Chaplain) no longer the same it had been. Moreover, some of Christ's flock died before any, and many more before all the apostles; St. John, it is known, lived upwards of sixty years after his master's death, and wrote his Revelation, and his Gospel a very little while before his own. It follows then again, that the Christians who died without having either seen or heard of his Gospel, or Revelation, had not the same faith with those who afterwards saw and believed them. These consequences may be extended much farther; and, by adhering to the principles of the Chaplain, it may be shown, that for many ages Christians either did not believe *essential* doctrines, or that it is not *essential* now to admit many books of scripture, which, nevertheless, he who should reject would not be deemed a Christian. For it is notorious that, long after the apostles' time, several scriptural books were of uncertain authority, the authors of them not being ascertained; as, for instance, the Revelation, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the second of St. Peter,

the second and third of St. John, those of St. Jude and St. James. During all this time, therefore, it was not *essential* to believe these writings to be divinely inspired; but will the Chaplain say, that it is not now essential to believe it? What would one of his controversial heroes, Dr. Hurd, say, if we were to deny the authority of St. John's Revelation? For though I have not had an opportunity to see his *discourses on the prophecies*, yet I conclude, from the occasion of his preaching them, that the Revelation has furnished him his arguments, such as they are, to prove the *apostacy of papal Rome*, as it did his predecessor Jurieu, whose reveries the illustrious Bossuet exposed as completely as, I doubt not, all those of the lecturers of the Warburton foundation* will one day be.

To revert to our subject: Was all unity of faith destroyed in the church, when the above-mentioned books of scripture were received into the canon? For it is certain that some things were then required to be believed, which before were not required. After St. John published his gospel, wherein are contained many things not related by the other evangelists, did not these things become objects of faith, which before had not been so? As long as the apostles lived, and preached, and wrote to the churches, *teaching them to observe all things, whichsoever their Divine Master had commanded them*, (Matth. xxviii. 21.) did not *new matter* continually arise to exercise the faith of their disciples? If then it be any objection to a *living autho-*

* Dr. Warburton, late bishop of Gloucester, founded an annual course of lectures, to prove the apostacy of papal Rome. Dr. Hurd's discourses were the first on this occasion.

city, that the number of necessary tenets must increase, as decisions multiply, (Ch. Let. p. 34.,) the objection is as strong against the authority of the apostles, which the Chaplain admits, (P. 27.,) as against that of a church equally endowed with infallibility in deciding on faith and morals.

The Chaplain's reasonings, from page 30 to page 34, properly belong to the division we are now considering; but being desirous to place all his objections to particular tenets of our church in one point of view, I shall arrange them under the last division. On this I shall enter, after noticing that the Chaplain, in the conclusion of his argument, indulges himself in some declamation, which however carries no weight with it, as long as the church's claim to infallibility is not invalidated by other arguments, than those we have seen. For, supposing that claim well supported, his forebodings can never come to pass; and our faith has nothing to fear from the additions of any future pope Pius. And here, by the bye, it must be remarked, that though an intimation is thrown out, (P. 35.,) that Pius IV., in his famous creed, imposed new doctrines; yet every article of that creed was, long before him, a point of our belief. This is known to every person conversant in the history of religion, and is candidly acknowledged by Dr. Bramhall, the Protestant archbishop of Armagh, in his reply to the bishop of Chalcedon: "For," says he, "those very points, which Pius IV. comprehended in a new symbol or creed, were obtruded upon us before by his predecessors, as necessary articles of the Roman faith, and required as necessary articles of their communion."

To prove that the church has fallen into error, it is urged in the third place, as was noticed above, that she requires a belief of tenets, which even some of our own celebrated divines, acknowledge either not to be *found at all in the scriptures, or at least delivered in them with great obscurity*; (P. 19.) and instances are given in the doctrines of *transubstantiation* and *purgatory*, *auricular confession* and the *power of loosening and binding*, or *absolution*. These shall now be distinctly considered, as far as is necessary to vindicate them from the Chaplain's objections. For I propose proceeding here, as before, concerning infallibility; that is, I shall not pretend to allege other proofs of these contested doctrines, than such as may arise from the purely defensive system I have adopted; and, God be praised, the grounds of our faith are so solid, that, I trust, the cause of truth and religion will not be injured, even in my hands, by this mode of repelling the attacks made against them.

But first, supposing it true, as the divines mentioned by the Chaplain are alleged to have said, that the tenets above cited, are not to be found in scripture, does it follow, that they were not revealed by Jesus Christ? With what right does the Chaplain assume as a principle, that God communicated nothing more to his church, than is contained in his written word? He knows, that we have always asserted, that the *whole* word of God, unwritten, as well as written, is the Christian's rule of faith. It was incumbent then on him, before he discarded this rule, to prove either, that no more was revealed, than is written; or that revealed doctrines derive their claim to our belief, not from God's infallible testimony, but from their

being reduced to writing. He has not attempted this; and I will venture to say, he would have attempted it in vain, even with the assistance of his Chillingworth. Happy indeed it is for mankind, that no efforts to this purpose can succeed; for if the Catholic rule of faith could be proved unsafe, what security have we for the authenticity, the genuineness, the incorruptibility of scripture itself? How do we know, but by the tradition, that is, by the living doctrine of the Catholic church, which are the true and genuine gospels? Can the Chaplain, with all his ingenuity, devise, for instance, any other solid motive, besides this already mentioned, for admitting the gospel of St. Matthew into the canonical writings? This gospel, according to the general opinion, was written in the vulgar Hebrew, or Syriac. The original text has been lost so long, that no traces of it remain; who translated it into Greek is quite uncertain. Now, where is the *written* word of God assuring us of the correspondence of this translation with the original? Where shall we find, but in the tradition, that is, in the public invariable doctrine of the Catholic church, any sufficient reason for admitting the faithfulness of the translator? Why shall we not reject it, as some early heretics did, the Manichæans, Marcionists, Cerdonists, &c.? I mention St. Matthew's gospel, as coming first to my mind; but the argument is applicable to other parts of scripture, and to some with much greater force. The testimony, therefore, of the Catholic church, certified in the tradition of all ages, is the ground, upon which we and others admit the divine authority of holy writ.* I do not suppose,

* See this acknowledged by Dr. Cosin, bishop of Durham, in his *Scholastic History of the Canon of Scripture*, ch. 1. sect. 8. edit. London, 1672.

that the Chaplain, after rejecting the church's infallibility, will place it, for the discrimination of true and false gospels, in an inward light administered to each sincere inquirer. I should be indeed greatly mistaken in him, if he entertain any such fanatical notions; his own Chillingworth would rise up against him. But if the testimony and tradition of the Catholic church, is to be necessarily admitted for receiving the scripture itself, which, according to him, is the *sole standard*, the *only rule* of Protestant belief, (P. 37.,) why is her testimony to be rejected, when offered in evidence of other points of faith? Why not as well admit it in favour of transubstantiation and purgatory, as of the lawfulness of infant baptism, of the validity of baptism administered by heretics, of the obligation of abstaining on Sundays from servile works, &c.? Scripture authority, for these and other points admitted by Protestants, there is certainly none; and they, who have attempted to offer any, have only betrayed the weakness and nakedness of their cause. Wherefore St. Chrysostom, as I find him repeatedly quoted by authors, whose accuracy I cannot doubt, commenting on these words of St. Paul, *Stand and hold the traditions you have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle*, (2 Thess. ii. 14. alias 15.) observes, that "it is plain, that the apostles did not deliver all things in writing, but many things without it; and these ought to be believed, as much as those; let us then give credit to the tradition of the church."* I have in preference cited this holy father in support of the Catholic doctrine, not because numerous testimonies

* Chrys. hom. 3. in 2 Thess. 2.

of others are wanting, both more ancient, and, if possible, more full and express; but because the Chaplain, in a note, (P. 8.,) insists much upon two remarkable passages, which, he says, are taken from the works of this eminent doctor.

I will not deny, that I was surprised when I read the first passage cited by the Chaplain; it appeared so opposite to the principles which St. Chrysostom had laid down in several parts of his works. It was a mortifying circumstance, that I could not conveniently have recourse to that holy doctor's writings, nor minutely examine the passage objected, together with its context. I procured a friend to examine the edition of Chrysostom's works, belonging to the public library at Annapolis; he has carefully and repeatedly read the 49th homily on St. Matthew; and not one syllable of the Chaplain's citation is to be found in it. After receiving this notice, I was for some time doubtful, whether it might not be owing to a difference in the editions. I could not persuade myself, that he, who so solemnly calls heaven to witness for the impartiality and integrity of his inquiry, would publicly expose himself to a well-grounded imputation of unpardonable negligence, in a matter of such serious concern. But I have now the fullest evidence, that the passage, for which Chrysostom on Matthew, hom. 49. is quoted, is not taken from that father. It is extracted from a work of no credit, supposed to be written in the 6th century, entitled, *The unfinished work on Matthew*.* But had it even been fairly quoted

* *Opus imperfectum in Matthæum*. The author adopts the Manichæan, the Montanist, and Arian heresies. In the first homily, he says, that *marriage is a sin*. In the 32d, that *second marriage is only an honourable fornication*; in

from him, the Chaplain would not have had so much cause for triumph, as he imagines. For the passage he adduces carries with it equal condemnation of the Protestant and Catholic rule of faith. It asserts, that it is only then necessary to discover by *scripture alone*, which is the true church of Christ, when *heresy has all outward observances in common with her*. But if the outward observances are not the same, if the church and heresy do not agree in offering the same unbloody sacrifice; in administering the same sacraments; in the apostolical and uninterrupted succession of their clergy; in their liturgy, their hierarchy, the whole frame of their ecclesiastical government, &c. then *it may be evinced by various means*, other than scripture, *which is the true church of Christ*. But will this be admitted by the Chaplain, who *adopts the holy scripture for the sole standard of his belief*? Will it be admitted by the *Protestant churches in general, which know no other rule*? (Let. p. 37.) See then how unsuccessfully this authority turns out for the Chaplain. In the first place, it lays him under the reproach of a want of impartial diligence; and, 2dly, If it militate against us, it is equally adverse to that religion, of which he now professes himself a member.

The disrepute of alleging the authority of Chrysostom so erroneously, will not be compensated by the other passage, for which he likewise is cited: and which, indeed, I find to be noticed by Bellarmine, as genuine; but he observes, that Chrysostom is not discoursing of doctrines obscurely delivered, or contested amongst different sects of Christians; but of such

the 49th, he calls the Catholic doctrine of the divinity of Christ, the homousian, or consubstantiation heresy.

as, being clearly and unambiguously taught in holy writ, are, nevertheless, disrelished or denied by worldly-minded men; who contend, contrary to the evident declaration of scripture, that riches are more helpful than hurtful to salvation; and of such Chrysostom says, that they ought to be disregarded, and all these things be estimated by the rule of scripture.

But if the Chaplain insist, that the direction here given, is general to *all* men, who are advised to investigate all matters of faith in the scripture, without paying any regard to *what this or that man asserts for truth*; I answer first, that this direction is very different from that of Chrysostom above cited, in his commentary on the 2d to the Thessalonians; and of the learned Vincent of Lerins, whom the Chaplain quotes with singular complacency.* (P. 35.) This venerable writer having observed, that all religious innovators accumulate texts upon texts to give credit to their different systems, inquires, *what Catholics, what the children of the church must do?* How can they in scripture discern truth from falsehood? *They will take care*, he continues, *so to proceed—as to interpret holy writ agreeably to the traditions of the universal church, and the rules of Catholic doctrine.*†

In the next place, I observe, that the rule of investigation laid down as from St. Chrysostom, is insuffi-

* In this author, the Chaplain may find the clearest condemnation of his new religious principles. I refer him to the 35, 36, 37, 38, and 39 chapters, which I wish I could translate without swelling this address to too great a bulk.

† Quid facient Catholici homines, & matris ecclesie filii? quonam modo in scripturis sanctis veritatem à falsitate discernent? Hoc scilicet facere curabunt, quod in principio commonitorii istius sanctos viros nobis tradidisse scripsimus; ut divinum canonem secundum universalis ecclesie *traditiones*, & juxta Catholici dogmatis *regulas* interpretentur. *Vinc. Lir. Com. c. 38.*

cient and inapplicable. Insufficient, because by scripture alone it is impossible to determine many points necessary to be believed and practised, and so received even by Protestants themselves.*

The rule is moreover inapplicable to much the greatest part of mankind; and I am really ashamed to enter seriously on the proof of it, since it must be evident to every considerate man in the world. For, if scripture, as interpreted *by private judgment*,† is the only rule which *all* are to follow, *neglecting what this or that man asserts for truth*; if *all* are to investigate *all* disputed things in the scriptures, it plainly follows, that the laborious husbandman, the illiterate mechanic, the poor ignorant slave, are to acquire the knowledge in languages, and the critical discernment necessary to compare translation with translation, text with text. For without this comparison and many other precautions, they never can form a reasonable judgment of the sense of scripture; nor can they be sure of that book being scripture, which is put into their hands as such. If to relate this prodigious opinion be not enough to refute it, all argument, even demonstration itself, will be of no avail.

The Chaplain seems to be aware of its glaring absurdity; and therefore, in a note, (P. 18.,) he says, that they who are unqualified to enter upon such inquiries as he made, *must rely principally upon the authority of their teachers*; and he quotes the bishop of Chester as recommending the same. Thus then, after citing with so much complacency a pretended pas-

* See p. 60 of this Address, and Mumford's Question of Questions, point first and second.

† Chaplain's note, p. 9.

sage of St. Chrysostom ; after bidding defiance to our divines to explain away the saint's doctrine, requiring *all of us to neglect what this or that man*, even himself or the bishop of Chester, *asserts for truth* ; but to *investigate all things in the scriptures* ; after this, I will not say, that he himself *unravels the difficulty with fine-spun subtlety like a modern schoolman* ;* but, like an Alexander, he cuts the knot at once, and *refers us to the authority of our teachers*.

While the Chaplain's letter is before me, I feel other impressions too strongly upon my mind to indulge in the satisfaction, which it might otherwise suggest, to observe, that after decrying *the dead weight of authority* ; (P. 13. ;) after exalting *private judgment*, as the sole interpreter of scripture, (P. 9.) he is obliged to confess, that the generality of mankind, must be guided in religious matters, *principally by the authority of their teachers* ; for he will hardly deny, that the generality of mankind are neither *by education, nor abilities, nor leisure, qualified to enter upon the inquiries necessary to judge for themselves*. Did Jesus Christ then leave a *rule of faith* so inadequate, as not to be capable of application to much the largest portion of mankind ? Do the *Protestant churches in general know no other rule* (Letter, p. 37.) than one so miserably defective ? and if defective now, what must it have been before the discovery of the art of printing, when the knowledge of letters was so rare, comparatively with the present times ; and it was morally impossible, to multiply manuscripts sufficient to supply every

* Note, p. 9.

individual with the means, even if he had the ability, to study scripture?

But who are the *teachers*, to whose *authority* the generality of mankind are referred? Are they any, however introduced to the exercise of that public function? This indeed may be a doctrine well enough suited to latitudinarians in religion, or the scoffers at all religion; but surely not very agreeable to the principles of a Christian. Must the teachers then, whose authority is to be so respected, be the regular and authorized ministry of the country? What if that country should be Turkey, and the ministers the deluded disciples of Mahomet? What if it should be a country blessed, like this, with unlimited toleration, and giving equal countenance to the professors and teachers of every denomination of Christians? In this case, the unlettered, that is, the far greater part of the community, are directed indeed by the Chaplain and the bishop of Chester to follow their teachers; but by what criterion they are to choose their teachers, does not appear. If by their doctrine, if by scripture, all the labour recoils back again upon the uninformed multitude, without *education*, *abilities*, or *leisure* to go through with it. On one hand, they are constrained to adopt Seneca's rule;* and on the other, they cannot possibly comply with it; they would fain follow the instructions of a faithful teacher; but how to distinguish him from a seduced or seducing one, they know not. I disdain taking notice of the insinuations so scandalously false, thrown out by the bishop of Chester, as if we discountenanced free inquiry.

* *Omnia delibera cum amico; sed prius delibera de amico.*

From what was said in the beginning of this address, you may judge how undeserved they are. His lordship is pleased to add, that *whatever things are necessary to be believed, are easy to be understood.* (P. 18, note.) Are not all doctrines laid down in scripture, and particularly those contained in the apostles' creed, *necessary to be believed?* So at least the Chaplain teaches. (P. 35.) In these is delivered the tenet of three divine persons, that of the incarnation of the Son of God, and of his descent into hell. Are these things easy to be understood? However they may appear to the bishop, they have been generally accounted mysteries incomprehensible to human understanding.

We likewise direct all to rely, in matters of faith, on their teachers, while they exercise their functions uncontradicted and unproved by the body of pastors, or their superiors in the hierarchy. But then their mission is established on a fact of public notoriety, the investigation of which requires no laborious discussion. They can trace an uninterrupted succession of their ministry to the apostles, and consequently to Christ himself. As Christ sent his apostles to *teach all nations, baptizing and teaching them to observe all things whichsoever he had commanded*; so did they send other pastors, to discharge the same functions as themselves. They could not preach at all times, and in all places; they therefore appointed disciples to found other churches, as they themselves had founded, and to exercise therein the same ministry. The pastors, thus associated to the apostles, successively admitted others; and this apostolical body, that is, the body of the envoys of Jesus Christ, has never ceased. When new members are incorporated

into it, they receive from him the same commission of teaching and administering the sacraments; the church of Christ cannot exist, without the preaching of the gospel; and preaching, according to St. Paul, is not to be exercised without a mission; *how will they preach if they be not sent?* (Rom. x. 15.) so that the church and this apostolical body must always subsist together, and can never be separated.

From these truths, founded on a plain matter of fact, an argument is deduced equally clear and convincing. It is as certain, that the apostles appointed other pastors to succeed them, as it is, that they founded churches. The actual pastors, then, of these churches, descending in a lawful and unbroken line of succession from them, are certainly sent by the apostles, and by Christ himself, since those churches have always subsisted, and still subsist. Thus our faith is as assured and well grounded, in believing the public doctrines delivered by these teachers, as it could have been, in receiving the preaching of the apostles themselves.

No books, no erudition is here necessary. The illiterate, as well as learned Christian can easily be certified of the fact on which the reasoning is founded. The prerogative of tracing to the apostles an ordinary and regular succession of pastors, is so peculiar a prerogative of the Catholic church, that no other society can dispute it with her, or appropriate it to themselves.* To this succession the primitive fathers constantly appeal, as demonstrative evidence of the true church, and challenge sectaries to exhibit

* See Bergier, *Deisme Refute*, &c. let. 4.

a like title to the divine commission of teaching and administering the sacraments.*

After having thus shown, both from the nature of the thing, and the Chaplain's own acknowledgment, that scripture alone is not a general and sufficient rule of faith, I might well contend, that *transubstantiation*, *purgatory*, *auricular confession*, and the *power of absolving*, are to be received as Christian doctrines, on the authority of the church, though no mention were made of them in scripture. But for your entire satisfaction, I will now consider particularly all that has been advanced on the other side respecting these articles of our faith.

To begin with *transubstantiation*, the Chaplain asserts, (P. 32.,) that *the doctrine conveyed by that word was no article of faith prior to the council of Lateran, in 1215*; and for proof of it he refers to Scotus, as cited by Bellarmine, *l. 3. de Euch. c. 23*. When I read this passage of the Chaplain's letter, I thought it remarkable in him to allege Scotus's testimony to prove a point of ecclesiastical history; the subtleties of the school were much better suited to that author's speculative genius, than a critical examination of historical facts. And it was becoming the Chaplain's candour to have acknowledged it, when he saw evident proofs of Scotus's inaccuracy in the place cited out of Bellarmine; who observes, that Scotus could never have seen the decrees of the councils held at Rome against Berengarius, the first in the year 1060, and the second 1079, in which the doctrine of transub-

* See *Irenæus* contr. Hær. l. 3. c. 3. *Tertul.* l. de præscr. c. 32. *Opt. Miles* l. 2. cont. Parm. *August.* in ps. contra par. Donati, & lib. contra ep. Fund. cap. 4.

stantiation was asserted; and Berengarius, who had impugned it, retracted his error.*

The Chaplain continues, that towards the beginning of the 9th century, *Paschasius Radbertus published his treatise upon the corporal presence of Christ in the Eucharist; and, as Bellarmine tells us, was the first who wrote seriously and copiously concerning it.* (Ibid.) For this, he cites Bellarmine *de Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis*. Does not every person who reads this passage, understand it to import, that, according to Bellarmine, Paschasius Radbertus was the first who *wrote seriously and copiously concerning* the corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist? Now let us hear Bellarmine himself; and then let every one judge, whether the Chaplain has carried into his researches after truth, all that impartiality and painful investigation, mentioned in his seventh page. Thus then Bellarmine, in the book cited by him: "This author (Paschasius Radbertus) was the first who wrote seriously and copiously of the reality of the body and blood of the Lord in the Eucharist, *against Bertram the priest, who was one of the first that called it in question.*"† Is it the same thing to be the first to write fully on the real presence, and the first to write fully on that subject against Bertram, who impugned it? Does not the former sense, suggested by the Chaplain, imply that Paschasius was the first to establish a *new doctrine*? and, is not Bellarmine's real meaning, that Paschasius

* See Berengarius's Retractations, and his Profession of Faith, in Bellarmine, l. 3. de Euch. c. 21.

† Hic auctor primus fuit, qui seriò & copiosè scripsit de veritate corporis & sanguinis Domini in Eucharistiâ *contra Bertramum presbyterum, qui fuit ex primis, qui eam in dubium revocarunt.* Bell. de Scrip. Eccl. ad. an. 826, de Paschasio Radberto.

was the first to defend an *established* doctrine against a *recent* opposer of it?

But let us proceed; and we shall find Paschasius himself clearly showing, that his view and design was, not to set forth a new doctrine; but to expound that which was common in the church; though the Chaplain says otherwise. *This monk*, says he, meaning Paschasius, *informs us himself, that his doctrine was by no means universal or settled.** Let us now see, how he gives us this information; and let his letter to Frudegardus (for to that the Chaplain refers) determine the point. In this very letter, then, he says, that “though some, through ignorance, err in this point, yet *not one* openly contradicts, what the *whole world* believes and professes.”† Here you will observe, that Paschasius says, that *not one* was found openly to contradict his doctrine on the Eucharist; and that it was believed and professed by the *whole world*. Is this to inform us, that his doctrine was by no means *universal or settled*? But let us hear him farther. “If any man,” says he, in the same place, “should oppose this truth, rather than believe it, let him take care what he is doing against the Lord himself, and the *whole church* of Christ. For it is a horrible crime to join in prayer with all, and not to believe what truth itself attests, and what *every where, all universally* confess to be true.”‡ From these pas-

* Letter, p. 32.

† Quamvis ex hoc quidam de ignorantia errent, *nemo* tamen est adhuc in aperto, qui hoc ita esse contradicat, quod totus orbis credit & confitetur. *Pasch. Radb. epis. ad Frudeg. Bibl. P. P. tom. 9 par. 1. pag. 246.*

‡ Videat, qui contra hoc venire voluerit, quid agat contra ipsum Dominum; & contra *omnem Christi ecclesiam*. Nefarium ergo scelus est orare cum omnibus, & non credere; quod veritas ipsa testatur, & *ubique omnes universalliter* verum esse fatentur. *Ibid.*

sages, it is evident, that the Chaplain could not make a more unfortunate reference, to prove what he intended, than to Paschasius's letter to Frudegard. But, continues he, Paschasius, in this very letter, *speaking of the corporeal presence, says, you question me upon a subject about which many are doubtful.* (P. 32.) Does Paschasius indeed say so? It would strangely contradict what he has already told us. Let us therefore return to the letter, and hear him himself. It appears from its contents, that Frudegard was a young monk, who had read in one of St. Augustin's works a passage that perplexed him; and that he applied to Paschasius, as his master, to explain the difficulty.* I will venture to assert, that the passage in the note is all the Chaplain's foundation for saying, as if they were the words of Paschasius himself, that *many were doubtful* of the real presence in the Eucharist. Is it possible, that Paschasius should acknowledge this in the very letter, wherein he informs his scholar, that the *whole church* professes the doctrine he delivers? That not even *one person* was found openly to contradict it? The young man himself acknowledges, that he had always believed the real presence, which shows, that it was at that time the common doctrine of the church, in which young persons were educated; he informs Paschasius, that a perplexity had arisen in his mind, not from hearing any public instruction of the pastors of the church, contrary to the real presence, but from some expres-

* *Dicis te antea credidisse; sed profiteris, quod in libro de doctrina Christiana Beati Augustini legisti, quod typica sit locutio: quod si figurata locutio est, est schema potius, quam veritas; ne-cio, inquis, qualiter illud sumere debeam. Ep. ad Frude. ibid.*

sions of St. Augustin. He applies to Paschasius to explain the difficulty, relying on his knowledge and orthodoxy; he does not conclude from the passage of Augustin, that it inclined him to change his faith, but expresses an uncertainty as to its meaning. *I know not how I am to understand it.* How then will the Chaplain make good his assertion, that Paschasius, in his letter to Frudegard, acknowledges, that *many doubted of the corporal presence* of Christ in the Eucharist?

He next alleges Rabanus Maurus, as one who, *about the year 847, wrote expressly against the novelty of this doctrine, in a letter to Heribaldus, bishop of Auxerre.** I apprehend that here again, the Chaplain has followed an unfaithful guide; whom I suspect to be the French Huguenot Aubertin, or Albertinus. For the Chaplain cites his work *on the Eucharist*, as one of those which operated in him a conviction of his former errors;† and I observe a great affinity between the mistakes already noticed in the Chaplain's citations, and those which were detected in Aubertin, by the author of *La perpétuité de la foi*. Now, though I will not say positively, that Rabanus has no such words in his letter to Heribaldus, (for I really neither have, nor can any where hear of its being to be found in America,) yet it may, I think, be inferred from Fleury's Ecclesiastical History, that Rabanus did not write his letter to Heribaldus *expressly against the novelty of Paschasius's doctrine*, as the Chaplain says; (P. 32. ;) and I much question, whether he so much as mentions it in that letter. For, according to Fleury, *Hist. Eccles. book 49, an. 859,*

* Let. p. 32.

† Note, p. 29.

the express purpose of Rabanus's writing to Heribaldus, was, to answer him on many penitential cases, concerning which the latter had consulted him, Rabanus being then archbishop of Mentz.

But as I wish to inform your faith at the same time that I am endeavouring to confirm it, I will add from Fleury, that there is extant an anonymous writing against Paschasius, which is thought, with much probability, to be a letter from Rabanus to Egil, abbot of Prum; and it is not unlikely, that the passage quoted by the Chaplain (P. 32.) is taken from this writing.

But what is the purport of the letter? Is it to dispute the real presence, and transubstantiation? No, certainly; for the author of it clearly professes these doctrines, and begins his letter with these words: "All the faithful must believe and confess, that the body and blood of our Lord is true flesh and true blood; whoever denies it, shows himself an infidel." And a little after: "I add, that as Jesus Christ is the true Lamb of God, who is mystically offered every day for the life of the world; so, by consecration and the power of the Holy Ghost, the bread becomes his true flesh, and the wine his true blood, which is so certain, that no Christian must doubt it."*

The purport then of this writing against Paschasius, was, to censure some modes of speech used by him in explaining the Eucharist. For, he had said, that the body of our Lord, which the faithful receive in communion, is the same body that was born of the Virgin Mary. This expression appeared to Rabanus particularly obnoxious, though it was undoubtedly

* Fleury, *ibid.*

authorized by former usage. It was therefore rejected by him, and thought improper, as not conveying an idea of the different *manner* in which Christ's body and blood exist in their natural state, and that which they have in the sacrament. In the former, they are *palpable* and *sensible*; in the latter, they exist in a manner *supernatural* and *mysterious*.

Paschasius maintained the propriety of his language in treating on this subject, in which dispute many others took part. Ratramus, or Bertram, wrote, by order of Charles the Bald, a treatise *on the body and blood of our Lord*; but that *he was employed expressly by that prince to oppose Paschasius*, is a fact nowhere proved, though confidently asserted by the Chaplain. The French author of the *Perpetuity of the Faith*, &c. says expressly, that Ratramus does not so much as mention Paschasius's name; he objects, indeed, to the expression used by him, but, at the same time, he plainly asserts in many passages the Catholic doctrine; and Boileau, the celebrated Sorbonist, has proved, that Bellarmine and others, were mistaken in thinking he was an adversary to it; as well as in saying, that Paschasius wrote against him his treatise *of the reality of Christ's body and blood*, &c. For the occasion of Paschasius's writing was, to instruct the Saxons, then lately converted to Christianity.

I will not swell this address with copying from Ratramus many passages to prove his belief of the real presence and transubstantiation. Amongst others, this is one. "The bread which is offered, is, at consecration, changed into the body of Christ; as likewise the wine, expressed from the grape, is made blood by the significancy." or efficacy "of the sacred

mystery ; not indeed visibly, but by the invisible operation of the Holy Ghost. Whence they are called the body and blood of Christ, because they are received not for that which they outwardly appear, but for that which they are made by the intimate action of the divine Spirit; and because they are quite another thing through invisible power, than what they visibly appear.”* This, I think, is abundantly sufficient to show, that the disagreement between Paschasius and Ratramus, consisted not in a difference of opinion respecting the real presence and transubstantiation.

We see, continues the Chaplain, that the doctrine of the carnal presence was no sooner openly maintained, than some of the most celebrated doctors of the time arose to combat it, without incurring any suspicion of heresy from their opponents. (P. 33.) We have, I think, seen directly the contrary. We have heard Rabanus say, that, by consecration, and the power of the Holy Ghost, the bread becomes the true flesh, and the wine the true blood, of Christ, which is so CERTAIN, that NO CHRISTIAN must doubt it. And, indeed, it would be a most extraordinary thing, that Rabanus should write expressly against the doctrine of the real presence ; and yet, that Baronius, an historian so fervently attached to the doctrines of the Catholic church, should style him the brightest luminary of Germany. (Ch. let. p. 32.)

We have heard Ratramus, in the last paragraph but one, deliver no less clearly the doctrine of the real presence and transubstantiation ; and if even *they* assert it so evidently, whom the Chaplain has select-

* Ratram. ap auct. *Perp. de la foi.*

ed out of all antiquity, as most favourable to his cause, I need not have recourse to other authors, their contemporaries, to prove, that *a suspicion of heresy* would have been incurred by those, who should have openly combated the above-said tenets.

Finally, we have heard Paschasius represent the doctrine of the real presence, as that of the universal church, and publicly affirm that it had not so much as *one* open adversary. Where then is the *convincing proof, that, at the period* indicated by the Chaplain, *the doctrine of the carnal presence was regarded merely as matter of opinion, and so continued for 200 years?** I flatter myself, on the contrary, that I have alleged from Paschasius and Rabanus *convincing proofs* of the doctrine of the carnal presence being at that time the established sense of the church; and other proofs more decisive will be added hereafter.

The Chaplain says, (P. 31.,) that the term *transubstantiation* was unknown till an *obscure* bishop invented it, eleven hundred years after the time of the apostles. The bishop here meant is Stephen of Autun, who lived about the year 950, that is 850, not 1,100 years after the time of the apostles, St. John having lived to the year 101 of the Christian era, according to the common opinion. I mention this, not for the sake of any advantage I mean to make of the Chaplain's mistake, but merely to show, that he did not bestow on his investigation, all that scrupulous attention, with which he flatters himself. However, Stephen was the first to make use of the term *transubstantiation*. I admit without hesitation, that it is not to

* Let. p. 33.

be met with in any more ancient author ; but as our dispute is not about words, but things, the Chaplain can derive no more advantage from this fact, than an Arian, or Nestorian can from the terms *consubstantial* or θεοτόκος, being never used before the first council of Nice, and that of Ephesus. The term transubstantiation, was found to convey a precise idea of Catholic doctrine, and so became adopted by the council of Lateran into ecclesiastical language ; all which is perfectly agreeable to ancient practice, as attested by Vincent of Lerins : “ The Catholic church,” says he, “ moved thereunto by the innovations of heretics, has always attended to this point in the decrees of her councils ; that is, to transmit to posterity, with the attestation of written authority, what she before received by tradition alone ; comprehending much matter in few words ; and for the better understanding, oftentimes expressing an *ancient* doctrine, by a *new* word of determinate signification.”*

You have already seen how much the Chaplain was mistaken in saying, that the doctrine conveyed by the word *transubstantiation*, was no article of faith before the year 1215. But, considering that his assertions coincide with the prevailing prejudices in this country, I find myself obliged to sacrifice my desire of shortening this address, to the necessity of fully manifesting an error adopted from Aubertin, or Dr. Cosin's *History of Transubstantiation* ; for I cannot persuade myself, that he gave so much credit to Scotus, as to take it up on his authority.

In a council held at Rouen in Normandy, on occa-

* Vinc. Lir. Comm. c. 32.

sion of Berengarius's heresy, an. 1063, the fathers of the council thus express their belief: "With our hearts we believe, and with our tongues we confess, that the bread on the Lord's table is only bread before consecration; but that the nature and substance of bread is, at the very time of consecration, by the unspeakable power of God, *changed into the nature and substance of that flesh which was born of the Virgin Mary*—and that the wine, which is mixed with water in the cup, *is truly and essentially changed into the blood* which mercifully flowed, for the world's redemption, from the side of our blessed Saviour, when wounded by the soldier's lance."*

In the Roman council, an. 1079, Berengarius retracted his error, and professed the Catholic faith in these words: "I Berengarius, with my heart believe, and with my tongue profess, that the bread and wine, which are placed on the altar, are, by the mystical prayer and words of our Redeemer, *substantially changed into the true, proper, and life-giving flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"†

Six years after Berengarius's death, viz. 1094, a numerous council was held at Placentia, of many bishops of Italy, France, Germany, &c. wherein it was again defined, "that bread and wine, when consecrated on the altar, are not only figuratively, but *truly and essentially changed into the body and blood of our Lord.*"‡ Eight or nine other councils were held during the same century, mostly in Italy and France, and all of them equally condemn Berengarius's

* See the decrees of this council, published by the learned *Mabillon*.

† Ap. Bell. lib. 3. de Euch. c. 21.

‡ Labbe, C. C. tom. 10. apud. auct. *True Ch. of Christ*.

opinion; so true it is, that the doctrine of transubstantiation was universally received as an article of faith, long before the year 1215.

When Berengarius first published his erroneous opinion of the real presence, and transubstantiation, between the years 1038 and 1050; it was instantly rejected universally, and concluded to be repugnant to faith. Adelmanus, who had been brought up with him under the discipline of Fulbert, bishop of Chartres, and became himself bishop of Brixen, wrote Berengarius a letter, expressed with much tenderness and charity, wherein he tells his friend, that a "report was spread of his being severed from the unity of the church, by holding a doctrine contrary to the Catholic faith, concerning the body and blood of the Lord, which is immolated every day on the altar." See the passage at length in the *Perpetuité de la foi*, 1st section. This letter was written before any council had been held against Berengarius; and yet Adelmanus tells him, that his doctrine was deemed to be contrary to Catholic faith and unity; a manifest proof of the real presence and transubstantiation, being regarded as tenets of the church antecedently to Berengarius's error.

Lanfrank, who afterwards became archbishop of Canterbury, was present at the council held at Rome against Berengarius, an. 1059, and wrote a treatise *on the reality of the body of Christ* in the Eucharist. In the very beginning of it he says, that Berengarius first "began to entertain an opinion against the whole world;" and afterwards, that he "composed a writing against the Catholic verity, and against the sen-

timent of *all* the churches.”* And in his 18th chapter, he thus states the Catholic doctrine: “We believe, that the earthly substances of bread and wine, being consecrated on the altar by divine institution, and the ministry of priests, are *changed, by the unspeakable, incomprehensible, and miraculous operation of Almighty power, into the substance of our Lord’s body.*—This is the faith which the church, that being spread through the world is called Catholic, has held in all ages, and continues still to hold.”† The same thing is repeated in many other places of his work; in his 22d chapter, he calls upon Berengarius to “question the Latins, to interrogate the Greeks, the Armenians, and generally all the Christians of every country, and they will all with one voice profess this faith.”‡

Guitmundus, archbishop of Aversa, another cotemporary author, and who was probably present at the council of Rome, an. 1059, reproaches the followers of Berengarius with holding a doctrine “that was not received so much as in one borough, or even one village.”§

In fine, Berengarius himself was so much convinced of the universal belief being contrary to his new tenet, that he pretended, according to Lanfrank, “that the church had perished through the ignorance of those who understood not her mysteries, and that she subsisted only in himself and his followers.”||

* Contra orbem sentire cæpisti—contra Catholicam veritatem; & contra omnium ecclesiarum opinionem scriptum postea condidisti. Lanfr. c. 1. apud. auct. *Perp. de la foi.*

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

§ Neque enim eis ulla civitatula, vel etiam una villula concessit. Ibid.

|| Ibid.

With this, and much more similar evidence before me of the sense of the church concerning transubstantiation, at the rise of Berengarius's heresy, about the year 1038, I may without rashness conclude, that the Chaplain was equally mistaken in saying that it only became an article of our faith in the year 1215; and in asserting, as we have before seen, that the doctrine of Christ's *carnal presence* in the Eucharist was regarded as matter of opinion till the council of Rome, under pope Nicholas, in the year 1059 or 1060.

The testimonies I have alleged are so full and decisive, that the most learned Protestant writers have admitted, reluctantly, indeed, but still they have admitted, that the Catholic doctrine had full possession of men's minds, when Berengarius first began to dogmatize. They assign its origin, increase, and full establishment to the period between the publication of Paschasius's writings, and the era of Berengarius above mentioned. This period they represent as the reign of darkness and absurdity. The Chaplain, without adopting their common opinion of the early prevalence of our tenets, has however caught the infection, and with wonderful sensibility laments the woful degradation of reason, and the superstition and ignorance of the age. According to most of these authors, it was during this lamentable state of religion, virtue, and learning, that our doctrine crept into men's minds; that it operated a total change in their faith; that parents, who had heard another lesson all their lifetime, trained their offspring to the belief of the real presence, and transubstantiation; that the pastors of the churches did the same with their parishioners; that the faithful, instead of believing, as before, that

they received Christ in the Eucharist figuratively, or spiritually, now changed their creed, and admitted the tenet of the real presence so universally, that Berengarius could not, in the whole world, find so much as *one pitiful town, or a single village*, to give countenance to his doctrine. What completes the wonder, is, that all this happened without any commotion or opposition. No council was called to withstand the growing evil; not one bishop throughout Christendom raised his voice against it. At all other times, the least innovation, the slightest departure from the received tenets, occasioned disputes and contests; every heresy, however obscure or speculative, was combated at its first appearance; but this doctrine of the real presence, which involved in its nature a point of daily practice, as well as of faith; which proposed to Christians, as an object of inward and outward adoration, that which in their former estimation it was idolatrous to adore; this doctrine gently insinuated itself without noise or disturbance into the minds of all Christians, during that long sleep into which ignorance had lulled them; it operated this wonderful revolution so silently, that no historian either perceived it in himself or others, to transmit us an account of it. Can men, who will believe this, find any mystery in religion, even transubstantiation itself, too hard for their digestion?

But we are not yet come to all the wonders of this most extraordinary phenomenon. The doctrine now held by the Catholic church was, at the rise of Berengarius's error, and so continues to this day, the doctrine of all the eastern and southern Christian churches, the Greek, the Armenian, the Cophtick, the

Abyssinian, &c. ; so truly did Lanfrank, as above cited, refer to them as witnesses of the universal belief. Many of those Christians, as the Nestorians, Eutychians, &c. were separated from the church of Rome near four hundred years before Paschasius wrote on the Eucharist. Within a few years after his writing his letter to Frudegardus, the Greek schism was in a great degree begun by Photius, and rent asunder the eastern and western churches, and bred between them, especially in the former, an animosity which they will with difficulty conceive, who are unacquainted with the ardent spirits of the Greeks. It is therefore incredible, I had almost said impossible, considering the nature of the human mind, that in this state of resentment, the oriental churches should not only adopt the innovations of the Latins, but adopt them without reproach or opposition, of which not the slightest testimony is come down to us ; and that these pretended innovations should be received and incorporated into their religion not only by the abettors of Photius's schism, but likewise by the Nestorians, Eutychians, &c., who had been so long separated from the communion both of the Roman pontiff, and the patriarch of Constantinople.

Obstinacy, or ignorance, alone can deny, that our doctrine concerning the Eucharist agrees with that of all the churches I have mentioned. No point of history can be supported with fuller evidence than this now is, that the real presence and transubstantiation are the invariable tenets of the eastern Christians ; and no other commencement of this general persuasion can be assigned, with the smallest show of proba-

bility, than the commencement of the Christian religion itself.

From all that has been said, our inference is clear and conclusive. The doctrine of the real presence and transubstantiation, were the established doctrines of the church, and not merely matters of opinion, long before the erás assigned by the Chaplain, that is, before the years 1060 and 1215. They were universally taught previously to the Greek schism, which may be said to have begun an. 857, by Photius's intrusion into the see of Constantinople, and even before the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies, the latter of which was condemned in the council of Chalcedon, an. 454; and the former in that of Ephesus, an. 434. But if they were the general doctrines throughout the western and eastern churches at so early a period, what foundation can there be for assigning their commencement to any other era, than that of Christianity itself?

It imports, then, little to the present subject, whether in the interval between Paschasius and Berengarius, a gloom of dark and universal ignorance overspread the face of the Christian world; and whether the bishops were unable to write their names;* for enough has been said, though much more remains unsaid, to prove to every dispassionate man, that the obnoxious tenets did not steal upon men's minds during this fatal interval. If it were at all material to refute the exaggerated imputations of supineness and ignorance, it would be no difficult matter, for the period so outrageously abused was not so fatal to the

* Chaplain's letter, p. 31.

cultivation of letters as is represented ; and if, through the tyranny of turbulent barons, and violence of contending factions, some few prelates incapable of writing their names, perhaps not six in all Christendom, were imposed upon different churches, there were many others, pious and well informed, who kept constant watch over the flocks committed to their charge. Whoever will read the acts of the council of Rheims, held within this period, viz. an. 992, will be satisfied that the bishops, who composed it, were perfectly acquainted with ecclesiastical discipline and sacred antiquity ; and animated with a becoming zeal for the preservation of sound morals among the clergy. Baronius and Sigonius had their eyes principally turned on Italy, their own country, and especially on Rome, when they wrote so unfavourably of the age ; and there indeed contending factions imposed some pontiffs on the chair of St. Peter, who disgraced their station by the corruption of their manners. But France, England, and Germany, and even some parts of Italy, were blessed with bishops of extraordinary virtue and knowledge, and with princes, who encouraged learning, and endowed academies of science, in which, if the true taste of literature did not yet flourish, at least the study of religion, and zeal for improvement, did ; as is attested of the schools erected at Paris, Arras, Cambrai, Liege, &c.*

The Chaplain (P. 19, 20.) cites some Catholic divines, who acknowledge that the doctrine of transubstantiation is not to be found in scripture. It has been already observed, that nothing conclusive can be in-

* Histoire Litteraire de Fr. t. 6.

ferred from this, even supposing these divines in the right, and that they are fairly cited. But what if their meaning be only this, that in scripture there is no express declaration of the bread and wine being changed into the body and blood of Christ? Might they not say this, and still believe that the doctrine of the real presence was so expressed in holy writ, as necessarily to infer the change, which we call *transubstantiation*? For I will venture to say, though I have never looked into some of these divines, that there is not one of them, who does not teach that the words, *This is my body*, import Christ's real, corporeal, and substantial presence in the Eucharist. Accordingly, Scotus says only, that there is no text of scripture so *explicit*, as *evidently to compel* our assent to transubstantiation.*

Melchior Cano's elegant work I have heretofore read with great pleasure; and I wish that the Chaplain had transcribed the whole passage referred to, that we might fairly judge of his meaning; for I own, that I grievously suspect Cano of saying, that transubstantiation is certainly implied, as a necessary consequence of scripture doctrine, if not expressly delivered in it; and that the words of the institution of the sacrament of the *Eucharist* would not be true, if they did not import a change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

Alphonsus de Castro is very *orthodox*, and has the character of being a divine of some credit; but as to his being a *mighty name* in scholastic theology, I never before heard it; and I am sure, no divine can be enti-

* *Ut evidenter cogat transubstantiationem admittere. Scot. apud Bell. l. 3. de Euch. c. 23.*

bled to that character, who gravely says, that in *old authors there is seldom any mention made of the transubstantiation of the bread into the body of Christ*; for so the Chaplain cites him. (P. 20.) How little conversant with old authors he must be, who gravely advances such a proposition, will plainly appear from Bellarmine, Du Perron, Tournely, &c. I shall presently have occasion to recite some passages from old authors; but shall do it with a sparing hand, not forgetting that the purport of this address is not to establish, but to vindicate our doctrine from the attack made against it.

After exhausting his authorities against transubstantiation, the Chaplain begs leave to mention *two negative arguments, which seem to prove to a demonstration, that it was unknown to the ancient church*.^{*} How capable this is of demonstration, you may judge from what you have already heard. Was it unknown to the ancient church, when Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, wrote thus about the year 350? "Jesus Christ, in Cana of Galilee, by his will only, changed water into wine, which has some affinity with blood; and can we not believe him, that *he changes the wine into his own blood*? Let your soul rejoice at it, as a thing most certain, that the *bread, which appears to our eyes, is not bread, though our taste do judge it to be so, but that it is the body of Christ*; and that the wine, which appears to our eyes, is *not wine, though our sense of taste take it for wine, but that it is the blood of Jesus Christ*."[†]

Was transubstantiation unknown, when, in the same century, Gaudentius, bishop of Brescia, thus express-

* P. 24, note.

† Cyril. Hier. Catech. Myst. 4.

ed himself: "The Creator, and Lord of beings, who produces bread from the earth, *from bread makes his own body*, because he can do it, and has promised it; and he, that out of water made wine, *out of wine makes his own blood.*"* It is, I hope, needless to add to these, the testimonies of almost every Christian father; and I think the Chaplain might contend, with equal appearance of truth, that the doctrine of the necessity of baptism *was unknown* to the ancient church, as that the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist was.

We are now prepared to examine his *negative arguments*. The first is, that if the ancient church formerly adored Christ in the Eucharist, as we now do, Catholics would, in arguing against Arians, have insisted on that adoration as a proof of Christ's divinity. (P. 24.) Such is his first demonstration; but does it not equally prove, that the ancient church never adored Christ at all, in or out of the Eucharist? For pray, would it not be equally conclusive against Arians, and in favour of Christ's divinity, to have alleged the ancient custom of adoring him out of the sacrament, for instance, as he is seated in Heaven on the right hand of his Father? Why therefore was this argument not insisted on by the ancient fathers? for a very obvious reason; because the Arians, at the very time that they fell into heresy to avoid the pretended contradictions in the doctrine of the trinity, swallowed other real ones; and, as ecclesiastical historians observe, made no difficulty to acknowledge, that Christ was a divine person, *true God of true God.*†

* Gauden. Brix. Serm. 2.

† Socrates' Hist. Eccl. l. 2. c. 20.

*eternal, the same God with the Father, and possessing the same divine pre-eminence or dignity ;** and therefore an object of divine worship. In a word. they seemingly admitted every thing but the term *consubstantial*. Adoration they did not refuse : and the Catholics, instead of having cause to reproach them with neglecting it, charged them, on the contrary, with introducing a plurality of Gods, by paying divine honours to him, to whom, consistently with their principles, they could not be due.†

Before I proceed to the Chaplain's second argument, amounting likewise to *demonstration*, I must beg leave to detain your attention a little while longer on the first. This is his reasoning : the Catholics, in their dispute with the Arians, did not object against the latter, the supreme adoration paid to Christ in the blessed Eucharist ; therefore no such adoration was paid him ; but that adoration would not have been withheld, if the Catholics had indeed believed Christ's real presence in the Eucharist ; therefore, since it was withheld, they did not believe in it. You have already heard a very satisfactory reason, why Catholics did not object against the Arians, as the Chaplain thinks they would ; to that then I shall say no more ; but begging leave, for once, to quit my defensive plan, I shall build one argument in favour of our doctrine upon the foundation laid by the Chaplain. According to him, adoration of Christ in the Eucharist, imports a belief of his real presence ; but primitive Christians adored Christ in the Eucharist ; they therefore believed his real presence. The se-

* Ibid. c. 19. propè finem.

† Soc. Hist. Eccl. l. 1. c. 23. edit. Val.

cond, or *minor* proposition, which is the only disputable one, can be proved by the clearest evidence of primitive Christians themselves. I shall omit relating passages to this point out of Ambrose, the holy bishop of Milan,* Chrysostom,† Gregory Nazianzen, &c., that I may come immediately to an authority still more authentic, the public liturgy of the church of Constantinople, which commonly goes under the name of Chrysostom, and was probably composed, and certainly used by him. In this liturgy, not only the external acts of adoration, expressed by incense, bending and prostrating the body, &c. are enjoined, but likewise internal adoration is clearly signified by the prayers addressed to Jesus Christ in the sacrament. “Lord Jesus,” is the priest enjoined to say, “look down from thy holy habitation, and from the throne of thy glory, come to sanctify us, thou who art seated in Heaven with thy Father, and who art here present with us in an invisible manner. Deign with thy powerful hand to grant us thy pure and unsullied body; and through us to all the people.” Then adds the liturgy, “the priest and the deacon must make their adoration.” And to show, that this adoration refers to the body of Christ upon the altar, we need only note the farther directions of the liturgy. The priest taking up the consecrated bread, and bending his head before the altar, prays in this manner: “I confess, that thou art Christ, the son of the living God, who came into the world to save sinners, &c. Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter into my house defiled with sin; but as thou didst vouchsafe to

* De Spir. san. lib. 3. 12.

† Chrys. hom. 69. *ad Pop. Antioch.*—and, *de Sacerd.* lib. 6.

enter the house of Simon the Leper, so likewise vouchsafe to enter my soul, full of ungovernable passions, as a manger, or a house of filth and death, covered all over with the leprosy of sin." Thus is proved the adoration of Christ in the Eucharist, not only by the testimony of the fathers, but by a law of ecclesiastical discipline, connected with daily and inviolable practice; and making part of the worship rendered to Jesus Christ agreeably to the public liturgy; and consequently, the primitive belief of the real presence is fully established.

The Chaplain's second negative argument, or demonstration against the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist is, *that heathen writers would have retorted upon Christians, the accusation of idolatry in adoring a bit of bread, in reserving their God in gold and silver chalices, &c.* (P. 24, note.) Violent, indeed, must be his prejudices against the religion he has renounced, if such arguments appear demonstrations to him. For how little do we know of the disputations between Christians and heathens? Some fragments of Celsus and Porphyry, and of the writings of Julian the apostate, together with the little that can be collected from the early apologies for Christianity, are almost all, that is come down to us on this subject. The heathens may have objected, as the Chaplain supposes they would; so may they have found, in the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, in his nativity, in his crucifixion, an apparent apology for their fables concerning their own divinities. They may have grounded on the Christian doctrine of redemption, the same arguments as the Socinians now do; and they may, from the example afforded them, have attempted to

justify their own human sacrifices. Above all, they may have availed themselves of the tenet of the Trinity, to uphold, or, at least, explain away, the absurdities of a plurality of Gods. But, have we any authority for saying they did so? No; and except a single expression of the scoffer Lucian, which seems to glance at the Trinity; and a passage of Tertullian and Athanasius, implying, that some Jews and Pagans reproached Christians with admitting more Gods than one; antiquity does not furnish us with any proof of these arguments being used by heathen writers. What wonder then, if they never made the objection proposed by the Chaplain, especially, as of all the mysteries of our religion, the celebration of the Eucharist was that, in which, during the reign of persecution and idolatry, the greatest privacy was observed.

The truth is, the heathens despised the Christians too much to inform themselves minutely of their tenets. They knew little of them, but what appeared outwardly; their aversion for idolatry, and their profession of following the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Here their inquiries stopped; and Tertullian, in his Apology, ch. 1., upbraids them with neglecting in this point alone to seek information.

To these negative arguments, the Chaplain begs leave to add, "that the fathers of the 2d council of Nice expressly confirm the opinion, that Christ's body in heaven is not flesh and blood; how therefore can bread and wine be changed into his body, if they become flesh and blood?" (P. 24, note.) For this most extraordinary passage, he quotes Labbe's Collection of the Councils, tom. 6. p. 541. 'This collection I

know not where to find in America ; but I aver, that no such doctrine was delivered or entertained by the fathers of that council ; and will therefore, without fear of being convicted of rashness, undertake to say, that the Chaplain cannot support what he has here advanced. Neither Cabassutius, in his summary of the councils, nor Fleury, nor Natalis Alexander, who recite the decrees and canons of this council with much exactness, say one syllable of such a doctrine being taught in it. As in many other instances, so likewise in this, the Chaplain has suffered himself to be misled by authors, whom, I hope, he will deservedly mistrust for the time to come. Their unfaithfulness is eminently conspicuous in the present instance. In the fifth session of the council, some passages were read of a fabulous book, entitled, *The Travels of the Apostles*. Amongst other fables, it was there related, that John the Evangelist had said, that Christ had no true body ; that when the Jews thought they crucified him, he exhibited only the appearance of a body, but was in reality without any corporeal figure. But so far was the council from confirming this doctrine, that they rejected it with horror. This is the account given by *Fleury, Hist. Eccles. tom. 9. b. 44. an. 787*. It would be curious indeed, if the authors, whom the Chaplain has followed, should have mistaken this fabulous writing for the acts of the council.*

* Since writing the above, I have found, in the Annapolis library, Binius's Greek and Latin Edition of the Acts of the 2d council of Nice ; I have carefully examined these Acts, but can meet with nothing similar to the opinion attributed to the council by the Chaplain, but the contrary doctrine repeatedly established, and the error rejected with horror, which ascribed to Christ only an apparent or phantastical body. See *Concil. Gener. Vol. V. Act. 5. p. 703, 4, 5, 6*.

Nothing, I think, now remains unnoticed of all he has said against our doctrine of the Eucharist, excepting the collection of supposed absurdities and contradictions, with which, in the same page, (24.) he charges transubstantiation. In this, he uses a mode of reasoning not very liberal, and yet not unpractised by many other writers against us. The objected absurdities and contradictions, whether real or imaginary, result more immediately from Christ's real presence in the Eucharist, than from transubstantiation; but to impute them to that doctrine, would not be quite so inoffensive. Some regards are due to Protestant Lutheran brethren, and the doctrine of the Protestant Episcopal church, who admit the real presence in their catechisms at least, and according to their earliest writers. But as to the Catholic tenets, too much cannot be said to render them an object of ridicule and detestation. *If transubstantiation be admitted*, says the Chaplain, (p. 24.) *the true God may be shut up in boxes, or devoured corporally by vermin.* Would to God it were possible, in answering such objections, (which indeed I never should have suspected the Chaplain capable of drawing from the foulest dregs of controversy,) to keep up your respect for this great mystery of our religion, and adorable pledge of divine goodness towards mankind! *How can he give us his flesh to eat?* (John vi.) was the Jewish question; *and many hearing it, said, this saying is hard, and who can hear it?*

So likewise the Marcionites, and other enemies of the Incarnation, contended, that to be enclosed in a womb, and to be laid in a manger, was unworthy of the Divine Majesty. The Pagans and Jews ridiculed

the credulity of Christians in believing in a man crucified between two thieves; but the church despised their mockeries, being taught by the great apostle, that the mystery of the cross was indeed *a stumbling block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to those who are called—the power of God, and the wisdom of God.** The divinity of Christ could not be injured by his mortal sufferings; and from them, great glory came to him, and utility to men. The same answer we may give to our opponents, when they compel us to take notice of objections so unworthy of the greatness and sanctity of the subject under consideration. But if this will not satisfy them, I would beg leave to ask them, whether they do not believe that the infant Jesus was confined in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and wrapped in swaddling clothes? Do they not believe that he was, like other children, liable to be hurt, for instance, by the application of fire, or the stings of insects? If then he could suffer these things in his own natural body, and be liable to be hurt by them; why may he not render himself subject, in appearance, to the same accidents, when he is under the covering of bread and wine, and incapable of being hurt thereby?

I have already taken some notice of the objection, so often repeated,† and so often refuted, of transubstantiation contradicting *our senses and our understanding*. Ought we to trust our senses more than God himself? When Joshua, who took the angel for a man, asked him, *Art thou for us, or for our adversaries*, and was told, he was not a man, but *a captain of the*

* 1 Cor. i.

† Ch. Let. p. 24.

heavenly host, he fell on his face, and worshipped, and said, *What says my Lord unto his servant?* (Joshua v. 14.) that is, he believed him rather than his senses; for to all his senses he appeared a man; but revelation informed him, that what he saw was an angel. In like manner, if God has revealed to us, that under the appearances of bread and wine, is contained the body and blood of Christ; are we not to believe him rather than those appearances? The evidence for the revelation, may be tried by all the rules of criticism; but when the mind is once convinced of its existence, it must then submit, notwithstanding all seeming contradiction, or opposition of our senses. "Let us always believe God," says St. Chrysostom, speaking of the Eucharist, "and not contradict him, though that which he says, seems to contradict our thoughts and our eyes. For his words cannot deceive us; but our sense may be easily deceived. Since, therefore, he says, *This is my body*, let us be fully persuaded of it. How many say now, oh! that I could see him in his own shape! or his clothes! or any thing about him! Believe me, you see him; you touch him; you eat him. You would be content to see his clothes; and he lets you not only see him, but also touch him, and eat him, and receive him within you."* From this genuine quotation you may see what St. Chrysostom, that *enlightened doctor of antiquity*, thought both of the argument drawn from a supposed contradiction of our senses and understanding, and of the real presence and transubstantiation.

As the Chaplain has added to his reasoning against

* Chrys. hom. 82. (al. 83.) in Matt.

our belief, none of those *innumerable arguments*, which evince the meaning of Christ's words, *This is my body*, to be *figurative*, (p. 25.,) I likewise shall gladly waive the controversy; only remarking, that he is neither terrified by the anathemas of Luther against the defenders of a figurative sense, whom he calls *blasphemers*, a *damned sect*, *liars*, *bread-eaters*, *wine-guzzlers*,* &c., nor by the severity of Dr. Cosin, bishop of Durham, in the beginning of his *History of Transubstantiation*, where, speaking of the words of the institution of the sacrament, he says; *if any one make a bare figure of them, we cannot and ought not either excuse or suffer him in our churches.*

Another of our tenets, which the Chaplain has selected as unsupported by scripture and antiquity, particularly in the Greek church, is, the belief of purgatory. But before he proceeded to impugn, he ought to have stated it; which not having done, the deficiency shall now be supplied. All, therefore, which the church requires to be believed on this subject, is contained in the decree of the council of Trent, which defines, that there is *a purgatory*, or middle state, *and that the souls therein detained, are relieved by the suffrages of the faithful, especially by the agreeable sacrifice of the altar.*† Concerning the nature or extent of their sufferings, whether by fire or otherwise, the place of punishment, its duration, &c., we are not confined to any particular opinion. Now, is it true, that this doctrine has no foundation in scripture and antiquity? The books of Maccabees, which so decidedly es-

* Blasphemos in Deum, damnatam sectam, mendaces homines, panivoros, vini-bibones. *Luth. in parva Conf.*

† Conc. Trid. sess. 25.

tablish it, must not be admitted of sufficient authority, because *they were not acknowledged for canonical scriptures by St. Hierom, Rufinus, Epiphanius, Athanasius, Gregory, and many other ancient and eminent fathers.* (Ch. Let. p. 21.) If it be a sufficient reason for rejecting the books of Maccabees, that some early fathers doubted of their canonical authority, though afterwards, on a full investigation, they were received by the whole church, I wish to know, how Protestants came generally to admit the authority of the epistle to the Hebrews, the 2d of Peter and of James, the Revelation of John and others; for of all these, as well as of the books of Maccabees, doubts were some time entertained, and the fathers held different opinions concerning them. But I expect no satisfactory account of this matter; and am well convinced, that the prevailing reason, which moved the compilers of the English Bible to reject the one, and receive the other, was, the support which they observed the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, would derive from the book of Maccabees.* But, though it were destitute of this, there are not wanting other passages of scripture, to confirm the same, as the Chaplain may find in our divines, though he so positively says the contrary, and particularly in the *Catholic Scripturist*, with whom he ought not to be unacquainted.

* Neither Jerome nor Gregory reject these books. The former says, they are not in the Hebrew canon, (formed by Esdras, before they were written,) nor universally received. But he himself held them to be of divine inspiration. *Com. in c. xxiii. Isaie*—in c. vii. & ix. *Eccl.*—in c. viii. *Daniel.* And Gregory, who was posterior to the council of Carthage, which declared their canonical authority, can only mean, that they had not been so received by all the churches. As to Athanasius, if the Chaplain ground his assertion, as I suspect, on a writing entitled *Synopsis*, and bearing his name, that work is rejected by all the critics, as falsely imputed to him.

As to the doctrine of antiquity concerning purgatory, and particularly of the Greek church, we shall meet with little difficulty. No article of the Christian belief has stronger evidence from the testimony of the early fathers; they prove incontestably the practice of praying for the dead; they assert, that by the prayers of the faithful, in this life, comfort and relief is obtained for those who are departed out of it; which is establishing as much of the doctrine of purgatory, as we are obliged to believe. St. Epiphanius, a bishop of the eastern church, ranks Aerius amongst the founders of heretics, for teaching, that prayers and alms are unavailing to the dead;* and Augustin confirms the same, adding, that his heresy was condemned by the universal church,† Greeks therefore as well as others. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, another Greek father, expounding the liturgy in a catechistical discourse, says, “we remember those who are deceased, first the patriarchs, apostles, and martyrs, that God would receive our supplications through their prayers and intercession. Then we pray for our fathers and bishops, and in general all amongst us, who are departed out of this life, *believing that this will be the greatest relief to their souls, for whom it is made*, whilst the holy and tremendous victim lies present.”‡ If this address should chance to be seen by any one, who has access to the works of this holy father, I would entreat him to read the continuation of this passage, and see the perfect agreement of our doctrine with that of the Greek church

* Epiph. Hær. 75, alias 76.

† Aug. de Hæresibus—Hær. 53.

‡ Cyril. Hier. Catec. Myst. 19. n. 9. edit. Bened. *alias* cat. 5.

in St. Cyril's time. The *enlightened* Greek doctor, St. Chrysostom, is equally decisive. "It is not in vain," says he, "that in the divine mysteries we remember the dead, appearing in their behalf, praying the Lamb, who takes away the sins of the world, that comfort may thence be derived to them—Let us pray for them, who have slept in Christ; let us not fail to succour the departed; for the common expiation of the world is offered."* Here is surely evidence enough to prove the antiquity of our doctrine, and its entire conformity with that of the Greek church. I quote no Latin fathers, as the Chaplain appears to lay particular stress on the Greek; otherwise it were easy to produce the most unequivocal evidence, of their perfect agreement with those just cited. The objection from the venerable bishop Fisher, that *to this very day purgatory is not believed by the Greeks, &c.*, is either a mistake in him, or, what I much more incline to believe, he meant only to say, that the Greeks do not believe in a purgatory of fire, contrary to a common, though not a dogmatical opinion of the western church.

The Chaplain proceeds (p. 30.) to tell us, that our present doctrine of the *divine* institution and necessity of confession, was not always a settled point in our church. What if it were not? what harm would ensue, if for some ages this matter remained without minute investigation, and the faithful contented themselves with humble and penitential confession of their sins, not inquiring, whether the practice was derived from *divine* or *apostolical* institution? Must we, for

* Chrys. in i. ad Cor. hom. 41—*ad ias* 51.

this reason, refuse to believe the church, when, upon full inquiry and examination of the tradition preserved in all the churches, she defines, that confession is an obligation imposed on us by *divine* authority? This would lead us back again into the question of infallibility. But let us hear the Chaplain's reasons. *The learned Alcuin*, says he, *during the ninth century, tells us expressly, that some said it was sufficient to confess our sins to God alone.* Were the persons here mentioned Catholics or not? Does it appear, that their opinion had any effect on the public practice, so that it might alarm the vigilance of the pastors of the church? Does he speak generally of all sins? Does he not refer to situations and cases of necessity, in which confession cannot be made but to God alone? Till these, and several other things relating to this passage, are stated more fully, it is impossible to determine Alcuin's meaning. The same must be observed of the passage from the manuscript penitential of Theodore, the genuineness of which, I much doubt; for I understand that Wilkins, the collector and editor of the British Councils, long since Usher's time, has not published it; and surely he would not have omitted so valuable a discovery; and moreover, because I find no mention of this passage, in a comprehensive abridgment of Theodore's Penitential, which now lies before me. I do not hereby mean to impeach Usher's integrity, or, in general, his judgment; but, for the reasons just stated, I conclude there were good grounds to question the authority of a manuscript, which does not appear to have had any of a similar tenor to support its credit. After all, to what do these authorities amount, supposing them both

genuine, and conveying the sense intended by the Chaplain? Only to this, that at the time, the church was not known by Theodore and Alcuin, to have made any authentic declaration of the *divine* institution and necessity of confession. The practice of it, we may fairly conclude to have been general, from this circumstance, if all other proof were wanting, which certainly is not the case; that it was doubted, whether forgiveness could be obtained without it; and in such a situation, what prudent and virtuous Christian, anxious to obtain reconciliation with his Maker, would neglect the use of a mean, perhaps necessary to procure it?

These observations are equally applicable to the authority of Gratian, whether he was of the opinion attributed to him by the Chaplain and Maldonatus; or whether he only held, that the precept of confession, was not obligatory immediately after the commission of sin, as I find his words understood by other divines. A general remark will not be improper in this place; that our faith is formed on the public doctrine of the church, and not on the opinions of private theologians. It is indeed requiring too much of us, to account for all the singularities, which any of them may have committed to writing. Does the Chaplain think, we cannot produce from Protestant authors many concessions, many acknowledgments of the agreement of our tenets with the sense of antiquity, with the practice of the first ages, with the universal belief of early Christians? Does not Dr. Cosin, in spite of all his animosity, acknowledge the possibility of transubstantiation? Does he not confess, that the water was changed^l into wine at the

marriage feast of Cana in Galilee? Do not the translators of Dupin's History, and other Protestants, bear witness to the ancient practice of praying for the dead? Have not the invocation of saints, the honouring of their remains, the celibacy of our clergy, been vindicated by Protestant writers of eminence from the misrepresentations and objections of our opponents? Yet, would the Chaplain think it worth his while to advert to these authorities, were they brought forth against him?

This however is his method against us. When he comes to object (P. 20.) to the power of *loosening* and *binding*, committed by Christ to his apostles and their successors in the ministry, he tells us, that the famous Lombard, the *Aristotle*, the *Newton* of scholastic divines, and some others, maintained that power to be only *declaratory* of forgiveness; whereas, *since the council of Trent, it is become an article of our faith, that the priest has power to forgive sins.* (P. 20.)

Peter Lombard, who lived in the 12th century, was indeed a man of acknowledged and methodical genius, and had the merit of reducing the scattered opinions of divines, into a regular system or body, which has since been the groundwork of scholastic theology. But if the Chaplain, by calling him its *Newton* and *Aristotle*, mean to convey an idea, that all his opinions are held sacred, he is greatly mistaken; for many of them are controverted, many universally rejected. The opinion, for which he is here cited, is very different from that which might be supposed by the Chaplain's imperfect representation of it. For the natural inference from his representation is, that the sacerdotal order, not only do not exercise a minis-

terial and dependent jurisdiction over repentant sinners, (which is what we teach,) but likewise that they impart no absolution, that they have no power of loosening or binding; in a word, that no grace is administered through the instrumentality of their ministry, and consequently that there is no such thing as the sacrament of penance. Now, all this is expressly contrary to Lombard. He holds the divine institution of this sacrament; he teaches that the ministry of absolution truly confers grace; that it has an inward effect on the soul; and though only declaratory with regard to the remission of the guilt of sin, is efficaciously and actively so, with respect to the remission of the temporal punishment annexed to it. The council of Trent censured, indeed, the doctrine of the reformers in such terms, as appear to the generality of divines, to import the falsehood of Lombard's opinion; but others do not think so; and the Chaplain might have remained in the bosom of our church, and still believed, that the power of absolution is only *declaratory*, in Lombard's sense, as Tournely* would have informed him.

I have now finished my observations on the argumentative part of the Chaplain's letter, with abilities far inferior indeed; but, I trust, with a superiority of cause, which has enabled me to leave nothing unanswered, that could carry trouble into your minds, or shake the firmness of your faith. Before he concludes his letter, he has thought proper to make a profession of his new belief, and shows a particular anxiety to vindicate to himself the appellation of a Catholic. I am

* De Pœn. quæst. 2. art. 2.

not surprised at his anxiety ; it is an appellation characteristic of the true church. " My name is Christian," says Pacianus, " my surname is Catholic. That denominates me, this distinguishes me."* And St. Augustin ; " we must hold the Christian religion, and the communion of that church, which is *Catholic* ; and which is called *Catholic*, not only by her own children, but by all her enemies."† But will the Chaplain now find this characteristic in his new religion, any more, than the sectaries of St. Augustin's times found it in theirs ? This holy doctor having mentioned various reasons, which prevailed on him to remain in the communion of the church, proceeds thus : " I am held in this church by the succession of priests coming down even to the present episcopacy, from St. Peter, to whom Christ after his resurrection committed the feeding of his flock. Finally, I am held to it by the very name of *Catholic*, of which this church alone has, not without reason, so kept possession, that, though all heretics desire to be called Catholics ; yet if a stranger ask them, where Catholics meet, none of them will presume to point out his own church, or his house."‡

The Chaplain claims right to the title of Catholic, because he " believes and professes every point of Christian faith, which at *all times*, and in *all places*, has constituted the creed of all orthodox believers." (P. 35.) For such, we are told, is Vincent of Lerins's description of a Catholic. In the preceding, as well as subsequent part of his work, Vincent has explain-

* Ep. 1. ad Sympron. Nov.

† Aug. l. de Verâ Rel. c. 7.

‡ Aug. cont. epis. Fundam. c. 4.

ed the characteristics of Catholicity so clearly, that it was impossible for the Chaplain to mistake them; and it was, perhaps, becoming his candour to have stated that author's meaning, when he was alleging his authority to the Roman Catholics of Worcester. "It is necessary," says he, "to follow the universality, antiquity, and agreement of the Catholic and apostolical church; and if a part revolt against the whole; if innovation rise up against antiquity; if the dissent of one or a few mistaken men disturb the agreement of all, or of a great majority of Catholics, let the integrity of the whole be preferred to the infection of a part. In this same universality, let greater regard be had to venerable antiquity, than profane novelty; in antiquity itself," (that is, with regard to doctrines, for which antiquity is alleged,) "let the *decrees of a general council*, if any exist, in the first place be opposed to the rashness of a few; and if no such decrees exist, let Catholics follow, what is next in authority, *the agreeing opinions of many and eminent fathers*; which things being faithfully, soberly, and anxiously observed, we shall *easily* with God's help discover the pernicious errors of rising heretics."* Will the Chaplain's Catholicity stand the test of these rules? Will the authority of the learned Vincent of Lerins justify the religion which he has adopted?

He next alleges, that the apostles' creed is the standard of Catholicity; but it must be subscribed, he says, *in its full extent*. Does he mean by these words, that every article of the creed is to be received, without addition, in the terms in which it is written? Or that it is to be received with such extension and ex-

* Vinc. Lir. Comm. c. 38.

planation as may comprehend other points not clearly expressed, but only implied therein? If this last be his meaning, who shall determine what is implied? By what authority shall the Arian or Macedonian be bound to acknowledge, that the divinity of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, is taught in the creed? Will he, who receives the creed in the Arian or Macedonian sense, be a Catholic? If it be the standard of Catholicity, it surely cannot be enough to admit its words; but the sense conveyed by those words must be the object of Catholic faith. I admit the creed, will each of these say, which, whoever admits *in its full extent*, according to you, *must be a member of the Catholic church.* (P. 35.) Show me that I do not so admit it; show me, that by requiring my assent to your explanation and extension of it, you do not require a submission to human authority, and thereby lay on us a yoke heavier than that, with which you reproach the church of Rome; for when she requires obedience, she does so in virtue of her claim to infallibility; but you have no such pretension. Thus will the Arian, Macedonian, and other sectaries argue; and I cannot see, how the Chaplain will get over their objection, consistently with the principles laid down in his letter; and therefore the creed, as subject to *extension* and *explanation*, cannot be with him, the standard of Catholicity.

But if the Chaplain mean, that the creed contains the universal Catholic faith; that the profession of it alone, without understanding any thing more to be implied, than is literally expressed, constitutes us members of the Catholic church; then are they not heretics, who condemn marriage, and introduce a

distinction of meats; whom nevertheless the apostle describes as *giving heed to the doctrine of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared* ;* nor they, who deny an eternity of punishment, or assert, that all the reprobated spirits in hell shall at length be saved; for none of these things are touched on in the creed. Where shall we find in it these necessary points, the profession of our obligation to love God, and to keep holy the Lord's day? For necessary those points certainly are, the omission or transgression of which, is a damnable sin. Where does the creed speak of the necessity of baptism, or of the lawfulness of it, when administered by heretics? Did not the Catholic church always assert the first, as an essential doctrine, and establish the other against the Donatists? Where finally, to omit many other articles, which not even the Chaplain would deny as belonging to Catholic faith, does the creed propose to our belief, the receiving of the books of the Old and New Testament, as of Divine revelation? It may therefore be concluded, and, I think, upon evident principles, and in direct opposition to the Chaplain, that a person may subscribe the apostles' creed, even *in its full extent*, without being a member of the Catholic church. I only make this exception, that by declaring his assent to these words, *I believe the holy Catholic church*, he means not to acknowledge her unerring authority; for if he does, that acknowledgment imports the belief of every article, which she proposes as revealed by God.†

* 1 Tim. c. 4.

† The Chaplain, in a note, (P. 35, 36.,) obviates the meaning here insinuated, and attempts to show an opposition between the exposition of this article of

Another material objection to the Chaplain's doctrine is, that it admits into the communion of the church, almost all those who in every age of Christianity have been deemed heretics, and the corrupters of faith. The great council of Nice, which the first Protestants pretended to respect as replenished with a truly Catholic spirit, in their eighth canon, speak of the Novatians as being out of the Catholic church. Their errors consisted, 1st. In denying the power of the church to forgive sins, particularly that of apostasy from faith; 2dly. In requiring the rebaptization of those, who had been baptized by heretics; 3dly. In condemning second marriages. I doubt whether the Chaplain will find any of these errors reprobated in the apostles' creed. St. Cyprian expressly teaches,* that the Novatians made use of no other creed, than that of the Catholics; which undoubtedly was that of the apostles; and yet they were deemed heretics, and out of the communion of the church.

The Donatists, in like manner, because they rejected baptism administered by heretics, were denied communion with the Catholic church; but the creed

the creed, in the catechism of the council of Trent, and that of many of our religious instructors. But they must be ignorant instructors indeed, who know not that by *believing in God*, we profess to believe both that he is, and that his word is infallible, as being founded in the divine perfections of infinite wisdom and truth; whereas, by believing the Catholic church, we make profession of acknowledging her existence; and that God communicates to us, through her, those truths, which we must receive, not as the words of man, but as they truly are, the words of God. Just so the Chaplain admits the scriptural doctrines delivered by the apostles and evangelists; nevertheless, he does not fail *in making a sufficient difference between God and his creatures*; but he knows that divine omnipotence can render *mortal men* infallible in communicating revealed doctrines to others; and which must ultimately be believed for the authority of God alone.

* Cyp. ep. 76. ad Magnum.

they did not deny. "You are with us," says St. Augustin, "in baptism, *in the creed*, in the other sacraments of God; but in the spirit of unity, and in the bond of peace; finally, *in the Catholic church* you are not with us."* I infer then again, that it was not the intention of the apostles to conclude in their creed the *universal Christian Catholic faith*.

You are now prepared to form a true estimate of the Chaplain's *universal belief*, as expressed in the place† we have been considering. As I before said, almost every sect, that ever deformed the face of Christianity, might be taken into it. Sabellians and Arians; Nestorians and Eutychians; Socinians and many Deists; and the disciples of that modern author, (his name is celebrated in the literary world,) who has lately discovered, that the doctrine of a pre-existent nature in Christ, that is, of his having existed before his Incarnation, is a corruption of Christianity; all these, however discordant in their principles, would subscribe the apostles' creed; and might say that they *embraced no new religion, but only discarded some doctrines, which had been engrafted upon the old one*. Thus, in a short time, under pretence of reducing our faith to the primitive simplicity of the creed, every tenet would be successively rejected, which curbs our passions, or subjects our understanding. "If once this impious licentiousness be admitted," says the excellent Vincent of Lerins, "I dread to say, how great will be the danger of destroying and extirpating religion. For, if any one part of the Catholic doctrine be rejected, another and another will share

* Aug. ep. 93. (olim 48.) ad Vincentium.

† P. 36.

the same fate; and at length it will become a practice, and deemed lawful to discard others; thus the tenets of religion being rejected one by one, what will finally ensue, but the rejection of the whole together.”*

The Chaplain proceeds to tell the Roman Catholics of Worcester, that his religion is that of the Bible; but that their religion is the doctrine of the council of Trent; insinuating thus an opposition between the two. But do not Catholics, as well as he himself, recur to scripture, as the foundation of their religion? Does not the council of Trent profess the most profound veneration for, and implicit belief of every part of scripture? Does it not, in all its decrees and definitions of faith, assert the tenets of the church on the authority of scripture? If then both the council and Chaplain be solicitous to form their faith on scripture, which is most likely to discover the true meaning thereof? If the Chaplain deem it his duty to rely most on his own private interpretation, the Catholics of Worcester think it wiser, and more consistent with humility and obedience, to follow that church, which Jesus Christ has promised to lead into all truth; and to hear those instructors, whom he has appointed to *teach all things whichsoever he has commanded*.

I rely solely, says the Chaplain, *upon the authority of God's word*; (P. 38.;) and do we not likewise rely *solely* upon the same authority? No, insinuates the Chaplain; *you Catholics think it necessary to recur to unwritten tradition*. And, pray, what is the tradition to which we recur, but *the word of God*, delivered

* Vinc. Lit. Comm. c. 31.

down to us by the testimony of the fathers, and in the public doctrine of the Catholic church? Does not the Chaplain himself receive the *written* word of God from the same testimony and tradition? Why is it less to be depended on in witnessing the unwritten word of God, than in delivering down, and separating the true and genuine books of scripture from those which are false or corrupted? He demands, with St. Cyprian, *whence we have our tradition?* We answer, from the apostles, from their successors, from the attestation of Christians, spread throughout the world; and St. Augustin proves our right to assign this origin; because, says he, “what the universal church holds, and was not instituted in a council, but was always maintained, is most reasonably concluded to be derived from apostolical institution.”* But St. Cyprian requires, *that it be commanded in the gospel, or contained in the epistles or acts of the apostles.* (P. 38.) What wonder, that St. Cyprian, while he was engaged, as he then was, in the error of the Donatists, should speak their language; and, like all other opposers of the authority of the church, should call for scripture proofs, which can never be effectual; because they can always be explained away by human ingenuity? Wherefore St. Augustin, in his 5th book, 23d ch. on baptism, against the Donatists, particularly refutes the writing now objected out of Cyprian; and it is wonderful, indeed, if the Chaplain did not discover this in the very place from which, I presume, he copied his objection. He sometimes cites Vincent of Lerins. Will he then allow one, who

* Aug. de Bapt. contra Donat. l. 4. c. 6.

still retains the most sincere good will for him, to recommend to his reading the eleventh chapter of Vincent's excellent work? Will he notice, what Vincent there says, of those who endeavour to support their false opinions, by quotations from Cyprian's works, written while he was engaged in the defence of error?

The Chaplain adds, that we deem the scriptures deficient and obscure; but he asks, *Where is the deficiency? Where is the obscurity?* (Ibid.) Deficient they certainly are not, if it be meant, that they do not answer the views and designs of divine Providence in causing them to be written; but in this sense they are deficient, that they do not contain all necessary points of belief and practice; which, I think, has been sufficiently proved; and is declared by St. Paul in the words before cited; *Brethren, stand and hold fast the traditions you have been taught, whether by word or our epistle.**

But where shall we find *the obscurity of the scripture?* We shall find it in almost every book of holy writ; we shall find it, where St. Peter tells us it is to be found, in Paul's epistles, *in which are some things hard to be understood, and which, as well as all other scriptures, the unlearned and unstable wrest to their own destruction.†* But St. Chrysostom assures us, that *scripture expounds itself, and does not suffer the reader to err.* (P. 38.) The Chaplain is conversant in history, and undoubtedly a person of observation. Can he then seriously believe or imagine it to be Chrysostom's meaning, that the scripture expounds itself in all points to every reader, so that he cannot err? Is

* 2 Thess. ii. 15.

† 2 Pet. iii. 16.

every one able to make that conference and comparison of the different passages of scripture, which lead to its true interpretation? Can any thing more be intended by that great doctor, than that scripture directs every reader to such a rule of exposition, as secures him from error? But is his private interpretation this infallible rule? Or is it that of the church, manifested in her public doctrine, by the ministers of her appointment? Hear St. Chrysostom himself: "Take the book in your hand; read a passage throughout; keep present to your mind, what you understand; but return frequently to the reading of those things, which are obscure and difficult; and if by repeated reading you cannot find out their meaning, go to a teacher, go to one wiser than yourself."* To the authority of Chrysostom might be added, I believe, that of every father of the church; and most of them have delivered their opinions of the insufficiency and obscurity of scripture, not in fragments of a sentence, but treating professedly and fully on this very subject. To these allow me to add an authority, which, with many of our Protestant brethren, will weigh more than that of all the fathers. Thus, then, Luther, in his preface to the psalms: "It is a most audacious presumption in any one to say, that he understands every part even of one book of scripture."† Let the Chaplain recollect all the disputes and variations even amongst Protestants themselves, concerning the meaning of these words spoken by Christ at

* Chrys. hom. 3. de Lazaro.

† Scio esse impudentissimæ temeritatis eum, qui audeat profiteri unum scripturæ librum à se in omnibus partibus intellectum. *Luth. pref. in Psal.* ap. Bell. de R. P. 1, 3. c. 21.

his last supper, *This is my body*. If innumerable arguments evince to him their meaning to be figurative, he cannot forget, that Luther and Dr. Cosin, a bishop of the church of England, pronounce anathemas against the maintainers of a figurative sense. After this, will he so confidently repeat his interrogation, *where is the deficiency, where is the obscurity of Scripture?*

He is content, he says, to acquiesce in that authority, to which alone St. Austin and St. Chrysostom refer us, (P. 38.,) insinuating hereby, that scripture is that sole authority. How he came to mention St. Augustin on this occasion, I am at a loss to conceive. This holy father has made a clear profession of receiving scripture itself, only because it came recommended to him by the church. "I would not," says he, "believe the gospel, if the authority of the Catholic church did not move me thereunto."* In his controversies with the Manicheans and Donatists, he repeatedly appeals to the authority and practice of the Catholic church; he tells the latter, that neither they, nor the Catholics, have any clear scripture for their different opinions concerning rebaptization; but that the former, by refusing to submit to the church, resist not man, but our Saviour himself, who in the gospel bears testimony to the church.† The pretended authority from St. Chrysostom is no more his than mine; it is a reference to the same exploded passage, as was cited in the Chaplain's note, (P. 9.,) of which enough has been said.

I have now gone through a task painful in every

* Ego verò evangelio non crederem, nisi me ecclesiæ Catholicæ commoveret auctoritas. *Aug. cont. Epis. Fundam. c. 5.*

† *Aug. lib. 1. cont. Cresc. c. 33.—& de Unit. Eccl.*

point of view in which I could consider it. To write for the public eye, on any occasion whatever, is neither agreeable to my feelings, my leisure, nor opportunities; that it is likewise disproportioned to my abilities, my readers, I doubt, will soon discover. But if reduced to the necessity of publishing, I would wish that my duty led me to any species of composition, rather than that of religious controversy. Mankind have conceived such a contempt for it, that an author cannot entertain a hope of enjoying those gratifications, which in treating other subjects may support his spirits and enliven his imagination. Much less could I have a prospect of these incitements in the prosecution of my present undertaking. I could not forget, in the beginning, progress, and conclusion of it, that the habits of thinking, the prejudices, perhaps even the passions of many of my readers, would be set against all the arguments I could offer; and that the weaknesses, the errors, the absurdities of the writer, would be imputed to the errors and absurdity of his religion. But of all considerations, the most painful was, that I had to combat him, with whom I had been connected in an intercourse of friendship and mutual good offices; and in connexion with whom, I hoped to have consummated my course of our common ministry, in the service of virtue and religion. But when I found these expectations disappointed; when I found that he not only had abandoned our faith and communion, but had imputed to us doctrines foreign to our belief, and having a natural tendency to embitter against us the minds of our fellow citizens, I felt an anguish too keen for description; and perhaps the Chaplain will

experience a similar sentiment, when he comes coolly to reflect on this instance of his conduct. It did not become the friend of toleration to misinform, and to sow in minds so misinformed, the seeds of religious animosity.

Under all these distressful feelings, one consideration alone relieved me in writing; and that was, the hope of vindicating your religion to your own selves at least, and preserving the steadfastness of your faith. But even this prospect should not have induced me to engage in the controversy, if I could fear that it would disturb the harmony now subsisting amongst all Christians in this country, so blessed with civil and religious liberty; which, if we have the wisdom and temper to preserve, America may come to exhibit a proof to the world, that general and equal toleration, by giving a free circulation to fair argument, is the most effectual method to bring all denominations of Christians to a unity of faith.

The motives, which led the Chaplain to the step he has taken, are known best to God and himself. For the vindication of his conduct, he appeals to the dictates of conscience with a seriousness and solemnity, which must add greatly to his guilt, if he be not sincere. He is anxious to impress on his readers a firm conviction, that neither views of preferment nor sensuality, had any influence on his determination. He appears to be jealous, that suspicions will arise unfavourable to the purity of his intentions. He shall have no cause to impute to me, the spreading of these suspicions. But I must entreat him with an earnestness suggested by the most perfect good will and zeal-

ous regard for his welfare, to consider the sanctity of the solemn and deliberate engagement, which at an age of perfect maturity he contracted with Almighty God. I pray him to read the two exhortations of that *enlightened doctor* St. Chrysostom to his friend Theodorus, who, like the Chaplain, had renounced his former state, in which by a vow of celibacy he had consecrated himself to Almighty God. "You allege," says the saint to his friend, "that marriage is lawful; this I readily acknowledge; but it is not now in your power to embrace that state; for it is certain, that one, who by a solemn engagement has given himself to God, as his heavenly spouse, if he violate this contract, commits adultery, though he should a thousand times call it marriage. Nay, he is guilty of a crime so much the more enormous, as the majesty of God surpasses man. Had you been free, no one could charge you with desertion; but since you are contracted to so great a king, you are not at your own disposal."* See here, how far St. Chrysostom was from considering the law of celibacy as a *cruel usurpation of the unalienable rights of nature, as unwarrantable in its principle, inadequate in its object, and dreadful in its consequences*. He considered a vow of celibacy as an engagement, or contract entered into with Almighty God; independent therefore of the discipline of any society as to its binding power, and not to be released but by God's relinquishing his right to exact a rigorous compliance with the obligation of it. He thought that the sanctity of religion was interested in the performance of so sacred an engagement,

* Chrys. ad Theod. laps. Exh. 2.

according to Deuteron. xxiii. 21. *When thou hast vowed a vow to the Lord our God, thou shalt not be slack to pay it, because our Lord thy God will require it.—That, which is once gone out of thy lips, thou shalt observe, and shalt do, as thou hast promised to our Lord thy God, and hast spoken with thy proper will and thy own mouth.*

THE END.

A

REPLY

TO

AN ADDRESS TO THE ROMAN CATHOLICS

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

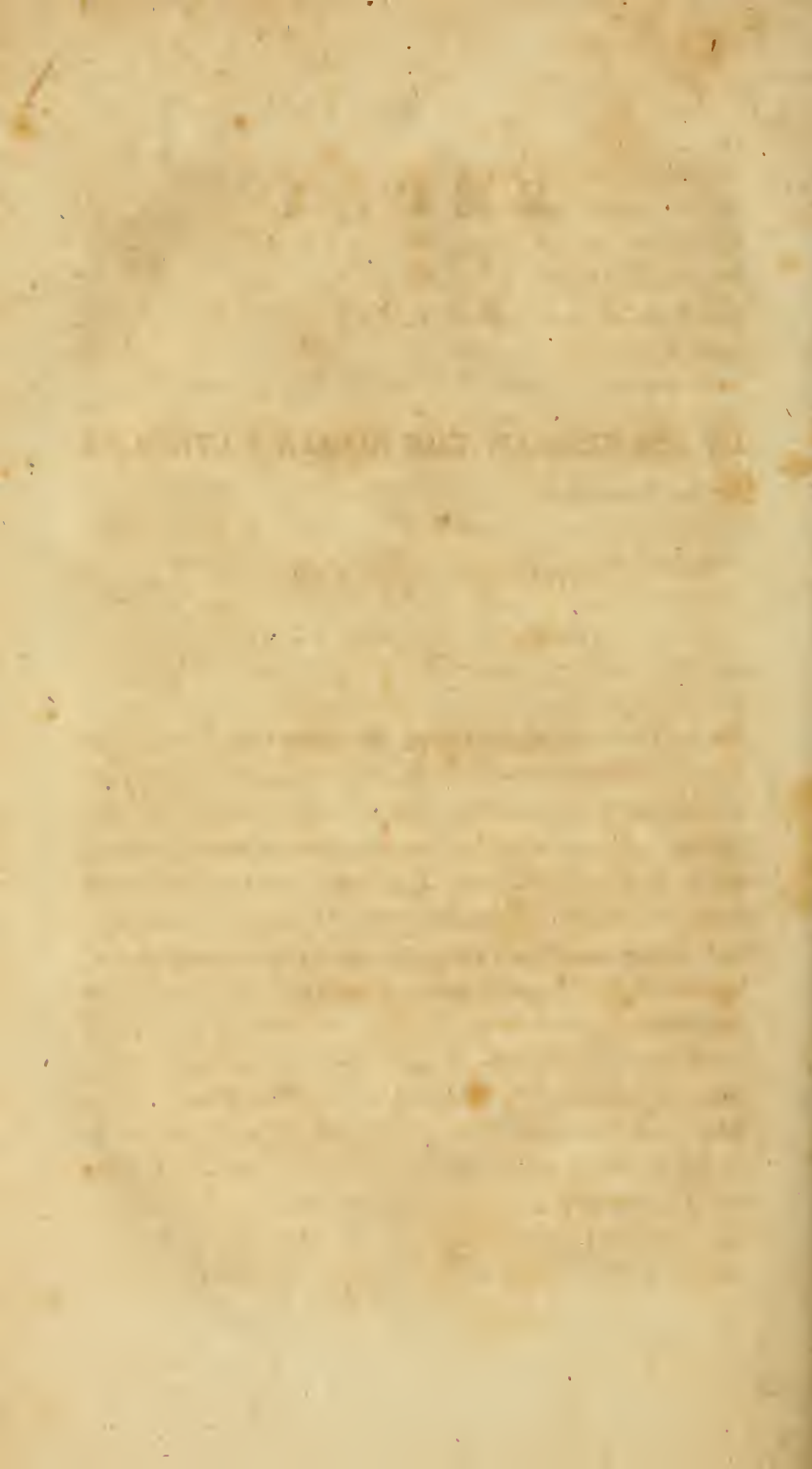
BY THE AUTHOR OF A LETTER TO THE ROMAN CATHOLICS OF
THE CITY OF WORCESTER.

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1817



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IT is with deep concern, that the late Worcester Chaplain finds himself under the disagreeable necessity of appearing again before the tribunal of the public. He is well convinced, that of *making many books there is no end*, and has experienced that *much study is a weariness of the flesh*.* But an attack, of a complexion which he did not expect, lately made upon his character, rouses every faculty of defence, that reason suggests, or truth can authorize. The weapon now levelled at his candour and accuracy, must, if possible, be parried by the Chaplain: and, what to him is exquisitely painful, must be made to recoil upon the hand that wields it. From some partial information, he had been led to expect, that the reverend and learned Author of the address would treat his little letter with some degree of indulgence.

* Eccl. xii. 12.

and allow its writer that credit for his uprightness and sincerity, to which the most solemn professions of both, were entitled from a friend. But he is grieved to find, that the Reverend Author honours him no longer with this endearing appellation. Without the imputation of any personal offence; nay, at a time when his bosom was warm with something more than the cold sentiment of *perfect good will*, when his tongue, in every company, was almost eloquent at the bare mention of the Reverend Gentleman's name, when he was feasting on the hopes that their united efforts were engaged in the sacred cause of Christian toleration, and that a difference in some religious speculations, would have little tendency to cool their mutual affections—at this moment, I say, the unfortunate Chaplain was experiencing a sad reverse in the heart, of him whom he loved without reserve, and sinking to the idea of a cast-off, *former friend*.* Under the weight of regret arising from this melancholy circumstance, the Chaplain's mind is but ill disposed to strew over a dry and exhausted subject those flowers of splendid diction, or that gayety of fancy, which alone can render it palatable to the generality of readers. They, however, who may have experienced a similar trial, will find an excuse in their sympathy for the deficiency of amusement. Having dropt this monumental tear over the Rev. Gentleman's former friendship, the Chaplain hastens to the object of this pamphlet, which is intended merely as a short vindication of the sentiments contained in his little letter, and of the authenticity of the quotations upon which they are grounded. It is not his inten-

* Address, p. 20. note.

tion to follow the Rev. Author of the address through all the mazes of extraneous matter which he has annexed to his animadversions on some passages of the letter, or to repel by fresh arguments any revived attacks upon the Protestant cause. *Neither his leisure nor inclination now allow him to undertake what has been done by much abler hands.* The Rev. Author and Protestants also know where to look for these arguments. The writers cited by the Chaplain will exhibit them with such profusion, perspicuity, and candour, that the charge of *gross misrepresentation, unfair quotations, partial answers, inconsistency, and contradictions*, so freely alleged against them by the Rev. Gentleman,* will make but a slight impression upon minds not previously warped by strong and early prejudices. Inconsistency and contradictions, indeed, are often compatible with every virtue of the heart, and must be implied to opinions that run counter to our own; but *gross misrepresentations* and *unfair quotations* are words of a harsh import, and will hardly apply to the pious Claude, the candid Chillingworth, and the venerable Usher: names too long consecrated in the temples of erudition and virtue, to be tarnished by the breath of indiscriminate accusation. O may the Chaplain's name be enrolled with these worthies in the annals of sincerity, and as long as his private history shall be remembered, may his moral fame run parallel with theirs!

The Chaplain has already hinted at the two points of view, in which he considers the Rev. Gentleman's address. He conceives it to be an impeachment of his

* Address, p. 28.

candour as a gentleman, and of his accuracy as a scholar. He is far from imagining, that the Rev. Author intended that his publication should be considered in so hostile a light. Some expressions of regard for the Chaplain forbid the idea. But surely, no man can admit his frequent suspicions of a want of candour in his former friend, or his free arraignment of his accuracy in quotation, but must conclude him destitute of these essentials to character. To wipe away, therefore, any unfavourable impressions, which his recent connexions may experience from the address, the Chaplain is compelled to enter the lists with a veteran divine of abilities very superior to his own; to contend with a man, whose extensive knowledge, whose refined and elegant mind, can polish even the roughness of scholastic theology. Perhaps, in the benevolence of his heart, the Rev. Gentleman himself will excuse the unequal contest, when he comes to reflect, that the almost total loss and aversion of the Chaplain's former connexions, must greatly enhance the value of those, with which he has lately been honoured.

The first assertion in the letter *to the Roman Catholics of Worcester* at which the Rev. Gentleman takes offence, is, *that no consistent Roman Catholic can be a candid inquirer in matters of religion.** The Chaplain, when he penned this line, was aware of the Rev. Gentleman's objections, and therefore marked the word *consistent* with a special emphasis. He trusts, that this precaution alone will be *able to reconcile his assertion with candour.*† For he will only ask this one

* Letter, p. 8.

† Address, p. 10.

plain question, Can *he* be called an impartial inquirer, who, previous to his inquiry, is obliged, under *pain of damnation*, to believe his own opinions to be true and those of his adversary groundless and false? Now, is not this precisely the case with every *consistent* Roman Catholic? Does he not believe with the assent of faith, that every article of his creed is as incompatible with falsehood as God himself? To what purpose, therefore, are Protestant authors *open to his inspection*? Can he read them with a view to *religious information*, to discover truths, which he is already persuaded are not to be found? And yet, he must be allowed to do this, before the Chaplain's candour can be questioned. The fact is, he may seek for information, but not *religious information*, in the writings of Protestants. The Rev. Gentleman passes by this material distinction, upon which the Chaplain's candour principally rests. For it is utterly impossible, that with a full conviction of the truth and evidence of a tenet, a man can seek information that may possibly refute it. He may look into the writers upon the opposite opinion, in order to detect the *inconsistency* of their principles, their *unfair quotations*, their *partial answers*, their *gross misrepresentations*; but is this to seek religious information, even in the sense that Leland admits it? Is this a *disposition to embrace truth on which side soever it shall appear*? When a man, for instance, conceives himself obliged to admit the doctrine of transubstantiation at the peril of his soul, is he *disposed to embrace truth on which side soever it appears*? Can he doubt for a moment the truth of this tenet without ceasing to be a *consistent* Roman Catholic? The Rev. Gentleman knows what line of duty

is marked out by all casuists in cases of this nature. He knows, that so far from harbouring a doubt of any doctrinal point, the understanding must instantly shut up every avenue, through which it had entered, and produce an explicit act of belief of that article.* Can the Rev. Gentleman point out in all this any degree of that indifference so essential to rational investigation? With reason, therefore, did the Chaplain affirm, that no *consistent Roman Catholic can be a candid inquirer in matters of religion*; and was authorized to add, moreover, that to seek *religious information in the writings of Protestants, was to incur the severest censures of the Roman Church*.

The Rev. Gentleman does not pretend to deny, that wherever the *Bulla Cœnæ* is received, it must have its effect. In Italy, therefore, and some other countries, excommunication must still be their lot, who presume to peruse any Protestant treatise upon religion. In the parts of Christendom, however, where this Bull is not received, the works of Protestants may be read with impunity. Thus a grievous crime in one country, is not even a venial offence in another. This must be the sentiment of every Roman Catholic; and yet its consistency can hardly be admitted. For, if the Pope be a *Doctor of the church, by way of eminence*, as he is frequently styled, if he be entitled to the pompous appellations of *Master of the World, of Universal Father*, which were frequently bestowed on him in the eleventh century; † if he be a *Divine Majesty, the Husband of the Church, the Prince of the Apostles, the Prince and King of all the Universe*; if he be

* See the Casuists, *passim*.

† Mosheim's Church History.

the *Pastor*, the *Physician*, and a *God*, to use the language of the council of Lateran, speaking to Leo X.,* who will dare question his right to proscribe such sources of information as, in his wisdom, he shall deem pernicious to his subjects? Inconsistency apart, he must have a daring soul, who shall venture upon a pasture, which the *Universal Shepherd* pronounces to be poisonous, and forbids his flock to taste, at the hazard of their salvation. The Rev. Gentleman will not deny that these lofty pretensions have their effect to this day. Else why are Roman Catholics constantly advised to obtain permission to read heretical books for the security of their consciences? Among the *faculties*, as they are called, or parochial powers conferred on R. C. missionaries even in England, is not a special license granted for keeping and reading heretical books? The Chaplain's warrant on this head is expressed in these words: *Conceditur facultas tenendi et legendi libros hæreticorum de eorum religione tractantes ad effectum eos expugnandi.* "Leave is granted to keep and read the books of heretics, which treat of their religion, *in order to refute them.*" These lines place this whole matter in its proper point of view. They evidently evince to *what purpose* Roman Catholics are indulged in the reading of Protestant authors. Not, it is presumed, for the sake of impartial investigation, but solely to *combat* and *refute* them. The Rev. Gentleman may say, then, *with as much confidence as he pleases, that rational investigation is as open to Catholics, as to any other set of men on the face of the earth.*† But persons of real candour will still give the Chap-

* Basnage, vol. 3. p. 556.

† Address, p. 11.

lain credit for the same valuable quality, until it be proved that *religious information* also, is equally open to Roman Catholics as to others; or that the Protestant churches forbid the reading of Roman Catholic writers, unless it be with a view to confute them.

Hitherto the Chaplain conceives his candour to be unsullied. The Rev. Gentleman, through eleven pages of his address,* has furnished a crowd of arguments to support it. His whole train of reasoning goes evidently to illustrate the Chaplain's assertion, *that the Roman church is daily undergoing a silent reformation: that the dark monsters of superstition and bigotry are retreating gradually before the light of genuine religion and philosophy,†* and, *that her more enlightened divines reject or explain away her most uncharitable tenets:* For the Chaplain will be bold to affirm, that the Rev. Gentleman is the first Roman Catholic divine, who has been eager, and zealous, and copious to demonstrate, that Protestants may be *members of the Catholic church,‡* and consequently, as such, in the way to salvation. All who know the Rev. Author have reason to rejoice, that a man of such abilities and erudition, should thus declare himself the patron of genuine Catholicity. The Chaplain has peculiar reasons for joining in the general congratulation: and most devoutly wishes, that the liberality of this sentiment, unqualified by any restrictions, may find its way into the minds of the Rev. Gentleman's brethren. Should this fortunately be the case, *certain congregations* will be no longer amused with compliments upon the ex-

* From p. 11 to p. 23.

‡ Address, p. 11.

† Letter, p. 12.

clusive soundness of their faith, nor Protestants provoked by menacing declamations, much more calculated to *disturb the peace and harmony subsisting in these United States between religionists of all professions*,* than the Chaplain's recital, or even reprobation of tenets, which it appears are about to take leave of America. It is to be hoped that, among others, the doctrine of there *being no salvation out of the Roman Catholic communion*, will soon depart from this continent, as so eminent a divine has already discarded it from his creed.

The Rev. Gentleman begins this article by observing, that to *be in the communion of the Catholic church*, and to *be a member of the Catholic church*, are two very different things.† But surely this inference does not follow from the distinction—"Therefore a man may be a member of the *Roman Catholic church* without being in *her* communion." To make this conclusion good, the Rev. Gentleman must first prove, that the *Roman* and *Catholic church* are synonymous terms,‡ which the Chaplain humbly conceives would require a longer essay than the address itself. Every Protestant divine is ready to acknowledge, that, in the ordinary course of Providence, no salvation can be obtained out of the Catholic church. The Rev. Gentleman would persuade us, that the sentiment of his church goes no farther than this, and he instances the words of Pope Pius's creed to prove it.§ A reference peculiarly fortunate for the Chaplain! For,

* Address, p. 11.

† Address, p. 11.

‡ Albertus Pighius, a celebrated canonist, was clearly of a different opinion—"Quis per Romanam ecclesiam unquam intellexit aut universalem ecclesiam, aut generale consilium." *Pigh. Eccles. Hierar.* lib. 6. cap. 3.

§ Address, p. 12.

if the words of that creed do not manifestly require communion with the Roman church as essential to salvation, he will relinquish every claim either to accuracy or candour. Wherefore, to obviate any unfair accusation in future, of *citing from memory, or neglecting to examine a faithful transcript of it*, he will set before the reader a few concluding articles of this famous creed, literally translated from the original Latin——“ I do embrace and receive all and every thing that has been defined and declared by the holy synod of Trent, concerning original sin and justification—I do, in like manner, profess that in the mass there is offered a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead; and that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist there is truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there is a conversion made of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood, which conversion the Catholic church calls transubstantiation—I confess also, that under one kind only, Christ, whole and entire, and a true sacrament, is received—I do firmly hold, that there is a purgatory, and that the souls there detained are relieved by the suffrages of the faithful—And, in like manner, that the saints reigning together with Christ, are to be worshipped and invocated; and that they do offer prayers unto God for us; and that their relics are to be worshipped—I do most firmly assert, that the images of Christ, and of the ever Virgin mother of God, and of the other saints, ought to be had and retained, and that due honour and worship ought to be given to

them—Also, I do affirm, that the power of indulgences was left by Christ in the church, and that the use of them is most wholesome to Christian people—I acknowledge the holy Catholic and apostolical Roman church to be the mother and mistress of all churches; and I do promise and swear true obedience to the Roman pontiff, the successor of St. Peter, prince of the apostles, and vicar of Jesus Christ, &c. *This true Catholic faith, without which no man can be saved*, which at this time I freely profess, and truly hold, I will take care, as much as shall lie in me, (with God's help,) constantly to keep whole and inviolate, and to confess the same unto the last breath of my life; and that it be taught, held, and preached by those under my power, or of whom the care shall belong to me in my profession. This I, the said N., do promise, vow, and swear, so help me God, and these, God's holy gospels."

Such are the concluding periods of Pope Pius's creed. Can the reader peruse them without wondering at the acrimonious censure thrown out by the Rev. Gentleman, that "the Chaplain labours to fix on Roman Catholics this obnoxious tenet with a perseverance which carries with it an air of animosity?"* The severity of the remark is freely forgiven, but surely its imprudence cannot be concealed. *This true Catholic faith, without which no man can be saved*—Mark the word *this*. Can its meaning possibly admit of a doubt? Is it not, that no man can be saved, who has not this faith? No man, therefore, can be saved, who does not believe the doctrine of *transub-*

* Address, p. 21.

stantiation, and of purgatory. No man can be saved, who does not acknowledge the Roman church to be "the mother and mistress of all churches." *No man can be saved who believes not these articles*, says the Pope: *They who protest against them may be saved*, says the Rev. Gentleman. Was it prudent to provoke a reference to this creed, when the meaning of it is too clear and evident to admit of any palliative, either from the subtlety of scholastic quibbles, or from liberality struggling against the influence of prejudice?

The Chaplain, therefore, was authorized to advance,* upon the authority of *this creed*, that neither *transubstantiation*, nor the *infallibility* of the Roman church, are taught more explicitly as *articles of faith*, than the *impossibility of being saved out of the communion of this church*. He is justified, moreover, in asserting, *that some have laboured hard to palliate the severity of this unpopular tenet, and that others have rejected it, as no article of their creed*. "But," says the Rev. Gentleman, "to be in the communion of the Catholic church, and to be a member of the Catholic church, are two very distinct things."† The Chaplain will not lead the reader through all the mazes of controversy, to consider the propriety of this distinction. Suffice it to ask, if these in reality be two distinct things, viz. *To believe the doctrines of transubstantiation, of purgatory, of saint worship, &c., to acknowledge the Roman church to be the mother and mistress of all churches; and to be in the communion of the Roman Catholic church?* Are these indeed two distinct things? Do not these doctrines discriminate her from all other churches? Can

* Letter, p. 10.

† Address, p. 11.

a man *promise, vow, and swear freely to profess and truly to hold them* without being a Roman Catholic, and, consequently, (unless under actual excommunication,) without being in communion with the Roman Catholic church? Wherefore it is evident, that to profess the faith set down in Pope Pius's creed, and to be in the communion of the Roman church, is one and the same thing; and it follows of course, that, *if no man can be saved without this faith, no man can be saved without this communion.*

The *accidental* salvation which the Rev. Gentleman's authorities allow to Protestants, by no means softens the harshness of the tenet. A few exceptions to a general rule serve only to strengthen it. Not but what the Chaplain most cordially wishes, that such in reality were the doctrine of the Roman church. A revolution of this nature would be peculiarly fortunate for him. The *unmerited* coldness and illiberal abuse, which he has experienced from several of his former connexions, would subsist no longer towards a *fellow Catholic*; nor would the Rev. Gentleman himself indulge in distressful feelings, or waste his pity on a brother whom he *may* regard consistently with his principles, and *ought* to treat as a *member* of the Catholic church. As every definition of heresy, which the Rev. Gentleman alleges, contains an explicit apology for the Chaplain, he cannot but adopt them with singular satisfaction. Nay, he will enforce the sentiment by an additional passage from St. Augustin, which, he knows, excludes him in a special manner from the guilt of this crime. "In my opinion," says he, "a heretic is a person who, for some temporal convenience, but chiefly for the sake of glory and pre-emi-

nence, broaches new and false opinions, or adopts them.”*

“The Chaplain knows,” says the Rev. Gentleman, “that many of the most eminent Protestant writers have asserted, that all the essentials of true religion are to be found in our communion, and surely, the possibility of obtaining salvation is one of these essentials.”† But what follows from this charitable assertion of some Protestant divines, but a more powerful claim to Christian liberality, which they only have a right to dispute, who expressly allow that *all the essentials of true religion may be found also in the Protestant communion*. Do the passages alleged by the Rev. Gentleman countenance this idea?‡ On the contrary, do they not all manifestly suppose, that every Protestant is in reality a heretic, however his sincerity and ignorance may accidentally excuse him from the guilt of heresy? But the Chaplain will suppose that the Rev. Gentleman allows salvation not only to the simple and illiterate, but to the inquisitive and learned of the Protestant communion. He will suppose, with the illustrious Bergier, that *all* Protestants, who, “with sincerity, or through inculpable ignorance, remain in their error, are really children of the Catholic church.”§ He will suppose, moreover, that this *sincerity*, this *inculpable ignorance*, may excuse a Protestant minister, as well as the most illiterate of his flock. Now, if this *may* possibly be the case; if

* *Quandoquidem hæreticus est, ut mea fert opinio, qui alicujus temporalis commodi, et maxime gloriæ principatusque sui gratia, falsas ac novas opiniones vel gignit, vel sequitur. Aug. de util. credendi.*

† Address, p. 22.

‡ See pages 17, 18, 19, 20.

§ Address, p. 17.

Protestants of all degrees, conditions, and capacities, *may be children of the Catholic church*, does not the spirit of charity command us to consider, and the law of justice to treat them as such? Or, if they receive not this treatment, does it not follow, that they are not regarded in so favourable a light? Here is one of those cases, in which the conduct of a Christian society, is the best comment upon the spirit and nature of its belief. To conclude, the Rev. Gentleman's reasoning must be this: "that, notwithstanding the lofty pretensions of the Roman church,* the decrees

* The most celebrated divine of the French church, and its most eloquent champion, thus delivers his sentiments on the spirit of toleration belonging to his communion: "Thus we clearly see, that what renders this church so odious to Protestants, is principally, and more than all other tenets, her *holy and inflexible incompatibility*, (*incompatibilite*,) if I may so speak. It is because she will stand alone, because she conceives herself to be the spouse, a title that admits of no division; it is, because she cannot suffer her doctrines to be questioned, because she confides in the promises and perpetual assistance of the Holy Ghost. For, in reality, this it is, that renders her so *severe*, so *unsociable*, and, consequently, so *odious* to all sects separated from her, which, for the most part, desired nothing more at the beginning, than to be tolerated by her, or not to be fulminated by her anathemas. But her *holy severity*, and the *holy delicacy* of her sentiments, forbade such indulgence, or rather such weakness, and her inflexibility, which makes her hated by schismatical sects, renders her dear and venerable to the children of God." *Bossuet, sixieme avertissement sur les lettres de M. Jurieu, page 302*—Again, p. 301, "She (the Roman church) subscribes to the holy scripture with all other Christians, as to a book inspired by God, and dictated immediately by the Holy Ghost, and she is only excluded from this pretended society, (*of tolerating Christians*,) because she is and ever will be opposed to religious indifference by her essential constitutions; and, in one word, because, as M. Jurieu says, she is *the most intolerant of all Christian societies*." How will any thing soften so formal a confession, but the silent reformation mentioned by the Chaplain? Again, at the end of the 2d vol. of his *Avertissemens, &c.*, among other heretics he reckons the advocates for *religious toleration*, and sets this down as one of their doctrines, "They maintain, that the magistrate has no power to punish heretics." Here is a short specimen of that flaming orthodoxy, which was blended with all the refinements of gallantry in the motley *etiquette* of Louis the Fourteenth's court. At a period preceding this, we meet with the following sentiment in the greatest controvertist of the Ro-

of her pontiffs, the decision of her councils, the writings of her champions, and the execution of her anathemas, it is still, and ever was the opinion of *all her divines*, since St. Augustin, that they who protest against her doctrines *may and ought* to be considered as true children of the Catholic church." If the old maxim be just, that *He proves nothing who proves too much*, the reader may apply it in the present instance.

With respect to the Christian charity, which Protestants entertain for Roman Catholics, the Rev. Gentleman's own words will evince how superior it is to that of their opponents: "You Protestants," says he, (p. 21.,) "allow our church to be a true church. Your universities have declared, on a solemn consultation, that a person not pretending to the plea of invincible ignorance, may safely leave the Protestant church, and become a member of ours, because it is a safe way to salvation." Was the Rev. Gentleman aware of the high compliment which he here pays to Protestant moderation, to that Christian condescension, which the reformed churches have ever manifested for composing the differences of Christendom? They know nothing of that *sacred and inflexible incompatibility*, of that *holy severity and delicacy*, so highly pre-

man church: "In the Catholic church many are bad, but of the heretics (speaking of Protestants) not one is good." *In ecclesia Catholica sunt pluri- mi mali, ex hæreticis nullus est bonus.* Bellar. lib. 4. de eccles. milit. cap. 13. Where the charitable Cardinal must mean, if he argue logically, that no Protestant is good in *that line*, in which many Catholics are bad, that is, in the *line of morality*. As to the decisions of the popes upon this head, one instance out of many shall suffice: "We declare, say, define, and pronounce that to every human creature it is absolutely necessary for salvation to be subject to the Roman pontiff." *Subesse Romano pontifici omni humanæ creaturæ declaramus. dicimus, definimus et pronunciamus omnino esse de necessitate salutis.* Bonifac. viii. in extravag. de majoritate et obedientiâ cap. Unam sanctam.

conized by the Bishop of Meaux as the characteristics of his church; which we are told, however, (p. 12.,) *says no more on this head, than do all other Christian societies.* They know nothing of the subtile distinctions, the impossible suppositions, which are held out as cloaks for an uncharitable tenet, but *they* know that charity itself is the soul of religion, the very bond of perfection; *they* know, that *God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him;* (Acts x. 34, 35.) *they* know, that faith will ever authorize concessions, which charity may demand; *they* know, that the faith ought to be *kept in the bond of peace;* *they* know, that all who maintain the common principles of Christianity, which at *all times*, and in *all places*, have constituted the creed of *all orthodox believers*, and who *walk according to this rule*, neither adding to this faith, tenets that may abolish, nor committing immoralities, that may tarnish it; *they* know, that *peace shall be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.* (Gal. vi. 16.) These, the Chaplain trusts, are the sentiments of Protestants. When the Roman pontiff, his councils, his divines, and universities, hold a similar language; when “they shall declare, on solemn consultations, that a person, not pretending to the plea of *invincible ignorance*, may safely leave the Roman church and become a member of ours, because it is a safe way to salvation;” then, and not till then, can they aspire to the same liberality with Protestants, or obtain credit for apologies, which, though sincere in individuals, are not authorized by the church, for which they are intended. And now, perhaps, the reader will not be at a loss to account for the Chaplain’s fixing this tenet

on the Roman church.* At any rate, let him compare the grounds of this charge with the Rev. Gentleman's reply, and if, after divesting his mind of prejudice, he should embrace *this* opinion, the Chaplain will still be comforted in the humiliation of his defeat, at the accession of liberal fame to his former connexions.

The field over which the Chaplain must next follow the Rev. Gentleman, is very intricate and extensive. Through forty-five pages of his address,† he displays all his powers of reasoning, to uphold the system of infallibility upon the ruins of the few arguments, which appeared to the Chaplain sufficient to overturn it. He had asserted,‡ that many *discriminating doctrines* of the Roman church could not be proved from the scriptures; and had made good this assertion from the concessions of several Roman Catholic divines. He therefore concluded, that they must rest entirely upon the infallibility of the church that taught them. He then proceeded briefly to investigate the claim to this mighty prerogative, and to examine it on the grounds of reason and revelation. On the same foundations will he now erect his fortress of defence.

The Rev. Gentleman begins by observing, that if the claim to infallibility be found to rest on *solid and convincing proofs*,§ then *certainly it becomes agreeable to the dictates of reason, and the soundest principles of morality, to assent to the doctrines proposed by this infallible authority, though we may not fully comprehend them. And so far the Chaplain will surely agree with him.* But does it follow from this argument, that the collier's

* Address, p. 20.

† Letter, p. 19, 20, 21.

‡ From p. 22. to 67.

§ Address, p. 23.

profession of faith, mentioned by Bellarmine, could be *rational*,* who is not supposed to have examined on *what grounds this claim to infallibility is established*, or to have had abilities to discover that *it rests on solid and convincing proofs*? Without knowing probably, what either himself, or the church believed, he satisfied his mind, and secured his orthodoxy, by a vague profession of *believing what the church believed, upon every subject*.† The Chaplain is still of opinion, that to plead the merit and efficacy of this answer to every religious difficulty, is to offer an *insult to reason*; and the Rev. Gentleman must think so likewise, or he would hardly have exhorted his friends to *examine the grounds of their religion over and over again*. (Add. p. 6.) The Rev. Gentleman asks the Chaplain, if it be *weakness and credulity* to submit to *divine authority, although we do not fully comprehend the doctrines it delivers*?‡ The Chaplain will demand, in his turn, where he even hints at the sentiment, which that question insinuates? Does he not declare repeatedly, that his belief is the apostles' creed; the bible his religion? How then can he refuse his assent to the mysteries enumerated by the Rev. Gentleman, which, his reason tells him, are delivered in them both? The fact is, the Rev. Gentleman takes the proofs of infallibility for granted, and then arraigns the Chaplain for dissenting from its decrees. He adds, moreover, that the Chaplain's arguments, drawn from reason, (p. 23, 24, 25.,) must furnish powerful arms to the Deist, the Ari-

* Address, p. 24.

† This ridiculous story of the collier and his faith, is seriously related by Bellarmine, *de arte bene moriendi*, lib. 2. cap. 9. from Peter Barochius. Bishop of Padua.

‡ P. 24.

an, and the Socinian.* But, the obvious application of the Chaplain's mode of reasoning to the Rev. Gentleman's own principles, shows this charge to be groundless. For, does he not tell us† that "the only rational method we can pursue, in establishing a contested doctrine, is to show, that it is proposed to our belief by an infallible authority?" Now, how does the Chaplain's reasoning, when applied to this principle, countenance the Deist, the Arian, and the Socinian? Will the following mode of arguing be admitted? "Reason and religion can never be at variance;‡ therefore, we must adopt the principles of a Deist or an Arian. The most rational religion must always be the best; therefore, we must deny the infallibility of scripture. The language of reason was never yet rejected with impunity; therefore, we must deny the doctrine of the Trinity." How would the enemies of revelation triumph at concessions of this nature? Is it prudent, in any matter, entirely to relinquish the field of reason to an adversary? Again—Will the Rev. Gentleman be ever able to persuade a reasonable man, that the mystery of the Trinity, for instance, and the doctrine of *transubstantiation* present the same difficulties to his senses and understanding? What have the senses to do with the Godhead? Or can the understanding presume to point at contradictions, in an object wrapt up in mystery unsearchable, and lying infinitely beyond the weak faculties of man? But, with *transubstantiation*, the case is quite otherwise: Here is a matter that admits of experiment, upon which our reason can argue, and our senses can pro-

* Address, p. 26.

† Ibid.

‡ Letter, p. 25.

nounce. The two former must be respected, when they discover gross and evident contradictions, and the latter attended to, when they decide upon qualities within the range of their essential faculties. Bread must be bread, while all its natural and discriminating properties are perceived by the senses, or there is an end of this source of information and judgment. "That which you saw," says St. Augustin, "is the bread and the cup: which your very eyes declare unto you."* This material difference being settled, well might the Chaplain disclaim an infallible *church authority* for certain tenets, which reason and experience tells him are incredible and groundless; and yet admit an infallible *scripture authority*, which, however it may challenge our assent to inscrutable mysteries, yet offers no violence to our senses and understanding. And now, the "Chaplain, or any other Protestant, can tell the Rev. Gentleman, why a Bolingbroke, or a Hume, had not as good a right to use the argument mentioned at page 23, against the general doctrines of Christianity, as he had to urge it against the Roman church." The reason is, because he and they, after discussing every claim to infallibility, conclude, that this prerogative belongs not to mortals, but to the word of God only, delivered in the scriptures.

But the Rev. Gentleman's scattered arguments on this head beginning now to converge to a point, it will be less difficult to seize their meaning, and methodize their discussion.

* *Quod ergo vidistis, panis est et calix: quod vobis etiam oculi vestri denunciant* Aug. in serm. de sacram. apud Bedam, in 1 Cor. 10. et Retrom. de corp. et sang. domini. vel in serm. de verb. dom. ut citatur ab Algero lib. 1. de sacr. cap. 5.

He first endeavours to uphold the system of infallibility upon the scriptural passages examined by the Chaplain. He then proceeds to throw out some additional proofs for its reality, and concludes by striving to vindicate the Roman church, from the imputation of variety or novelty in her tenets, on which the Chaplain had grounded his last short argument against her infallibility. Throughout the whole of this controversy, he frequently repeats his former insinuations of a want of candour and accuracy in the Chaplain.

The Rev. Gentleman appears displeasèd,* that the Chaplain should say,† that *few scriptural texts* seem to countenance infallibility; and that he should insinuate, he was *at any time discouraged from examining them*. Why he once refused to do so, the Chaplain trusts, he has not *now* to explain. The reader will recollect, whether the kind of examination formerly allowed him is deserving of the name. That few scriptural texts make for infallibility, he shall still take the liberty to think, notwithstanding the *thirty* enumerated by Father Mumfort, whose work he has read without discovering him, in any line, an adversary worthy of *his* Chillingworth, or *his* Usher. The truth is, the *Catholic Scripturist*, like many others, has an admirable facility at finding whatever he wishes for in the scriptures. He knew the great advantage in not being over delicate in the choice of texts, and that it is no difficult matter to impose them upon people, who value them more for their number than their weight.

* Address, p. 28.

† Letter, p. 27.

The Rev. Gentleman begins by telling us,* that, “among other proofs of her infallibility, the Catholic church alleges these words of Christ to St. Peter.† *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” Regarding this text in a very important light, he accordingly bestows upon it eight pages of his address, and enforces it with all the ingenuity, of which he is master. The Chaplain will attend him over as much of this ground, as may be necessary to illustrate the few lines of his letter which refer to this passage.

Without citing any authority for a position, which he took for granted, and *knew* to be certain, he just mentioned, *en passant*, that the Greek word *Hades* ought rather to be translated *Death* than *Hell*. At the bottom of the page, however, he adopts both meanings of this controverted word, and yet with all this precaution could not entirely escape the Rev. Gentleman’s censure. But it is fortunately in his power to produce so many authorities to support his accuracy in this instance, that were he inclined to indulge in a parade of erudition, he could swell his answer, on this *subject only*, to a bulk superior to the Rev. Gentleman’s address. He will just set down a few passages, which, he trusts, will carry conviction to the reader: observing first, that by *death*, he meant rather the *permanent*, than *actual* separation between the body and soul—a state of extinction, or a cessation of life. Now, in this sense, the word *Hades* is perpetually used by the ancients. The Greek poets apply it to *death*, as frequently as *Thanatos*.‡ Sopho-

* Address, p. 29.

† Matth. xvi. 18.

‡ See Pindar. Olymp. Ode 8, &c. &c.

cles, in the beginning of his *Trachinice*, puts this sentiment in Dejanira's mouth; "that although it were an old man's saying, that happiness or wo cannot be known before death, yet she knew her own life to be unfortunate *πρὸ εἰς ἅδ' ἔρχομαι*; *before she went to Hades*;" these last words are explained by the ancient scholiast by *πρὸ θανάτου* *before death*. The same poet, in his *Ajax*, says; that "He is better who lies in *Hades*, than he who is afflicted with a mortal disease." Here also the scholiast expounds *lying in Hades*, by the word *τεθνηκας*, or *being dead*. Innumerable passages from the ancient Greek writers, of a similar import, must be omitted, to insist upon others of still greater weight. What will be objected to the authority of the *Vulgate*, or the Latin translation of the bible approved of, and ordered to be used by the council of Trent? *καταγεις εἰς πυλας ἁδ' καὶ ἀγαγεις* "thou leadest to the gates of hell, and bringest back again."* Now, how is *Hadou* rendered by the *Vulgate*? Is it not by the Latin word *mortis*, or of *death*? *Deducis ad portas mortis et reducis*? It is written, (Proverb. xiv. 12. and xvi. 25.) "There is a way, which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The *Seventy Interpreters*, in both these places, use *Hades* for *death*. So in Hos. (xiii. 14.) where the Hebrew and Greek both read "I will deliver them from the hand of *Hades*," the Latin *Vulgate* has "de manu *mortis* liberabo eos," that is, from the "*hand of death*;" which Cyril of Alexandria tells us, is in reality the same thing. "He has redeemed us," says this Father, "from the hand of *hell*, that is, from the power of *death*."† "The dissolution of the soul from

* Wisd. xvi. 13.

† Cyr. in Hoseam. p. 371.

the body," says St. Chrysostom, "is not only called *death*, but *Hades* also. For listen to the patriarch Jacob saying, *Ye will bring my old age with sorrow to Hades.* (Gen. xlii. 38.) And the prophet again; *Hades has opened its mouth.* (Isai. v. 14.) And in many places will you find in the Old Testament, that in our translation we call *death Hades.*"* The learned Eusebius, on the very text that gave rise to this digression, writes expressly, as follows; "That the church doth not yield to the *gates of death*, *πυλαις θανατου* on account of that one saying, which Christ did utter, *Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*"† St. Ambrose concludes also from the same text, "That faith is the foundation of the church: for it was *not said of Peter's flesh*, but *of his faith*, that the *gates of death* should not prevail against it."‡ The reader, no doubt, is convinced by this time, and so, perhaps, is the Rev. Gentleman also, that in this matter the Chaplain did not "trust to his private interpretation of scripture, in opposition to the general sense and understanding of the church in all ages," or borrow his ideas from the suggestions of Besa.§ Let the Rev. Gentleman only confess, that he was somewhat off his guard in this hasty accusation, and it will be thought of no more. The meaning then of the text is, that the gates or powers of hell, or rather of *death*, will never prevail against the Christian church.

* Chrys. Serm. 2. in Pascha. tom. 5. edit. Savil. pag. 537.

† Euseb. lib. 1. præparat. Evang. pag. 7.

‡ Fides ergo est ecclesie firmamentum: non enim de carne Petri, sed de fide dictum est, quia *portæ mortis non ei prevalebunt.* *Ambr. de Incarnat. sacram. cap. 5.*

§ Address, p. 29.

The Chaplain had expressed, and expresses again, his assent to this truth; and concludes from it, that *perpetuity* is annexed to the Christian church. For if she shall never be reduced by *Hades*, that is by *death*, to a state of extinction, she must of consequence be *perpetual* and *immortal*. Whereas, if *Hades* in the text be taken for Hell only, this limitation will exclude the idea of *perpetuity* and infallibility also. For, admitting that the infernal powers should not prevail in abolishing the Christian church, does it follow, that no other powers shall succeed in their attempts against her? Let us suppose, that the eloquence of Pagan philosophy, the allurements of human passions, or the flames of persecution, had proved subversive of the Christian name. In this case, the church would have failed, without the powers of hell being any wise concerned, or the promise of Christ being called in question. For the *world*, the *flesh*, and the *devil* are the mortal foes to religious societies, as well as to the several individuals who compose them. If so, how does the text, in securing the church against the last, necessarily ensure her against her two former enemies? If she *fail principally by erring*,* may not the *world* and the *flesh* contribute as effectually to her downfall, as the powers of hell itself? Wherefore, it appears certain, that *perpetuity* only is promised in the text. Nor should we adopt the word *hell*, does it countenance any other prerogative: for, even in this case, the only meaning we can gather is, "that the infernal powers shall not prevail against, that is, *ultimately* overcome, and enslave the church;

* Address, p. 30.

or abolish the *great and essential tenets expressed in the apostles' creed.*" The Rev. Gentleman harshly brands a short and innocent paraphrase on the text quite similar to this, as a *strong instance of confident assertion usurping the place of solid argument.** But, until he shows that Christ's church can subsist without *his* religion,† or that he did not foresee that, at some periods of time, she *would be feeble and disordered*, the candid reader will hardly accede to this censure.

As to the passages which he adduces from the *Question of Questions*, and *The shortest Way to end Disputes about Religion*, they manifestly rest upon these false suppositions: that the Roman church, and others in communion with her, was the only visible church when she proposed points of faith, which Protestants deem erroneous, and that every error, in the line of religion, utterly destroys the church that teaches it. Now, both these positions appear to be groundless: First, because whenever these points of faith were publicly held out as *terms of communion* by the Roman church, they were rejected by other societies of Christians, who were equally branches of the Catholic church. This was the case at the several periods, when image-worship, purgatory, transubstantiation, &c. were added to the list of original tenets. Secondly, because the church is not destroyed by every religious error, but by such only as are *fundamental*. Wherefore, until an error pervades every Christian society, which is directly levelled at some article of the apostles' or the Roman creed,‡ the common prin-

* Address, p. 31.

† See the passage, Address, p. 32.

‡ This creed is the same with that which is repeated in the liturgy of the church of England at the communion service.

ciples of Christianity must remain unshaken, and the professors of them be members of the Catholic church. Against these essential tenets, this *sole foundation*, the powers of *death*, or of *hell*, are never to prevail.* They may obscure, and weaken, and shake them, by the superstructure of error, and by the poisonous exhalations of vice; but they shall never *prevail against them*. The Rev. Gentleman asks (p. 33.) “if the gates of hell do not prevail against a church requiring an idolatrous worship, or teaching those mysteries of iniquity, viz. the heresy of persecution, &c. mentioned in the Chaplain’s letter.” (p. 11.) The answer is, that as the whole Catholic church never adopted these maxims, the question becomes useless. If, however, the Roman church appear guilty on this head, it belongs to her advocates to clear her as well as they can.

The Chaplain had advanced, (Let. p. 28, 29,) *that the gates of death or of hell should not prevail against the essential tenets of the Christian religion*. On this assertion the Rev. Gentleman builds a long catalogue of *ideal* absurdities. But surely he did not reflect that, if doctrines take place, they must necessarily have advocates; that Christians and Christian doctrines must

* This distinction between the *fundamental* articles of faith, and other doctrines, appears very conformable to the notions of the elegant Melchior Canus. His words are these: “Quædam sunt Catholicæ veritates, quæ ita ad fidem pertinent, ut his sublatis, fides quoque ipsa tollatur. Quas nos usu frequenti non solum Catholicas, sed fidei veritates appellavimus. Aliæ veritates sunt ipsæ Catholicæ et universales, nempe quas universa ecclesia tenet, quibus licet eversis, fides quatitur, sed non evertitur tamen. Atque in hujusmodi veritatum contrariis erroribus, dixi fidem *obscurari*, non *extingui*: *infirmari*, non *perire*: Has ergo nunquam fidei veritates censui vocandas, quamvis doctrinæ *Christianæ* veritates sint.” Melch. Can. loc. Theol. lib. 12. cap. 11.

stand or fall together. Perhaps, when he comes to consider further, that the Chaplain borrowed, nay, copied *this interpretation* of the text from the council of Trent, he will regret having amused himself and his readers, at the manifest expense of this infallible assembly. The words are these, *The Council “has thought fit, that the symbol of faith which the holy Roman church uses, as that principle, in which all who profess the faith of Christ necessarily agree; and the firm and *only foundation* against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, should be expressed in the same words, in which it is read in all the churches.” This passage, the Chaplain trusts, secures both his candour and accuracy so far in *this matter*, as to render any further vindication of either extremely superfluous. The Roman Catholic will hardly reject an apology so pointedly drawn from the council of Trent.

The Rev. Gentleman proceeds next† to examine the promises of Christ, made at his last supper. (John, xiv. 16. &c.) He thinks it necessary to set down the text more fully; to which the Chaplain can have no objection, as not a syllable of it applies to infallibility. Let the reader pronounce upon the logic of these inferences: “I will ask my Father and he will send you another Comforter to abide with you for ever:” (Ibid.) *therefore the Roman church is infallible.* “The Comforter, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your

* Symbolum fidei, quo S. Ecclesia Romana utitur, tanquam principium illud, in quo omnes, qui fidem Christi profitentur, necessariò conveniunt, ac *firmamentum firmum et unicum*, contra quod portæ inferni nunquam prevalebunt, totidem verbis, quibus in omnibus ecclesiis legitur, exprimentum esse censuit. (Concil. Trid. Sess. 3.)

† Address, p. 37.

remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you :" (v. 26. :) *therefore the Roman church is infallible.* " I have yet many things to say unto you : but you cannot hear them now ; however, when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth : " (Ibid. xvi. 13. :) *therefore the Roman church is infallible.* The absurdity of these conclusions did not escape the Rev. Gentleman's notice, and therefore he only infers from these passages " the perpetual assistance of the Divine Spirit, teaching and leading the apostles and their successors, that is, the body of pastors, into *all truth necessary and relating* to the service of God and salvation of man."* As the Chaplain had expressed this very idea in his letter,† he may be allowed to waive any further discussion of these texts, and to repeat his hearty accession to so rational a comment.

The words of Christ, recorded in St. Matthew, (xxviii. 20.,) " Behold I am with you *always* even unto the end of the world,"‡ to be any wise conclusive for the cause of infallibility, must suppose *first*, that by the word *you* are meant the doctors and teachers of the church of Rome, and *they only*. Now, the Rev. Gentleman himself disclaims this supposition ; for he says expressly,§ that " they must be the successors of the apostles, whose line of succession we can trace to them. This done, we must account of them as the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God, (1 Cor. iv. 1.) from whom we may learn certainly the truth of the gospel." The teachers therefore of the Greek and Protestant churches, who *can trace an indisputable succession to the apostles*, must

* Address, p. 39.

† P. 29.

‡ Address, p. 40.

§ P. 41.

have as just a claim to Christ's promise, as the teachers and prelates of the church of Rome. Secondly, These words must suppose, that Christ will be with the successors of the apostles not only to keep them from all *damnable* and *destructive* errors, but absolutely from all erroneous doctrines whatever: and yet, even granting all this, it then would follow, if the promise be absolute, that not only the whole church of Rome, not only a general council, not the Pope alone, but every bishop, every priest, every person, who is sent by Christ to baptize and preach the gospel, might claim this assistance by virtue of his words, and consequently be infallible. "Now, in this case," says Mr. Chillingworth, "what a multitude of infallible churches should we have!" "But," says the Rev. Gentleman:* "All truth, in matters of faith and salvation, into which the Spirit was to lead them, is exclusive of *all error*, in the same line:" and therefore it follows, doubtless, that the Spirit can never lead the church into error. But can we infer likewise, that her teachers shall never hold out any tenets for truth, besides such as the Holy Spirit has delivered? Or, in other words, that they shall never build *wood, hay, and stubble* upon the foundations of truth? Does not the heterodoxy of popes, bishops, and councils, which is upon record, demonstrate that this may possibly be the case? If a person be led into every geometrical truth relating to trigonometry, does it follow, because *all truth* in this line is exclusive of all error in the same, that he shall never adopt any other positions that may confuse his ideas and mislead his operations? Had our

* Address, p. 42.

Lord assured us, that the successors of his apostles should never depart one tittle from the truths of religion, nor add a single tenet to the holy simplicity of his doctrine : Had he told us that the Roman pontiff, his councils and his pastors, should be secured from every kind of error in the line of religion, had he ordered us in all our doubts and difficulties to have immediate recourse to the Roman church only, as an infallible tribunal ; then, indeed, would it have been rash and impious to withstand her decisions. But the ways of God are not the ways of men, and it would be the highest presumption to expect, that his wisdom should ply to our apparent convenience. Perhaps a familiar case will illustrate this whole matter. Let us suppose that the Almighty had promised America, at the commencement of her late glorious struggle, *to guide her into all freedom*, and that the powers of Great Britain *should not prevail against her*. Could any thing more be inferred from this promise, than that the attempts of her enemies should be baffled in the end, and that all the essential branches of liberty should be hers ? Her provinces might be ravaged, her inhabitants distressed, her armies defeated. She might at times stand trembling upon the brink of destruction. But her enemies, notwithstanding, should not ultimately succeed. She should still retain sufficient strength to preserve her freedom from the exertions of tyranny. Even this freedom itself might at times be impaired. Its principles might be obscured in some State of the union, while they shone with their original lustre in others. Ignorant or designing men might build *wood, hay, and stubble*, upon the fundamental rights of election, upon trials by jury, or the liber-

ty of the press. But would these abuses falsify the promises of the Almighty? Might they not subsist for a time without abolishing the *essentials* of freedom, to which perpetuity is promised, and which of course would remain entire, when the abuses, that obscured them, lie buried in oblivion?

To break the enchantment of the magic circle, in which the Chaplain conceives the advocates for infallibility to be entangled,* the Rev. Gentleman shifts the general ground of the argument, and endeavours to rear his system upon other foundations than what the scriptures supply. "The Catholic reader has but to open his eyes," says he,† "and he will discover that his church is in the practice of determining controversies of faith, by the concurrent authority of the episcopal body. The church, even from the apostles' time, has always exercised this authority—which the primitive Christians considered as definitive and infallible. Whoever refused submission was cast from the church as a heathen and publican. On these grounds will the Christian be induced to believe her infallibility—To exercise such a right (viz. of deciding and excommunicating) without infallibility would be vain and nugatory: therefore, she is infallible." Here, in his own words, is the Rev. Gentleman's argument, that is to dissolve the charm of this formidable circle. It appears plausible at first sight, but when urged for infallibility, is like applying the areas of several small circles to ascertain the square of a large one. In other words, it is nothing more than solving one *vicious circle* by introducing another.

* Letter, p. 26.

† Pages 45, 46.

For it is only in supposition that this infallibility exists, that the practice of the church can be alleged to evince it. The church is infallible, therefore she has a right to decide upon matters of faith: She has a right to decide upon matters of faith, therefore she is infallible. Will such reasoning be deemed sufficient to uphold the highest privilege ever claimed by mankind? The fact is, in every well regulated society, some supreme court of judicature must necessarily be established, in order to terminate finally contentions among individuals, which otherwise would for ever disturb the peace of the community: but are such tribunals on this account to be deemed infallible? It is true, the decisions concerning truth do not bear a strict resemblance to those which regard our temporal interests. The first must never depart an iota from the *apparent* light of reason and revelation. The second may be modified as the common good requires. But in both cases the manner of judging is the same, and in both cases may the decisions of men be mistaken. Accordingly, we often see, when one supreme tribunal has been compelled to yield to an adverse power, its decrees have been reversed, and others enacted, which during the prevalence of their authors are as binding as the first. This was the case during the famous disputes concerning the incarnation. For two hundred years the same opinions were successively approved and condemned, as their abettors, or adversaries, got the upper hand. It was, therefore, thought necessary to recur to some supreme authority, in order to prevent disputes from becoming perpetual. The spirit of charity, which is the very essence of religion, was greatly impaired by these

dreadful quarrels, and it was judged a less dangerous expedient to decide definitively upon these several questions, than to suffer Christians to tear one another to pieces in the fury of controversy. But this could not deprive individuals of the right of judging for themselves in *speculative* matters. In these cases, reason cannot yield to human authority alone; especially when it is known, that many final decisions have been discovered at last disagreeing with truth. This made St. Gregory of Nazianzum declare, “that he was never present at an assembly of bishops, which did not increase the evils they meant to remedy; the spirit of dispute and ambition always prevailing over the dictates of reason.”* And the judicious Turretin adds,† “that if any man, having read the acts of the councils, regard them as infallible, a physician would be the proper person to undertake his case.”

As to the argument drawn from the right and practice of excommunicating, what force can it have with those who laugh at infallibility? They would say, no doubt, that this also is running round a circle; because the church not being infallible, as is pretended, her practice on this head is rather an abuse that ought to be reformed, than a law of obligation; that nothing is more dangerous, and less logical, than to argue from *matter of fact* to *matter of right*; because the latter must first be established before the former can possibly be an argument for its justice. Thus, when several popes presumed to enforce acts of ju-

* Carmen. de vitâ suâ.

† Qui lectis conciliorum actis ea pro errare nesciis habucrit, ad medicos ablegandus est. Turret.

isdiction, in matters merely temporal, to the prejudice of princes, they were withstood as so many usurpations, and abolished as tyrannical, and no wise competent to prescribe against *right*. It is therefore a sign of a weak cause, to urge the practice of excommunication as a proof of infallibility, since nothing decisive can follow from it: for, even supposing it to be just and warrantable, infallibility would not follow from it as a necessary consequence. Excommunication has often been employed upon very trifling occasions, where articles of faith were no wise concerned. This was the case with respect to the celebration of Easter, the repetition of baptism, the marriage of the clergy, the affair of the three chapters, &c., where each excommunicating party could not surely challenge the privilege of being infallible. This act of church authority, therefore, when properly exercised, is not grounded upon infallibility, but solely upon the right, which all communities possess, of framing laws and regulations for their own well-being, and of excluding every person from their society, who refuses to submit to its essential ordinances. Particular churches have frequently excommunicated each other, without the least pretence to infallibility. The thunder of this ecclesiastical artillery was echoed for ages from the East to the West, although the contest was chiefly for pre-eminence and power. Nothing then can be less satisfactory, than the argument drawn from the practice of excommunication, a penalty often inflicted without necessity and justice; frequently at the expense of reason and truth; and consequently but ill calculated to uphold the highest privilege ever claimed among men.

The Chaplain, therefore, although he believes the infallibility of scripture, has reason to insist upon this hackneyed argument; for, “the Roman Catholic must believe his church infallible, because she teaches, *by an infallible authority*, that many texts of scripture prove her to be so.” Here is the magic round, in which the advocates for this system must continue to move until delivered by reasons yet undiscovered.

With respect to the *other hackneyed argument* mentioned by the Chaplain,* the Rev. Gentleman thinks it “really matter of astonishment, that *he* also should insist upon it.”† The reader is requested to turn to the note, and if he there find any *matter of astonishment*, this sentiment must be easily wakened in his mind. Where is the *great mistake* in asserting, “that some divines place infallibility only in the pope and council received by the whole church?” Are they not negatively distinguished, by this opinion, from those who plead for the infallibility of the pope alone, or in conjunction with a council? The Chaplain never meant to deny, that *all* Roman Catholics profess to believe that infallibility resides in the pope and council received by the whole church, but he maintains that they who make it consist in this *only* must differ in their notions upon the constituents of this prerogative from those who attribute it to each separate branch. This is all the *matter of astonishment*, which can possibly be collected from the Chaplain’s words. *He*, indeed, has ample room for astonishment, when he hears the Rev. Gentleman denying it to be the doctrine of his church,‡ “that a council can decree nothing without the assent of the pope;

* Letter, p. 26. note.

† Address, p. 48.

‡ Address, p. 48.

that he alone has a right to interpret the council, and explain its decisions; and that those *tenets* only are of *faith*, which he determines to be so.”* If these be not the doctrines of the Roman church, *the Chaplain has indeed erased from his memory, among other learned lumber, the theological principles of her schools.*† For he will declare upon his honour, that he thus understood the doctrines on this head delivered in the lectures, which he attended: and he trusts, his honour, *even after discarding his former prejudices, is as sacred as theirs, who choose still to uphold them.* The explicit hint at gross ignorance, or wilful misrepresentation, thrown out in this place, makes the reader’s further indulgence necessary, while this matter is cleared up. Let the Rev. Gentleman inform us whether a council can make decrees in *matters of faith, without the assent of the pope.* If so, what becomes of the infallibility arising from their mutual agreement, and the consent of the church? If, according to the Rev. Gentleman,‡ *infallibility reside in the body of bishops united and agreeing with their head, the bishop of Rome,* how can a council of these bishops give a sanction to tenets, to which their head declares his dissent? Will any Roman Catholic school allow a council to be œcumenical, or its decrees to be of faith, if the pope do not preside personally, or by his legates, and confirm its decisions? The Rev. Gentleman denies, *moreover, that the pope alone has a right to interpret the council, and that such interpretations only are of faith; the bishops, also, says he,§ claim a divine right to this privilege.* But let him tell us, if their interpretations be *of faith.* If so; then

* Letter, p. 26. note.

† Address, p. 48.

‡ Address, p. 49.

§ Address, p. 49.

is every bishopric an infallible church: if not; then has the pope only a right to pronounce on them with definitive authority. Let the practice of the Roman church in this particular illustrate her belief. Whenever disputes arose among Roman Catholic divines, or universities, was not the sovereign pontiff always appealed to, to settle them? In the fierce and famous contests *de auxiliis*, or of grace, between the Molinists and the Thomists, did not each party continually appeal to the pope? And had he judged it prudent to decide upon the matter, would not a rejection of his decisions have been deemed *heretical*, and treated as such? Did not the Jansenists repeatedly allege the authority of the Fathers and Councils to support the five positions of the Bishop of Ypres; and yet the Rev. Gentleman must regard them as heretical, and their opposite truths to be of faith, since the sentence passed on them by the Roman see.* Why

* The inquisitive reader will not perhaps be displeased with a short account of a fanatical system of divinity, which for near a century agitated the kingdom of France. It called forth all the airy humour, all the powers of satire, all the profound erudition of this elegant nation. Princes and bishops, friars and poets, divines and ladies, eagerly engaged in the mighty contest; while, to an impartial bystander, it was a matter of doubt whether the object of contention was not a mere fantome at last. About the year 1630, Cornelius Jansenius and John Verger, commonly called Abbé de St. Cyran, contracted a close friendship, and concerted a new plan of doctrine concerning divine grace, founded in part upon the opinions of Michael Baius, of the university of Lovain. This system, Jansenius, by his friend's advice, endeavoured to establish in a book, which, from St. Augustin, he entitled *Augustinus*. After being bishop of Ypres from 1635 to 1638, he died of the pestilence, leaving his book in manuscript only; which, however, was given to the public after, by Fromondus, a learned Lovanian divine. This book of Jansenius was condemned by Urban VIII. in 1641, and in 1658 Innocent X. censured five propositions, to which he conceived the errors of this work were principally reduced. This was the signal for the combat, and hosts of zealous heroes sprang up on every side. "The principal errors contained in the doctrine of the Jansenists," says the learned Butler, *in his Life of*

are long catalogues of propositions, which are condemned by the Pope, inserted in all books of casuistry, and laid down as so many acknowledged errors against faith and morals? This surely, alone, is sufficient to authorize the Chaplain's assertion, *that the Pope only has a right to interpret councils; in order to determine what tenets are of faith.* He therefore, alone, must be the ultimate depository of infallibility. (Lett. p. 26.) When he speaks *ex cathedra*, as it is called, his oracles must command submission from his adherents: and yet the reader may possibly mistake the meaning of his decrees, full as readily as some essential passage of the Bible; unless, indeed, with infallibility, the gift of *perspicuity* also be communicated to him in a higher degree than to the word of God. As to the *maxims* and *solemn declarations* of the Gallican clergy, they must first be proved consistent, before they can have weight. It was a just remark of the celebrated Archbishop Wake, that "the English prelates, by renouncing all dependence on the Roman pontiff, exhibited a degree of *consistency* and candour not to be reconciled

Vincent of Paul, "are, that God sometimes refuses, even to the just, sufficient grace to comply with his precepts; that the grace which God affords man since the fall of Adam, is such, that if concupiscence be stronger, it cannot produce its effect; but if the grace be more powerful or victorious, by a *necessitating* influence, that then it cannot be resisted, rejected, or hindered: and that Christ by his death paid, indeed, a sufficient price for the redemption of all men, and offered it to purchase some weak, insufficient grace for reprobate souls, but not to procure them means truly applicable, and sufficient for their salvation. The main spring or hinge of this system is, that the grace, which inclines man's will to supernatural virtue, since the fall of Adam, consists in a moral, pleasurable motion, or a delectation infused into the soul, inclining her to virtue, as concupiscence carries her to vice; and that the power of delectation, whether of virtue or vice, which is strongest, draws the will by an inevitable necessity, as it were by its own weight." To support, explain, modify, reject, and impugn such absurdities as these, an enlightened and polished nation was convulsed for near a century, exhibiting a most contemptible picture to every thinking man, of systems, and system makers.

with the professions and conduct of the Bishops of France." (*Append. to Mosheim's Church History.*)

The Chaplain's second consideration on *the plea to infallibility*, (Lett. p. 29.) which was meant only to evince *that the Roman church regards some doctrines at present as articles of faith, which for many ages were debated as matters of opinion*, is not fairly stated by the Rev. Gentleman. It is there said, *that at some periods of time several doctrines were defined as belonging to faith, which at others were debated as matters of opinion*. He instances the opinion of the Millenarians to prove this assertion. Is this to "allege that the church formerly taught doctrines as of *faith*, which she now rejects as contrary to faith?" (Address, p. 50.) "Because this doctrine was maintained as an article of universal belief, or of Catholic faith, by almost every father, who lived immediately after the times of the apostles," does it follow that the Catholic church defined it as an article of communion? For some ages previous to the reformation, we do not meet with a divine of any eminence, except Thomas Aquinas, who was not a zealous advocate for the doctrine of *persecution*; and yet the Rev. Gentleman will hardly allow it to be an article of Catholic communion. The truth is, without the intervention of any solemn decree, the doctrine of a *millennium* was an article of Catholic belief; and, therefore, if the church fail principally by erring, (Address, p. 48.) she certainly must have failed, when nearly all her teachers were involved in an error, which has since been deemed capital. At any rate, the Rev. Gentleman must confess, that the doctrine of *admission to happiness*, or of *condemnation to punish-*

ment immediately after death, is now defined as belonging to faith, which was formerly debated as a matter of opinion, and rejected by almost all the ancient fathers. This is all the Chaplain meant to advance as the ground of his argument. This is all, that either accuracy or candour calls upon him to maintain. It was never his intention to investigate the merits of auricular confession, of purgatory, transubstantiation, or any other tenet of the Roman church. He merely advanced, and clearly showed, “that these and some other doctrines are not to be found in the scriptures, and that at some periods of time they passed for opinions only.” Until these assertions be confuted, the Chaplain stands acquitted of disingenuity and mistake; even allowing that the Rev. Gentleman’s arguments, through thirty-six pages of his address,* have proved satisfactory in establishing these doctrines. Without leading the reader through all the beaten paths of the province of controversy, which the Rev. Gentleman travels over in this part of his address, the Chaplain wishes only to detain him at those passages which are intended to do away the above-mentioned assertions.

The Rev. Gentleman begins with transubstantiation,† which the Chaplain asserts *was no article of faith prior to the council of Lateran, in 1215.*‡ Scotus, who was styled the *subtile doctor*, and has ever been regarded as a prodigy among the schoolmen, maintains this to be the case. But, say Bellarmine and the Rev. Gentleman, Scotus was mistaken. Although he died in 1308, he knew nothing of the councils which

* From p. 69. to 105.

† Address, p. 69.

‡ Letter, p. 32.

established this doctrine, and yet the first that did so, was held in 1060, or rather 1050, under Leo IX. During two centuries and a half, the opinion of Berenger was echoed through Europe, and had innumerable adherents; yet Scotus, who lived at the conclusion of this period, had never heard of the councils that condemned him. Will the impartial reader acquiesce in improbabilities like these? The Chaplain goes on, "It was towards the beginning of the ninth century, that Paschasius Radbertus published his treatise upon the corporal presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and as Bellarmine tells us, was *the first who wrote seriously and copiously concerning it.*" (Ib.) The words of the learned cardinal, which immediately follow *against Bertram the Priest, who was among the first that called it in question*, are omitted by the Chaplain; and this omission is held up as a striking instance of his deficiency in point of accurate and impartial investigation.* No censure in the Address surprised him more than this. If the reader have been two years at a Latin school, let him construe fairly the following sentence. *Hic auctor primus fuit, qui serio et copiosè scripsit de veritate corporis et sanguinis domini in Eucharistiâ, contra Bertramum Presbyterum, qui fuit ex primis, qui eam in dubium revocarunt.*† Now, if he can make out from this sentence, or the latter part of it, that Paschasius was only the first who wrote *seriously and copiously against Bertram*; and not the first who wrote *seriously and copiously concerning the body and blood of the Lord in the Eucharist*, he must have mispent his time egregiously, or possess

* Address, p. 69.

† Bell. de Scrip. Eccl. p. 266.

a happy talent at distorting the obvious meaning of words. But another learned Jesuit shall clear his brother Bellarmine from obscurity in this instance, and the Chaplain from the censure of ignorance or design. These are the words of Father Sirmondus, in his life of Paschasius. "*Genuinum ecclesie Catholice sensum ita primus explicuit, ut viam cæteris aperuerit, qui de eodem argumento multi postea scripsère.*" "He was *the first*, who explained the true sense of the Catholic church in such a manner, as to open the way to many others, who wrote afterwards on the same subject."

But to proceed: "Paschasius himself informs us," says the Chaplain, "that this doctrine was by no means universal or settled."* The Rev. Gentleman styles this a most *unfortunate reference*, and boldly rejects the citation itself. The Chaplain has not by him the original epistle of Paschasius to Frudegard, but he finds his words cited by the accurate Usher, in a manner that admits not a doubt of their authenticity.† "You question me," says he, "upon a subject, about which *many* are doubtful." And again, "although *many* hence be doubtful, how he remains entire, and this can be the body and blood of Christ." If these two passages be genuine, and they must be so, unless Usher foisted them into the letter, it follows, that Paschasius is guilty of a palpable contradiction, or in the heat of controversy, as is often the case, compliments his own particular notions as *Catho-*

* Letter, *ibid.*

† "*Quæris enim de re ex qua multi dubitant.*"....*Quamvis multi ex hoc dubitent, quomodo ille integer manet, et hoc corpus Christi et sanguis esse possit.* Pasch. Epist. ad Frud. citat. ab Usher, p. 77. *Answer to a Challenge, &c.*

lic truths, or that the words quoted by Usher are omitted in the edition which the Rev. Gentleman consulted. The plausibility of this conjecture will shortly appear, when the treatment of some of his cotemporary writers on this very subject comes to be mentioned.

The passage quoted by the Chaplain* from Rabanus Maurus, in his letter to Heribald, is not rejected by the Rev. Gentleman, "because he has not this epistle, nor is able to procure it; † he suspects, however, that it is copied from the *Huguenot Albertinus*, whose mistakes have a great *affinity with those of the Chaplain.*" But this very passage shall shift the weighty imputation from the Huguenot and the Chaplain, to a quarter, where the Rev. Gentleman little suspects it can belong. Let the reader peruse the following words of the most diligent, as well as the most successful searcher into antiquity, and then pronounce upon this additional instance of the Chaplain's *inaccuracy*. "In the year 1616," says Archbishop Usher, ‡ "a tome of ancient writers, that never saw the light before, was set forth at Ingolstat, by Petrus Stuartius; where, among other treatises, a certain *Penitential*, written by Rabanus, that famous Archbishop of Mentz, is to be seen. In the 33d chapter of that book, Rabanus making answer to an idle question moved by Bishop Heribaldus, concerning the Eucharist, (what should become of it *after it was consumed, and sent into the draught, after the manner of other meats,*) hath these words, (initio pag. 669.) *Nam quidam nuper de ipso sacramento corporis & sanguinis*

* Letter, p. 32.

† Address, p. 71.

‡ Answer to a Challenge, p. 17.

domini non rite sentientes, dixerunt : hoc ipsum corpus et sanguinem domini, quod de Mariâ virgine natum est et in quo ipse dominus passus est in cruce, et resurrexit de sepulchro. Cui errori quantum potuimus, ad Egilum abbatem scribentes, de corpore ipso quid vere credendum sit aperuimus. For some, of late, not holding rightly of the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord, have said, that the very body and blood of our Lord, which was born of the virgin Mary, and in which our Lord himself suffered on the cross, and rose again from the grave. Against which error, writing to abbot Egilus, according to our ability, we have declared, what is truly to be believed concerning Christ's body. You see Rabanus's tongue is clipt here for telling tales : but how this came to pass is worth the learning. Stuartius frees himself from the fact, telling us in the margin, that *here there was a blank in the manuscript copy ;** and we do easily believe him : for Possevine, the Jesuit, hath given us to understand, that manuscript books also are to be purged, as well as printed.† But whence was this manuscript fetched, think you ? *Out of the famous monastery of Weingart ;* saith Stuartius.‡ The monks of Weingart then, belike, must answer the matter : and they, I dare say, upon examination will take their oaths, that it was no part of their intention to give any furtherance to the cause of Protestants hereby. If hereunto we add, that Heribaldus and Rabanus are both ranked among heretics, by Thomas Walden,§ for holding the Eu-

* *Lacuna hic est in MS. exemplari.*

† *Ad istos quoque purgatio pertinet.* Lib. 1. Bib. Select. cap. 12.

‡ *Ex MS. cod. celeberrimi monasterii Weingartensis.*

§ Walden's Tom. 1. doctrinal. in prolog. ad Martinum V. Id. Tom. 2 cap. 19, et 61.

charist to be subject to digestion and voidance, like other meats; the suspicion will be more vehement, whereunto I will adjoin one evidence more, that shall leave the matter past suspicion. In the libraries of my worthy friends, Sir. Rob. Cotton, (that noble baronet so renowned for his great care in collecting and preserving all antiquities,) and Dr. Ward, the learned master of Sidney College, in Cambridge, I met with an ancient treatise of the sacrament, beginning thus: *Sicut ante nos quidam sapiens dixit, cujus sententiam probamus, licet nomen ignoremus*; which is the same with that in the Jesuits' college at Lovain, blindly fathered upon Berengarius.* The author of this treatise, having first twitted Heribaldus for propounding, and Rabanus for resolving, this question of the voidance of the Eucharist, layeth down afterwards the opinion of Paschasius Radbertus, whose writing is still extant. *Contra quem, says he, satis argumentatur et Rabanus in epistola ad Egilonem abbatem, et Ratrannus quidam libro composito ad Carolum regem, dicentes (carnem Christi) aliam esse.* Against whom both Rabanus, in his epistle to abbot Egilo, and one Ratrannus, in a book which he made to king Charles, argue largely; saying, *it is another kind of flesh.* Whereby, what Rabanus's opinion was of this point, in his epistle to abbot Egilo, or Egilus, and, consequently, what that was which the monks of Weingart could not endure in his penitential, I trust, is plain enough."

The Rev. Gentleman must be seriously concerned for the orthodoxy of Bertram, who was employed by

* Ant. Possevin. Appar. sacr. in Bereng. Turon.

Charles the *Bald* to oppose Paschasius, when, in contradiction to Bellarmine, Turrianus, and other eminent divines, he adopts his vindication penned by the flimsy author of the history of the Whippers.* Bertram, we are told, plainly asserts *in many passages the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation*. The Rev. Gentleman sets down but one, which is probably the most explicit. "The bread," says he, "is changed into the body of Christ by the significancy of the sacred mystery, by the invisible operation of the Holy Ghost. Whence they are called the body and blood of Christ," &c.† It requires a happy talent to make out *transubstantiation* from these words. They appear manifestly to mean, if, indeed, they mean any thing, that in the holy mystery bread and wine *signify* the body and blood of Christ, and are *called* so from the invisible hallowing of these elements. Here is the sound Protestant doctrine, which made Turrianus confess, "that to cite Bertram, was no more than to declare that the heresy of Calvin is not new."‡ But, to clear the sentiments of this writer from every shadow of doubt, let the reader be informed, that the book which he wrote to Charles the *Bald*, contains, among others, these remarkable passages, of which the Latin original is now before the Chaplain. "Your Excellency and Grandeur inquires," says he, "whether the body and blood of Christ, which is received by the mouth of the faithful in the church, be cele-

* Whoever has read the *Historia Flagellantium*, by the Abbe Boileau, or another of his indecent productions, will sooner allow him any appellation, than that of a judicious and solid historian.

† Address, p. 75.

‡ Franc. Turrianus de Euchar. contra Volanum lib. 1. cap. 22.

brated in a mystery or in truth : and whether it be the same body which was born of Mary, which did suffer, was dead and buried ; and which, rising again and ascending into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of the Father ?”* To this question he makes answer, “ that the bread and the wine are the body and blood of Christ figuratively.”† That according to the substance of the creatures, that which they were before consecration, the same also are they afterwards :”‡ That “ they are called the Lord’s body and blood, because they take the name of that thing of which they are a sacrament :”§ That “ there is a great difference between the mystery of the blood and body of Christ which is taken now by the faithful in the church, and that which was born of the virgin Mary, which suffered, which was buried, which rose again, which sitteth at the right hand of the Father.”|| Could the emperor, who proposed his doubts upon this subject, or the writer who thus solves them, believe the *Catholic* doctrine of *transubstantiation* ? The Chaplain might father it with equal propriety upon Archbishop Tillotson, or the *Huguenot* Albertinus. That Bertram wrote this treatise at the emperor’s request, is evident from the first of these passages ; and it is equally certain that, had the doctrine of transubstantiation been notorious and universal, that prince, as a good Catholic, would have been shocked and displeas’d at Bertram for opposing it. The indefatigable Dr. Priestly, speaking of Pascha-

* Bertram. in lib. de corp. et sang. Dom. edit. Colon. ann. 1551, p. 180.

† Ibid. p. 183.

‡ Ibid. p. 205.

§ Ibid. p. 200.

|| Ibid. p. 222.

sus and his tenets, tells us,* that, “among others, the emperor Charles the *Bald*, was much offended at it, and, by his particular order, the famous Bertram or Rattram wrote against the new opinion of Paschasius.”

One word more of Bertram, and the Chaplain will dismiss him : not, indeed, without some reluctance, for he has stood forth an able advocate for his accuracy on this occasion. His book upon this subject was deemed so inimical to *transubstantiation*, that the Roman inquisition forbade it to be read. But the university of Doway, perceiving that the prohibition served only to excite the public curiosity, thought it more adviseable to publish the book, after pruning away the exuberance of some exceptionable passages.† “Since,” say they, “we bear with many errors in other ancient Catholic writers, since we extenuate and excuse, and, by frequently inventing some comment, deny them, and annex some convenient sense to them, when they are objected in disputes and contests with our adversaries ; we do not see why Bertram may not deserve the same justice and diligent revisal, lest the heretics cry out, that we burn and forbid such antiquity as makes for them.” Accordingly, all the arguments of this writer, which prove, that what the faithful receive in the sacrament

* History of Opinions relating to the Lord's Supper, p. 39.

† Quum in Catholicis veteribus aliis plurimos seramus errores et extenuamus, excusemus, excogitato commento persæpe negemus et commodum iis sensum affingamus dum opponuntur in disputationibus aut in conflictionibus cum adversariis : non videmus cur non eandem æquitatem et diligentem recognitionem mereatur Bertramus : ne hæretici ogganniant nos antiquitatem pro ipsis facientem exurere et prohibere. Index Expurg. Belg. page 5. edit. Antwerp, ann. 1571.

is not the body of Christ, that died upon the cross and rose again from death, are ordered to be omitted.* Here is another instance of unprincipled censure, that should for ever silence the charge of *gross misrepresentation* and *unfair quotations* being alleged against Protestants.

The Chaplain is accused, in the next place,† of a palpable anachronism and *want of attention* in mistaking the era of the obscure bishop who first invented the word *transubstantiation*. The Rev. Gentleman asserts that he *lived about* the year 950, and not in the twelfth century. The learned Bellarmine, however, speaks less positively of this fact: “*He is said to have flourished about the year 950.*”‡ And the celebrated Dr. Priestly, whose chronological accuracy stands so high at present, tells us, that “the term *transubstantiation* was first used by Stephen, Bishop of Autun, in the beginning of the twelfth century.”§ He says, moreover, “that he was cotemporary with Peter Lombard;”|| who, according to Bellarmine, flourished in the year 1145.** Many eminent divines are of the same opinion with the *Huguenot* Albertinus, whose authority is at any time upon a level with that of the *Jansenist* Nicole.††

* Non male aut inconsulte omittantur igitur omnia hæc. Ibid. The learned Richer, syndic of the theological faculty of Paris, tells us, *Council. General.* lib. 4. par. 2., “That the court of Rome suppresses and abolishes all those acts which contradict its usurped rights; and hence it is that many spurious things are read as genuine, even in ancient councils.”

† Address, p. 77.

‡ *Dicitur autem floruisse anno Dom. 950.* De Scrip. Eccl. p. 276.

§ History of Opinions, &c. p. 41.

|| Ibid. p. 43.

** Ibid. p. 321.

†† This writer and his associates, les Messieurs de Port-Royal, being the

This unmerited censure of inaccuracy being done away, the Chaplain does not consider a regular attendance upon the Rev. Gentleman through the nine ensuing pages of his address to be any wise material. They contain nothing but historical facts, which he means not to controvert. For upwards of two hundred years of the most deplorable ignorance and depravity of manners that ever disgraced the annals of mankind, the doctrine first broached by Paschasius, had ample leisure to spread itself through the churches of Christendom. The dark genius of superstition snatched eagerly at a tenet which came recommended by all the extravagance of mystery; and, having nothing to apprehend from the hostile light of philosophy and science, played it off with success upon the credulity of some and the passions of others. Towards the middle of the eleventh century, it appears to have gained many advocates, and was becoming universal; when Berenger, the learned Archdeacon of Angers, began to oppose it. This he did with such abilities and success, that in spite of the several councils mentioned by the Rev. Gentleman, in spite of the fierce menaces of implacable enthusiasts, mankind was awakened by the firm voice of reason, and France, Italy, and England were filled with his disciples.* From that period to the

avowed, and, it may be added, the *malicious* enemies of the Jesuits, it is wonderful that the Rev. Gentleman should so highly appreciate *La Perpetuite de la Foi*, which is altogether a production of this school, and is justly styled by *Le Courayer*, *le Triomphe de la dialectique sur la raison*.

* William of Malmesbury, who, as Usher asserts, *de succ. et stat. Christ. Eccl.* p. 101., was the author of the *Continuation of Bede*, printed at Heidelberg in 1587, tells us, "that all France was full of his doctrine, which was propagated by the poor students, whom he gained over by his daily alms." *De Gestis Anglorum lib. 3.* Roger of Wendover, and Matthew Paris, in his

present, great and respectable bodies of Christians have constantly rejected the tenet of transubstantiation. The facility with which this doctrine was abandoned, shows plainly that it had taken no strong hold upon men's minds. It is to be presumed that the far greater part knew not themselves what they believed on this head; for, at periods infinitely more enlightened, this has frequently been the case. The Chaplain, therefore, with *most learned Protestants, admits, and he does it without any reluctance*, (Add. p. 82.,) that the doctrine of the carnal presence had greatly prevailed, when Berenger arose to refute it; but he denies that it had full *possession of men's minds*: for authentic monuments of history evince, that, at the beginning of the eleventh century, the matter was frequently debated, and an opposite opinion sometimes taught. One proof, out of many, shall suffice for this assertion. Alfrick, abbot of Malmesbury, in an Easter homily, which he wrote about the year 1026, has these remarkable words: "Men have often searched, and *do yet often search*, how bread that is gathered of corn, and baked by the heat of the fire, may be turned into Christ's body, or how wine that is pressed out

history of the year 1037, support the same fact. In a word, *Matthew*, who collected the history of Westminster and Rochester, tells us expressly, "that at this time Berenger of Tours falling into heretical pravity, had corrupted *all the French, Italians, and English* with his errors." *Eodem tempore Berengarius Turinensis in hæreticam lapsus pravitatem, omnes Gallos, Italos et Anglos suis jam corruerat pravitatibus*. Hence, as Usher observes, we may justly call in question the assertion of Guitmundus, when, to serve his own cause, he says *that the doctrine of Berenger was not received in one borough, or even one village*. See Address, p. 81. In a word, so fluctuating were men's opinions on this matter, that Engelbert, Archbishop of Trevers, assures us, that Hildebrand himself was doubtful, whether *what is taken at the Lord's table be the true body and blood of Christ*. *Constitut. Imp. Goldast. Tom. 1. p. 46. apud Usorium.*

of many grapes, is turned through one blessing into the Lord's blood."* His solution of these difficulties is not only similar to that of Bertram, mentioned above, but in many places translated literally from it. The text of each of these writers is now before the Chaplain. And the argument he draws from this fact is unanswerable. This homily was appointed to be read publicly to the people in England, on Easter day, before the communion. The same doctrine was delivered to the clergy, by the bishops at their respective synods. In one of these writings, directed to Wulfine, bishop of Sherburne, it is said, "that the housel (communion) is Christ's body, not *bodily*, but *spiritually*. Not the body in which he suffered, but the body of which he spake, when he blessed bread and wine to housel, the night before his suffering, &c." Again, addressing himself to Wolfstane, archbishop of York, the writer thus expresses himself: "The Lord who hallowed housel before his suffering, halloweth daily bread to his body, by the hands of the priest, and wine to his blood in *spiritual mystery*, as we read in books. And yet, notwithstanding, that lively bread is not bodily so, nor the self-same body that Christ suffered in: nor that holy wine is the Saviour's blood which was shed for us in *bodily thing*, but in *spiritual understanding*. Both are truly that bread his body, and that wine also his blood, as was the heavenly bread which we call manna, that fed God's people for forty years; and the clear water which did then run from the stone in the wilderness, was truly his blood; as Paul wrote in one of his

* Homil. pasch. Anglo-Saxonica impressa Lond. per. Jo. Daium et MS. in Pub. Cantab. Acad. Bib. apud Usserium Respons. p. 79.

epistles.”* The reader is qualified by this time to pronounce upon the authorities alleged by the Rev. Gentleman for the *universal* belief of transubstantiation, at the period we are speaking of. He will probably regard them as *confident assertions usurping the place of matters of fact*, or as fresh instances of the ignorance of these assemblies. At any rate, no council that condemned Berenger, before that of Lateran, in 1215, is allowed to be *general* by Roman Catholic divines. That held at Rome in 1050, by the confession of Gratian, conceived its decrees in terms that render them doubtful or absurd.† The others were merely provincial synods, by no means competent to establish an article of faith. From all which it follows, that, previous to the council of Lateran, the doctrine of transubstantiation was no article of Roman Catholic belief: which is all the Chaplain asserts in his letter.

How this doctrine gained ground during the gloomy period that intervened between Paschasius and Berenger, in what year it was adopted by particular churches, or why it met not with more early opposition, is by no means incumbent on the Chaplain to demonstrate. He advanced a matter of fact, and he has proved it. They, however, who are acquainted with the imbecility of the human mind, when all its faculties are suffered to lie waste and uncultivated, will deem the space of two centuries more than sufficient to settle the usurpations of error upon the overthrow of reason. The origin of an intellectual

* See this treatise impr. Lond. cum hom. pasch. et MS. in pub. Oxon. Bib. et Colleg. S. Ben. Cantab. apud Usser. *ibid.* p. 32.

† Letter, p. 33. These decrees may be seen in vol. 1. of Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History.

as well as of a bodily plague, is very frequently obscure and uncertain, but when the mind is prepared to receive the infection, its progress and its ravages are rapid and distinct. It was during this dark and woful period of astonishing ignorance, *while men were asleep, that the enemy of the church came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.* (Matth. xiii. 24, 25.) "An unhappy period," says Genebrand,* and other Roman Catholic writers, "destitute of men either of genius or learning, as also of famous princes or bishops." "A period in which were no famous writers, nor *councils.*"† "A period than which none was ever more unlearned and unhappy."‡ A period which, "for want of writers, is usually styled the obscure age."§ A period, in a word, when an aspiring pontiff, to secure the attachment and submission of the clergy, broke down the sacred enclosures of connubial restraint, and thus let loose on Christendom an inundation of vice, which raged with unabating fury down to the reformation.|| Now, although we be unable to

* Chronic. lib. 4.

† *Bellarmin. in Chronol. anno 970.* This assertion of the learned Cardinal runs directly counter to the Rev. Gentleman's opinion, delivered in his Address, page 35.

‡ *Idem de Rom. Pont. lib. 4. cap. 12.*

§ *Baron. Annal. Tom. 10. ann. 900. sect. 1.*

|| See the History of the Dismal Consequences of the Law of Celibacy, in Usher. de successione & statu Christ. Eccl. and the Essay on this subject, printed at Worcester, in England, in 1732. Sigebert, a cotemporary writer, tells us in his chronicle, "that Pope Gregory (VII.) removed the married priests from the divine functions by a new procedure, and (as it appeared to many) by a rash prejudice against the opinion of the holy fathers, &c. From which step," says he, "so great a scandal arises, that in the time of no heresy was the holy church torn to pieces, by a more dreadful schism. Few observing continency, some feigning it for the sake of lucre and reputation; many adding to their incontinency, both perjury and adultery." How greatly all this, and much more that could be alleged, to the credit of celibacy, and to the age in which it was ultimately enacted!

mark the several stages of error, or fix with precision every devastation occasioned by the spirit of deceit, who, “as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour;” (Pet. v. 8.) yet we cannot infer from hence that he lost the opportunity of so dark a night, or neglected to avail himself of the unbounded depravity which corrupted, and the general lethargy which benumbed, the faculties of men. Protestants therefore may believe, that in such circumstances an error may gradually spread, and even become universal, and *still find transubstantiation too hard for their digestion.* (Address, p. 83.)

“That this doctrine ever was, and is still, a tenet of the Greeks, the Armenians, the Cophitics, and Abyssinians,”* is a position much more easily advanced than supported. It positively contradicts the latest accounts of the most enlightened travellers; who tell us, that the Greek prelates, when questioned upon this doctrine, reject it with indignation.† As for the Cophs and Abyssinians, their ancient liturgies explain the words of the institution by saying, *this bread is my body,*‡ which Bellarmine acknowledges to be tantamount to a denial of the mystery.§ Moreover, will the Rev. Gentleman persuade us, that the Greek church admitted transubstantiation in the time of Photius, when we know from history, that the fathers

* Address, p. 83.

† See their several relations, in Dr. Hurd's *History of all Religions*, Among others, the learned Wheeler and Chandler have deposed against the Rev. Gentleman's assertion.

‡ See Usher de success. et statu Christ. Eccl.

§ Non igitur potest fieri, ut vera sit propositio, in quâ subjectum proponitur pro pane, prædicatum autem pro corpore Christi. Panis enim et corpus Domini res diversissimæ sunt. *Bellar. de Euch.* lib. 3. cap. 19.

of the council of Constantinople, in 869, used the consecrated wine mixed with ink to sign his condemnation?*

What an abuse of the Eucharistical elements, what a profanation would this have been! The belief of the Greek church upon this matter is illustrated by John Damascenus in the following manner: "Isaiah saw a *lighted coal*; now a lighted coal is not mere wood, but wood joined to fire; so the bread of the sacrament is not mere bread, but bread joined to the divinity, and the body united to the divinity is not one and the same nature, but the nature of the body is one, and that of the divinity united to it another."

"This," says Dr. Priestly,† "has been the faith of the Greek church ever since the time of this Damascenus, who wrote in the beginning of the eighth century, and his name is as great an authority in the Eastern church, as that of Thomas Aquinas was afterwards in the West. In reality, the Greeks must consider the Eucharistical elements as *another body of Christ*, to which his soul or his divinity bears the same relation that it did to the body which he had when on earth, and with which he ascended to heaven. They must suppose that there is, as it were, a multiplication of bodies to the same soul. *No real change, however, is by them supposed to be made in the substance of the bread and wine*; only from being mere bread and wine, it becomes a new body and blood to Christ." Here is a doctrine perfectly suited to the subtile genius of the Greeks. It may be absurd, but still it is not transubstantiation. The Rev. Gentleman, therefore, appears rather too sanguine, when he asserts, "that

* Priestly's Hist. of Opinions, p. 27.

† Ibid. p. 24.

obstinacy or ignorance alone can deny that his doctrine concerning the Eucharist, agrees with that of all the churches he had mentioned.”* The reader has just seen the decided opinion of a man who never yet was accused of *ignorance*, nor charged with *obstinacy*, when disengaged from the discussion of his peculiar opinions. Wherefore, the Rev. Gentleman’s inference from his contested premises will not, perhaps, be so *conclusive* as he imagines; nor will his apology for the *dark ages* be admitted until more instances of knowledge than one be produced to invalidate the profusion of authorities, which have ever stamped them with a variety of infamy.

The Chaplain had advanced,† “that many celebrated controvertists of the Roman church acknowledge that some of her *essential* tenets are not to be found at all in the scriptures, or are delivered in them with great obscurity.” He briefly instanced this fact with respect to transubstantiation, the priest’s power to forgive sins, and the doctrine of purgatory. He produced three or four eminent divines as vouchers for the first, and this the Rev. Gentleman calls *exhausting his authorities against transubstantiation*.‡ The reader might conclude from these words that instead of about thirty lines, the Chaplain had compiled a folio against this tenet. Not that such a task would by any means be difficult; were he merely to transcribe all the passages of the ancient fathers, which declare that what Christ called his body, is bread in substance, and his body in figure only, and sacramental relation. The reader who may

* Address, p. 84.

† Letter, p. 19.

‡ Address, p. 38.

wish to peruse these passages, will find them in abundance in every Protestant controvertist who treats upon the Eucharist. What the Chaplain meant to infer from the authorities which he mentioned was merely the sentiment delivered by Bellarmine in these words: "that it may be reasonably doubted, whether scripture in this matter appear so evident as to command the belief of a dispassionate person, since men of the greatest learning and penetration, among whom Scotus is eminently conspicuous, have thought otherwise."* Here we have the learned cardinal expressly delivering the Chaplain's position, and his authority alone shall supersede the trouble of looking for other great names to support it.

With reason, therefore, did the Chaplain assert, † "that he could never discover this and some other doctrines in the scriptures, as they escaped the notice of very acute and interested inquirers." He observed consequently "that these *discriminating* tenets derive their whole weight from the infallible authority of the Church which teaches them." And he reasoned further, "that the arguments against these doctrines, drawn from their palpable contradictions, appear greatly an overmatch for such as are alleged for the infallible church that enforces them: therefore, reason tells him that, rather than admit such doctrines, he should not balance to discard such authority." To illustrate this argument he mentioned ‡ a few consequences of transubstantiation which *appear to him* absurd and contradictory. The Rev. Gentleman does not attempt to clear them of this charge: He is of opinion, however, that these difficulties "re-

* De Euch. lib. 3. cap. 26.

† Letter, p. 22.

‡ Letter, p. 24.

sult more immediately from Christ's real presence in the Eucharist than from *transubstantiation*; but," says he, "to impute them to that doctrine would not be quite so inoffensive."* Nor would it in any degree be warrantable so to do: for the doctrine of Protestants, on this head, can defy the most subtle schoolman to fix a single contradiction upon it, of those enumerated in the Chaplain's letter. *Transubstantiation* alone holds an exclusive right in them, and will continue to hold it, until Protestants shall confess, or their opponents demonstrate, that to *receive the body and blood of Christ verily and indeed*,† implies not only a spiritual and sacramental presence, but a corporal and substantial presence, a physical and oral eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood. From this idea only every difficulty originates. Here our senses are bewildered, our religion recoils, our reason stands aghast. A bit of bread becomes the substance of the son of God, and yet retains all the properties of bread! A moment ago it was nothing more. Four words are pronounced by a priest, and this earthly substance becomes the physical body and blood of a man—of a God! And yet it appears, tastes, smells, feels, and nourishes like mere bread! At the same instant of time in a million of different places, the same identical body exists in a million of different circumstances. Here it is at rest—there in motion. Here it is held up to public adoration—there it descends into the stomach of a sinner. In heaven it is a real organical body—on earth it is without organs, without dimensions, without extent;

* Address, p. 95.

† See the Catechism of the church of England.

without weight, without any obvious property of a living body. The Rev. Gentleman may style such objections the *foulest dregs of controversy* ;* but this is not to answer them. No wonder the Jews were astonished at the idea of *Christ giving his flesh to eat* : (John vi.) taken in a literal sense, it was truly a *hard saying*. But our kind Redeemer pitied their ignorance, and dispelled their perplexity. “It is the spirit,” says he, “that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you *they are spirit*, and they are life.” (John vi. 63.) At this rational comment every difficulty vanishes; faith and reason are no longer at variance.—Thrice happy had it been for the cause of humanity and religion, if this solution which Christ gives of his own words, had been seriously attended to by succeeding ages. A principal subject of ridicule had been removed from unbelievers, and the Arabian sage had not exclaimed with exultation, “that since Christians eat what they adore, he would wish his soul to abide with the philosophers.”†

The Rev. Gentleman is of opinion that many circumstances in the life of our Saviour are full as exceptionable as the change of the substance of bread into his natural body. Were this really the case, it would be a further justification of the sentiment of Averroes. But let a single instance in the life of Christ be exhibited, that induces us to discredit the evidence of our senses. The union of the divine and human nature, although incomprehensible, falls not

* Address, p. 95.

† Quandoquidem Christiani comedunt quod adorant, sit anima mea cum philosophis. *Averroes*.

within their sphere of action. But during his abode upon earth, his form, his voice, his flesh, were those of a man, while his sovereign control over nature proclaimed him to be God. All, therefore, who saw, heard, and touched him, from the *evidence of their senses* declared him to be the former—they who reasoned upon his wonders, pronounced him to be the latter. Is the case any wise similar in transubstantiation? The Rev. Gentleman indeed produces a *genuine* passage from St. Chrysostom* to prove that we must submit to this tenet, however it seem to contradict our senses. “Believe me,” says this Doctor, “you see him, you touch him, you eat him. You would be contented to see his clothes; and he lets you not only see him, but also touch him, and eat him, and receive him within you.” (Hom. 81. alias 82. in Matth.) Here the reader is presented with one of those hyperbolical passages which in the heat of declamation often dropt inadvertently from the glowing fancy of the Greeks. The Rev. Gentleman himself cannot surely admit the literal meaning of these words. For does he not profess, that Christ is only present, under the *appearances* of bread and wine? How then can we see his body, when nothing but bread and wine appears; or touch it, when the sacramental elements are the sole object of this sense? This *genuine* quotation, therefore, avails but little—like many other expressions of the ancient fathers, which escaped them during their extempore discourses, it will not stand the test of analytical criticism. However, to convince the reader that no passage from this, or any other of the fathers, can be

* Address, p. 97.

brought forth for transubstantiation, to which a counter-passage cannot be produced, let him peruse the following words of the same eloquent doctor, taken from his dogmatical epistle to Cesarius against the heresy of Apolinarius:* “As, before the bread is sanctified, we call it bread; but when God’s grace has sanctified it by the means of the priest, it is delivered from the name of bread, and is reputed worthy of the name of the Lord’s body, although *the nature of bread remain still in it, &c.*” Whoever will open any Protestant writer upon this subject, or be at the trouble of perusing the ancient fathers themselves, will quickly discover a variety of passages equally conclusive against any physical change in the nature of the elements, and evidently proving that the old writers spoke merely of a presence of *union, efficacy, and grace*. If in other parts of their writings they sometimes countenance a physical and carnal presence, we must conclude that their notions on this matter were vague and unsettled, and that they conceived themselves at liberty to explain the words of the eucharistic institution, in the manner best suited to their audience, or the subject matter of their several discourses. The Chaplain entreats the reader to bear with him a few moments longer on this head, and he will dismiss it altogether. It is with much reluctance that he has dwelt on it so long.

* This passage makes so powerfully against transubstantiation, that several Roman Catholic writers have called the authenticity of this letter in question. But Archbishop Usher says, *he finds it cited in the collections against the Severians, which are to be seen in Canisius’s Lectiones Antiquæ. Tom. 4. pag. 232, translated by Francis Turrianus. It is also twice cited by John Damascen against the Acephali, and the context of this passage is adopted by the Jesuit Turrianus. Ush. Catalogue of Authors, &c. ad ann. 400.*

He had mentioned in a note* two negative arguments to prove that transubstantiation was unknown to the ancient Christians. They appeared to him to amount to a moral demonstration; and they appear so still. The first is this—It is well known that the orthodox writers against the Arians exhausted every source of argument which a zeal for truth, or the warmth of controversy, could suggest, to prove the divinity of Christ. Now, would not this doctrine have derived great support from the following fact? viz. that Christians from the days of the apostles had always conceived Christ to be really and corporally present in the Eucharist, and that the elements were *then* and ever had been adored with the same *supreme worship* as is paid to the Father.” And yet this fact, so favourable to their cause, is never mentioned by one of these numerous and eminent writers: an evident proof that it did not exist. But, says the Rev. Gentleman,† the Arians did not deny that Christ was “a divine person, true God of true God, eternal, the same God with the Father,—and, therefore, an object of divine worship.” As a voucher for this doctrine of the Arians, he introduces Socrates, a Novatian heretic, whose historical inaccuracy is well known to the critics. Some few of the Arians, however, may have made these concessions; but if the reader will peruse the history of this heresy in the elegant Mr. Gibbon, or the temperate Priestly, he will find, that by far the greater part of the sect adhered to the original doctrine of Arius, maintaining that *the Son of God was a creature neither co-eternal nor con-*

* Letter, p. 24.

† Address, p. 39.

substantial with the Father. This opinion of Arius is gathered from Epiphanius, Augustin, and Theodoret, by the learned Bellarmine, whose words are these.* “Arius, a priest of Alexandria, taught that the Son of God is a *creature* neither co-eternal nor co-essential with the Father.” Here is a firm foundation for the Chaplain’s argument, erected upon an authority which the Rev. Gentleman will hardly controvert. The Arians taught that Christ is a *creature*, yet the writers who refuted them never urged the practice of adoring him with supreme worship in the Eucharist, to prove him to be God. The omission of this circumstance must evince the nullity of any such practice: it shows, moreover, that the *adoration* mentioned in St. Chrysostom’s liturgy,† means only an inferior act of reverence to the elements, or a supreme act of worship paid to Christ, either spiritually present, or reigning personally with his Father in heaven.

The second negative argument is drawn from the silence of pagan writers with respect to the inconsistencies of transubstantiation. Had this tenet been current when they wrote, no privacy of worship could have concealed it from them. Every persecution made many apostates who would naturally communicate, expose, and ridicule so unnatural a doctrine. It could not have escaped the knowledge of a Celsus, a Porphyry, or a Julian. “The Philosophers,” says the learned professor Bullet,‡ “saw

* Chron. pars altera p. 495. de Scrip. Eccl.

† Address, p. 91.

‡ Histoire de l’Etablissement du Christianisme tracé des Auteurs Juifs & Payens, &c. The History of the Establishment of Christianity, compiled from Jewish and Heathen Authors only, exhibiting a substantial proof of the

with concern the success of Christianity. Whether out of zeal for their gods, or vexation to see themselves confounded, they resolved to exert their most vigorous efforts to stop the course of this religion: they *studied* its doctrines: they perused with attention its books, with a view to heighten all the difficulties they could find there. Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian composed works, in which they employed all the resources of their genius, to give a plausible turn to idolatry, and to *charge Christianity with contradictions and absurdities.*—And yet among these alleged absurdities, we do not meet with one that results from transubstantiation. Although they *studied the doctrines of Christianity*, although Julian was born and educated a Christian, yet this tenet, so fraught with contradictions, escaped his ridicule and his censure. To swallow such improbabilities, is to set every rule of historical criticism at defiance. To suppose, that objections of this nature might have been made by the pagans, although not one of them be recorded in their works which have come down to us, or in those of the voluminous Christian writers who refuted them, will be deemed, perhaps, an instance of as violent prejudice as that to which the Chaplain's renunciation of some former opinions is ungenerously attributed.* In this instance, as in others, let the informed and impartial reader pronounce.

At the close of the note above mentioned, the Chaplain begged leave to add,† “that the fathers of the

truth of this religion, by Professor Bullet, Dean of the University of Besancon, &c. &c. This work is earnestly recommended to all those who wish to satisfy their doubts relating to the system of Christianity.

* Address, p. 92.

† Letter, p. 21.

second council of Nice confirm the opinion, that *Christ's body in Heaven is not flesh and blood*: therefore, even supposing bread and wine to be changed into his body and blood, they cannot become his body as it now is in Heaven." For this passage he quoted l'Abbe's collection of the councils. (Tom. 6. p. 541.) The Rev. Gentleman tells us,* that he "knows not where to find this collection in America, but I aver," says he, "that no such doctrine was delivered or entertained by the fathers of that council; and will, therefore, without fear of being convicted of rashness, undertake to say, that the Chaplain cannot support what he has here advanced.—As in many other instances, so likewise in this, the Chaplain has suffered himself to be misled by authors, whom I hope he will deservedly mistrust for the time to come—their unfaithfulness is eminently conspicuous in the present instance." It must give pain to all who know the Rev. Gentleman, to behold him thus battling with a shadow, and accusing the Chaplain and Protestant writers, of opinions which never entered into their heads to advance. Does the quotation from the council insinuate in the most distant manner, that *Christ had no true body upon earth, or that he only exhibited the appearance of a body*? The Chaplain will aver, that no such idea is held out in his letter, or by any author whom he is advised to *mistrust*. All that the passage cited by l'Abbe says, is, that Christ's body *in Heaven* is not flesh and blood. This opinion, the Rev. Gentleman must know, was entertained by many of the primitive Christians. The fact is clear-

* Address, p. 94.

ly demonstrated by Burnet in his treatise *de statu mortuorum et resurgentium*; and it was grounded on this passage of St. Paul to the Corinthians, (xv. 50.) “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” Not a word is mentioned of Christ’s human body previous to his ascension. The Chaplain, therefore, stands acquitted of inaccuracy, and his argument on this head is as *formidable* as ever.

The doctrine of purgatory is another *discriminating tenet* of the Roman church, which the Chaplain could not discover in the scriptures. It must therefore rest solely upon the infallibility of this church.* He instanced an eminent Roman Catholic writer, asserting “that the Greeks reject this tenet, that their ancient doctors seldom or never mentioned it, and that the Latins became acquainted with it only by degrees,” (*pedetentim*.)† He found some great divines rejecting texts which others deemed conclusive in favour of this doctrine, and discovered no plausible countenance given it except in an apochryphal book of the Bible. After all this he ventured to assert that this doctrine is not contained in the scriptures. The Rev. Gentleman offers nothing to invalidate this position. He, indeed, refers the Chaplain to the *Catholic scripturist* for authorities to support this tenet;‡ and, “is well convinced, that the prevailing reason which moved the compilers of the English Bible to reject the books of Maccabees, was the support which they observed the Catholic doctrine of purgatory

* Letter, p. 20.

† Ibid p. 21.

‡ Address, p. 99.

would derive from it." As to the authorities in the *Catholic scripturist*, many of them have so little weight even with Roman Catholic divines, that they can hardly be supposed to contain much intrinsic evidence. With regard to the compilers of the English Bible, the Chaplain trusts that other motives can be offered for their rejecting the books of Maccabees from the canon of the scriptures, than one so base and ungenerous as the Rev. Gentleman suggests. Is he able to penetrate into the hearts of these learned compilers, and there discover the secret springs of their conduct? After the most mature and upright deliberation, might they not have been convinced, that the epistle to the Hebrews, the second of Peter and of James, &c. although questioned by a few of the ancient fathers, were at all times deemed canonical by the much greater part of Christians, while at the same time they saw plainly that the books of Maccabees were ever judged apocryphal by the primitive church? Perpetuity and uniformity of testimony was all they could go upon. These they found vouching for the authenticity of some books, whilst others were destitute of such essential supports. Among the latter are these books of the Maccabees. Previous to the council of Carthage, St. Jerom tells us, "that the church in his time, read, indeed, these books; but did not admit them among the canonical scriptures."* "All these," says Rufinus, "were read in the churches, but not as authorities for proving the faith:"† And after the same coun-

* Legit quidem ecclesia, sed eos inter canonicas scripturas non recipit. *In lib. Salom.*

† Quæ omnia legi quidem in ecclesiis voluerunt, non tamen proferri ad auctoritatem ex his fidei confirmandam. *Expos. Symb.*

cil, St. Gregory excuses himself for *citing the books of Maccabees*, “although,” says he, “they be not canonical.”* Thus, notwithstanding the alleged authority of this council, and of Pope Innocent, we find these books rejected from the canon of scripture, through every age and every country, even down to the council of Trent. They were deemed apocryphal by Junilius and Primasius, in Africa, by Cassiodorus and Gregory, in Italy, by Isidore of Seville, in Spain, by Alcuin, in France, by Bede, in England, by Rabanus Maurus, in Germany. Cajetan, writing to Pope Clement VII.† declares them *not to be canonical*. Thus, the agreement of Christian writers upon this matter, before the 16th century, has been nearly uniform; so that among all the modern dogmas of the council of Trent, this has the least to boast of, from uninterrupted tradition. Were this digression entirely foreign to the subject, the reader would still pardon it as an apology for the very learned and respectable divines who translated the English Bible.

The Rev. Gentleman next tells the Roman Catholics of America,‡ “that no article of the Christian belief has stronger evidence from the testimony of the early fathers, than the doctrine of purgatory. They prove incontestably the practice of praying for the dead; they assert that by the prayers of the faithful in this life, comfort and relief is obtained for those who are departed out of it; which is establishing as

* De qua re cavenda non inordinatè facimus, si ex libris, licet non canonicis, sed tamen ad ædificationem ecclesiæ editis, testimonium proferamus. *S. Greg. Expos. in Job. lib. 19. cap. 17.*

† Non sunt hi libri canonici, hoc est, non sunt regulares ad firmandum ea quæ sunt fidei. *Epistol. dedicat. ad Clem. VII.*

‡ Address, p. 100.

much of the doctrine of purgatory, as we are obliged to believe." Are Roman Catholics then not obliged to believe, that purgatory is a place of torment and punishment? Is it not an article of their belief that the guilt of venial sin, and the temporal punishment due to mortal, are done away by the torments of purgatory? What says the most authentic catechism of the Roman church, published under the sanction of the Pope, in consequence of an express decree of the council of Trent, for the instruction of parish priests? "There is a purgatory," that is to say, "a *purgatory fire*, by which the souls of the pious being for a determinate time *tormented*, are expiated or purged, that an entrance into their eternal kingdom may be opened to them."* Now, had the early Greek or Latin Christians any idea of a purgatory like this? Neither of the passages alleged by the Rev. Gentleman, from Cyril and Chrysostom, throws out a distant hint of any such thing. That the ancient Christians commemorated and prayed for the dead, no informed Protestant ever meant to deny. But it does not follow, that they conceived them to be in a state of purification or punishment. Because we pray for our absent friends, must we therefore believe them to be tormented and miserable? The fact is, many of the ancient fathers imagined, that the souls of the departed faithful were not to be admitted into the complete enjoyment of heaven, until the general resurrection—but that in the mean time they expected this great event in the bosom of Abraham, in a state of tranquillity and rest, capable of receiving additional hap-

* See the Roman Catechism.

piness from the supplications of their pious brethren upon earth. This idea laid the only foundation for praying for the dead. However unwarranted it may be, it has certainly no affinity with the modern doctrine of purgatory. The Chaplain has no inclination to load his page with voluminous quotations. No occupation requires less genius or more labour than that of a compiler; yet he cannot forbear instancing a few authorities, that place the ideas of the early Christians upon this subject in their true point of view. Such an article of church history will be interesting to some readers, while to others it will appear at least a matter of curiosity. "We observe," says the ancient author of the commentaries upon Job, among Origen's works,* "the memorials of the saints, and devoutly keep the remembrance of our parents and friends who die in the faith, as well to rejoice for their refreshment, as to request for ourselves a godly consummation in the faith that our festivity may be for a memorial of rest to the souls departed, . . . and to us may become a sweet savour in the sight of the eternal God." St. Cyprian, speaking of Laurence and Ignatius, whom he acknowledges to have received the crown of martyrdom, says, "We offer sacrifices always for them, when we celebrate the passions and days of the martyrs with an anniversary commemoration."† St. Chrysostom, discoursing on the funeral ordinances of the church, writes as follows: "Tell me, what do the bright lamps mean? Do we not accompany them with these as champions? What mean the hymns?"

* Lib. 3. Comment.

† Epist. 34.

Consider what thou dost sing at that time. Return, my soul, into thy rest; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee! And again: thou art my refuge from the affliction, that compasseth me.”*

The liturgy used in the church of Syria, and attributed to St. Basil, has these words: “Be mindful, O Lord, of them who are dead and departed out of this life, and of the orthodox bishops who from Peter and James the apostles, until this day, have clearly professed the right word of faith; and namely of Ignatius, Dyonisius, Julius, and the rest of the saints of worthy memory.”† And in the liturgy ascribed to the apostles we read: “We offer unto thee for all the saints who have pleased thee from the beginning of the world, patriarchs, prophets, &c. &c.”‡ In the liturgies of the churches of Egypt, said to have been written by St. Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, and Cyril of Alexandria, we meet with sentiments entirely similar. “Be mindful, O Lord, of thy saints: vouchsafe to remember all thy saints who have pleased thee from the beginning, &c. and especially the holy, glorious, the evermore Virgin Mary, the mother of God, and St. John the forerunner, St. Stephen, &c.”§ And again, in the liturgy of the church of Constantinople, attributed to St. Chrysostom: “We offer unto thee this reasonable service *for* those who are at rest in the faith, our forefathers, fathers, patriarchs, &c. &c.”|| This expression of offering *for* the saints, be-

* In Epist. ad Hebræos hom. 4.

† Anaphora ab Andr. Mæsiæ ex Syriaco conversa.

‡ Constitut. Apost. lib. 8. cap. 12.

§ Liturg. Ægypt. a Victorio Scialach ex Arab convers. p. 22. 47 et 60. edit. August, ann. 1604.

|| Chrys. liturg. Græc.

coming exceptionable some centuries after, was thus modified in the Latin translation by Leo 'Thuscus, *for the patriarchs, &c. interceding for us* ;* which last words are not to be found in the Greek original now before the Chaplain. Similar sentiments are delivered by St. Ambrose in several parts of his writings,† and by the other fathers who have treated of this subject. In a word, the commemorations for the dead, which are read in the mass at this day, so far from mentioning any place of torment, suppose on the contrary that the souls who are prayed for are already in a state of tranquillity and rest. Let this one prayer suffice for this assertion. “Remember, O Lord, thy servants and handmaids, who have gone before us with the ensign of faith, and sleep in the *sleep of peace*. To them, O Lord, and to all who *rest in Christ*, we beseech thee that thou wouldst grant a place of refreshment, light, and peace.”‡ In none of these passages will the reader be able to discover the modern doctrine of purgatory. He will therefore hardly assent to the Rev. Gentleman's position, “that no article of the Christian belief, has stronger evidence from the testimony of the early fathers.”§

Another point of *doctrine* of the Roman Catholic

* Chrys. liturg. Lat.

† De obitu Valent. Imp. Idem de obitu Theodosii, &c.

‡ *Missale Romanum*. In the mass for the dead, some of the prayers entreat a deliverance from hell—but none from purgatory—because, as Bellarmine observes, “the church prays for the souls in purgatory, that they may not be condemned to the everlasting pains of hell ; not, indeed, because it is not certain, that they are not to be condemned to these pains ; but because God is pleased, that we should pray even for those things which we are certainly to receive.” Bell. de Purgat. lib. 2. cap. 5.

§ Address, p. 100.

church, is the *necessity* and *divine institution* of confession. The Chaplain had advanced as a matter of fact, that "this opinion was discussed by ancient writers with great freedom, and that centuries were requisite to settle this practice in its present form."* To support this fact, he alleged some authorities, which the Rev. Gentleman cannot possibly set aside. And, indeed, if the passages from Cardinal Hugo, Gratian, Alcuin, and Maldonatus do not completely justify the Chaplain's assertion, words can have no explicit meaning, but what may yield to the subtilty of a theological quibble. But the truth is, that previous to the Lateran council, in 1215, it was the opinion of many orthodox divines, that confession to God alone was sufficient. Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure are both vouchers for this fact. "The master of the sentences," says the former, "and Gratian, are of this opinion, but now, since the decision of the church under Innocent III., we must deem it heretical."† The date of this tenet, therefore, can be traced no higher than the 13th century: and even since that period, several divines have not regarded the Lateran decision as final. Of this opinion was the commentator upon Gratian, Scotus, Panormitanus, Michael of Bologna, &c., not to mention Erasmus, Rhenanus, cardinal Cajetan, and others of a still more recent date. So that the learned Richer had good reason to conclude, and the Chaplain with him, "that internal confession is, indeed, of divine right, but that outward confession is no more than an ecclesiastical institution," not enjoined by the scripture,

* Letter, p. 30.

† In 4 dist. 17.

nor regarded as essential by the ancient churches of Christendom.

The Chaplain trusts, that by this time the reader is convinced, "that the Roman church regards some doctrines at present as articles of faith, which for many ages were debated as matters of opinion." The Rev. Gentleman himself admits the fact,* yet lays the Chaplain under the tedious necessity of proving it. Now, an argument arises hence against the system of infallibility, which appears unanswerable. The solution at which the Rev. Gentleman labours from the 52d to the 58th page of his Address, can only be supported on the idea of a *progressive religion*. He allows, that doctrines *not of faith* yesterday, may be so to-day, because evidence of their divine revelation may be had to-day which was wanted yesterday. "In perilous times," says he, "the church unfolds the doctrines"† committed to her charge, which, in proportion as they are thus unfolded, become objects of faith. It was principally, when heresies were condemned, that the opposite Catholic verity was established. Yet, previous to this condemnation, these errors were for ages adopted by the faithful.—Where was infallibility during this prevalence of error? Was the church conscious of this prerogative, or did she neglect to exert it? If, for instance, the opinion of *sufficiency of confession to God alone* was opposite to a *revealed truth*, which had been committed to her by Christ or his apostles, why did she tolerate it for more than twelve centuries, and thus neglect to deliver a truth, and enforce a practice, which

* Address, p. 51.

† Ibid. p. 54.

Christ and his apostles taught to be *essential to salvation*? What the Rev. Gentleman remarks,* of the faithful receiving *gradual* information from the writings of the apostles, can have no weight with those who conceive these writings to have been inspired with a view of completing the Christian system of belief. These writings being finished, and their authors dead, the gracious scheme of revelation was closed, and a dreadful wo pronounced against those, who should add to, or abridge this work of the Almighty. (Ad Galat. i. 9.) From that period to the present, the Christian church *has authority in controversies of faith, she is a witness and keeper of holy writ* :† when her decisions are supported by the testimony of antiquity and universal consent, it would be equally rash and senseless to contest them. But our assent in these cases rests not upon any infallible authority. In facts of an historical as well as a religious nature, a perpetual, general, and uniform testimony is fully sufficient to command our belief. But when we find a particular church or body of Christians proposing doctrines as of faith, which are destitute of this testimony, doctrines, which, for many ages, men of sanctity and erudition did not conceive to be essential, and which she herself chose to tolerate, deeming them immaterial; may we not regard the infallibility of such a church as chimerical, and her pretensions to it as the principal obstacle to the removing of abuses which have darkened the pure simplicity of the gospel, and rendered Christianity a stumbling block to the weak-minded, and a scoff to the philosopher?

* Address, p. 56.

† Church of England's Articles.

The Chaplain, with the conviction of this upon his mind, resolved to have recourse *to the law and to the testimony.* (Isa. viii. 20.) Here alone is infallibility to be met with. Let the church adhere to these, and she shall never err. Upon these alone is grounded the Christian Catholic faith, into which we are initiated at our baptism, which we repeat in our churches, and profess upon our death-beds.* Here is that pure, that Catholic belief which we find expressed in the apostles' creed; here that sacred deposit committed to the Christian church, which she is commanded to preserve, but not authorized to alter. "The church of Christ," says Vincent of Lerins, "being a diligent and cautious guardian of the tenets deposited with her, changes nothing in them, abridges nothing, adds nothing—but earnestly applies herself to this one thing, that by discussing ancient matters with fidelity and wisdom, she may perfect and polish such as are rude and unfinished, establish and consolidate such as are explicit and obvious, and preserve such as are confirmed and defined."† Thus far church authority may go, and no farther. It is not allowed to announce new doctrines to the faithful, but only to elucidate such as may appear obscure, to offer fresh arguments to such as seem to want them; it merely determines if it be convenient or necessary to express some doctrine in terms more explicit and intelligible.‡

* It may be asked why the Chaplain abandoned the Roman church, if her children at baptism be initiated into the very same faith which Protestants profess when they are admitted to that sacrament? The answer is, because many other doctrines not mentioned nor hinted at during the administration of baptism are required as essential terms of her communion.

† Common. cap. 32.

‡ Eadem tamen quæ didicisti ita doce, ut cum dicas *novæ* non dicas *novæ*.
Vinc. Ler. Com. cap. 27.

Upon this principle only does Vincent defend the ancient councils. That of Nice, says he, did nothing more than recall the faithful to the primitive belief: *ad antiquam fidem a novellâ perfidiâ, ad antiquam sanitatem a novitatis insania.** With respect to the Novatian heresy,† the council proceeded on the same luminous principle. It showed their doctrine to be opposite to this primitive article of the creed, *I believe the forgiveness of sins.* The rebaptization of infants was a point of discipline it had a right to pronounce upon. And the forbidding of second marriages (or indeed any marriages *at all*) had already been stigmatized as the doctrine of devils. (1 Tim. 4.) Were the Chaplain at leisure, he could venture to prove, that not a single error was condemned by the primitive church but what directly or indirectly ran counter to this creed. The Arians, Socinians, and Unitarians refuse *to believe in Jesus Christ*, by denying his divinity and consubstantiality with the Father: on the same pretext, the Macedonians would *not believe in the Holy Ghost*: the Nestorians, by admitting two persons in Christ, denied that this Man-God was *born of the Virgin Mary, or suffered under Pontius Pilate*: the Eutychians, by confounding the divine and human nature, must either reject this article, *I believe in Jesus Christ*, which shows him to be God; or this, *he was crucified, dead, and buried*, which proves him to be man. And so of all the rest.—If, besides these primitive truths delivered in the Bible and abridged in the creed, other matters were at times deemed sufficient to exclude men from Catholic communion, they

* Vinc. Ler. Comm. cap. 7.

† Address, p. 110.

could only be such as belonged to the line of morality and discipline, to which church authority has been always judged competent: with the divine truths of religion no authority must meddle, unless it be to elucidate, inculcate, and defend them. Such as are essential must be obvious and simple, being mercifully calculated for the ignorant no less than the learned. They who reject them must do it at their peril. But, that the man who embraces these truths in their natural meaning, who subscribes the Catholic creeds in their utmost extent, and assents sincerely to every scriptural doctrine, may still “admit *into his belief* almost every sect that ever deformed the face of Christianity,”* is one of those lofty assertions that thrills the uninformed mind with reverential horror, whilst, with a man of tolerable understanding and conscious integrity, its sole effect is a transient smile of indifference.

The Rev. Gentleman is unwilling to allow the Chaplain’s claim to the appellation of Catholic, because, to be so, “he must belong,” says St. Augustin, “to that church which is *Catholic*, and which is *called Catholic* not only by her own children, but by all her enemies.—Will the Chaplain,” he asks, “find this characteristic in his *new religion*?”† The Rev. Gentleman knows well, that Protestants esteem and call themselves Catholics. For an enemy to withhold from them this appellation is a poor plea to prescribe against right. Will the Rev. Gentleman own himself to have been a rebel, because for more than eight years he was pronounced to be so by the ene-

* Address, p. 111.

† Ibid. p. 106.

mies of his country? As to the Chaplain's *new* religion, were it really such, it would doubtless exclude his claim to the title he assumes. But he trusts, a religion can hardly be called *new*, which rests entirely upon the foundations of primitive revelation, which can trace all its tenets to the *law and to the testimony*, and is so jealous of these divine sources, as to suffer no vague and arbitrary traditions to mix their sullied waters with their original fountain: A religion which includes the daily profession of *believing a Catholic church*: a religion which no one but a Catholic can profess, as he alone adheres solely to the ancient and universal belief. "For," says Vincent of Lerins, "he is a real and genuine Catholic, who . . . remaining fixed and unshaken in faith, is determined to hold and believe that only, which he shall discover to be the universal and ancient doctrine of the Catholic church."* The Rev. Gentleman finds that the Chaplain also is acquainted with Vincent of Lerins. He had read him over previously to the friendly advice contained in the address.† If, in the eleventh chapter, he appear to contradict the general principle of his work, which goes to prove, *that we are not obliged to believe any doctrine, which was not always believed by the Catholic church*, to them it belongs to vindicate his consistency, whose cause may stand most in need of his support: his authority can be no further serviceable to the Chaplain, than to show what his idea of a Catholic was, and that, were he living at this day, he would hardly have rejected a plea to Catholicity founded upon his own definition of it: "to this," says

* Common. cap. 25.

† Page 114.

he, “ we must chiefly attend, that we maintain what *every where* and *always* has been believed by *all*: for this is truly and properly Catholic, as the very word imports and reason declares:”* And again, “ It never was lawful, it is not lawful now, nor will it ever be so, to propose any thing to Christian Catholics, which they had not received before.”† The Chaplain, therefore, still humbly confides, that by adhering solely to this universal belief, he is justly entitled to the appellation of Catholic, and that he “ does not embrace a new religion, however he may discard some doctrines which at different periods of time have been engrafted upon the old one.”

But, with the Rev. Gentleman and all Roman Catholics, a separation from this church necessarily involves the idea of novelty. *Where was your religion before Luther?* is the triumphant question of every smatterer in controversy. *Where was your face before it was washed?* was the witty counter-question of a Protestant humorist. The truth is, the Chaplain’s church *was* always where it actually subsists; that is, in every part of the world, where the ancient foundations and the common principles of faith were maintained, upon the profession of which men were admitted by baptism into the church of God. There he doubts not but our Lord has his subjects and he his fellow servants—for the church to which he belongs introduces no *new* faith—she is no new church. What in ancient times was deemed to be truly and properly Catholic, namely, what was believed *every*

* Contra hæres. cap. 3.

† Annunciare ergo aliquid Christianis Catholicis præter id quod acceperunt nunquam licuit, nusquam licet, nunquam licebit. Comm. cap. 14.

where, always, and by all, has in succeeding ages been constantly preserved, and is at this day adopted entirely by this church. If we should take a view at present of the several Christian societies which have acquired any considerable extent upon the globe, of the reformed and Roman churches in Europe and America, of the churches of Egypt and Ethiopia in the south, of the Greek and other Christian societies in the east; if we should set aside the points in which they mutually dissent, and collect together the other articles in which they generally agree, we should soon discover a code of doctrine so genuine and Catholic, that being joined to a suitable line of conduct, it would be sufficient to conduct us to everlasting salvation. These are the only truths that bear the stamp of *universality*—From these alone can the church be called Catholic—These she must ever retain, or she forfeits her title. The enemy may, indeed, sow his tares among these original tenets; nay, we are told, (Matth. xiii. 24, 25.) that he may sow them *in the Lord's field, and among the Lord's wheat*. They, therefore, who have been employed in destroying these weeds, in separating the Lord's good grain from the chaff, cannot be said to have substituted a new field, or changed the nature of the ancient grain. The field is the same, but weeded now, unweeded then—the grain is the same, but winnowed now, unwinnowed then.—Every church professing these *universal* truths must be Catholic. To her belong the promises of Christ, the appeals of antiquity, and the encomiums of the fathers. She suffers no monopoly of her extensive prerogatives; but embra-

ces every Christian who adheres to the foundations upon which she is built.

To this Christian Catholic church the Chaplain trusts he belongs. Happily for him, no society of Christians can annul his right to this sacred communion; among the various churches, into which Christians are divided, he may join that which best suits his ideas of church government, and which appears to him to be the farthest removed from philosophical indifference on the one hand, and fanaticism on the other—but in the great and essential points of faith he shall ever consider himself a member of all whose religion is that of the Bible *only*. Here the Chaplain has found a resting-place, which he never means to abandon. If Roman Catholics conceive a *double foundation* more secure, in God's name let them build their religion upon it: no man will dispute their right so to do; but let them, at the same time, bear cheerfully with those, who are satisfied that their faith is safe upon one.

The Rev. Gentleman is surprised at the quotation from St. Cyprian,* which discountenances all authority in matters of faith, except that of the *gospel, the epistles, or acts of the apostles*. “No wonder,” says he,† “that St. Cyprian, while engaged in the errors of the Donatists, should speak their language. . . . St. Augustin, *lib. 5. cap. 23. de bap.* against the Donatists, particularly refutes the writing now objected out of St. Cyprian; and it is wonderful indeed if the Chaplain did not discover this in the very place from which I presume he copied his objection.” Here the Rev. Gentleman confesses that Cyprian was unacquainted

* Letter, p. 38.

† Address, p. 113.

with the divine authority of unwritten tradition. Mr. Rushworth, a Roman Catholic controvertist, had acknowledged this long before.* He should have proved, however, that this learned martyr retracted his opinion, before he wondered at the Chaplain's omitting the refutation of it penned by St. Augustin. When the primitive fathers deliver contrary opinions, we are certainly at liberty to adopt that which appears most rational. But St. Augustin himself only combated this sentiment of Cyprian, upon the subject of rebaptization of infants, which he must have regarded as belonging rather to church discipline than to *faith*; for, with respect to the latter, no man was a stronger advocate for the all-sufficiency of the scriptures. He tells us, indeed, "that he would not believe the gospel, if the authority of the Catholic church did not move him thereunto." In this sentiment the Chaplain willingly acquiesces, because he believes the church to be the *keeper* and depositary of the scriptures; and because, from the perpetual and uniform consent of all the churches, the credibility of their canonical authority must arise. But the church derives from hence no plea to infallibility, any more than our judges or courts of judicature, by determining what is the fixed law of the land, and the only books that contain it, can arrogate to themselves so mighty a privilege.

The Chaplain asks, (and he does it with St. Hilary, whom the Rev. Gentleman passes by without notice,) "where is the deficiency and obscurity of the scriptures?" That is, in matters fundamental and necessary. For, were they really deficient, how

* Dial. 3. sect. 13.

would they *be able to make us wise unto salvation?* as the apostle expressly assures us they are. (2 Tim. 3.) Nor is any attempt made to do away the authority of Cyril, *lib. 12 in Joan.*, who tells us, that “all is written which the writers thought sufficient for faith and morality.” Was the credit of this father entitled to special indulgence, because on another subject his authority is deemed unanswerable? * But it was indeed needless to take notice of a line or two, if “most of the fathers have delivered their opinions of the *insufficiency* and obscurity of scripture, not in fragments of a sentence, but treating professedly and fully on this very subject.” † It has been the Chaplain’s misfortune never to meet with any of these numerous treatises. On the contrary, all the fathers, whom he has consulted on this head, repeatedly acknowledge the sufficiency of scripture in whatever belongs to *faith* and *morality*. If in other passages of their writings they deny this sufficiency, we should do well to discard their authority altogether, and be influenced only by our sentiments, our reason, and the Bible. However, the venerable writers of antiquity are too explicit on this matter to labour under a similar reproach. The few following passages will suffice to ascertain their notions on this subject—“The holy scriptures given by the inspiration of God, are of themselves sufficient to the discovery of truth.” ‡——“The things which we find not in the scripture, how can we use them?” §——“It is well that thou art content with the things that are written.” ||—In

* Address, p. 88.

† Address, p. 114.

‡ St. Athan. *contra Gentes.* § St. Ambros. *offic. lib. 1, cap. 23.*

|| Hil. *lib. 3. de Trin.*

another place St. Hilary commends the Emperor Constantius for “desiring the faith to be ordered *only* according to those things that are written.”* “Believe the things that are written,” says St. Basil, “the things that are not written seek not.† . . . It is a manifest falling from the faith, and a sign of arrogance, either to reject any point of those things that are written, or to bring in any of those things that are not written.”‡ Gregory of Nyssen, brother to St. Basil, lays it down as a principle, “which no man should contradict, that the truth must be acknowledged in that only which exhibits the seal of scripture testimony.”§——“As we deny not those things that are written, so we reject those things that are not written.”|| And again: “That which has no authority from scripture is as easily discarded as it is advanced.”¶——“In those particulars,” says St. Augustin, “which are *clearly* set down in the scriptures, *all those things* are found which comprehend faith and direction of life.”**——And again: “whatsoever ye hear from hence, (the holy scriptures,) let that relish well with you; whatsoever is without them reject, lest ye wander in a cloud.”††——And in another place: “All those things which in times past our ancestors have recorded as done to mankind, and have delivered down to us, all those things also which we see and deliver to our posterity, so far as they belong to the investigation and support of true religion, the

* Hil. lib. 2. ad Constan. Aug.

† Basil hom. 29. advers. calumniantes S. Trinitat.

‡ Idem de fide.

§ Greg. Nyss. dialog. de anima et resur. tom. 1. edit. Græco-Lat. p. 639.

|| Hieronymus advers. Helvid.

¶ Idem in cap. 23. Matth.

** De doctr. Christiana lib. 2, cap. 9.

†† Lib. de pastor. cap. 11.

holy scripture has not passed over in silence.* — It remains to say a word or two of a passage to the same effect, which the Chaplain in his letter cited from St. Chrysostom. *In Matth. c. 24, hom. 49.* It is not in his power to have recourse to the works of this father. And as the Rev. Gentleman says,† he has the fullest evidence *before him that the passage is not genuine, but extracted from a work of no credit, supposed to be written in the 6th century, entitled, the unfinished work on Matthew; the Chaplain will readily acknowledge his mistake, and yet, perhaps, not expose himself to a well-grounded imputation of unpardonable negligence.*‡ For, in the first place, the passage is *certainly* published among the works of Chrysostom, and therefore it was very natural to suppose it was his: Secondly, Gratian, the great canonist, frequently cites St. Chrysostom as the author of *this unfinished work.*§ Thirdly, Bellarmine himself does not seem quite decided on this point—He only says, “This work *does not appear to be Chrysostom’s*; however, in other respects, it is a learned book, and *by no means to be despised.* . . . It is, therefore, probable, that the author of it was a Catholic, but that his work was corrupted by the Arians.”|| If this apology be not sufficient to wipe away *the reproach of a want of impartial diligence, and the disrepute of alleging the authority of Chrysostom so erroneously,*¶ the Chaplain will par-

* Epist. 42.

† Address, p. 61.

‡ Address, *ibidem.*

§ Plurimis in locis Gratianus citat Chrysostomum pro auctore operis *imperfecti.* Bell. de Scrip. Eccles. p. 321.

|| Non videtur esse Chrysostomi . . . quamvis alioqui liber sit doctus et minimè spernendus . . . proinde credibile est auctorem fuisse catholicum, sed opus illius ab Arianis esse depravatam. Idem *ibid.* p. 161.

¶ Address, p. 62.

don a triumph at this slight inaccuracy, as it is the only one pointed out in the Address.

The Chaplain has now to thank the Rev. Gentleman for the important advice with which he closes his Address. Had it come, however, from any other quarter, it would have been regarded as an insult, and treated as such. It would have appeared a pre-meditated design “to misinform, and to sow in minds so misinformed the seeds of religious animosity.”* But the Chaplain will not harbour a suspicion of such intentions in a man whom he cherishes with all the ardour of friendship. Yet he cannot help thinking that the Rev. Gentleman has misapplied *St. Chrysostom’s advice, to his case*. For did the monk Theodorus enter into his engagements under the sanction of an authority which he afterwards thought himself at liberty to discard? Did he know, when he promised to lead a single life as a monk, that the bishop of Rome could at any time release him from this vow, and permit him to marry the beautiful Hermione? Did this bishop actually do so? Did he annul all his monastic engagements? Was this monk ever promoted to the order of subdeaconship, at which time only the law of celibacy is hinted to the regular clergy? Did he conceive this exhortation of the bishop during that ceremony, *castitatem servare oportet, you must live chastly*,† to imply a solemn vow never to marry? Or, if he viewed it in this light, could he still be bound by this point of discipline, after the authority enacting it ceased to exist in his regard? When these several questions can be answered in the

* Address, p. 118.

† Rit. Rom.

affirmative, then may a parallel be drawn between this monk and the Chaplain. Moreover, let the Rev. Gentleman inform us whether a vow of celibacy be a *stronger engagement* or *contract* with Almighty God, than a vow of *perpetual* poverty and obedience: Let him tell us, why one is more *independent of the discipline of any binding power* than the other—Why, one more than the other, *cannot be released but by God's relinquishing his right to exact a rigorous compliance with the obligation of it.** The begging friars imagine that a solemn renunciation of all *property* is the height of perfection, whilst the vow of *obedience* was chiefly preconized by the Jesuits. Yet, by a dispensation from papal authority, thousands of both have been released from their most solemn vows, and restored to the enjoyment of property and freedom. Among these is the Rev. Gentleman himself, and his clerical brethren in America. After renewing twice every year, and oftener, the solemn vows, by which they renounce their property and their liberty, each of them, without scruple, now possesses, inherits, enjoys, and disposes of the goods of this world, and acknowledges no longer the spiritual control of a superior. The same dispensing authority can at any time restore to them the disposal of their persons, and allow them to marry. Wherefore, to urge *that the sanctity of religion is interested in the performance of an engagement*, entered into under an authority which at any time can annul it, is making that sanctity to depend upon the caprice of an intriguing court, or *the views of an artful and temporizing pontiff*: (Add. p. 20, note.) and

* Address, p. 119.

seriously to plead for the obligation of ritual ties, when the power that enacts and dissolves them is no more, is to nourish the prejudices of the uninformed, to bewilder the argument, and perpetuate the spirit of illiberal cavil . . . The passage cited from the book of *Deuteronomy*, with which the Rev. Gentleman concludes his address, is calculated to leave these impressions on the mind. But the reader will recollect that all Roman Catholic divines maintain in practice, "that any vow upon certain occasions may be lawfully rescinded. Their bishops may dispense with many, the pope with all. Nay, the *faculties* which are granted to the missionaries in England, empower them to *dispense with, for a reasonable cause, and change, all simple vows, excepting those of continency and religion, which are reserved to Rome.*" (Essay on Celib. p. 184.) Wherefore, as the Chaplain means to have no business with Rome, he shall take the liberty of judging for himself in this particular. It is really painful to be thus pleading the cause of human nature and its *unalienable rights*, in the eighteenth century, on the continent of America: rights interwoven with the economy of our nature, calculated to promote the welfare of the individual, and the great purposes of society. Rights which mankind are not authorized to sport with, any more than with the principle of self-preservation or life. The recovery of these essential prerogatives of humanity, will be deemed a substantial blessing, by every liberal person; if, however, it provoke any censure from his former connexions, the Chaplain, having once appealed to their candour and charity, shall continue to treat it with pity and indifference. *Æquo animo audienda sunt im-*

peritorum convicia, et ad honesta vadenti contemnendus est ipse contemptus. Seneca.

Before the Chaplain takes a *final* leave of the public on these matters, which he very sincerely wishes to do at present, he must beg its attention for a moment to the most material accusation thrown out in the address. He is accused of “imputing doctrines to the Roman Catholics foreign to their belief, and having a natural tendency to embitter against them the minds of their fellow citizens.” He is accused of “misinforming, and of sowing in minds so misinformed the seeds of religious animosity.” (Add. p. 118.) The Rev. Gentleman could not have wounded his former friend in a more tender part. At such an attack *he also felt an anguish too keen for description*—for such accusations coming from him, must extinguish every spark of good will towards the Chaplain, which may still be lurking among his former connexions. They go to alienate the esteem of his recent friends, by holding him up as a disturber of the public peace, as an enemy to his country. Did the Rev. Gentleman perceive the natural tendency of such a censure, or could he think the Chaplain deserved it? The Rev. Gentleman might have known him better. There was a time when he honoured him with his confidence and esteem, when he condescended to become the depositary of his little concerns. At an early period of life, he kindly took him by the hand, and led him through the paths of honour and of virtue: his lessons were always those of friendship and of wisdom; from these flowed that sentiment of *universal benevolence* which the Chaplain deems the most precious he possesses. Could the Rev. Gentleman be

ignorant of the growth of a plant, which he himself had nourished in the heart of his friend, and which he must have observed to flourish there, with a luxuriance nearly approaching to enthusiasm. . . It was this sentiment that banished every word from his letter which could wound the feelings of the most delicate Roman Catholic: this made him distinguish between their persons and opinions, and prevented a dereliction of some of the latter, from impairing the social affections which he cherished for the former. Far from wishing to *sow the seeds of religious animosity in the minds of his countrymen*, he would make any sacrifice to eradicate them for ever: far from wishing to *embitter the minds of their fellow citizens against the Roman Catholics of America*, he is proud to see them elevated to that equal respectability, to which, as zealous supporters of their country's freedom, and as a Christian society, they are essentially entitled: far from harbouring any religious animosity or narrowness of sentiment, he only wishes for opportunities to show how much he despises them: far from abandoning the cause of virtue and religion, as the Address seems to insinuate, (p. 117.) he means to exert his slender abilities and *consummate the course of his ministry* in the service of both—thrice happy, if the profession of the common principles of Christianity, and a perfect union of heart, could be deemed sufficient by the Rev. Gentleman, to perpetuate their connexion in so noble a pursuit. Such are the immutable sentiments of the Chaplain. Whether his letter, or this reply, tend to counteract or confirm them, it belongs to the candid reader to determine.

A SHORT ANSWER
TO
"A TRUE EXPOSITION
OF THE
DOCTRINE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
TOUCHING THE
SACRAMENT OF PENANCE,
WITH THE
GROUNDS ON WHICH THIS DOCTRINE IS FOUNDED,"
CONTAINED IN
AN APPENDIX
TO
THE CATHOLIC QUESTION
DECIDED IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK, IN JULY, 1813.

BY CHARLES H. WHARTON, D. D.
Rector of St. Mary's Church, Burlington, N. J.

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity? Mich. vii. 18.
I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord; and so thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.
Ps. xxxii. 6.
And the Scribes and Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? Luke v. 21.
"Non potest hoc cuiquam hominum cum Christo esse commune ut peccata condonet."
"No man can have *this* in common with Christ, that he may forgive sins."
St. Ambros. epist. 76. ad Studios.

NEW-YORK:
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Clayton & Kingsland, Printers.

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1817.

MEMORANDUM

TO THE HONORABLE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
FROM THE COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

RE: [Illegible Title]

That [Illegible]

It is recommended that [Illegible]

Very respectfully,
[Illegible Signature]

[Illegible]

TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND THE BISHOPS,
THE
REVEREND THE CLERICAL,
AND
THE GENTLEMEN LAY DEPUTIES
OF
THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
IN
GENERAL CONVENTION ASSEMBLED,
THIS ANSWER
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE HUMBLE SERVANT AND BROTHER,
THE AUTHOR.

THE HISTORY OF THE

The text on this page is extremely faint and illegible due to the age and condition of the document. It appears to be a historical account, possibly detailing events or a narrative from a past era. The handwriting is cursive and typical of 17th or 18th-century manuscripts. The page shows signs of wear, including discoloration and some dark spots, which further obscure the text.

A SHORT ANSWER.



AT a time when the spirit of religious controversy seemed to be dormant in our land—when the different Christian societies were convinced of the delicate propriety of confining the enforcement of their peculiar tenets within the pale of their own communions—when the few theological publications now circulating among us were labouring to inculcate the fundamental doctrines of our common Christianity, and on them to erect a goodly system of mutual forbearance, harmony, and love—the advocates of evangelical charity beheld, with considerable regret, the appearance of a pamphlet calculated to diminish the influence and disturb the serenity of this heavenly temper. Had the publisher of the Catholic Question been satisfied with communicating to us the issue of that interesting trial, which every liberal mind must approve and applaud; had he confined himself to the gratifying of his readers with a display of eloquent and ingenious declamation, and irresistible argument, although on a subject which never admitted of a doubt; nay, had he annexed to the account of this trial an exposition of his creed, as adopted and enforced by the council of Trent, unaccompanied with any illiberal reflections upon those who pay little regard to that council's denunciations or decrees, the writer of this reply would never have thought himself authorized to question a right to instruct the members of his church

in the tenets of their religion, or to throw over them fresh lights to demonstrate their truth.

But the *reverend* author of the Appendix (for I suppose him to be such) has manifestly seized upon what he conceived to be a favourable opportunity to lay his doctrines before the public, still alive to some favourable impressions from the recent decision of his cause, with an air of triumph bordering upon insult, with a tone of defiance pointing to intimidation.

He enters upon his exposition by boldly asserting, as “an undeniable fact, and which our adversaries,” says he, “have but too well known, that the Catholic doctrine can never be attacked with any success, but by *misrepresentation*; and that it wants only to be known to obtain the suffrages of *upright* men, and to silence the most inveterate of its enemies.” (*App.* p. 1.)

Here the reverend author begins by indulging a spirit of illiberality, which, it seems, all the candour of his Protestant advocates, all the enlightened justice of his Protestant judge, had not been able to allay. He confidently throws down the gauntlet, and looks around him, either for resistance or submission. Silence on the part of Protestants, although deemed by some advisable on this occasion, might probably flatter the Reverend Gentleman and his adherents with an idea of the latter; and as one of his learned advocates, although a Protestant, has been induced to assert, that “the Catholic,” meaning clearly the *Roman Catholic*, “religion has existed for eighteen centuries, and that the sacrament of penance has existed with it;” (*Cath. Ques.* p. 26.;) there are solid grounds for seriously apprehending, lest some persons not so well informed as the learned counsellor, may be seduced into his

opinion, and into other unfounded doctrines contained in the Appendix.

The taste for religious controversy has, in great measure, gone by; yet still, when opinions by many deemed erroneous are forced upon the public eye, by a great parade of erudition, and a hardihood of assertion smiling contemptuously at contradiction, when the teachers of any Christian church presume rashly to pronounce, that “in her bosom only, man can enjoy the precious advantage of forgiveness of sins; that she is the *true* Jerusalem, in which the *true* temple exists, and the *true probatic* pond, which heals all sorts of diseases; that in her only are found the *true* Jordan, which cleansed Naaman and his leprosy; that she is the mysterious inn, in which the *true* Samaritan effects the cure of the traveller, whom he finds wounded in the road to Jericho;” (*App.* p. 107.) I say, when such lofty pretensions as these are obtruded upon the public, it cannot be expected that they will pass unnoticed by those who are acquainted with their futility, or by the Christian ministers of other societies, who consider themselves intrusted with the sacred deposite of religious truth, as its delegated guardians.

It is not the intention of this reply to follow the reverend author of the Appendix into the extensive fields of polemical divinity, which he has laid open to his readers. To the avowed design of proving the divine institution of *sacramental auricular confession*, he has annexed all the hackneyed and well-known arguments in favour of the collateral tenets of the Romish church. Of many of these no notice can be taken in a short pamphlet: if, however, they should disturb the

belief of any Protestant reader, let him only turn to some of the most eminent writers in defence of the reformation, which every library furnishes; let him only peruse the immortal and unanswerable work of Chillingworth, entitled *The Religion of Protestants a safe way to Salvation*, and every rising doubt and difficulty will be quickly dissipated.

The sole object, then, of this reply is to investigate and refute, as briefly as possible, the arguments alleged in the Appendix in support of the divine institution of auricular confession, or of the *sacrament of penance*, as explained, decreed, and enjoined by the council of Trent. In doing this, I trust it will be shown, first, that the doctrine of *auricular confession*, as a *divinely instituted sacrament of the Christian church*, has no foundation in the scripture. Secondly, that this doctrine was unknown to the primitive church; and that previously to the thirteenth century it had never been enacted into an article of faith and indispensable discipline.

Thirdly, That neither the council of Lateran, nor the council of Trent, nor any other earthly tribunal, has a right to impose such a grievous yoke upon the faithful from a plea to infallibility; as this plea is altogether unsupported either by reason or revelation.

The reader will readily perceive that whatever can be urged in answer to the arguments for the divine institution of auricular confession, must be comprehended under these three heads: he will see no necessity of following the Rev. Gentleman through all the syllogistic forms, and imposing arrangements of a great, but irrelevant mass of matter, which frequent-

ly perplex, rather than elucidate the truth; for it must strike every mind with conviction, that a religious tenet, which is founded neither on scripture, universal usage, nor competent authority, can have no foundation at all.

PART FIRST.

“The doctrine of the divine institution of *sacramental auricular confession, not authorized by scripture.*”

Before we enter on the proofs of this assertion, it is necessary to state precisely, in what consists the difference of opinion between the Protestant and Romish churches, with respect to confession of sins: accurate notions of this disagreement can alone enable the reader to perceive the drift of the arguments that follow. This difference is fairly stated by Cardinal Bellarmine, and will not be questioned by the author of the Appendix. “Admittit Calvinus generalem confessionem; admittit etiam, privatam, coram pastore; sed addit, hanc, liberam esse debere, nec ab omnibus exigendam, nec cogendos ad enumeranda omnia peccata præcepto aliquo, aut arte inducendos, nisi quoad interesse sua putabunt, ut solidum consolationis fructum referant.” (*Bellar. lib. 3. de Pœnit. cap. 1.*) And, “in this doctrine,” says he, in the same place, “all Protestants agree,” that is, all Protestant churches admit, that it may be occasionally adviseable for a man burthened with sin, to lay open his conscience in private to a minister of God, and to seek at his hands the aids of instruction, and the comfort of God’s pardon: but they contend, at the same time, that such private confession is a voluntary act, by no means to be con-

sidered as a *divine* institution, and an indispensable obligation, without which, no remission or pardon of sin can be hoped for from God, as the council of Trent has decreed it to be under a formidable anathema, (*sess.* 14.,) and the Romish church professes to believe.*

* The error of the Romish Church concerning penance has been probably strengthened by a misuse of the Latin term "*pœnitentiam agere.*" It is classical Latin for *μετανοειν*, "or to repent;" but the expression "to do penance," conveys to an English ear a very different sentiment from either; although strictly a rendering of the Latin expression. The Douay translation says, in a note on Matthew iii. 2., that the Greek word is used in Scripture, and by the Fathers, for the sense of the said English expression: but this may safely be denied. To show the difference of meaning, I will refer to the following texts, selected out of many in the Douay translation. It has "Do penance" in Matthew iii. 2., and in Acts ii. 38., and indeed generally. But in Luke xvii. 3 and 4., and in Acts xi. 18., the incongruity is so manifest, that the phraseology is varied essentially. In the former passage, the repentance spoken of, is an act of justice to an offended brother. In the latter it is descriptive of the conversion of heathen persons; who, on the principles of the opposite system, are not required to do any acts comprehended under the name of penance, in the usual sense of the word: such acts being restricted to sins after baptism.

The verb *μετανοειν*, is either compounded of *μετα*, *after*, and *νοειν*, *to understand*, which signifies, that *after hearing* such preaching, the sinner is led to *understand*, that the way he has walked in was the way of misery, death, and hell. Or the word may be derived from *μετα*, *after*, and *νοειν*, *madness*, which intimates that the whole life of a sinner is no other than a continued course of *madness* and *folly*: and if to live in a constant opposition to all the dictates of *true wisdom*; to wage war with his own best interests in time and eternity; to provoke and insult the living God; and, by habitual sin, to prepare himself only for a state of misery, be evidences of *insanity*, every sinner exhibits them plentifully. It was from this notion of the word, that the Latins termed repentance *resipiscentia*, *a growing wise again*, from *re* and *sapere*; or, according to Tertullian, *Resipiscentia quasi receptio mentis ad se*, restoring the mind to itself: *Contra Marcion*, lib. ii. Repentance then implies, that a measure of *divine wisdom* is communicated to the sinner, and that he thereby becomes *wise* to salvation. That his *mind*, *purposes*, *opinions*, and *inclinations* are *changed*: and that, in consequence, there is a total change in his conduct. It need scarcely be remarked, that, in this state, a man feels deep anguish of soul, because he has sinned against God, unfitted himself for heaven, and exposed his soul to hell. Hence, a true penitent has that sorrow, whereby he forsakes sin, not only because it has been ruinous to his own soul, but because it has been offensive to God.

Now this *divine institution* of private, or auricular confession, and its absolute necessity for the remission of sins, are, for many reasons, rejected from the creed of all Protestants: and particularly, because they cannot discover these doctrines in the scriptures. They consider, and so must every candid inquirer into religious truth, that if a burthen so grievous as auricular confession, had been enjoined as a Christian precept in the gospel, it would have been expressed in terms the most explicit and convincing; in phrases at least as imperative and unambiguous, as those which imposed the heavy yoke of the law; a yoke, nevertheless, light and pleasant, when compared to that which has since been fixed upon the necks of Christians, under the mild and perfect law of liberty and grace.

The passages referred to by the Reverend Gentleman, in support of the *divine institution*, and *absolute necessity* of auricular sacramental confession, are three from the Evangelists, one from the Acts of the Apostles, one from St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, and the last from the General Epistle of St. James—On each of these a few observations will suffice to show, that, all the *majors* and *minors* of the Reverend Gentleman notwithstanding, these texts bear very lightly and remotely on the question before us. They by no means carry with them that blaze of evidence which should compel a man to unfold the most humiliating thoughts, desires, and actions of his life; to communicate to a fellow mortal, often very ignorant, and incapable of advising, those secrets of the heart, which to know, is the exclusive privilege of Omniscience; and of which he is too jealous, to enact, under the sanction of a precept, the participation of them

with a sinful creature. The control over its hidden emotions and propensities, either in concealing or divulging them to others, must be among the essential qualities of the mind, and the voice of God must be as distinct as that which thundered upon Sinai, before it can be imagined that he ever meant to infringe them.

But to proceed to the Reverend Gentleman's argument drawn from the New Testament—In the eighteenth verse of the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew, he finds, that “Christ has instituted the apostles and their lawful successors, the priests of his church, to be judges upon earth, invested with a power, that without their sentence, no sinner, fallen after baptism, can be reconciled.” (*App.* p. 20.) Here is a discovery of great latitude indeed, and although somewhat awkwardly expressed, contains a most awful and momentous meaning: nothing less than “the impossibility of a sinner's being reconciled to God, after baptism, without the sentence of a priest.” The first text is this, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church—and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” The second text is Matt. xviii. 18. where, in the same terms, he makes the same promise afterwards to his apostles—“Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” “The third, and principal passage,” says the Reverend Gentleman, “upon which the belief of the Catholic church respecting the divine institution and absolute necessity of confession,

is grounded, is found in the twentieth chapter of St. John, where Christ, after his resurrection, thus addresses his disciples, (ver. twenty-first and twenty-second,) ‘As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you; and when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever *sins* ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.’ ”

It might be sufficient here to observe, respecting these passages, that they were never deemed by the fathers of the primitive church, to be conclusive evidence for the divine institution of auricular confession, as it has been since explained and decreed by the council of Trent; and that during the ages preceding the Lateran council, in 1225, they have been generally understood as communicating such power only to the ministers of the gospel, as the Protestant churches are willing to allow. If this should be fully proved in the *second part* of this Reply, as I trust it will, the confidence of the Reverend Gentleman, and his adherents, in applying these passages to support their doctrine, will be considerably abated.

The Reverend Gentleman builds on these passages, many arguments in favour of auricular *sacramental* confession, for which Protestants conceive they furnish no foundation. The words “*thou art Peter,*” &c. have no reference to the subject immediately before us; for even granting them to imply a promise of exemption from error, they surely convey no authority to St. Peter, to receive the private confessions of the faithful, and forgive their sins by sacramental absolution—But it is the power of the keys, convey-

ed in these passages, on which the Gentleman insists—He identifies this power with a judicial authority, which cannot be exercised without a full disclosure of all the sins of the penitent, to a judge appointed by God to forgive or retain them. He tells us, (p. 24.,) that to *adjust* any differences which a subject may have with his sovereign, it is *necessary to present himself before him whom the sovereign should have delegated judge in his place*. Now, is there any parity between this case, and that of the sinner with God? Suppose this sovereign to be omniscient, and, of course, intimately acquainted with every action, thought, and disposition of his subject, which might render him an object of pardon or punishment; suppose, moreover, this most merciful sovereign had issued a solemn proclamation, inviting all who “labour and are heavy laden, to come unto him, that he may give them rest,” would a commission to an officer, to grant or refuse admittance into his kingdom, induce the subject to apply to him on a subject no wise connected with this commission, especially if, by a solemn ordinance, he had already been received as a regular subject into this kingdom? Again, let us suppose that a sovereign should appoint judges throughout his dominions, to absolve all his subjects from the guilt and penalties of rebellion, who should manifest satisfactory evidences of their repentance and future allegiance, would it be necessary to specify every act of rebellion of which these subjects had been guilty? Would not a general confession of their guilt and sincere resolutions to offend no more be sufficient grounds for the judges to act upon, to declare them reinstated in the favour of their sovereign and the privileges of his kingdom?

The power of *binding* and *loosening* is committed to these judges, and it can only be exercised by declaring those to be still guilty, who remain obstinate in their offences, and those to be absolved who are sincerely penitent. Thus, we see that one of the Reverend Gentleman's main propositions, (p. 25.,) "that if confession be not of divine institution, and of absolute necessity for the reconciliation of the sinner, that is, if there be any other ordinary means to obtain the remission of sins committed after baptism, different from confession, the use and exercise of the power of forgiving and retaining sins, would be rendered thereby wholly useless and nugatory." We perceive, I say, that this assertion is totally unfounded. A circumstantial enumeration of every sinful thought, word, and deed, to be made to a priest by a private confession, is not required by any of these passages of scripture, for the due exercise of the Christian ministry in the forgiveness of sins.

We find throughout the New Testament, that "Christ has given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins; and that *he* pardoneth and absolveth all those who truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel." (*Common Prayer.*) This we find, and we find nothing more; for as to the power of *retaining* sins, the Rev. Gentleman will not, surely, conceive it to be applicable to those, for which, the sinner exhibits every reasonable mark of godly sorrow and repentance. Sins thus repented of, God could never have given any man power to retain. Such power would efface every idea of divine placability, contra-

dict the most positive declarations of Scripture, and overthrow the whole economy of the gospel. Besides, the power of *retaining* sins can never, upon the Rev. Gentleman's own principles, constitute any part of this sacrament of penance, because *absolution* is the *form* of that sacrament, so that where there is no absolution there can be no sacrament. The power, therefore, of the *keys*, or the authority to bind and to loose, to forgive and retain sins, communicated by Christ to his apostles and their successors, must be very different from that now exercised by the priests of the Romish church: and, truly, do we read in the New Testament, that any such power as this was exercised by the apostles? The Rev. Gentleman, indeed, points out several passages, which mention, in general terms, the confession of sins, but how he can seriously believe, that they establish *auricular sacramental confession*, must be matter of astonishment to those who are accustomed to think for themselves. Do the recorded instances of our Saviour pronouncing forgiveness of sins mention any confession but such as was general? Did the penitent woman, when kneeling at the feet of Jesus, watering them with her tears, and wiping them with her hair, go into a minute and circumstantial enumeration of her sins; or rather, were not the unequivocal evidences of her repentance deemed sufficient to procure her absolution? Was not the simple confession of "God be merciful to me a sinner," effectual in obtaining forgiveness for the contrite Publican? Where do we read that a private sacramental confession was ever made to Christ or his apostles? "If we confess our sins," says St. John, "God is faithful and just to forgive us

our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." *Confess our sins*—to whom? not surely to a priest, but to God, who alone can *cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. Can the Rev. Gentleman imagine that any unfettered mind will admit the following conclusions, drawn from the passages of Scripture which he alleges? "Christ left with his apostles, and their successors, the power of forgiving and retaining sins;" therefore, no sins can be either *forgiven* or *retained*, but such as are revealed to a priest in sacramental confession. How does it follow that a power of forgiving, in God's name, the sins revealed to his ministers, implies an obligation or necessity of making a minute and circumstantial confession of every deadly sin? How does it follow, that God will not forgive sins which are not revealed to a priest? Does this power in the Christian church invalidate the means of obtaining forgiveness adopted in the *Jewish*: or are the motives of a pardoning God fluctuating and uncertain? Would not a penitential spirit plead as effectually for a Christian now, as it did for king David in the olden time, when he said, (*Ps. xxxii.*,) "I will acknowledge my sin unto thee, and my unrighteousness have I not hid. I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord, and so thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin:" or shall Christians be compelled to believe, that a few ambiguous expressions are to be diverted from their more obvious and consistent meaning, to bind on their consciences a most intolerable burthen, inconsistent with *the perfect law* of liberty, by which Christ has set us free, and tending frequently, it is to be feared, to inspire a confidence of forgiveness, resting rather on a compliance with so humiliating an ordi-

nance, than on the full and perfect atonement and satisfaction of Christ for the sins of the whole world?

A more frequent, explicit, and impressive reference to this fundamental article of Christianity would not fail to detract from the imaginary importance of sacramental confession, by convincing every scriptural believer, that no *satisfaction* for sin can be made or required, but what has been already made by the great Redeemer; and that even repentance itself, without it, so far from being sufficient to ensure the sinner's amendment, is rather calculated to render him easy under his guilt, from the facility of reconciliation. There is, in fact, no other doctrine, or ordinance, or discipline, which, exclusively of this tenet, can alarm or rouse the sinner from the apathy of habitual transgression. I know that the Rev. Gentleman believes this doctrine in its full extent; and I know that Protestants feel grateful to his church, that amidst the prevalence of ignorance, superstition, and folly, she still preserved inviolate *this* and other vital principles of our holy faith; for it was against *these* that the gates of hell, or the powers of death and darkness, were never to prevail. But I put it to the conscience of the Rev. Gentleman, whether his high encomiums on the divine right, the indispensable necessity, and the mighty benefits of auricular confession, do not tend to keep this fundamental tenet out of sight, or at least to place it in the back ground of the Christian system.

The following luminous exposition of these passages, by the learned Dr. Adam Clarke, if duly considered, would probably set at rest for ever, all controversy arising from them.

“ *Thou art Peter.* This was the same as if he had said, *I acknowledge thee for one of my disciples*—for this name was given him by our Lord when he first called him to the apostleship. See John i. 42.

“ *Peter*, *πετρος*, signifies a *rock*; and our Lord, whose constant custom it was to rise to *heavenly* things through the medium of *earthly*, takes occasion from the name, the metaphorical meaning of which was *strength* and *stability*, to point the solidity of the confession, and the *stability* of that cause which should be founded ON THE CHRIST, the SON of the LIVING GOD.

“ *Upon this very rock*, *επι ταυτη τη πετρα*—this true confession of thine—that I am THE MESSIAH, that am come to reveal and communicate THE LIVING GOD, that the *dead lost* world may be saved—upon this very rock myself, thus confessed, (alluding probably to Psal. cxviii. 22. *The STONE which the builders rejected, is become the HEAD-STONE of the CORNER:* and to Isa. xxviii. 16. *Behold I lay a STONE in Zion for a FOUNDATION,*) —will I build my Church *μου την εκκλησιαν*, *my assembly* or *congregation*, i. e. of persons who are made partakers of this precious *faith*. That *Peter* is not designed in our Lord’s words, must be evident to all who are not blinded by prejudice. Peter was only *one* of the builders in this sacred edifice, (Eph. ii. 20.) who, himself, tells us, (with the rest of the believers,) was built on this living foundation stone: (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.) therefore, Jesus Christ did not say, *on thee, Peter*, will I build my church, but *changes* immediately the expression, and says, *upon that very rock*, *επι ταυτη τη πετρα*, to show that he neither addressed *Peter* nor any other of the *apostles*. So, the supremacy of Peter,

and the infallibility of the Church of Rome, must be sought in some other Scripture, for they certainly are not to be found in this.

“ *The gates of Hell*, *πυλαι Ἀδου*, i. e. the *machinations* and *powers* of the invisible world. In ancient times, the gates of fortified cities were used to hold councils in; and were usually places of great strength. Our Lord’s expression means, that neither the *plots*, *stratagems*, nor *strength*, of Satan and his angels, should ever so far prevail as to destroy the sacred truths in the above confession. Sometimes the *gates* are taken for the *troops* which issue out from them—we may firmly believe, that though Hell should open her gates, and vomit out her Devil and all his angels to fight against Christ and his saints, ruin and discomfiture must be the consequence on their part; as the arm of the Omnipotent *must* prevail.

“ *The keys of the kingdom*. By the *kingdom of heaven*, we may consider the true Church, that house of God, to be meant, and by the *keys*, the power of admitting into that house, or of preventing any improper person from coming in. In other words, the doctrine of salvation, and the full declaration of the way in which God will save sinners: and who they are that shall be finally excluded from heaven; and on what account. When the Jews made a man a *doctor* of the *law*, they put into his hand the key of the closet in the temple, where the sacred books were kept, and also tablets to write upon; signifying by this that they gave him authority to teach and to explain the Scriptures to the people. *Martin*. This prophetic declaration of our Lord, was literally fulfilled to Peter, as he was made the *first* instrument of

opening, i. e. preaching the doctrines of the kingdom of heaven to the *Jews*, (Acts ii. 41,) and to the *Gentiles*, (Acts x. 44—47. xi. 1. xv. 7.)

“ *Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth.* This mode of expression was frequent among the Jews: they considered that every thing that was done upon earth according to the order of God, was at the same time done in heaven: hence they were accustomed to say, that when the priest, on the day of atonement, offered the two goats upon earth, the same were offered in Heaven. As one goat therefore is permitted to escape on earth, one is permitted to escape in heaven; and when the priest casts the lots on earth, the priest also casts the lots in heaven. See *Sohar. Levit. fol. 26.* and see Lightfoot and Schoetgen. These words will receive considerable light from Levit. xiii. 3 and 23. *The priest shall look upon him* (the leper) and *pronounce him unclean.* Heb. וטמא אהו *vetimé otho, he shall pollute him*, i. e. shall declare him polluted, from the evidences mentioned before, and in ver. 23. The priest shall pronounce him clean וטהרו חבתו *vetiharo hacohen*, the priest shall cleanse him, i. e. *declare he is clean* from the evidences mentioned in the verse. In the one case the priest *declared* the person infected with the leprosy, and *unfit for civil society*: and in the other, that the suspected person was *clean*, and might safely associate with his fellows in civil or religious assemblies. The disciples of our Lord, from having the *keys*, i. e. the true knowledge of the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, should be able at all times to distinguish between the clean and the unclean, and pronounce infallible judgment: and this *binding* and *loosing*, or pronouncing *fit* or *unfit for fellowship* with the

members of Christ, being always according to the doctrine of the gospel of God, should be considered as proceeding immediately from heaven, and consequently as *divinely ratified*."

That *binding* and *loosing* were terms in frequent use among the Jews, and that they meant *bidding* and *forbidding*, *granting* and *refusing*, declaring *lawful* or *unlawful*, &c., Dr. Lightfoot, after having given *numerous instances*, thus concludes :

"To these may be added, if need were, the frequent, (shall I say ?) or infinite use of the phrases, אסור ומותר *bound and loosed*, which we meet with *thousands* of times over. But from these allegations the reader sees abundantly enough both the *frequency* and the common use of this phrase, and the *sense* of it also ; namely, first, that it is used in *doctrine*, and in *judgments*, concerning things *allowed* or *not allowed* in the law. Secondly, that *to bind* is the same with *to forbid*, or *to declare forbidden*. To think that *Christ*, when he used the common phrase, was not understood by his hearers, in the *common* and *vulgar sense*, shall I call it a matter of laughter, or of madness ?

"To this, therefore, do these words amount. When the time was come wherein the *Mosaic Law*, as to some part of it, was to be abolished, and left off, and as to another part of it, was to be continued, and last for ever, he granted *Peter*, here, and to the rest of the apostles, (chap. xviii. 18.) a power to *abolish* or *confirm* what they thought good, and as they thought good ; being taught this, and led by the Holy Spirit, as if he should say, whatsoever ye shall *bind* in the law of *MOSES* that is *forbid*, it shall be *forbidden*, the divine authority confirming it ; and whatsoever ye shall

loose, that is, *permit*, or shall teach that it is *permitted* and *lawful*, shall be *lawful* and *permitted*. Hence they *bound*, that is, *forbad* circumcision to the believers; eating of things offered to idols, of things strangled, and of blood for a time, to the *Gentiles*: and that which they *bound on earth* was *confirmed in heaven*. They *loosed*, that is, allowed purification to *Paul*, and to *four other brethren*, for the shunning of scandal, (Acts xxi. 24.) and in a word, by these words of *Christ* it was committed to them, the Holy Spirit directing, that they should make decrees concerning religion, as to the use or rejection of *Mosaic* rites and judgments, and that either for a time, or for ever.

“Let the word be applied, by way of paraphrase, to the matter that was transacted at present with Peter. ‘I am about to build a *Gentile* Church,’ saith *Christ*, ‘and to thee, O Peter, do I give the *keys* of the kingdom of heaven, that thou mayest *first open the door of faith to them*; but if thou askest by what rule that Church is to be governed, when the *Mosaic* rule may seem so improper for it, thou shalt be so guided by the Holy Spirit, that whatsoever of the law of *Moses* thou shalt *forbid* them, shall be *forbidden*: whatsoever thou *grantest* them, shall be *granted*, and that under a sanction made in heaven.’ Hence, in that instant, when he should use his *keys*, that is, when he was now ready to open the gate of the gospel to the *Gentiles*, (Acts x.) he was taught from heaven, that the consorting of the *Jew* with the *Gentile*, which before had been *bound* was now *loosed*; and the eating of any creature convenient for food, was now *loosed*, which before had been *bound*; and he, in like manner, *looses* both these.

“Those words of our Saviour, (John xx. 23.) *Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted to them*, for the most part are forced to the same sense with these before us, when they carry quite another sense. Here the business is of *doctrine* only, not of *persons*; there of *persons*, not of *doctrine*. Here of *things lawful or unlawful* in religion, to be determined by the apostles; there of *persons obstinate or not obstinate*, to be *punished* by them, or *not to be punished*.

“As to *doctrine*, the apostles were doubly instructed. 1. So long sitting at the feet of their Master, they had imbibed the evangelical doctrine. 2. The Holy Spirit directing them, they were to determine concerning the legal doctrine and practice, being completely instructed and enabled in both, by the Holy Spirit descending upon them. As to the *persons*, they were endowed with a peculiar gift, so that the same Spirit directing them, if they would retain, and punish the sins of any, a power was delivered into their hands of *delivering to Satan*, of punishing with *diseases, plagues*, yea, *death* itself, which *Peter* did to *Ananias* and *Sapphira*; *Paul* to *Elymas, Hymeneus, and Philetus*,” &c.

After all these evidences and proofs of the proper use of these terms, to attempt to press the words into the service long assigned them by the Church of Rome, would, to use the words of Dr. Lightfoot, be “a matter of laughter or of madness. No church can use them *in the sense thus imposed upon them*, which was done merely to serve secular ends; and least of all can that very church that thus abuses them.”

Any further observations on texts relating to this subject might safely be omitted; for we may confi-

dently presume that no unprejudiced reader will consider the other passages of the New Testament, brought forward in the second chapter of the Appendix, as bearing in the smallest degree on sacramental confession. Let him, however, judge for himself.

The first passage is this: (*Acts 19.*) "And many that believed, came and confessed, and showed their deeds." Here mention is made of confession of sins, but is any thing said of sacramental absolution? These people openly "acknowledged and confessed their manifold sins and wickedness, they did not dissemble nor cloak them before the face of their heavenly Father; but confessed them with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart." In terms approaching to the language of one Protestant church, and in the spirit of them all, they probably vented the sorrows of their hearts, "by acknowledging and bewailing their manifold sins and wickedness, which from time to time they most grievously had committed, by thought, word, and deed, against the Divine Majesty, provoking most justly his wrath and indignation against them;" by declaring that they "did earnestly repent, and were heartily sorry for all these their misdoings; that the remembrance of them was grievous unto them; the burthen of them intolerable;" and "by imploring mercy and forgiveness of all that was past, from their most merciful Father, for the sake of his Son, and their Lord Jesus Christ." (*Communion Service.*) Such was the nature of the confession made by these people, and, upon this unequivocal evidence of their repentance, they received, no doubt, from St. Paul, in virtue of the powers of his sacred ministry, a declaration that their sins were forgiven. This ministerial act.

which is termed by some absolution, is still exercised and highly appreciated in the Protestant churches. Every regular minister of the gospel conceives himself authorized to preach forgiveness of sins to repenting sinners; to assure them, when they exhibit satisfactory proofs that their repentance is real and sincere, that their sins are remitted, and they restored to the grace and favour of God. "They perceive, indeed, in the words of their sacred commission, a manifest distinction between the sinner and the sin." It is not said "whatsoever sins, but *whosoever* sins ye remit." There may be satisfactory evidence of repentance without a minute and circumstantial disclosure of all the offences to which it has a relation. (*See Bishop White's Second Lecture.*) But whenever such evidence appears, as in the case before us, God's ministers are authorized and bound to pronounce to his people the absolution of their sins. And whether the words of this absolution be, *I absolve thee*, as they appear in the office of *visitation of the sick*, used by the church of England, or, *I declare and pronounce you to be absolved*, as used exclusively by the Protestant Episcopal church in America, in neither case do they furnish any countenance to the sense of sacramental absolution, as understood and taught by the Romish church. The forms of absolution, however expressed, are by all Protestants held to be merely *deprecatory* and *declaratory*; and indeed in this light were they considered by the whole Christian church down to the thirteenth century, as will appear hereafter.

Upon the whole, the passage before us is perfectly analogous to that in the second chapter of St. Matthew, where, it is said, "all Jerusalem and all Judea,

and all the region round about Jordan, went out to John, and were baptized by him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Now, will the Rev. Gentleman tell us that this confession affords any pretext for the sacrament of penance?

With respect to the text from 2 Cor. v. it is really surprising, that the Rev. Gentleman should cite it in support of his doctrine. "God," says the apostle, "has given to us the ministry of reconciliation;" that is, he has commissioned and charged us, the pastors of his church, to publish and announce to mankind his reconciliation to our sinful race in Christ, or through the sufferings and death of Christ, as the grand principle and motive of this reconciliation. "We then pray you, as ambassadors for Christ;" we pray you in God's name; "we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God;" that is, in other words, we implore, we beseech you, in the name of God, and as the ministers of Christ, lay hold by faith on the great atonement made by Christ for the world, as the ground and assurance of your reconciliation with your Maker. Now, what has the ministry of such reconciliation as this to do with *auricular sacramental* confession? It relates entirely to the ministry of the word, to the preaching of the glad tidings of salvation to a lost world, through the atoning blood of the Redeemer.

The third and last passage quoted by the Rev. Gentleman is from the fifth chapter of the Epistle of St. James, where the apostle exhorts the faithful to "confess their sins one to another." This text can never subserve the cause of *sacramental* confession, till it be shown, that to "confess to one another," means

“to confess exclusively to a priest.” Besides, as understood by the Rev. Gentleman, it proves too much, and therefore proves nothing: for if it enjoin on all Christians the obligation of mutual confession, and this confession be sacramental, then must priests confess to laymen, as well as laymen to priests. But the fact is, no passage could have been selected more unfortunately to uphold the Romish doctrine on this head, or more pointedly to enforce the Protestant opinions: for why are we exhorted in this place “to confess our sins to one another?” Not to obtain absolution of a priest; but, as the context clearly proves, that from a mutual feeling of our infirmities and sins, we may be induced to pray for each other, as “the prayer of a righteous man availeth much”—and by “the prayer of faith our sins may be forgiven us.”

The arguments for pressing this passage into the cause of *sacramental confession*, are really too trifling to merit further notice; and therefore, having considered all the scriptural proofs for this doctrine contained in the Appendix, we leave them to the decision of the candid reader, trusting confidently that after an impartial investigation, like many Roman Catholic divines, he will be compelled to look elsewhere for the divine institution of this sacrament, and to adopt the opinion of the celebrated Peter Lombard, styled by way of eminence *the master* of the sentences, and considered as one of the theological luminaries of the twelfth century. “Behold,” says he, (lib. 4. dist. 18. fol. 108, 109.) “what a variety of opinions has been delivered by the doctors upon these things; and amidst so great a variety, what are we to abide by? This truly we can say and think, that God *only* remits

sins, and retains them; and yet he has granted power to the church to *bind* and to *loosen*. But he binds and loosens in a different manner from the church. For he remits sin by himself only, because he both cleanses the soul from the inward stain, and frees her from the debt of eternal death. But this he never granted to priests, to whom, nevertheless, he gave the power of binding and loosening: that is, of *declaring men* either bound or loosened. Hence, our Lord first restored the leper to health by himself, then sent him to the priests, that by their judgment he might be pronounced to be cleansed." Thus explicitly does this eminent divine, so late as the twelfth century, deliver the doctrine of the Reformation, and contradict that of the council of Trent. We proceed now to show, that Peter Lombard was not singular in his opinion; that it prevailed universally in the primitive church, and that the present Romish doctrine of *sacramental confession* was not enacted into an *article of faith*, and *indispensable discipline*, previously to the thirteenth century.

PART SECOND.

The testimony of the ancient fathers does not prove sacramental confession.

In casting his eye over the Appendix to the *Catholic Question*, from page forty-one, the reader will perceive a formidable host of ancient Christian fathers, marshalled according to the respective centuries of the church, and all bearing testimony to *sacramental confession*. These passages are earnestly recommended to the attentive perusal of the reader, with

this observation, that as many more of a similar cast might readily be added to their number, as would fill the pages of a massive folio. The doctrine of evangelical repentance and forgiveness of sins was always deemed a primitive and fundamental article of the Christian church. What wonder, then, that all her learned and orthodox writers should be found so zealously insisting upon its necessity and truth? But let these passages be examined by the rules of sound criticism and unprejudiced judgment, and I will venture to affirm, that they mean nothing more than warm and high-strained exhortations to repentance, either public or private, and can never, without manifest violence, be distorted to inculcate the necessity of *sacramental* confession as a means, (*necessitate medii*,) or as a divine precept, (*necessitate præcepti*,) for obtaining forgiveness of sin. It must indeed be readily acknowledged, that on this, as well as on many other opinions and points of discipline existing in their day, the fathers frequently express themselves in a language little consistent with that coolness and accuracy which should always accompany polemical disquisitions. Being ignorant of any divine precept respecting *minute sacramental confession*, and *sacerdotal absolution*, as they are now understood in the church of Rome, they indulged in a laxity and ambiguity of expression, which any controversy existing at the time would have induced them to avoid. But no such controversy did exist in their day. Confession to a priest, as a *divine* and *indispensable institution*, was for many ages at most nothing more than an embryo doctrine, and never arrived at its full birth till the council of Trent, in the sixteenth century,

ushered it into the world under all its guardian sanctions and anathemas.

The parade of passages brought forward by the Rev. Gentleman from the writings of the primitive fathers, and of those who came after them, can make nothing to his purpose, unless these passages exhibit the same features which are attributed to confession by the council of Trent. Now, will any person say that such is the fact? When St. Ireneus tells us, (*App.* p. 42.) that a sinful woman, “penetrated with grief, spent her whole time in confessing and bewailing her sins, and lamenting the crime she had been led, by a magician, to commit;” can he be understood to mean any thing more than is daily done in Protestant religious assemblies? Or shall we be seriously told that her *whole time* was spent in confessing the same sins to a priest, and obtaining from him reiterated absolution? Is there in the passage quoted from Tertullian (p. 42.) the slightest allusion to auricular confession, or sacramental absolution? As a point of discipline, this writer must have entertained very rigid notions concerning the disclosure of sins, and we know that his inflexible obstinacy and severity on other subjects, often led him into heretical opinions. The quotation from Origen (p. 43.) means, only, that “if we reveal our sins not only to God, but to those who are able to heal our wounds;” that is, “to wise and devout ministers, who can apply to our wounded consciences the healing balsam of supplication and advice;” then will our sins be blotted out by Him who has said, “behold, I blot out iniquities as a cloud;” and this is evidently the meaning of the passage—(*see Orig. in psal. 37, hom. 2.*)

With respect to the passages cited from St. Cyprian, (p. 44, &c.) and other fathers of the two following ages, their meaning may be easily ascertained from a short view of church discipline prevailing at those periods. This discipline was extended gradually to private as well as to public crimes. At first, public confession was enjoined only for public offences, but when afterwards the benefits resulting from this practice became apparent, many zealous penitents, in the first fervour of their conversion, willing to obtain, for sins committed in private, the same consolatory declarations which the church pronounced on public penitents, voluntarily submitted themselves to her outward discipline, and by a confession of private sins, underwent the penances appointed for such as were public. This appears to be the case from Origen, and St. Cyprian, cited in the Appendix, from St Ambrose, (*lib. 1. de pœnit. c. 16.*) and other writers of those times. That this public confession of secret faults, however, might be attended with the greatest advantages, some prudent minister was first made acquainted with them, by whose direction the penitent might understand what sins were proper for the public notice of the church, and in what manner the penance should be performed. For this reason Origen advises, that great care should be used in choosing a skilful physician, to whom any disclosures of this kind should be made. “If he understand,” (*Orig. ibidem.*) “and foresee, that thy disease is such as ought to be declared in the assembly of the whole church, and cured there, whereby, perhaps, others may be edified, and thou thyself more easily healed; with much delibera-

tion, and by the very skilful counsel of thy physician, must this be done.”

In process of time, that is to say, soon after the persecution of the emperor Decius, the penitent was no longer at liberty to choose his spiritual director, but by the general consent of the Bishops it was ordained, that, in every church, one particular discreet minister, should be appointed to receive the confessions of such as relapsed into sin after baptism. This addition to the penitential canon, is expressly noticed by *Socrates*, in his Ecclesiastical History, (*lib. 5. c. 19.*) and was observed in the church for a considerable length of time. It was, however, finally abolished, when Nectarius was Bishop of Constantinople, about one hundred and forty years after the persecution of Decius. A woman confessed publicly a sin, in which a deacon of the church was implicated, and a load of scandal was thus cast upon the clergy, that furnished an inducement to discontinue the practice, and liberty was now allowed to every one, upon the private examination of his own conscience, to approach the Lord's table. (*Socrat. ibid.* and *Sozomen, lib. 7. histor. cap. 16.*) And thus was a rule of conduct on this subject adopted, conformable to that of the apostle—(1 Cor. xi. 28.) “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup;” and agreeable to the primitive opinion expressed by Clemens Alexandrinus, when he asserts, that “a man's own conscience is his best director in this case;” (*lib. 1. Strom.*) This abolition of confession is an important event in the history of the church, and it evidently shows that no idea of the *divine right*, and *indispensable necessity* of the sacrament of penance, then

prevailed among Christians. The fact stands emblazoned with irresistible evidence. By the advice of a priest named Eudemon, Nectarius was prevailed upon to abolish this practice: and "this," says Socrates, "I am bolder to relate, because I received it from Eudemon's own mouth." The historian Sozomen agrees with Socrates, and adds, moreover, "that in his time (that is, in the reign of Theodosius the younger) the practice was still discontinued, and that the Bishops had, in a manner, every where, followed the example of Nectarius."

I am well aware, that in order to invalidate such clear and unanswerable evidence against the unfeasible necessity and divine institution of confession, the cardinals Bellarmine, and Baronius, are compelled to question the veracity of these historians, or to contend, that they spake only of the abolition of public confession. The force of their arguments, however, will be readily acknowledged to weigh little with a Protestant, when it is known that they were disregarded by one of their own most eminent divines. The learned Suarez reasons thus on the subject: "In this manner Gratian and Baronius answer, understanding these words of public confession. But some expressions of St Chrysostom are greatly repugnant to this interpretation; by which he seems to exclude the ministry of the tongue, and to say, that confession ought to be made in thought only," as *hom.* 31. in *Epis. ad Hebræos*. "Confess your sins before God; pronounce your offences to your true Judge in prayer, not with your tongue, but from the recollection of your conscience. Wherefore this exposition appears to me probable, that Chrysostom spake of

private confession." (*Suarez in Thom. part. 3. tom. 4. disp. 17.*) As to the degree of credit due to the narrative of Socrates and Sozomen, the same learned divine delivers his opinion of it, in the following words: (*Suarez, ibidem.*) "Some answer by saying that no credit is to be given to this relation, because Sozomen wrote many falsities, and because Socrates, being a Novatian heretic, does not challenge our belief. Cæsar Baronius answers nearly in this manner; but a falsehood concerning so important, so public, and so manifest a matter, could not easily be forged. Some, therefore, acknowledge, that he (Nectarius) annulled the practice of penance." Thomas Waldensis, a divine much commended by Dr. Stapleton, was entirely of Suarez's opinion, and boldly asserts, (*tom. 2. cap. 141.*) "that Nectarius actually annulled confession."

In conformity with this alteration in church discipline, St. John Chrysostom, who was the immediate successor of Nectarius in the see of Constantinople, expounding the words of the apostle, (*1 Cor. 11.*) "Let every man examine himself," &c. writes as follows: (*hom. 28.*) "He does not bid one man to examine another, but every one himself, making the judgment private, and the trial without witnesses." And in the end of his second homily on *Fasting*, which, in some editions, is the eighth *de pœnitentia*, he exhorts in these words: "within thy conscience, none being present but God, who sees all things, enter thou into judgment, and into a search of thy sins, and passing thy whole life in review, bring thy sins into judgment in thy mind: reform thy excesses, and so with a pure conscience draw near to that sacred table,

and partake of that holy sacrifice." Still, however, he solemnly charges ministers, not to admit known offenders to the communion. (*See hom. 82. in Matth. edit. Græc. vel. 83. edit. Latin.*) From the writings of this father, and from the subsequent practice of the church, we learn that the godly and apostolic discipline of public penance, was not entirely abrogated; on the contrary, that open offenders were publicly censured, and pressed to make public confession of their sins. Nectarius, therefore, merely abolished the obligation of disclosing to a penitentiary, such sins as were of a secret nature, and by so doing exhibited an unequivocal proof of his ignorance of *sacramental, auricular* confession, as a divine and indispensable obligation. With two short observations on this subject, it shall be dismissed altogether. One is, that the form of confession used by the primitive Christians, was *canonical*; or, in other words, belonged to that external discipline of the church, which, for good reasons, might be altered; but, in no respect, *sacramental*, and of divine right. The other observation is, that this measure of Nectarius, was approved of, not only by his successor, St. Chrysostom, but by most of the Catholic bishops, whilst the Arian and other sectarian churches, as Socrates and Sozomen inform us at large, retained the former usage.

About seventy years after the innovation introduced by Nectarius, a custom began to prevail in Italy, for penitents to write down their sins, and to have them read publicly in the church. St. Leo, bishop of Rome, disapproved of this practice, and strictly forbade it. His own words on this head shall be laid before the reader, that he may be ena-

bled to judge what reference they have to *sacramental* confession and absolution; or how far the Rev. Gentleman is justified in pronouncing the “testimony of this father, at once so *pointed*, and so strong in every *point*, relating to confession as taught in the Catholic church, that none of the reformers have ever offered to give a solution.” (*App.* p. 51.)

The Latin text is before me, but I will adopt, in part, the translation furnished in the Appendix. “I forbid,” says he, “the recitation in public of the declaration, which sinners shall have made of their faults in detail, giving them in writing, because it is sufficient to discover to the priests by a private confession, the sins of which they may stand guilty; for although we should commend the great faith of those, who fear not to cover themselves with confusion before men, from a great fear of God, nevertheless, because all men’s sins are not of that kind, that they may not fear to publish such of them as require repentance, let so inconvenient a custom be removed; lest many be driven away from the remedies of repentance, while they are either ashamed or afraid to disclose their deeds unto their enemies, wherein they may be exposed to the danger of the laws. For *that* confession is sufficient which is offered first to God, and then to the priest, *who comes as an intercessor for the sins of the penitent.* (*Epist.* 30, *ad Episcopos Camp. Samnii et Piceni.*)

The Rev. Gentleman omits the last words, although he must know, that on them turns the whole controversy between us. “*Sacerdos pro delictis pœnitentium precat̄ accedit.*” “He *prays* that the sins of the penitent may be forgiven.” Without the

most distant hint at *judicial sacramental* absolution; although, indeed, the words may seem to imply absolution of a *declaratory* and *intercessional* nature, which the Protestant reformers never denied. The other passage from the same venerable father, is equally irrelevant to the present question. It speaks of *the supplications of the priests, of imposing a competent penance, and of enjoining a wholesome satisfaction on those who confessed their sins*, according to the discipline then prevalent in the church; but, of absolution, as defined by the council of Trent, not a syllable occurs. It expresses no other sentiment, but that contained in “the declaration of absolution or remission of sins,” in the beginning of the morning service of the Protestant Episcopal church, to which every Protestant, I believe, would willingly say, *Amen*.

This main support of the Romish doctrine of confession, drawn from the authority of St. Leo, and by the Rev. Gentleman deemed so conclusive, as to bid defiance to the whole body of the reformers, being thus easily removed, a review of the other passages brought forward in the Appendix from the fathers, might readily be omitted without any prejudice to the cause of truth: and if the reader will be at the pains of perusing them, he will be led principally to observe, as many divines have done, and as Dr. Samuel Johnson expresses himself in his forcible language, (Bos. Life, page 322. vol. ii.) “that it is probable, that from the acknowledged power of public censure, grew in time the practice of auricular confession. Those who dreaded the blast of public reprobation, were willing to submit themselves to the priest, by a private accusation of themselves; and to

obtain a reconciliation with the church, by a kind of clandestine absolution and invisible penance, conditions with which the priest would, in times of ignorance and corruption, easily comply, as they increased his influence, by adding the knowledge of secret sins, to that of notorious offences, and enlarged his authority by making him the sole arbiter of the terms of reconciliation. From this bondage, the reformation set us free. The minister has no longer power to press into the retirements of conscience, to torture us by interrogatories, or put himself in possession of our secrets, and of our lives. But though we have thus controlled his usurpations, his just and original power remains unimpaired; and this power consists in the *ministry* of the word, the due *administration* of the *sacraments*, and the *forgiving* or *retaining* of sins in the scriptural meaning of the words." The opinion of the learned Beatus Bhenanus, the friend of Erasmus, coincides exactly with that of Dr. Johnson. His words are these: (*Argument. in lib. Tertull. de pœnit.:*) "For no other reason have we here alleged the testimony of many writers, but that none might be surpris'd at Tertullian's silence respecting the private confession of sins, which, as far as we can conjecture, took its rise from public confession, in order that the disclosure of secret sins might also be secret. We read however, no where, that it was ever enacted as a precept." Of the manifold authorities adduced in the Appendix from the ancient fathers, not one asserts the *divine institution* and *indispensable obligation* of *sacramental confession*; and to obviate any apparent tendency of them that way, passages without number might easily be selected to prove that no such opin-

ion existed in their time. The reader may find them detailed in all Protestant polemical writers on this subject; and the very few with which he shall here be presented, will carry with them, at least, sufficient conviction to every thinking mind, that the opinions of the best divines, on this head, before the council of Trent, were various, fluctuating, and unsettled.

The passage from St. Chrysostom, which has been already mentioned, marks sufficiently the opinion of the eastern church in his day. Do not the following words of the same eminent father set this controversy at rest? "Let the inquiry and punishment of thine offences be made in thine own thoughts: let the tribunal at which thou arraignest thyself be without witness: let God alone see thee and thy confession." (*Hom. de Pœâ.*) Again, (*Hom. 31. ad Hæb. et in Ps. 59. Hom. de Pœâ. et Hom. 5. in incarn. Itemque de Lazaro.*) "I wish thee not to accuse thyself publicly, nor before others: but I wish thee to obey the Prophet, who says, *confess thy sins before God; tell thy sins to him, that he may blot them out.* If thou be ashamed to tell unto another, wherein thou hast offended, rehearse them every day in thy soul. I do not tell thee to confess them to thy fellow servant, who may upbraid thee, but tell them to God, who may cure them. I pray and beseech you, that you would more frequently confess to the eternal God, and enumerating all your trespasses, implore his forgiveness. I do not lead you into a theatre of your fellow servants, I seek not to disclose your crimes before men. Open your conscience before God, unbosom yourselves to him, lay open your wounds to him, who is the best physician, and of him humbly implore a medicine." Now, I put

it to the candour of every reader, if such can possibly be the sentiments of one who believes in the *divine right and obligation of auricular confession*? Indeed, the testimony of this father, appeared so pointed to the author of the *Glossæ on the Decretals*,* that he positively asserts, (*de Pœâ. dis. 5. in Pœâ.*) “In the Greek church, private confession of mortal sins was not necessary, this tradition having never reached the Greeks. Some maintain that forgiveness of sins may be obtained without any confession made to the church or the priest;” and he then cites Saints Ambrose, Austin, and Chrysostom as advocates for this opinion. Again, we find these words in the same place, “But that the sin of an adult person cannot be remitted without oral confession, *which is false*,” &c. These last words, *which is false*, have since been ordered to be expunged in a famous *Index Expurgatorius*.

It would be needless, after what has been said, to load these pages with counter-passages from the fathers of the four or five first centuries, directly invalidating the consequences, drawn from those which are produced in the Appendix. These were never understood as building the system of auricular confession upon a divine foundation; and the most pointed phraseology on this head, flowing either from the glowing imagination of the Greek, or the embarrassed theology, and frequently crude conceptions, of the Latin fathers, never met with more respect in subsequent

* These Decretals contain a body of canon law and decrees of the greatest authority, they having been approved by Pope Eugenius III.; and Gratian, who commented upon them, is styled, in the Lyons edition of 1518, “a most learned divine.”

ages, than was due to men whose labours, though occasionally inconsistent and erroneous,* were, nevertheless, eminently serviceable in defending and promoting gospel truth and holiness. The authority of these primitive writers made no other impression on those who followed them, than to convince them that church discipline respecting *confession* and *repentance* was subject to variation, and a point still open to discussion, without any imputation either of heresy or schism.—Could Laurence, bishop of Novaria, who flourished in the beginning of the sixth century, have believed confession to be a divine and indispensable institution when he wrote these words? “After baptism, God has appointed the remedy within thyself, he has placed remission in thine own power, that thou needest not seek a priest, when thy necessity requires; but thou thyself now, as a skilful and prompt master, mayest amend thine error within thyself, and wash away thy sin by repentance.” (*Lau. Nov. lib. Pat. Tom. vi.*) What was the opinion of Cassian, the celebrated Ascetic, when he tells us, (*Collat. 20. cap. viii.*), “If any are withheld through bashfulness from discovering their faults to men, they should be so much the more diligent and constant in opening them by supplication to God himself, whose custom is to afford assistance without the publication of men’s shame, and not to upbraid them when he pardons?” What was the opinion of St. Prosper, who lived also in the fifth century, when he asserts, “that it is a matter of indifference whether men of ecclesiastical order, detect their sins by confession, or leaving the world ignorant of them, voluntarily separate them-

* See Daillé de usu Patrum.

selves for a time, from the altar, although not in affection, yet in the execution of their ministry, and so bewail their corrupt life?" (*de Vita Contemp. lib. ii. c. 7.*) The advice of the holy abbot Paphnutius, related by Cassian, and inserted among the canons collected for the use of the English church, in the time of the Saxons, under the title *de pœa soli Deo, confitenda*, is very remarkable. His words are these: "Who is it, that can humbly say, I made my sin known unto thee, and my iniquity I have not hidden, that to this confession he may deserve to add what follows, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my heart: but if bashfulness do so draw thee back, that thou blushest to reveal them before men, cease not by continual supplication to confess them to him from whom they cannot be hidden," &c. (*Cass. Coll. xx. c. 8.*) "Tears wash away the sin which the voice is ashamed to confess," says St. Ambrose, (*Lib. x. Com. in Luc. c. 22.*), "tears confess our crime without offering violence to our bashfulness;" from which passage the Glossa upon Gratian infers, if, out of shame, a man will not confess, tears alone blot out his sin." (*Glos. de pœa dist. i. c. 2. lachrymæ.*)

In the ages which followed the irruption of the northern hordes into Christendom, when the lamp of science was nearly extinguished, and the fair features of religion greatly obscured by the prevalence of disgusting ignorance, and its offspring superstition; when, except by a chosen few, reference was seldom had to the all-sufficiency of Christ's atonement, and to an entire reliance on his full and effectual satisfaction for the remission of sins, confession and bodily austerities naturally obtained a great degree of importance from their supposed efficacy in quieting the consciences of

sinner. Accordingly, we are not surprised to meet with recommendations to confession, amounting nearly to precepts, in some of the writers and councils of the middle ages. Yet a germ of good sense and scripture knowledge, still vegetated in the church, which neither the jargon of scholastic theology, nor the cullability of the ignorant multitude, was ever able to wither. The obligation of auricular confession and sacerdotal absolution, remained for many ages a subject of altercation and doubt, nor was it till the Protestants, in the valleys of Piedmont, began to settle the doctrines of the gospel upon their scriptural foundations, that any council conceived it to be its duty or interest to pronounce definitively upon it.

It is not necessary to lead the reader through a long catalogue of writers, who lived before the councils of Lateran and Trent, as a few prominent authorities will answer the purpose of a volume, and will convince the reader that it is a real imposition on the public, to assert that throughout every age of the church, previously to these councils, uniformity of opinion existed on the obligation of *confession*.

Bede, who lived in the eighth century, would have us confess our daily and light sins one unto another, but open the uncleanness of the greater leprosy to the priest. Alcuin, who wrote shortly after, advises the "confession of all the sins that can be remembered:" but it appears from this same Alcuin, and Haymo of Halberstadt, who wrote soon after him, that "some would not confess their sins to the priest," but said, "it was sufficient for them that they did confess their sins to God alone." (*Alc. Epis. 26. Haym. in Evang. in Dom. 15. Post Pent.*) Others confessed their sins

to the priests, but not *fully*, as appears from the council of Cavaillon, held in the reign of Charlemagne. Great stress is laid on the determinations of this council, by the advocates of the sacrament of penance; but to what, in fact, do they amount? They censure, though but lightly, this *partial* confession, and then a free acknowledgment is made, that it remained still a question, whether men should confess to God, or to priests also. The words of the council are these, which may serve as a key to many other authorities from councils and scholastic writers, produced in the Appendix, with imposing prodigality. "Some say, that they ought to confess their sins to God only, and some think, that they ought to be confessed to the priests, both which practices exist, not without great fruit in the holy church; namely, thus, that we both confess our sins to God, who is the forgiver of sins, saying with David, 'I have acknowledged my sin unto thee, and my iniquity I have not hidden, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin:?' And, according to the apostle, we confess our sins to one another, and pray for one another, that we may be healed. The confession, therefore, which is made to God, purges away sin, but that which is made to the priest, teaches in what manner they should be purged away. 'For God, the author and bestower of salvation and health, sometimes gives it by the invisible administration of his power, sometimes by the operation of physicians.'" (*Con. Cavaillon, cap. 33. Anno 813.*) In the Pænitential of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, who died in 690, are found these remarkable words, "It is lawful that confession be made to God alone, if it be requisite." This document, Archbish-

op Usher tells us, he transcribed from an ancient copy in Sir Robert Cotton's library. From this Pænitential, Gratian erroneously quotes the canon above mentioned, but in doing so, he asserts that, in the eighth century, the Greeks denied the necessity of confession except to God alone, "Quidam Deo solummodo confiteri debere peccata dicunt, ut Græci." (*de Pœa. dist. 1. cap. ult.*) Whatever doctrines or discipline afterwards prevailed in the Greek church, can have no bearing on the present subject, and must render the numerous quotations of the Rev. Gentleman to press that church into his service, nugatory and useless. The opinions of theologians in the twelfth century, are thus clearly stated by the learned Gratian: "upon what authority," says he, "or upon what strength of arguments both these opinions are grounded," (viz. of the necessary or optional practice of external confession,) "I have briefly laid open. But to which of them we should rather adhere, is reserved to the judgment of the reader. For both of them have for their advocates wise and religious men." (*de Pœa. dist. 1. cap. 89.*) Such was the state of this controversy in the middle of the twelfth century, and such it continued until the council of Lateran, in 1215, riveted upon the understandings and consciences of Christians, a double yoke of unprecedented severity, by decreeing at the same time, under horrid anathemas, the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the obligation of confession.

The reader may expect, and probably also wish, that this part of the controversy might terminate here, but the range taken in the Appendix is so wide, and marked with such an air of confidence and triumph,

that not to notice it in some degree, might appear like an abandonment of truth to the glare of cumbrous and ostentatious theology. Whatever displays are made in the Appendix of the advantages of confession, of the *exhortations* of pious men to practise it, of its *benefits* to church and state, of the improbability of a *voluntary submission* to so humiliating a practice; (p. 30, 31;) of its having been adopted by *sick* and *dying persons*, by *armies*, *kings*, and *emperors*, or rather by some of *each* of these descriptions of persons, of its having been sanctioned by *miracles* and *prodigies*; (p. 68, 69;) all these add no force to arguments in support of auricular *sacramental confession*, and *judicial absolution*, unless it can be proved that such was the very confession always understood and practised in the church, and afterwards defined and commanded by the council of Trent. Now, this never was, and never can be proved. From the wholesome discipline of the primitive church, as sanctioned by the Scriptures, for the legitimate exercise of the ministerial office in the remission of sins, and reconciliation of the sinner, confession underwent many gradual alterations: it was occasionally modified, as circumstances required, or as the warm imaginations of some ecclesiastical rulers, and the interested views of others, added to its importance. Like many bodily austerities and humiliating restraints, confession began to be unduly appreciated, and in the lamentable depression of biblical knowledge and sound theology, was too often, as was observed above, made a substitute for faith in the atonement and intercession of Christ. It is among those galling fetters and grievous burthens, which a mistaken devotion has, in every religion, deemed effectual towards pro-

pitiating the offended deity,* and although a manifest perversion, is a striking evidence of the innate and universal conviction of mankind, that without some adequate satisfaction, some painful sacrifice, there can be no forgiveness of sins.† Being considered as an observance conducive to piety by men of retired and scholastic habits, it was *first* established as a point of *discipline*, and by the Lateran council enjoined as such. It had previously, indeed, been adopted by many, who venerated every institution recommended in the cloister, or practised by such as were renowned for their holiness. Supported by idle and fictitious tales, to enforce the advantages, and then the necessity of the practice, it arrived, by imperceptible gradations, to such importance, as to become an indispensable precept. Will the Rev. Gentleman deny, that this can be the rise and progress of such burthensome observances? Can he point out, for instance, the time, when the strict obligation of reciting daily the ecclesiastical office, or breviary, under the penalty of damnation, was imposed upon the Roman clergy; or will he consider it of divine appointment? Yet this is also a most burthensome task imposed upon themselves under the most awful sanctions, and frequently, it is to be feared, giving rise to a mockery of religious worship in light minds, or creating uneasiness in the consciences of the scrupulously pious.

From what has been already said, the reader I trust will feel himself authorized to conclude, that the *divine right of sacramental confession*, was unknown in

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cheu!

Quam temerè in nosmet legem sancimus iniquam?—*Horace*.

† See Magee on the Atonement, No. V.

the church before the thirteenth century. And, indeed, where was the necessity of a solemn decree by the Lateran council, if the doctrine had been previously established? However, this important fact can be placed, I think, beyond the reach of uncertainty.

Many passages from the writings of Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, and others, may be found in Protestant polemical authors, pointedly asserting, that before the council of Lateran, in 1215, the opinion of *confessing to God only* was allowed in the church; and the fear of satiating the reader with quotations, is the only motive for omitting them: one or two may suffice. "The master of the sentences," says St. Thomas, and Gratian "mentions *this* as an opinion," that is, the necessity of *confession to God alone*; "but now, after the determination of the church under Innocent III. it is to be accounted heresy." The date, therefore, of this dogma, goes no further back than the thirteenth century: and however the Rev. Gentleman may qualify as heretical all the Protestant churches of the present day, yet surely, if he credit the *angelical doctor*, he will hardly extend his denunciations to those divines who lived before the council of Lateran. (*App.* p. 69.) Nay, since that council, many orthodox Roman Catholic writers have questioned the absolute validity of its decisions; of which number are the commentator on the decretals of Gratian, Scotus, the abbot Panormitanus, Michael of Bologna, and some others, to say nothing of Erasmus, Rhenanus, cardinal Cajetan, and Richer, divines of a still more modern date. It appears from *Pere Richard's analyse des conciles*, published at Paris, with approbation of the censors, in 1772, in four volumes

quarto, that sinners were sometimes refused absolution *in the article of death*; yet were they admitted to the Eucharist *without the reconciliatory imposition of hands*, to use the words of the council of Orange in four hundred forty-one, *which is sufficient for the consolation of the dying*. And afterwards the council of Mentz, in eight hundred forty-seven, (*can. 27.*) mentions it as the discipline of that time, that criminals were to *receive the Eucharist* if they appeared truly penitent, *and had confessed their sins to God*: for, says Pere Longueval in his history of the Gallican church, (*tom. 5. p. 549.*) “they were not always allowed to confess to a priest.” Thus do modern divines of the Romish communion freely deliver the opinions of the primitive and middle ages on the subject of confession. They do not even hint that they were founded on any divine right, and indispensable necessity—and the learned Richer, after passing in review all the passages from the fathers, &c. mentioned in the Appendix, ingenuously acknowledges, that none of them relate to sacramental confession. “*Quorum patrum testimonia perperam a nonnullis ad nostram sacramentalem confessionem trahuntur.*”

With respect to the benefits of auricular confession, so much insisted on by the Rev. Gentleman, it might be readily proved that it was deemed a dangerous institution, even by the popes themselves. We find that bulls have been published by Pius IV. and Gregory XV.—“*Contra sacerdotes, qui mulieres pœnitentes in actu confessionis ad actus inhonestos provocare et allicere tentant.*” Young and pampered ecclesiastics, placed in delicate situations of this kind, cannot be always exempt from temptation: nor is the

fact to be unnoticed, that young persons of either sex, and more particularly those of a timorous and modest disposition, by the information they must acquire from their *tables of sins*, the circumstantial cautions given them against vice, and the details into which they must necessarily enter, frequently have their imaginations perplexed and tortured by unreasonable apprehensions of continual danger and mortal guilt. By investigating all the ramifications of sinful acts and propensities, they become far better acquainted with vice in all its shapes, and their minds more harassed, if not more defiled, than pious Christians of other denominations: For it is found by experience, that nothing contributes more to the progress of vice in some persons, by whom it might otherwise have never been admitted, than the knowledge that it has sometimes been actually committed. A natural aversion and shame attends the commission of certain crimes, oftentimes alone sufficient to prevent them, were it never acknowledged that such propensities had ever been indulged.

However, allowing all that is said in the Appendix relating to the advantages attending confession of sins, which advantages are often very questionable, and, unless perfectly optional, sometimes counterbalanced by much delusion and mischief; allowing that Protestant divines, and churches in general, contend earnestly for the exercise of the power left by Christ in the church for the forgiveness of sins, by declaring in his name those to be absolved who, with sincere faith and true repentance, confess and deplore their manifold sins and wickedness, (and the words cited from the great and good bishop Andrews mean no-

thing more) (*App.* p. 96.) Allowing, I say, all this, and as much more of the same strain as the Rev. Gentleman may choose, what additional weight can it add to his opinions? Will he pretend that Protestant divines, when appreciating the advantages of confession, consider it in the same light as he does, or that they ascribe to it any divine right or judicial absolution? If not, then such authorities make nothing to his purpose. The passage, indeed, which he quotes from a Mr. Bayle (p. 95.) is more exactly in point: but who *this* episcopalian doctor of the *English church* may be, the writer of this Reply has yet to learn. Surely the Rev. Gentleman cannot be so far deceived as to mistake this Mr. Bayle for the celebrated author of the *general, historical, and critical Dictionary*; if so, the English church will freely resign all her pretensions to him, and the Romish, or any other communion, is welcome to his authority. Should, however, there be possibly such a writer of the Episcopal church, or the Rev. Gentleman have mistaken his name, he must be too obscure to oppose any weight of testimony against the explicit and acknowledged doctrine of all the reformed churches.* Therefore, the *divine right and indispensable obligation of sacramental confession*, was no article of Christian faith before the thirteenth century; and all the declamation employed to establish it is a mere sophism, which the whole course of church history tends to refute. With good reason, therefore, did the learned Richer conclude, that "*inward confession is indeed of divine*

* Since writing the above, I find the passage is from Dr. Bayly, bishop of Bangor in the reign of James I. The Puritans claimed the book from which it is taken; be this as it may, his authority avails nothing against the practice of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and the meaning of her liturgy.

right, but *outward* is only of *positive* right, and subject to such alterations as the church may appoint." "Quapropter fide Catholicâ tenendum internam confessionem, et mentis mutationem esse juris divini et naturalis planè immutabilis, modum vero extrinsecum ut secreto, aut publicè peccata confiteamur omnino a prudenti Ecclesiæ dispensatione pendere; consequenterque modum hunc externum confitendi juris esse positivi, aut Ecclesiastici variabilis, sicut et ritus reliquorum sacramentorum, quos Christus reliquit Ecclesiæ moderationi."

This is nearly the general opinion of Protestants, and with an exception or two, is rational and wise; how it can be reconciled to the decrees of the council of Trent, which it is alleged to support, must be left to the ingenuity of its advocates to decide.

We say that the nature of ministerial absolution as defined by the council of Trent, and now practised in the church of Rome, appears to be repugnant to ancient usage, to the principles of common sense, and unsupported by scripture. With respect to ancient usage, what can be more conclusive than the concessions of some of the Romish divines themselves? Morinus (*De pœa. lib. 8. c. 8, 9, 10, and 20.*) acknowledges, that the *judiciary* form, *I absolve*, instead of the *deprecatory*, may *Christ absolve*, was not introduced before the eleventh or twelfth century; till which time, absolution was invariably given by prayer, as is evident from many of the ancient rituals published by this writer. We read moreover in the works of Thomas Aquinas, (*opusc. 22. cap. 5.*) that in his days a learned writer objected to the *indicative* form of absolution then used by the priest, *I absolve thee from*

all thy sins, and preferred the mode of *deprecation* and prayer; alleging that this was the opinion of Gulielmus Altisiodorensis, William of Paris, and cardinal Hugo, and that thirty years had scarcely elapsed, since all made use of this form only, “Absolutionem et remissionem tribuat tibi omnipotens Deus.” “May Almighty God give unto thee absolution and forgiveness.” The answer of Thomas Aquinas to this assertion may be seen in his small treatise “Of the form of Absolution,” which on this occasion he wrote to the general of his order. One ancient form of absolution used in the Latin church was this: “Almighty God be merciful unto thee, and forgive thee all thy sins, past, present, and to come, visible and invisible, which thou hast committed before him and his saints, which thou hast confessed, or by some negligence, or forgetfulness, or evil will, hast concealed: God deliver thee from all evil here and hereafter, preserve and confirm thee always in every good work; and Christ, the Son of the living God, bring thee unto the life which remaineth without end.” (*Confitentium ceremoniæ, Antiqu. edit. Colon. an. 1530.*) As late as the beginning of the seventeenth century, we have the opinion of Jeremiah, the patriarch of Constantinople, on this subject: “whatsoever sins,” says he, “the penitent, either from *shamefacedness*, or forgetfulness, leaves unconfessed, we pray thee, most merciful God, that those also may be pardoned unto him, and we are persuaded, that he shall receive pardon of them from God.” (*Jerem. Patr. C. P. respons. 1. ad. Tubingences, cap. 11.*)* Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure,

* Dr. Cowell, in his account of the Greek church, declares, on his personal knowledge, that confession is not required from all: although there are

speaking of the form of absolution used in their time, observe “that prayer was premised in the *optative*, and absolution added afterwards in the *indicative mood* ;” hence they conclude that the priest’s prayer obtains grace, his absolution presupposes it; that by the former he ascends unto God, and procures pardon for the fault, by the latter he descends to the sinner, and reconciles him to the church.” (*Alex. Halens. sum. part 4. quæ. 21.—Bonav. in 4 senten. dist. 18. art. 2. quæ. 1.*) “Although a man be loosed before God,” says the master of sentences, (*lib. 4. sent. dist. 18.*) “yet is he not accounted loosened in the face of the church, except by the judgment of the priest.” This loosening by the judgment of the priest, is generally considered by the fathers as nothing more than a restoration of offenders to the peace of the church, or a re-admission of them to the holy communion, and accordingly they usually express it by the terms of “bringing them to the communion ;” (*Concil Laodinan. can. 2.*) “reconciling them to, or with the communion ;” (*Conc. Eliberitan. can. 72.*) “restoring the communion to them ;” (*Ambr. de pœa. lib. 1. &c.*) “admitting them to fellowship ;” (*Cypr. epist. 53.*) “granting them peace ; &c.” (*Ibid. &c.*) Now in all these acts of discipline we never find any using the form, *I absolve thee from all thy sins*, which words, nevertheless, the council of Trent decrees to be “the form of the sacrament of penance, and in which its virtue and efficacy principally consist.” (*App. p. 12.*)

confessors appointed in the several districts ; very few in proportion to the population. Dr. Smith, in his account of the same church, represents confession as required of all, but governed in extent by the prudence of the confessing party, and according to his knowledge of his own case.

It would be a waste of labour to prosecute this subject any further in order to establish the fact, that before the councils of Lateran and Trent, neither the indispensable necessity of sacramental confession, nor the present form of absolution, nor penance as a sacrament of the Christian church, were doctrines admitted and believed among her articles of faith: they possessed not the sanction arising from all ages, all places, and all Christian churches. They were never considered as a dogma, (*“quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus,”*) which was numbered among the tenets of the Catholic church.

And, indeed, how could this practice, as defined and enjoined by the council of Trent, have been ever viewed in this light? Does not the idea of a man's sitting in judgment over the most secret sins of his fellow mortals, and pronouncing definitively and juridically upon them, effectually removing the guilt of some, or retaining that of others, shock the obvious principles of common sense, and encroach upon that inviolable privilege of concealing our thoughts, so essential to the human mind? * But, above all other considerations, how plain and explicit ought to be the terms of a commission which seems to trench upon the attributes of the Deity himself, by communicating any one of them to sinful man! It was by his incommunicable power to forgive sins, that Christ first evinced his divinity to the world; and it was from the exercise of this power that the ancient fathers drew their great argument for this fundamental truth. †

* Feeling, in some subjects, is paramount to reason. To feel that we are free, says Bishop Horsley, is the best argument to prove that we are so.

† See Irenæus, lib. v. c. 17—Tertul. contra Marcion, lib. iv. c. 10. Athan. orat. iv. contra Arian. Basil contra Eunomium. Hilary in St. Matt. &c. &c.

Now, if priests had pretended, in their days, to any thing more than a declaratory or ministerial power, this argument would not have been conclusive, for it might have been replied that Christ's power was also derived from God; that he acted in the capacity of his minister, and in his name. And if it be said that, in the exercise of this power, Christ performed many stupendous miracles, was not this the case also with many of the Romish saints, provided any credit be given to the history of their lives.

The divine prerogative of forgiving sin, as belonging to, and exercised by our Saviour, is clearly explained, and devoutly enforced by the Rev. Gentleman, (p. 108, 109.,) and must meet the assent of every Christian reader; nor will it be denied, that this power was imparted by Christ to his apostles and their successors in the ministry, in a manner best suited to the merciful plan of reconciling sinners to their offended Maker. But, like other attributes of the Deity, this also could be communicated to mortals, only in a limited and restricted sense. Christ says, indeed, to his apostles, "As my father hath sent me, even so send I you." (*John. xx. 21.*) After which words, the Rev. Gentleman (p. 109.) adds, with a hardihood of expression, at least unbecoming: "He hath sent me *to save the world*, (*John iii. 17.*,) you also shall become in some sort its saviours." The text is this: "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." If ministers also be sent for this purpose, truly the exception, *in some sort*, must qualify their mission, and it may equally apply to their delegated power of remitting or retaining sins. They have

authority to do both ; but in a qualified, limited, and improper sense, either by separating from church communion, public and impenitent offenders, and in restoring to it, such as are penitent, or by declaring and pronouncing, in general terms, that absolution and remission of sins is promised and granted by Almighty God, to all those, who, with hearty repentance and true faith, turn unto him. “ But,” says the Rev. Gentleman, “ that it should not be understood that they had to announce, or proclaim it only, or to promise it on his part, he associates them with him in this divine power. He wishes *that they themselves should remit sin* ; that they should remit it in his name and on his part ; he imparts his authority to them to save sinners. He engages himself to ratify in Heaven the sentence they shall have pronounced on earth.” (*App.* p. 109.)

The lofty strain of prerogative which runs through this and other passages of the Appendix, must excite painful, if not indignant feelings, in all who have not pinned their faith upon the council of Trent. They will naturally ask the question, Whether the guilt of sin, can, with any propriety, be said to be forgiven by any but God alone ? Can any but the Divine Lawgiver pardon the guilt attached to the violation of his laws ? Can any thing but his grace blot out the deadly stain, and restore the vitiated soul to his favour ? Can any thing short of this, raise up one who is dead in trespasses and sins, and clothe the soul in the robes of righteousness ? Is, indeed, the priest *associated with God* in the power of forgiving sin ; or is not this God’s special and incommunicable property ? A collect of the Roman church begins with these words :

“Deus, cui proprium est misereri semper et parcere,” &c. “O God, whose property it is to have mercy always, and to spare,” &c.; in other words, “to whom alone it belongs to pity and pardon repenting sinners.” The prayer which is offered up by the priest, before he pronounces the absolution, proves that the latter can only be *ministerial* and *declaratory*. After receiving the confession of the penitent, accompanied, as he conceives, with satisfactory marks of inward repentance, the priest is directed to pray for him in the following words: “*Misereatur tui,*” &c. “Almighty God have mercy upon thee, and, thy sins being forgiven, lead thee to eternal life. Amen.” “*Indulgentiam,*” &c. “The Almighty and Merciful Lord grant thee pardon, absolution, and remission of thy sins. Amen.” “*Dominus noster,*” &c. “May our Lord Jesus Christ absolve thee: and I, by his authority, absolve thee from every bond of excommunication, suspension, and interdict, as far as I am able, and thou requirest.” “*Deinde.*” “And then (or after this, after God has forgiven thee, pardoned and absolved thee from thy sins) I absolve thee from thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.” Now, who does not perceive in these short prayers, the spirit of the ancient discipline of the church, mitigated, indeed, but still retained in some measure? After removing, by a delegated authority, the penalty of excommunication from the penitent, if a layman, and of suspension, if in orders, and thus restoring him to the fellowship of the faithful, after praying that “God would grant him pardon, absolution, and remission of his sins,” with full assurance that this exercise of outward discipline is ratified, and

this prayer is heard in Heaven, for true and gospel penitents; he *then, deinde*, “absolves him from his sins, in the *name of the Holy Trinity*; that is, in this glorious name, he pronounces and declares that very absolution, for which he had previously prayed, and which was certainly granted before it was proclaimed, if granted at all. Thus the very form of absolution, prescribed in the Roman ritual, materially lowers the high and decisive tone of that ministerial act, and brings it nearly to a level with the doctrine of Calvin, above mentioned, and of other Protestant divines.

But if this be the case, it will probably be said, why have recourse to any minister at all? Why make any public or private confession of sins, in order to be assured of their forgiveness, or what benefit can arise from any kind of absolution in the sense admitted by Protestants? The answer is, because the minister of God is his delegated functionary to declare the terms of reconciliation and salvation held forth in the gospel; “for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts,” and “they should seek the law at his mouth.” (*Malac. ii. 7.*) The ministers remit sin, as the apostles did, “by the word of God, by the testimonies of the scripture, and by exhortations to virtue.” (*St. Jerom. in Isa. xiv. 17.*) They are supposed to be men of integrity, piety, and knowledge; to have studied the human heart; to be best acquainted with the motives that lead to piety, and with the preservatives against vice. They are, moreover, delegated in a special manner to assure a sinner for his comfort, that, according to their best judgment, he has complied with the conditions required by Almighty God,

and is entitled to forgiveness and pardon on the gospel terms.

And what is it, after all, that the priests of the Roman church, do more than this, when their own doctrines are fairly stated? They, indeed, pronounce penitents absolved by positive assurance, and as they say, by a *judicial* exercise of a power inherent in them: but even this is only upon the presumption of a sincere repentance, without which they allow that it is not ratified in Heaven. In the primitive church, absolution was never granted until a severe penance had actually been performed; but now it is given on a mere promise of submitting to one that is very slight; nay, is considered as valid, although this penance should not be performed at all; for were this not the case, the absolution would be only conditional. It follows, therefore, that the absolution in the Roman ritual, is in reality, like that of the Protestant churches, strictly *declaratory*, with this only difference, that Protestants acknowledge it, and Roman Catholics will not, although, according to their own principles, it cannot possibly be any thing more.

With respect, however, to this private absolution, in whatever light it be considered, it is a ministerial act of modern date, never mentioned nor hinted at in the scriptures, nor known to the primitive fathers. Whoever will read St. Augustin's letter to Macedonius, will be convinced, that in his time, public penance was never granted but once, and private absolution never at all. "La reponse de St. Augustin," (says *P. Richard*, vol. 1. p. 192.,) "prouve invinciblement, qu'ils ne connoissoient pas deux sortes de penitence, et d'absolution, l'une publique, qu'on ne reçe-

voit qu'une fois ; et l'autre secrete, à laquelle on estoit admis autant de fois que l'on tomboit dans le peché." The contrary opinion, he adds, is indefensible, (*insoutenable.*) Now, the council of Trent allows, that public confession was not commanded ; and it was, moreover, never enjoined, but for public offences of the most flagitious nature. Many others, though of a *mortal* or *deadly* nature, such as pride, detraction, anger, breach of trust, private enmity, treachery, lying, intemperance, &c., together with sinful thoughts and desires, did not exclude men from the Lord's table, if blotted out by tears, prayers, and contrition. "Three ways," says St. Augustin, (*de Sym. ad Catec. lib. i. c. 7.*) "are sins remitted in the church, by baptism, by prayer, and by submitting to the humiliation of the greater penance." No mention is here made, either directly or indirectly, of private confession and judicial *absolution*. If, then, it be an incontrovertible fact, that for more than four hundred years after Christ, there is no instance of absolution but such as was *public*, and that this was only granted for certain sins ; it evidently follows, that there were many mortal sins, of which no confession was required, and from which no *judicial* absolution was granted. This argument admits of no answer, nor has any, I believe, been ever attempted.

But the *holy œcumenic council* of Trent, as the Rev. Gentleman styles it, (p. 7.) has definitively and irrevocably fixed the meaning, decreed the necessity, and enjoined the obligation of auricular *sacramental confession*, as it is now adopted and practised in the church of Rome, and pronounced dreadful anathemas against all who presume to question its decisions. These it

grounds upon the texts which have already been considered, so that the reader may judge of their claim to his assent.

To assist his determination on so weighty a point, and to abate, if possible, the confidence on this subject, which is generally derived from the decrees of this council, it may be deemed advisable to say something respecting it in this part of our reply.

With whatever veneration and submission Roman Catholics believe themselves bound to receive the decrees of this council, they will cease to command respect, from those who know the unbecoming manner, the precipitation, in which the whole business was conducted, by the haughty legate Crescentio. The fact is, neither *caution*, nor *common consent*, nor *universal tradition*, was consulted in framing either its decrees or its canons, as appears not only from the history of Fra. Paolo, but from authentic letters of several bishops, and others, who were present at it. From these it is manifest, that it was a most confused and irregular assembly—that the presiding legates were men of consummate artifice and dissimulation, striving perpetually to sow dissention among the members;—that most of the bishops who composed the council, were men of very moderate attainments, little conversant either in theology or ecclesiastical antiquities;—that several of them were self-interested, worldly men, ever ready to stoop to the most servile flattery, with a view of being translated to more opulent sees;*—that all the prelates were much dissatisfied at the overbearing insolence of the legate, and

* The letters of several of these bishops might readily be quoted, all full of sentiments of this nature.

tired out by their long residence at Trent, as ruinous to themselves and their people;—that when a bishop advanced any thing displeasing to the legates, they first interrupted him with a degree of contemptuous petulance, which gave universal offence,* and afterwards omitted neither menaces nor entreaties to bring him over to their opinion,—that there were but seventy bishops in the whole council, who were capable of discussing any point of theology,—that the decrees, particularly those on penance and transubstantiation, were drawn up in a hurry, by a few creatures of the legate, in such terms as he thought fit, and were then presented for signing, without allowing any time for further examination,†—that the doctors of Louvain, and the divines of the Elector of Cologne, were obliged, secretly, to correct considerable mistakes which were pointed out in several of the decrees, after these good fathers had solemnly approved of them in a public session;—that although some able divines were often allowed to *speak*, yet they were little heeded; and never permitted to attend, while the doctrinal canons were drawn up;—that the council was in effect held at Rome, between which

* This was particularly the case with the bishop of Verdun, a man venerable for his piety and integrity, whom Crescentio, in the public assembly, called an *imprudent, silly, young fellow*. *Lett. Varg.* 26 November. See also the memoirs of the bishop of Orense.

† The council was not even allowed to have its own secretary and notaries, and the legates employed such only as were totally devoted to them, hence the minutes of this council, have never even been suffered to appear; and the very first edition of the council, printed at Rome by Manucius, was corrupted. See *Richer*, l. iv. p. 2. *His. Con. Gen.* In the like manner, the Roman edition of the councils, has wholly omitted the council of Basil: “which (says the same learned man) is an action worthy of the absolute monarchy of the church of Rome, determined to obtain in *fact*, what it cannot defend in *right*.” *Quod jure non potest, id viâ facti consequi*. Lib. 3. c. 7.

place and Trent messengers were constantly passing, and that they only executed at Trent the determinations of the pope;—that whenever any thing was likely to be carried against them, they secured a plurality of suffrages, by sending for a fresh supply of voters;—that whatever was proposed, the legates always began by declaring their own sentiments on the subject;—that the ambassadors of the emperor Charles V. thought so meanly of the capacities of those, who were alone admitted to vote, as to urge the necessity of consulting the universities before any question was determined;—that many of the bishops were pensioned by the pope, on the express condition of opposing that reformation of his court, so loudly called for by the whole Christian world, with the exception only of the Roman clergy:—In a word, never did Dioscorus, in the tumultuous meeting at Ephesus, behave with greater insolence than did Crescentio in the council of Trent: nor was that assembly, in fact, less free, though this was conducted with greater art and caution.

Fra. Paolo Sarpi, the theologian and counsellor of the Venetian States, a man universally esteemed by all his contemporaries, and eminently qualified for the undertaking, has left us the history of the proceedings of this council, to which Palavicini's publication has only served to add greater authority and credit. While the first has shown how much may be said against it, the latter has proved how little can be said in its favour. The history of the council of Trent by Fra. Paolo is pronounced by Dr. Johnson to be "a work unequalled for the judicious disposition of the matter, and artful texture of the narration; commend-

ed by Dr. Burnet as the completest model of historical writing; and celebrated by Mr. Wotton as equivalent to any production of antiquity; in which the reader finds ‘liberty without licentiousness, piety without hypocrisy, freedom of speech without neglect of decency, severity without rigour, and extensive learning without ostentation.’” (*John. Life of Fr. Paolo.*) Such is the history of Fra. Paolo Sarpi, which furnishes us with the disgusting sketch of the council of Trent, just presented to the reader. If it be said, that he was a secret friend to the reformation, this circumstance will probably detract from the credit of his narrative, in the opinion of Roman Catholics; but what will they object to the famous *Vargas*, who assisted at the council, and lived and died in the communion of their church? His letters, still extant, confirm the principal facts related by Fra. Paolo, and the following few extracts from them may, perhaps, induce some to pay less deference to this pretended general council of the Christian church, than they have heretofore conceived to be its due. An appeal is here made to facts related by Roman Catholic writers, with which, however, they never intended Protestants should be acquainted: but Providence has otherwise ordained it, by preserving their original letters, to bear testimony to the truth.

“The council can do nothing of itself,” says *Vargas*, in a letter to the bishop of Arras, dated November 12; “it is deprived of its authority. The legate is absolute master of it, and conducts every thing as he pleases. After this, nothing can astonish us,” &c. In another letter, addressed to the same prelate, on the 29th, we find the following very striking expres-

sions and remarks: "He," (the legate) "is lost to all shame. He seeks to intimidate us by his haughty and imperious language. He treats the bishops as so many slaves; he threatens and swears that he will leave us. The issue of the council will be such as I always foretold, unless God prevent it by a miracle—He has got through that session (the fourteenth) with a shameful and infamous reform. It will render us the fable and laughing-stock of the universe—His conduct is a dishonour to God—the bishops are offended at it. They are only detained here by repeated entreaties and solicitations—They are scandalized—All the sinews of ecclesiastical discipline are relaxed—The riches consecrated to God's service are become the objects of a scandalous traffic.—By these measures (general councils) the court of Rome will hold the universal church in subjection.—The lawsuits occasioned by these privileges (of wearing the tonsure) are a mine of gold to the court of Rome—It is lamentable to see in what manner they examine and define the doctrinal points—The legate manages all as he pleases, without either counting or weighing the suffrages of the divines and bishops.—His majesty has sent many able divines hither; and the dean and other doctors of Louvaine are men of erudition and piety; but they are not called in to give their opinions, when the doctrinal canons are drawing up.—Every body complains of this—many have little respect for such decrees.—*We have reason to think that the pope's ministers intend to erect into articles of faith many doubtful and problematical points.*—If they continue to act with the same precipitation, they will lose even the small corner of the world, which still re-

mains subject to their obedience.—The prediction of St. Paul (*cap. ii. Epis. ii. ad Thess.* concerning the falling away of the man of sin, &c.) draws near to its accomplishment in the church of Rome—Many wish that the council had never been assembled; and would to heaven it had never been thought of,” &c.

Again, he tells the bishop of Arras: “Many bishops deliver their suffrages on subjects which they do not understand, and are not even capable of comprehending.—The doctors of Louvain, and the divines of the elector of Cologne, and some others, will protest against the council, as well as the Lutherans.—We are all so many dumb dogs—The evils of the church will become incurable, and abuses will be confirmed.—God grant that that blind court may be converted.—This only serves (*les juges conservateurs*) to embroil together the two powers, ecclesiastical and civil, and to occasion the spending of much money; and therefore this abuse is confirmed, instead of being abolished,” &c. See his *Letters of November 26, December 29, and 20th and 25th January, 1552.*

Such is the account of the council given by Vargas, a man eminent in the law, who was employed at Trent by the emperor Charles V. From his writings he appears to have been a person of great integrity and erudition, an able divine and canonist,* though, from early prejudices, warmly opposed to the Reformation. He was a member of the sovereign council of Castile; was highly esteemed by Pope Pius IV.; after the conclusion of the council of Trent he filled the most important offices at Venice, at Rome, and in

* See his panegyric by Don Nicholas Antonio, from the *Bibl. Author. Hispan.*

Spain, and was finally made counsellor of state. Whatever he relates is from his personal knowledge and observations, and is confirmed by the testimony still extant of several of the Spanish bishops, and of Malvenda, a doctor of Paris. Moreover, his memoirs and letters are addressed to the famous Anthony Perennot, bishop of Arras, minister of Charles V., and afterwards archbishop of Mecklin, and of Besançon, so well known in the annals of those times, by the name of cardinal Granville. This prelate was an inveterate and cruel enemy to the Protestants: “Sa conduite imperieuse et tyrannique,” say the authors of the *Nouveau Dictionnaire Historique*, printed at Caen, “et ses cruautés contre les Protestans, qu’il faisoit bruler impitoyablement, souleverent les peuples contre lui, et il fut obligé de s’enfuir en Espagne.”—And yet, nevertheless, from his answers to Malvenda, Dom. Francis of Toledo, Vargas, and others, he seems to be fully persuaded of the truth of this honest writer’s information.*

Such being the authenticated account of the council of Trent, as stated by cotemporary writers, who, notwithstanding, by a strange inconsistency, submitted to its decrees, the Rev. Gentleman cannot be surprised, that Protestants should object to its being obtruded on them as of infallible authority; or rather, that with respect to confession, they should consider its decisions as erroneous, founded neither on scripture, ancient usage, nor tradition. They humbly

* *Lettres et Memoirs de François de Vargas, de Pierre de Malvenda, et de quelques Evêques d’Espagne traduits de l’Espagnol, &c.* Many similar passages to those above cited, with several other curious and interesting anecdotes relating to this council, may be seen in this work.

conceive, that the spirit of God could never have presided at such a meeting, in which the spirit of knowledge, meekness, honesty, and peace had so small a share. But I know it will be said, that whatever may have been the characters of the fathers of this council, its decrees being sanctioned and confirmed by the pope, and received as articles of faith by the whole Catholic church, they must be considered as stamped with the seal of infallibility, and of course must challenge the belief and assent of all the faithful. From this *infallibility of the church*, "which," he tells us, (p. 82.,) "has repeatedly and solemnly declared this truth in her general councils, and emphatically taught the same in every age," the Rev. Gentleman "draws his fourth and last argument in favour of the divine institution of confession." Had he drawn from it his *only* argument he would have saved himself much laborious investigation, and by confining the controversy to a single point, have obviated some doubts, which too circumstantial a discussion may possibly excite in the minds of his readers. The lofty plea of infallibility, once established, renders all further reasoning on the subject superfluous; and it is to be regretted, I say, that the Rev. Gentleman did not confine himself to it, as, in that case, it might have admitted of a more minute discussion, than can be afforded to it when making only one head of a short reply. The reader must be sensible, that this subject opens a most extensive field of argument, which, however, will be passed over with all possible despatch.

PART III.

Neither the council of Lateran, nor of Trent, nor any other earthly tribunal, had, or has, a right to impose such a grievous yoke as auricular confession upon the faithful, from a plea to infallibility, this plea being altogether unsupported either by Reason or Revelation.

Infallibility being the great fundamental tenet of the Roman Catholic church, by which all others are sanctioned; and in virtue of which she claims the belief of many points of faith, which, her own divines confess, would not otherwise appear evidently revealed, nor manifest from reason; one would naturally imagine, that it would be very clearly and explicitly set down in the scriptures, and that Christ and his apostles would have delivered it in the most unequivocal terms. I will produce all the principal passages, which are commonly alleged in support of this infallibility, make a few remarks on them, and then leave the candid reader to judge for himself.

The first text is, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church;" (*Matth. xvi. 18.*;) therefore she must be infallible. Here I must beg leave to observe, that many Roman Catholic divines, who have an admirable facility in discovering whatever they wish for in the Scriptures, often allege this same text to establish the primacy of St. Peter. But they might as well apply it to transubstantiation, efficacious grace, or any other doctrine. There is a great advantage in not being over delicate in the choice of arguments, and it is no difficult matter to impose upon those, who value them more for their number than their weight. This text, like many others, has been alleged, and ad-

mitted by thousands, who, from a point of conscience, or prejudice, never considered it. For my own part, I sincerely believe that, in whatever light it be admitted, it *cannot* go to prove the infallibility of the church. The obvious promise of Christ is this only —“ That no violence or persecution of men or devils shall ever succeed in destroying the Christian religion, to which he has been pleased to annex *perpetuity*.” Now, what has infallibility to do with all this? —If it be said that errors would destroy the church as effectually as violence, and that, therefore, she must be infallible in her decisions: I answer, this is very true under two exceptions, each of which, overthrows every plea to infallibility. The first is—that all errors do not destroy the church, but such only as are fundamental. The second—that without infallibility, she may always secure herself from these capital errors, by taking for her guide the light of clear Revelation and the evidence of Reason. With these two luminous principles in view, the church cannot fall into many material errors—by abandoning either she is reduced to a level with every other fallible society. The church, therefore, that is to say, the whole body of the faithful, cannot err in matters essentially connected with the essence of Christianity: but the text does not prove, in the most distant manner, that the church, besides the fundamental articles of religion, should *never* teach any others, or enforce their belief, although they be not authorized either by Reason or Revelation. And accordingly we find, that the great body of orthodox Christians, through every age, have constantly believed and professed the fundamental articles of the Christian religion contain-

ed in the Apostles' Creed, and in the decisions of the four first councils. Against these great fundamental tenets *the gates of hell will never prevail*. The enemy may sow tares, and stubble among this heavenly grain; he may build structures of straw upon this unshaken foundation. Against his wiles and encroachments, the rulers of God's Church should ever be upon their guard. It is a main point of their duty to clear away the rubbish, which the artifice of Satan, and the various passions of men, have been for ages heaping upon these foundations of truth: but they may rest secure that these foundations themselves, will never give way to any power in hell or on earth. They may be obscured by the mists of superstition and immorality, but will ever retain sufficient light to conduct every upright and pious believer, to all points of his duty, essentially connected with his eternal salvation.*

* The following illustration of this text by the late learned Mr. Grenville Sharp, and Dr. Middleton on the Greek Article, in addition to what has already been said, will evince its meaning beyond a doubt, and put at rest every controversy arising out of it.

That the Romish hierarchy has founded its pretensions to dominion chiefly on the text mentioned in the title, is well known; and not less so, in this country, that those pretensions, in all their forms, have been solidly refuted by Protestant writers of various kinds. Mr. Sharp, however, calls the attention of his readers to a point which has certainly been too much overlooked, namely, that Πέτρος, *Peter*, does not mean *a rock*, as it has been incautiously translated, but *a stone*.* Christ is the *rock* (Πέτρα) Peter (Πέτρος) is only *a little piece of a rock*, or *a stone*, that has been dug out of the rock. Thus is the dignity of Christ preserved, and Peter properly kept at a due distance from him. The passage, therefore, truly means, "Thou art Peter, (or Cephas, both meaning *a stone*,) a fragment from that sacred rock on which I will build my Church." The distinction is clearly made in the original text, "Thou art *Petros*, and upon this *Petra*, (namely, this rock, which thou hast confessed,) will I build my church."

* Πέτρα is a rock, Πέτρος a stone.

2. "Jesus Christ promised his apostles, that he would be with them to the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.) And who denies it? He is with his church by his protection, by his grace, by the lights he communicates to her, by the gifts which he confers, by the strength which he exerts in supporting her against violence and temptations. But cannot he be with her without rendering her infallible? He is with every just man; yet who would thence infer his security from every error, unless from such as might prove fatal to his integrity?—Besides, why should the presence of Christ, render the church infallible rather than impeccable? Is not vice as great an enemy to religion as error? Would not the church be equally undone by either of these evils becoming universal? Why then was it not full as necessary, to secure her against the one as the other? But dreadful experience evinces that she has been insured against neither.

Perhaps it will be said that individuals alone are guilty, but that the church, by the mouths of her ministers, detests the scandals she is compelled to tolerate: but in this respect, the same thing may be said of error, with equal truth and propriety. In this case also, individuals only are guilty; and one portion of the church, oftentimes anathematizes the other—Besides, as I remarked above, every kind of error is not destructive of religion, and the church may err in

Mr. Sharp produces the biblical expressions in which our Saviour is mentioned as a **ROCK** or a **CHIEF STONE**, and comments upon them with sagacity and judgment. He remarks, also, more clearly than we can do in this contracted space, the connexion between the words of Peter's confession and our Saviour's immediate reply to it; and in what manner it actually *excludes* the sense, which has been forced upon it by the church of Rome.

some points, without Jesus Christ ceasing to be with her ; for nothing that does not attack the essence of Christianity, can ever abolish it. While, therefore, the essentials of religion are maintained, errors in collateral doctrines will never prove fatal. It is absurd, moreover, to imagine, that the pretended infallibility of the church can secure her against error. Christ, in forming his church, did not alter the nature of man or of human societies. What they were before the establishment of Christianity, such they still are, with this only exception, that now they possess the benefit of Revelation, to serve as a rule for belief and conduct. In this Revelation, and no where else, is infallibility to be found. If, in some respects, the church may be styled infallible, she is only so in being the depository of this code of Revelation, which contains all truth without any mixture of falsehood, and in which every tenet of religion, necessary for salvation, may be easily discovered by every diligent and candid inquirer. Thus it is that Jesus Christ is with us to the end of the world, without creating any necessity for an infallible church.

3. The next passage alleged by Roman Catholic divines, is from the fourth chapter of St. Paul to the Ephesians, 11. 14, where he says, “Jesus Christ has given to his church, some to be apostles, others to be prophets, to the end that we should be no longer children who suffer themselves to be carried about by every wind of doctrine,” &c.

This text makes as little for infallibility as the other two. The question here, is not concerning any judgment of the church, but the sending of pastors and ministers to instruct the people. “For how can they

hear the word of God, unless it be preached to them; and how can it be preached but by those who are sent." (Rom. x. 14, 15.) Apostles, therefore, and prophets are necessary to bring back the people from error, to put them in the way of truth, and secure them from illusion. But is it any wise necessary that these ministers should be infallible? This is what the apostle had no idea of in the text. They have a code of doctrine and morality to follow, which is infallible, but they themselves have no pretence to this privilege. In the same manner, the church possesses the infallible scriptures, and by following them can never err. But the question is, whether this be always the case—One part of the Christian church pretends that it is so; the other that it is not: I fear it will soon be found, that those who maintain the impossibility of the church's receding from the sense of scripture, will meet with stubborn facts to thwart their pretensions. For, among Roman Catholic divines themselves, who are perpetually accusing each other of errors, and defending their respective opinions by the decisions of the church, it is absolutely necessary that some should be wrong. Wherefore, notwithstanding her infallibility, the doctors of the Roman church are divided eternally upon objects of faith. Notwithstanding her decisions, they deny, explain, and modify them as they please, or allege opposite decrees in support of their several opinions. If, therefore, the church's infallibility, be deduced from the union of her bishops and doctors, she has a slender plea, indeed, to that exalted privilege. For a union, that is, such in words and formulas only, (and it is no other,) cannot be deemed a proper union,

which consists in ascribing the same identical meaning to the words which both parties adopt.

4. With as much propriety are many other passages of scripture alleged. St. Paul writes to the Galatians, and tells them, that “if any man should announce to them any other doctrine than what he had taught them, such a person should be an anathema.” (Gal. i. 9.) The question here was concerning justification by faith, or by the works of the law; and it appears at first sight, that to preach a doctrine contrary to that delivered by St. Paul, was to re-establish Judaism upon the ruins of the gospel. Such was the prevarication which St. Paul condemned, and he had reason for doing it. Is it probable he would have passed so severe a censure upon less important articles? or did he imagine that no doctrine, contrary to his, could be preached to the Galatians? If he did, why caution them against an evil that was never to happen? The fact is, the apostle was really apprehensive of such a thing, and the more so, as St. Peter himself, by patronizing the ceremonies of the law, seemed to support a doctrine, which St. Paul so severely reprobated—Moreover, he was far from pronouncing an anathema upon an opposition to less material points, as appears evidently from his frequent exhortations to the faithful, to bear with each other in the difference of opinion which would arise among them. He knew well that, *as men*, they could not be all of a mind, and, therefore, recommended a charitable forbearance, instead of a vague infallibility. This is an invention of a later date, and was craftily adopted, when reason was deficient. Infallibility was engrafted upon the necessity of a system

which enforced opinions repugnant to common sense. But this very necessity is an argument of its weakness, if not of its falsity.

5. "Jesus Christ," they add, "commands us to regard every person, who will not hear the church, as a Heathen or a Publican." (Matt. xviii. 17.) *Therefore, the church is infallible.* St. Paul commands us to obey the *powers that are* : *Therefore, these powers are infallible.* One of these conclusions is as logical as the other ; but the truth is, the passage in question bears not the most distant relation to infallibility of any kind. It does not so much as hint at any doctrine, or decision in matter of faith. It speaks only of a reconciliation between two persons, one of whom, refuses to make the other satisfaction, notwithstanding the interposition of the church or congregation to which he belongs. In this case, he is to be cut off from the communion of the faithful, as a turbulent person : he is not to be allowed to come to the public worship or sacrament, and is to be treated as those are, who do not belong to the Christian church. Let us then respect the voice of the church, when Jesus Christ obliges us to hear her ; but let us not draw *general* conclusions from scriptural passages, which are true only in *particular* cases ; let us not convert the principles of the gospel into sources of illusion ; nor build infallibility upon texts of scripture, which afford not the least ground for such a chimera. Let us not open a door to error, by being over-solicitous to exclude it.

6. It is said, moreover, that, in proportion as heresies have arisen, the church has always adopted the language of St. Paul, to convey her threats ; and

that the fathers deliver it as a rule of faith to believe that *which has always been believed*. They were convinced, therefore, that an infallibility resided in the church, and that the profession of the true religion could never fail.

This last assertion is very certain. The fathers never believed that the profession of the true faith could be so far obscured, as to be *totally* abolished. But did they believe, that the greatest part of the church could not fall into *capital* errors, or that the true faith could not subsist together with *some* errors? This is what can never be evinced from their writings; and yet, for the above objection to be of any force, we must first allow, that the primitive fathers had the same notions as modern divines; and believed, as they do, that the profession of the true faith is incompatible with errors no wise essential; but of this they had never any idea. When they spoke of errors, they only meant such as sapped the foundations of religion; on other points they allowed themselves great latitude of opinion. I appeal to those who are well versed in their writings, and in the ancient councils, for the truth of this assertion: I ask them, moreover, whether they have ever discovered in either, that every error is damnable, and deserving of an anathema? Should *this* be said, nothing would be more easy than to refute such a position, by demonstrating that many of the most holy and orthodox prelates and doctors, were not exempt from error; while they remained worthy members of the Catholic church. It is not true, then, that all errors were thought deserving anathema in the ancient church; and it is equally false, that this ecclesiastical commination is a proof of infallibility,

unless we suppose that no anathema was ever pronounced, but by an infallible tribunal. Now, innumerable doctrines anathematized by particular councils and bishops, who can have no claim to infallibility, are so many unanswerable arguments against this supposition. From anathemas, therefore, no conclusion can be formed in favour of infallibility: especially as the church has often pronounced them, in cases where infallibility was no wise concerned, and her sole object was to maintain good order and discipline. I say, moreover, that from this position, viz: "To deliver for truth, *that* which has always been believed," is no argument of the church's infallibility, but merely points out, in case of doubt or dispute, the most obvious means of coming at the truth: for it may well be presumed, that what was believed *originally* and *generally*, ought to form the creed of the present generation. This may be styled a moral rule of conduct in the ordinary course of life, but is not, nevertheless, without its exceptions. Besides, if universal belief should establish a species of infallibility, it would not be the effect of an unerring judgment in the church, but of the moral impossibility, that an article of religion, which had always been believed and professed, without any alteration, should prove false in the end. But this cannot be deemed any special privilege; it would argue great folly, not to say infidelity, to doubt of any human fact, were it attested in this manner: not because any infallibility was requisite to transmit it to posterity, but because, with respect to facts delivered down to us, we have no rule to go by, so certain as this uniform agreement of testimony.

Let divines, therefore, cease preconizing an infalli-

bility of judgment, which never subsisted out of their own imaginations. It is the privilege of the Christian church, as it was that of the Jewish, to preserve the essential foundations of religion, and the sacred deposite whence the knowledge of them is derived. By the guidance of this deposite, and the special protection of God, she never can perish. But neither her perpetuity nor indefectibility can secure her from common mistakes, or raise her above the level of common humanity. As long as she is made up of fallible men, so long will the weaknesses, errors, and superstitions of mankind insinuate themselves into her most sacred tenets, and purest morality. But in this case she has the same resource as the Jewish synagogue had; she must refer the matter to *the law and to testimony*. (*Isa. viii. 20.*) Here only is infallibility to be found. As long as the church follows this rule she shall never err. But nothing insures her against mistake the moment she forsakes it, and takes upon her to decide upon mere probabilities, without the warrant either of evidence or revelation. For when she decides upon matters that are merely probable, whence can she derive her infallibility? It cannot be from inspiration, which, as all agree, she does not possess; nor from any fresh revelation or evidence, for then it would follow, that the doctrine delivered by Christ and his apostles was not complete. What therefore can be the principle of this infallibility? Is it the present belief? but we have seen, that this is merely a moral rule of conduct, and carries with it no greater proof of infallibility in the church, than the general belief of the existence of Julius Cæsar, confers infallibility upon the relations of history. Thus, neither rea-

son nor authority, furnishes a single argument in favour of this pretended infallibility. The most plausible supports of this system, must therefore be drawn from the practice of the church, which we will now proceed to consider.

It is said, that as often as any contest has arisen in the church, and has been determined by her decision, Catholics have always thought themselves obliged to submit. Those who refused to do so, were regarded as heretics, were cut off from the body of the faithful, and were thought to belong no more to the Christian society. Now, to have a right to excommunicate those who will not submit, the church must be secured from error in those doctrines, to which she claims our assent. Therefore, the practice of the church in exacting submission to her decrees, is a proof of her infallibility; because, without this, such a claim, under such heavy threats, would be an act of sacrilegious usurpation and tyranny. This argument is very plausible at first sight, but is, in reality, nothing more than a *begging of the question*. For, it is only in the supposition that this infallibility does exist, that the practice of the church can be alleged to evince it. Were not this the case, what would they conclude, who question this infallibility? They would say, no doubt, that the church not being infallible, as is pretended, her practice on this head, is rather an abuse that ought to be reformed, than a law of obligation; that nothing is more dangerous, and often less logical, than to argue from *matter of fact* to *matter of right*, because, the latter must first be established, before the former can possibly be an argument for its justice. Thus, when several popes presumed to enforce acts of jurisdiction

in matters merely temporal, to the prejudice of princes, they were withstood as so many usurpations, and abolished as tyrannical, and no wise competent to prescribe against *right*. It is great weakness, therefore, to urge this practice as a proof of infallibility, since nothing decisive can follow from it, till it be demonstrated to be a just and equitable practice, which I am very certain will never be done. But even supposing it to be just and allowable, it furnishes no demonstration of infallibility, nor would this follow from it as a necessary consequence: excommunication has been often employed upon very trifling occasions, where articles of faith were no wise concerned, and where both parties seemed equally in the right. Such was the case with respect to the celebration of Easter, the repetition of baptism, the marriage of the clergy, the affair of the three chapters, &c. where the excommunicating party could not surely challenge the privilege of being infallible. This act of church authority, therefore, is not grounded upon infallibility, but solely upon the right, which every community possesses, of framing laws and regulations for its own well being, and excluding every person from its society, who refuses to submit to the rules, without which such a community cannot subsist. Particular churches have frequently excommunicated each other, without the least pretence to infallibility. The eastern and western churches fulminated against each other for ages, although the contest was chiefly for pre-eminence and power. St. Gregory Nazianzen complains of their ambition in his time.

Non causa pietas, (bilis hoc exagitat ad mentiendum prona,) sed lis ob thronos, (*car. de suâ vitâ.*) Nothing,

therefore, can be less satisfactory than the argument drawn from the practice of excommunication, a penalty often inflicted without necessity and justice, frequently at the expense of reason and truth, consequently but ill calculated to demonstrate the existence of the highest privilege ever claimed by mankind.

But it will be said, that, at least, it was never deemed lawful to counteract the decisions of the church; and that after the definitive sentence was passed, no man was at liberty to contest the point any longer, but was obliged to submit. Now, this obligation could only arise from the idea of the church's infallibility, and of no appeal from her judgments being legal. There might be some weight in this argument, were it not the nature of every sovereign tribunal to admit of no appeal from its sentence, although not resting upon any infallible authority.

In every well-regulated society some supreme court of judicature must necessarily be established, in order to terminate finally those contentions among individuals which, if perpetuated, would for ever disturb the peace of the community. But are such tribunals, on this account, to be deemed infallible?—It is true, that the decisions concerning truth, do not bear a strict resemblance to those that regard our temporal interests. The first must never deviate an iota from the *apparent* light of reason or revelation—the second may be modified or relaxed as the public good requires. But in both cases the manner of judging is the same, and in both cases the decisions of men, may be equally mistaken: and accordingly we often see, when one supreme tribunal has been compelled to yield to an adverse power, its decrees have been reversed, and

others enacted, which, during the prevalence of their authors, are as binding as the first. This was the case during the famous disputes concerning the incarnation. For two hundred years the same opinions were alternately approved and condemned, as their abettors or adversaries got the upper hand. It was, therefore, thought necessary to recur to some supreme authority, in order to prevent disputes becoming perpetual. The spirit of charity, which is the very essence of religion, was greatly impaired by these dreadful quarrels; and it was judged a less dangerous expedient to decide definitively upon these several questions, than to suffer Christians to tear each other to pieces, in support of their respective opinions. But this could not deprive individuals of the right of judging for themselves in speculative matters. In these cases, reason cannot yield to human authority alone, especially when it is known, that many final decisions have been discovered at last, disagreeing with truth. This made St. Gregory Nazianzen declare, “that he was never present at an assembly of bishops, which did not increase the evils they were meant to remedy; the spirit of dispute and ambition always prevailing over the dictates of reason.” And the judicious Turretin adds, “that, if any man, having read the acts of the councils, should regard them as infallible, a physician would be the proper person to undertake his case;” “*Qui lectis conciliorum actis, ea pro errare nesciis habuerit, ad medicos abligandus est.*” But, perhaps, it will be said, that we are not to depend so securely upon the decisions of councils, as upon the subsequent consent of the church. She being the depository of tradition, cannot err in mat-

ters of faith, and, therefore, when she admits of the decrees of councils, stamps the seal of infallibility upon them. If this be the case, then are these decrees no longer infallible in themselves: the *universal* testimony of the church claiming alone this exalted privilege. And this is what Roman Catholic divines have been compelled to maintain, when they perceived the absurdity of defending the infallibility of councils. But even in this supposition, it is evident, 1. That, an actual testimony, although it be universal respecting articles of faith, as well as other matters of fact, is insufficient, unless these facts be delivered down by tradition as perpetual as it is universal. For the universal belief of any fact is no argument for its existence, unless it be related by respectable cotemporary authors, who vouch for its origin, and be transmitted down to us by an uninterrupted succession of credible witnesses. 2. This privilege is not peculiar to the church; for in matters of religion, as in all others, a perpetual, uniform, and general consent *must* challenge our belief. 3. If this pretended universal testimony be confined to any particular society, then does it become only a partial testimony, and its weight is diminished, in proportion as it becomes less uniform and general. To what, then, is this boasted uniformity reduced? To a certain society of Christians; which although, perhaps, more numerous than any other particular sect, is certainly less so than all the others collectively. This society of Christians claims for it alone the privilege of infallibility, and sets at nought, the testimony of all other churches: but, I apprehend, they ground their pretensions upon no better reasons than the Laplanders do, the preference they

give to the Christian religion—These being asked why they believed it to be best, answered, that it must necessarily be so, as the Norwegians, Muscovites, and Swedes had embraced it. (*La Moutraye Voyages, tom. iii. c. 16.*) Many divines argue in the same conclusive manner. They support their opinions by the testimony of those only who make it a point of conscience to think as they do, and, as Turretin observes, setting themselves up for judges in their own cause, pronounce themselves infallible. *Quidquid de ecclesiæ infallibilitate et juribus docent pontificii, huc tandem redit, eos judices in propria causa sedere velle.* I do not mean, however, to deny, that a universal consent, carries with it great weight, and that every wise man ought to acquiesce in it, when he cannot otherwise arrive at the intrinsic evidence of the fact. But it is not any infallibility annexed to this testimony, that challenges this assent. He believes, because, in this case, neither reason nor prudence, will suffer him to do otherwise. But how very rare is such a universal agreement? and how much more rare to find it attested through a long series of ages, especially, when neither subscriptions nor formulas were in fashion to force, if not an inward belief, yet an outward profession, from those who were too weak to oppose an overbearing majority, or too indifferent about the truths of religion, to exert themselves in her behalf? I say outward professions have frequently been forced, and these, it is evident, are of no kind of authority, *cum et ipsum nomen sententiæ pereat, quando non illud dicitur, quod sentitur,* as Facundus observes, (*lib. 12.*) Now, to allege such a consent for the truth of an opinion, is full as absurd as to argue from the gene-

ral submission of a nation to a tyrannical prince, in favour of his usurpation, which they cannot, or dare not, resist. And, indeed, may we not fairly conclude, that the assent of at least three parts out of four, among the Roman Catholics, does not proceed from conviction and knowledge of the cause; and that, in the rest, it is more the effect of education, of fear, of interest, or of a conscience easily alarmed at the idea of disobedience, which is perpetually inculcated as an enormous crime, than the result of mature deliberation and reason? Such an agreement, therefore, as this, can never be alleged as an argument for truth, without destroying every possibility of distinguishing between a false and true religion; since, by a forced submission, an involuntary obedience may pass for conviction; and since every sovereign power might compel its subjects to such an assent, whether the object of it be true or false.

Such is the obvious consequence of a submission that is exacted under the heaviest anathemas and punishments. Let every man determine what consent must be, when extorted by such methods: *Nec aliquid præstatur causæ, de qua sic fuerit judicatum, et contradicentibus multum ex hoc firmitatis accedit. Convincitur enim non recte quisque judicasse, quod, compellente alio, judicavit. (Fac. 16.)* And yet it is often upon such a submission only, such a consent, that the infallibility of the church is defended. But neither the one nor the other can have any weight, unless they be perfectly free and rational: much less, if they rest entirely upon an authority which requires a blind acquiescence, and makes it criminal to listen to any difficulty that may occur against its decrees. For it

is extremely absurd to bring any uniformity of consent, to prove the truth of a doctrine, unless this consent be grounded upon conviction: nay, I should rather conclude, that submission extorted by force and apprehension, so far from establishing the truth of any system, is an argument of its falsity; that an agreement in opinion, without a competent knowledge of the matter, is no agreement at all; or nothing more than dissimulation and deceit, unless springing from conviction. In a word, that a forced consent, being neither general nor perpetual, can determine no man to embrace an opinion, unless he have other powerful motives for doing it.

I have hitherto alleged all the common arguments for infallibility, and I think, whoever will consider them attentively, will discover them to be but slender props to so weighty a privilege. I will allow, notwithstanding, that such a system would be convenient, that it would be admirably calculated for ascertaining the truth, and quieting the anxiety of uneasy consciences, provided it had pleased the Almighty to establish it; or if experience did not show he has not done so. But the convenience of a system is a poor plea for its reality; and if this argument were sufficient to require our belief of it, new ones, for the same reason, would be daily invented, and intruded upon the public, as more convenient than the former. How wide a field would then be opened to the wild fancies of system-makers! What deviation from the simple methods, which the Almighty has adopted to establish his religion! Had He been pleased, in His wisdom, to remove every difficulty in matters of faith, and to propose them with such evidence, that the most ignorant

Christian could not possibly have been mistaken, He certainly could have done so. This system would have been at least as convenient as that of an infallible tribunal: nay, had Almighty God regarded the convenience only, He would have preferred the first; for evidence would undoubtedly have made any inquiry quite useless; whereas, the difficulties attending examination, place the belief of infallibility as much above the capacity of the simple and ignorant, as is the inquiry into any other point of doctrine. But God, in creating us to know and to love Him, has left to our understanding its privilege of investigating truth, and to our hearts their freedom in the choice of moral good. To this end, it was necessary, that man should not be influenced, beyond resistance, by the charms of virtue, or the evidence of opinions. In such a supposition, he could reap no merit from practising virtue, or adhering to truth. What I say of irresistible evidence, may be equally applied to infallibility. Had man been allowed to choose for himself, one of these preservatives against error, had certainly been adopted. But the ways of men are not the ways of God; and it would be high presumption, to expect that His wisdom should ply to our apparent convenience. Now, it is clear, from our innumerable disputes, that the Almighty has not adopted this line of evidence, and it is equally clear, from the uncertainty of our decisions, that He has not established any infallible tribunal. Such a privilege, therefore, is entirely chimerical; it has no foundation in scripture, and the history of the church gives constant evidence against it. Forced and unnatural interpretations of a few scriptural passages, first gave it birth;

and illogical inferences, instead of solid argument, have been employed to establish it. But they only are imposed upon, whom a painful discussion would cost too much; who deem it better to indulge in an indolent acquiescence in the determination of superiors, even at the hazard of being deceived, than to enter upon inquiries that might disturb ancient notions, and so bring on a painful struggle between prejudice and reason. Thus, a love of ease on the one hand, and ambition on the other, joined frequently with an indifference about religion, the convenience of system, and an appearance of humility, have sanctified an opinion, which reason rejects, and from which the church that pretends to it, reaps but trifling advantages. For, in reality, when have we discovered, that this notion of infallibility, ever silenced any disputes between religious opponents? Let us look back upon the first ages of the church, and see if her decisions, as soon as pronounced, were sufficient to awe jarring disputants to submission: yet this would have been the case, had any idea of infallibility prevailed. How many centuries passed away before men grew cool, and heresies were extinguished, even after the most solemn declarations of the church! Whoever reads the history of the Arians, the Nestorians, the Eutychians, the Monotholites, to say nothing of heretics of less notoriety, will soon perceive that infallibility had little to do in settling these disputes. The faithful throughout the world, were induced to submit, by convincing themselves gradually of the solidity of the arguments, upon which the church's decisions were grounded. When I say the faithful, I mean such as have some notion of what

they believe. For, as to those who limit themselves to words only, (and this is the case with the generality of men,) I am of opinion that *their* belief rests solely upon authority. But this proceeds not from any persuasion of such authority being infallible: for, in other Christian churches, where infallibility was never heard of, the people submit with the same docility, and pay equal deference to the voice of their pastors. In this respect, the unlettered multitude is every where the same. The ignorant man, who would be a sincere Roman Catholic at Rome, would be fully as sincere a Protestant in England; or perhaps an honest mussulman at Constantinople; acting in all places upon the same principle, *viz.* a blind obedience to his teachers, whether they lead him into truth or error. Such are the obvious consequences of a faith, the merit and excellence of which, consists in believing without ideas. A person who knows no other religion, than that which his superiors have taught him, and who is acquainted with no teachers, but such as chance has thrown in his way, believes every thing, and believes nothing; for, not having any idea of what he believes, all his religion consists in words and formulas, let him belong to what communion he may. To such, therefore, as these, infallibility can be of little service; since their belief rests solely upon the word of their pastors. And as to those who are more enlightened, this pretension would be equally unavailing, as nothing but solid reasons can command their assent. Convinced that no human authority can dispense with a rational inquiry, they can find no peace of conscience, no tranquillity of mind, but in the conviction of having done their best

to discover the truth, and the ways of salvation, by calling in to the assistance of reason, the light of revelation, by which alone they hope to be infallibly secured against error.—Wherefore, the dangerous consequences of a free inquiry, must appear greatly exaggerated to every unprejudiced mind. To no purpose are we told by Roman Catholic divines, that, without this infallibility, there can be no uniformity in belief, and that each individual will have a religion of his own: for, allowing this to be true to a certain latitude, where can be the crime of judging for ourselves in a matter where each one is personally concerned? Besides, has this pretended infallibility ever produced a uniformity of sentiment in the Roman Catholic church? Are not warm disputes and uncharitable wranglings, perpetually echoing in their schools, upon very important questions concerning *grace*, the infallibility of the pope, the supremacy of councils, the intention requisite for administering the sacraments, and a variety of other weighty and doctrinal points? Do not Molinists and Thomists, and other bodies of theologians, mutually accuse each other of material heresy? And do they not preserve an appearance of Catholicity, merely by subscribing the same formulas of words, yet reserving to themselves the liberty of interpreting them as they please? So that we may say of the Roman Catholic church, what the sage La Bruyere pronounced of a nation in general: “It professes the same worship, and has but one religion; but the truth is, it has really many; nay, almost every individual has one of his own.” (*Charac. des Esprits forts.*) Now, can it be supposed that such a uniformity as this, is either necessary, or

sufficient for salvation? If so—then religion consists in nothing but words. If not—then of what service is infallibility, which is productive only of such a uniformity as those who support this system deem insufficient? the gospel, it is true, inculcates nothing so frequently as charity and union, because nothing is so essential to the interests of religion. But it is rather a union of hearts, than a union of opinions; and St. Paul, exhorting the Philippians to adopt the sentiments with which he had endeavoured to inspire them, advises them to make a point of being united in those things with which they were acquainted: leaving them at liberty upon other matters, till God should be pleased to favour them with new lights. (Philip. iii. 15.) This is a genuine gospel regulation—this only, comes within the line of our duty, because it is agreeable to the rules of reason and justice. If we adopt this injunction, infallibility becomes useless; and uniformity of belief is a duty in those matters only, *to the knowledge of which we have already attained*. As to other articles, it is not by any means more criminal to oppose *them*, than such as are totally foreign to religion. Upon *these* we may think with others, or dissent from them, without either merit or reproach, unless other motives than a love of truth should influence our opinions. In this case, we should indeed be criminal: not because we do not adopt the creed of other people, but because we suffer ourselves to be actuated by the views of interest, fear, or other motives too base to regulate the opinions of an honest man. It would have been, doubtless, a happiness to mankind to be placed beyond the possibility of deception. But the Almighty, for wise and merci-

ful reasons, has ordered it otherwise. It is not for us to fathom the depths of His providence, but to rest contented with the knowledge He has been pleased to communicate, and not arrogate to ourselves an infallibility, which belongs properly to Him alone, and of which he does not choose to make any human society a partaker. It is our duty to pay a proper respect to the decisions of the Christian church, to revere her tribunal, and never to reason upon her ordinances but with decency and candour. But this does not deprive us of our right to discuss the justice and truth of her decrees. And in this discussion, we must observe the same rules that serve to guide us in other inquiries. Speculative truths must rest entirely upon evidence or probability; and matters of fact upon the witnesses that support them. In a word, all speculative religion consists in knowing, if what is proposed to be believed, be certain from reason, or evident from revelation; or, in other words, the certainty of an opinion must be demonstrated by argument: and the revelation of it must be demonstrated by facts. Now, I say, we may be fully convinced of the truth of either, without having recourse to any infallible authority upon earth. This system, therefore, was invented without necessity, is supported without proofs, rests upon manifest suppositions, and appears calculated solely to secure the dependence of the people, and blind submission to the rulers of the church. Neither does it follow, that by rejecting the idea of a supernatural infallibility, every doctrinal point must become dubious and unsettled. In other branches of knowledge, many truths are admitted as certain, without the interference of any living, infallible au-

thority. And, indeed, of what service would reason be to us, that precious gift of Heaven, if it were meant only to lead us astray under the guidance of a living instructor, who has no means of arriving at the truth, but such as we ourselves may employ? Were the church gifted with the light of divine inspiration, it would then be evident where her infallibility could be found. But to this she does not pretend: and builds her decisions upon *testimony* alone. She can, therefore, claim no infallibility, but such as is agreeable to the nature of *testimony*: viz. a moral presumption only resulting from it, when at any time it is universal and uncontradicted. This presumption, moreover, being nothing more than what may belong to other matters of fact, is not a special privilege of the church. It claims our assent more from motives of reason than religion, because it would be as absurd to withhold it in matters of religion only, when it is supported by circumstances that carry moral certainty with them, as it would be weak and simple, to acquiesce where these circumstances are wanted.

The only method, therefore, of arriving at the truth, is by analysis and investigation: I mean for men of learning and abilities; for, as to the common people, their faith must rest chiefly upon authority; but this authority need not be infallible. Evident and simple truths are easily believed without infallibility in their teachers, and such as consist in subtile discussions, seldom appertain to the essence of religion. It would be cruel to challenge the belief of them, from people who cannot possibly have an idea of their merits. In obscure cases, the decision of no

infallible authority is requisite, because such cases are generally unnecessary. But whether such a decision takes place or no, it cannot certainly alter the nature of truth, nor change the force of argument, that makes for or against it. What, therefore, we must do, is to bear with each other's opinions in meekness and charity. Both reason and religion abhor the idea of domineering over the belief of our neighbour. Each one has an unalienable right of thinking for himself in matters of religion, as in all others, and adopting the principles which good sense and an upright conscience suggest. And, indeed, why in religion only should this method be rejected? Does not every man believe, because he regards the object of his belief grounded upon reason? Must not even a Roman Catholic tell us, that he believes his to be the only true church, because such a belief appears to him rational and certain? If his belief be not rational, if he submit to authority, without understanding or weighing the doctrines it inculcates, his belief is not faith, it is credulity, it is weakness. A man might with equal reason be a Jew, a Mahometan, or a Deist, as they ground their principles upon an authority, whose decrees they deem sacred, and which they neglect to examine. Let the merit, therefore, of a blind submission be ever so much extolled, I will maintain, that faith cannot be meritorious unless it be rational; and it can be rational in him only, who knows and weighs the arguments that enforce it. Nay, should he be fortunate enough to hit upon truth, without such an inquiry, his faith in that case would be of little value, as he could assign no reasons for being secured from error. The knowledge, then, of

all religion, both natural and revealed, depends upon inquiry. It is the only method of arriving at truth, and every man who has his salvation at heart, ought diligently to adopt it. The grace of the Almighty will never be wanting to those who do it with sincerity and attention.

Whether they who admit this plea to infallibility, or they who reject it, would be more likely to arrive at the true meaning of the Scriptures on doctrinal points, is a question which Roman Catholic writers themselves have determined.

“ In a work (says Dr. Magee) which, within a few years, has obtained the most distinguished mark of approbation, from the highest learned society of a nation holding communion with the church of Rome, we meet with a detailed statement of those causes, which have disqualified the votaries of that church for the task of Scripture interpretation. After an enumeration of the advantages, derived to the literature and civilization of Christendom, from religious houses, as depositaries of the remains of ancient learning, the author thus proceeds:—‘ If the churchmen preserved in this manner the faint tradition of knowledge, it must, at the same time be acknowledged, that in their hands it more than once became dangerous, and was converted by its guardians to pernicious purposes. The domination of Rome, built upon a scaffolding of false historical proofs, had need of the assistance of those faithful auxiliaries, to employ on the one side their half knowledge to fascinate men’s eyes, and on the other to prevent those eyes from perceiving the truth, and from becoming enlightened by the torch of criticism. The local usurpations of

the clergy, in several places, were founded on similar claims, and had need of similar means for their preservation. It followed, therefore, both that the little knowledge permitted should be mixed with error, and that the nations should be carefully maintained in profound ignorance, favourable to superstition. Learning, as far as possible, was rendered inaccessible to the laity. The study of the ancient languages was represented as idolatrous and abominable. Above all, the reading of the holy Scriptures, that sacred inheritance of all Christians, was severely interdicted. To read the Bible, without the permission of one's superiors, was a crime: to translate it into the vulgar tongue, would have been a temerity worthy of the severest punishment. The Popes had indeed their reasons for preventing the word of Jesus Christ from reaching the people, and a direct communication from being established between the gospel and the Christian. When it becomes necessary to keep in the shade objects as conspicuous as faith and public worship, it behoved the darkness to be universal and impenetrable.' (*Villers's Essay on the Reformation of Luther*, p. 88, 90.) The same writer, in another place, thus contrasts the characters of the Protestant and Romish churches, as to their grounds of assent to sacred truths.—'The church of Rome said, 'Submit, without examination, to authority!' The Protestant church said, 'Examine, and submit only to thy own conviction.' 'The one commanded men to believe blindly: the other taught them, with the apostle, to reject the bad, and choose only that which is good.' (*Ibid.* p. 294.) And when the church of Rome was, at length, obliged, by the necessities of self-de-

fence, to grant to her faithful sons the privilege of theological investigation, in what way does the same writer represent the system of studies permitted for this purpose? The theology of the Romanist, and that of the Protestant, he describes, as ‘two worlds in opposite hemispheres, which have nothing common except the name.’—‘The Catholic theology rests (says he) on the inflexible authority of the decisions of the church, and therefore debarb the man who studies it from all free exercise of his reason. It has preserved the jargon, and all the barbarous appendages of the scholastic philosophy. We perceive in it the work of darkness of the monks of the tenth century. In short, the happiest thing which can befall him who has unfortunately learnt it, is speedily to forget it. The Protestant theology, on the contrary, rests on a system of examination, on the unlimited use of reason. The most liberal exegesis opens for it the knowledge of sacred antiquity; criticism, that of the history of the church; it regards the doctrinal part, reduced to purity and simplicity, as only the body of religion, the positive form which it requires; and it is supported by philosophy in the examination of the laws of nature, of morality, and of the relations of men to the Divine Being. Whoever wishes to be instructed in history, in classical literature, and philosophy, can choose nothing better than a course of Protestant theology.’ (*Ibid.* p. 307, 308.)—Such are the observations contained in a work, which has been distinguished by a prize, conferred by the national institute of France.

“Perhaps one of the most decisive proofs of the justice of this writer’s remarks on the state of sacred

literature in the Roman church, has been supplied by the late republication, in this country, of that wretched specimen of Scripture criticism, *Ward's Errata*. This powerless offspring of a feeble parent, which was supposed to have perished when it first saw the light above a century ago, has lately, upon signs of reanimation, been hailed in Ireland with shouts of joy. And the meagre abstract of *Gregory Martin's discovery of the manifold corruptions of the Holy Scriptures*, a work which has itself lain for two hundred years overwhelmed by confutation, has been received by the Romanists of this part of the empire, with a gratulation that might well become the darkest ages of the church. A work condemning the Protestant translation of the Bible for using the term *messenger* instead of *angel* (in *Mal.* ii. 7, iii. 1. *Mat.* xi. 10. *Luke* vii. 27, &c.) by which the character of *angel* is withdrawn from the *priesthood*, and of a *sacrament* from *orders*:—for not rendering the words (in *Hebr.* xi. 21.) προσευχεν επι το ακρον της ραβδου αυτου, as the Rhemish does, *adored the top of his rod*, and thereby surreptitiously removing one of the principal Scripture arguments for *image worship*:—for ascribing to the word פסל, in the second commandment, the meaning *graven image*, whilst the Rhemish renders it *graven thing*, which, with those who admit an *image* not to be a *thing*, will exempt *images* from the prohibition of the commandment:—for not giving to the words μετανοια, and *penitentia* the sense of *penance*, but merely assigning to them their true interpretation, *repentance*, and thus doing wilful despite to the *sacrament of penance*:—a work, I say, condemning the Protestant translations of the Bible for these, and

some other *such* errors; and in all cases *demonstrating* the error by one and the same irrefragable proof—that the Romish version is the true one, and that the Protestant version, which differs from it, must *consequently* be false—is certainly not such a one as might, in the nineteenth century, be expected to be raked up by the clergy of a widely extended communion, and exhibited triumphantly as a masterpiece of critical erudition. In the opinion of many, this miserable performance did not deserve an answer; especially as every argument which it contained had been in former times repeatedly confuted. Perhaps, however, they judged more rightly, who thought, that even the weakest reasonings should be exposed, lest they might be imagined to be strong, and that even the most hackneyed arguments should be replied to, lest they might be conceived to be new. Accordingly, this work received an answer from Dr. Ryan, whose zealous exertions in the cause of religious truth are well known, and is about to receive another from the reverend Richard Grier, of Middletown. These gentlemen, at all events, display courage in their enterprise, since the author whom they attack, backed by the whole council of Trent, has pronounced, that whosoever shall not receive the books of Scripture, *as they are read in the Catholic (Romish) church, and as they are in the Vulgate Latin edition, shall be ACCURSED.* (*Errata*, p. 37.)

“How little the orthodox member of the *Romish* church is, at this day, to expect serious consideration in the walks of serious criticism, may be inferred from the description given of him by a doctor of his own communion. ‘The vulgar papist rests his faith

on the supposed infallibility of his church, although he knows not where that infallibility is lodged, nor in what it properly consists : it is to him a general, vague, indefinite idea, which he never thinks of analysing. He reads in his catechism, or is told by his catechist, that *the church cannot err in what she teaches* : and then he is told, that this unerring church is composed only of those who hold communion with the Bishop of Rome, and precisely believe as he, and the Bishops who are in communion with him, believe. From that moment reason is set aside ; authority usurps its place, and implicit faith is the necessary consequence. He dares not even advance to the first step of Des Cartes's logic ; he dares not doubt : for in his table of sins, which he is obliged to confess, he finds *doubting in matters of faith* to be a grievous crime.' Such is Dr. Geddes's account of him whom he is pleased to call the *vulgar papist* ; under which title he in truth means to include, all who are sincere votaries of the church of Rome, and whom that church would acknowledge as such : in other words, he means by this term to designate all who are actually within the pale of Popery.

“ And let it not be supposed that this is the testimony of an enemy in the disguise of a friend ; and that the author, whilst he assumed the name of *Catholic*, was influenced by the feelings of a Protestant. On the contrary, it is manifest from the following passage that his mind remained under the powerful influence of Romish impression, and that he continued still a partisan of that faith whose errors he affected to decry. ‘ For,’ says he, ‘ is the faith of the vulgar Protestant better founded ? He rests it on a book

called the Holy Bible, which he believes to be the infallible word of God.'—And thus he pronounces the faith of the Protestant and of the Papist to be alike implicit and alike unfounded. 'If the instructor of the Protestant be asked how he knows that the book which he puts into the hand of his catechumen is the infallible word of God; he cannot, like the *priest*, appeal to an unerring church; he acknowledges no such guide: and *yet it is hard to conceive what other better argument he can use.*' He goes on even to pronounce, that 'in the Popish controversy, the Romanists have, on this point, the better side of the question; called, by some of their controversialists, *the question of questions.*' And in what way does their superiority appear upon this question of questions? By 'its never having been satisfactorily solved by the Romanists themselves: they having always reasoned in what is termed a vicious circle; *proving the infallibility of the church from the authority of Scripture, and the authority of Scripture from the church's infallibility.*' (*Preface to Critical Remarks*, p. 5.) 'This must undoubtedly have given the Romanists *the better side of the question*; for what Protestant logician could successfully reply to such an argument? But the reader must be wearied of this fatuity."

Much reasoning is expended, to no purpose, by the Rev. Gentleman (*Append.* p. 86,) in proving the perpetual visibility of the Christian church. Can he be ignorant, or does he wish to mislead his readers with the idea, that this visibility is denied by Protestants?—No; the church, they contend, has been always visible. Her features, indeed, have at some periods been clouded with the mists of error, superstition,

and folly; while at others they have displayed, in heavenly effulgence, all the beauty of holiness. "This church," says the Rev. Gentleman, "always discoverable," &c. (*Append.* p. 89.) "cannot cease to be the true church." And who denies it? "Therefore, we must conclude, at the same time, cannot teach errors contrary to faith. Here is a very short and simple reasoning, but which terminates at once all controversies on matters of religion; and, until it be answered, (which will never be done with any success,) we have a right always to refuse, if we please, to enter upon the discussion of any particular article." (*Append. ibid.*) He then concludes: "The church of Christ cannot err in matters of faith, therefore all her decisions are true, all her doctrine the true faith of Christ; therefore confession of sins, taught by the same church, to have been instituted by Christ, and to be necessary to salvation, was, indeed, instituted by Christ, and is indeed necessary to salvation." (*Ibidem.*)

Here is the Sampson of all the Rev. Gentleman's arguments, bearing him in triumph through every difficulty, and scattering all opposition like dust before the wind! But what will be said to this simple position? Every Christian church, and the Roman among the rest, *has* taught erroneous doctrines; therefore, they *can* teach them: "*ab actu ad potentiam*" is sound logical reasoning. In the foregoing pages this has been proved respecting auricular confession, and therefore, in the words of the Rev. Gentleman, *terminates at once all controversy* respecting the infallibility of his church.

But, it is said, (*ibidem,*) "if the church should at any time teach errors *contrary* to faith, she would cease from that instant to be the true church." Agreed—

if such errors subvert the foundations of the Christian religion, as revealed in the Scriptures. Errors, however, of this description, never infected the whole body of the church: they were either unknown to antiquity, or, when beginning to appear, were reprobated, and resisted. This might readily be proved of every doctrine which Protestants deem erroneous; and when at length the profligate abuses, and degrading tyranny of the Roman church were carried to excesses no longer to be tolerated, the reformers of the sixteenth century, treading in the footsteps of many illustrious predecessors, justified their separation, not by alleging that the foundations of Christianity were demolished, but that so much *hay* and *stubble* had been heaped upon them, as to render further communion with a church which refused to remove them, incompatible with Christian sincerity and worship. The great mistake of the Rev. Gentleman, consists in confounding the *Roman* with the *Catholic* church, in applying to the former the promises meant only for the latter. Against *this* the gates of hell were never to prevail, either by overturning the foundations of religion, or preventing its doctrines being preached to all nations. As long as the church of Rome taught nothing inconsistent with these fundamental doctrines, so long was she a sound member of the Catholic church: and when, in latter ages, she engrafted upon Scriptural doctrines such unwarrantable innovations, as occasioned many individuals and societies to secede from her communion, she continued still to be a member of the Christian church; but amalgamating with the doctrines essential to salvation, a heterogeneous compound of scholastic subtleties, burthensome ob-

servances, and superstitious practices, as terms of communion, she obscured the divine simplicity of the gospel, she perplexed the consciences of Christians with articles which the ignorant could not comprehend, nor the learned explain. As far as this was the case, the church of Rome must drop her plea to infallibility; and that it has frequently been the case, and is so at this day, history, and the known articles of her faith, sufficiently testify. But as far as she adopts, in common with the Protestant churches, the same profession of faith as expressed in the apostles' creed, and the fundamental articles of religion essentially connected with and emanating from it, so far would Protestants be disposed to cultivate with her a *unity of spirit* and *bond of peace*, and excite a holy emulation for righteousness of life. By acknowledging a liability to error, and adhering steadfastly and exclusively to the plain and obvious doctrines of the gospel; Christian morality, practical piety, and solid devotion, would attract much of that attention which is now wasted upon points of minor importance. "We have constantly seen," (says Dr. Milner, *Ch. Histor.* vol. 4, p. 208,) "in the course of this history, that the holiness of heart and life, which real Christians have evidenced from age to age, was always connected with the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. Sometimes one of these doctrines, and sometimes another, constituted the prominent feature of their profession; but it is in vain to look for men of real holiness and virtue, who were inimical, or even indifferent to the fundamentals of the gospel."

These fundamental doctrines of salvation are clearly and explicitly revealed in the Bible, which

speaks a language full as intelligible as that of any Pope or council can be. This book is the religion of Protestants, and affords the greatest security that can be given in the present state of things. It is the word of God himself, and acknowledged as such by all Christian churches. Nay, Roman Catholics themselves consider it, on some occasions, as a sufficient guide to truth; for why else do they appeal to it to prove the infallible authority of their church, and indeed almost every other tenet of their faith? Why does the Rev. Gentleman appeal to its testimony in favour of sacramental confession? And have not Protestants an equal right to this unerring testimony upon points much more clearly delivered? An attentive reader of the New Testament will hardly be persuaded, that the doctrines of transubstantiation, of the Pope's supremacy, of auricular confession, or of infallibility, are as clearly delivered there, as are, for instance, the precept of eating bread and drinking wine, in commemoration of Christ's death and passion, and the express command of receiving this sacrament in both kinds? He will hardly be persuaded that the metaphysical subtleties in favour of infallibility can counterbalance the arguments against certain doctrines, which set all our senses at defiance, and break in upon the most secret recesses of our bosoms. In a word, he will more readily acquiesce in the position, that the same body cannot exist in many different places at the same time; that the sensible accidents of bodies cannot exist without their appropriate substances; that a stupendous miracle is not performed at the celebration of every mass: than in

the evidence for infallibility which is collected from the Scriptures.

The doctrine of a tribunal upon earth, which cannot err in its decisions, appears to be inconsistent with our nature, as rational beings. Were it possible it might, indeed, prevent all error; because where no judgment is formed, there is no mistake. In this case, however, our faculties must be altered; for as they now are, no infallible teacher could destroy our freedom of thought. We must judge at least of his authority to teach us, and whether what he teaches be conformable to reason. This is the guide which must finally direct us. Whether God himself vouchsafe to speak to us, or manifest his will by an inspired messenger, we must still be determined by our reason with respect to what he requires of us to do or to believe: so true it is, that nothing can supersede the exercise of our judgment; although, when once convinced that God has spoken, it becomes our duty to obey without hesitation or doubt.

As our belief, then, must arise from conviction, the course of argument, in all our inquiries, is this: "It is revealed, therefore we must believe it," and not, "The church has taught it; therefore it must be revealed." From a proper appeal to sense and reason, from the motives of credibility, we first convince ourselves that the Scriptures are inspired by Almighty God, and consequently possess a plenary authority: we then believe the doctrines which they contain, because they are revealed. But the method of reasoning adopted by Roman Catholics moves on a different plan. They admit, with other Christians, that the Scriptures are revealed: and then they tell us, that these Scriptures

teach the infallibility of their church. In proof of this, they cite a few obscure and controverted passages, the most forcible of which are so very inconclusive, that unless their church had pronounced them to be plain and obvious, it would never have entered into the head of any man to rest so important a doctrine upon such questionable evidence.

Moreover, if men could be certain of the truth of Christianity, when it was first embraced, without any appeal to a living, infallible judge, they can surely be equally so of any of its doctrines. Whatever is evident from the common principles of reason, is sufficiently certain; to be *infallibly* so, is not necessary to salvation. The mercies of God will be extended to the infirmities of our understanding, as well as to those of our will. To be scriptural and acceptable, our faith must be an act of both; and therefore its evidence cannot be irresistible.

Another inconvenience seems also to flow from the doctrine of infallibility; which is, its tendency to throw mankind into skepticism and infidelity. For, when a person has, from his infancy, been taught the necessity of such a guide, and yet is unable, from argument or Scripture, to persuade himself of its existence; this unhappy conflict naturally inclines him to universal doubt. It creates an indifference to all religion, and leads him to ascribe every religious system on earth, rather to human policy, than to any revelation from above. When taught to believe that the doctrines of auricular confession, of the invocation of saints, transubstantiation, &c. rest on the same authority as the divinity of Christ, as the fall of man, and his recovery through a Redeemer, he discards at once

the whole motley system, without allowing himself to examine the respective claims of these doctrines to his assent, or investigating the authority which sanctions them all alike. To affirm, therefore, that the evidences in favour of several discriminating doctrines of the Roman church, are of equal weight with those, which are offered for the truth of Christianity itself, is an assertion deserving the severest censure, and involving consequences destructive both to morals and faith.

The pretence of tracing up the Roman church to the times of the apostles, is grounded on mere sophistry, which it is not the business of this reply to examine. The succession which Roman Catholics thus unfairly ascribe to their church, belongs to every other, and exclusively to none. But that portion of the Christian church is surely best entitled to this claim, which teaches, in the greatest purity, the doctrines of the apostles. The Roman church affirms, that she has succeeded to the apostles, and, therefore, is infallible. Protestants show that many of her doctrines are unscriptural and novel, and that, therefore, she is not so. Let any candid person pronounce, which of these two arguments is fairest and most conclusive. “They have not the inheritance of Peter,” (*says St. Ambrose, lib. 1, de pan.*) “who have not Peter’s faith.”

If it be urged, that without an infallible guide there can be no unity in faith, nothing but universal anarchy and confusion, let its advocates show, that this tenet has always prevented heresy and schism: let them show, that fewer dissensions have arisen in the bosom of the Roman church than among the adherents

to the Westminster confession of faith, or to the articles of the English church. It will be found, that since the first ebullitions of intemperate zeal, which took place at the period of the reformation, occasioned by the natural incapacity of the human mind to bear the sudden effulgence of truth after a long series of tyranny and delusion, have settled down into regular systems of faith, and bodies of discipline in the Protestant churches, fewer instances have occurred among them of destructive heresies, and desolating contentions, than during an equal period of time disturbed the peace of Christendom.

We may observe further, that the boasted uniformity of the Roman church is a mere fiction, amounting in fact to nothing more than this, that all who believe as she does, are of her religion: for when any persons are pointed out, however virtuous and learned, who have at any time dissented from her doctrines, the answer is, that such persons could not be deemed Roman Catholics. This is a palpable evasion: as no one ever doubted, but that when she has excommunicated all who dissent from her decrees, those who remain in her communion must be of her religion.

The disagreements among Protestant communities are neither very numerous nor very important, nor do they spring from any want of an infallible guide. It is neither the obscurity of the written law that divides them, nor the infallibility of their church, which keeps Roman Catholics united. This pretended unity arises chiefly from the rigorous strength of her external policy: and however the sentiments of her adherents may differ, as they frequently do, yet they continue to hold the same language, because they dare

not hold any other. Not only an expression, but a voluntary doubt, incurs the severest penalties of their church. An apparent uniformity of worship and language, upheld by measures thus violent, is much more calculated to make men hypocrites, than to cement them together, either in the bonds of the same sincere belief, or of cordial affection and reciprocal kindness. It is the fear of being considered as heretics and unbelievers, the severity of church discipline, the ignorance in which Roman Catholics are educated with respect to the doctrines of Protestants, and the motives of their dissent; but above all, it is the certainty, in case they abandon their communion, of never being cordially forgiven by those with whom they were most intimately connected, by the ties both of nature and friendship, which detains many in their church, rather than any sincere and rational conviction of the superiority of their belief to that of their neighbours.

The reader will probably be now induced to acknowledge, that slender indeed are the pretensions to infallibility, on which the Rev. Gentleman builds the sacrament of *auricular confession*, and that he would have acted more prudently by confining himself entirely to the Scriptures; but the few equivocal and doubtful passages which he discovers there would not have answered his purpose. An overwhelming authority was necessary to establish a point, which seems an outrage to the sense and independence of man. But neither is such authority as we have seen, nor an obligation to resort to it, to be found in the oracles of God. These alone, independently of the interpretations of fallible men, constitute the rule

and limits of a Christian's belief. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, for our instruction." (*Rom. xv. 4.*) "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (*2 Tim. iii. 16.*) "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think, ye have eternal life."

On this solid ground the Protestant plants the standard of his faith. This is his rallying point amidst the contentions of theologians, the bulls of popes, and the decrees of councils, which have so frequently obscured, so seldom elucidated the doctrines of the gospel. A few passages from the ancient fathers will show what was their opinion on the subject, and if some of a contrary tendency should be alleged, it will only prove that their notions of a *rule of faith* were very vague and unsettled, and by no means in unison with those who conceive that in tradition and the church, they possess an additional rule to that held forth in the Scriptures.

The opinions of some of the ancient fathers concerning Scripture, as a rule of faith.

"The apostles preached the gospel, but afterwards delivered it to us in the Scriptures to be the foundation and pillar of our faith."—*St. Irenæus adv. hæreses, lib. iii. cap. 1.*

"I do not follow men, or human doctrines, but I follow God, and what he taught."—*Justinus Martyr in collo. cum Trypone.*

"The holy and divinely inspired Scriptures suffice

for our instruction in all truth.”—*St. Athan. contra Gentes.*

“Cannot God speak distinctly, who created our understanding, our voice, and our tongue? Yes, his divine Providence chose that divine things should be void of obscurity, that all might understand those things which he spoke to all men.”—*Lactantius lib. Institu. 6. cap. 21.*

“For as the holy evangelist himself testifies, our Lord said and did many things which are not written; but those things were selected to be written, which appeared sufficient for the salvation of the faithful.”—*St. Augustinus super Joan. cap. 11. tract. 49.*

“What more shall I teach you, than what we read in the apostle? for the holy Scripture fixes the rule of our doctrine, lest we presume to be wise beyond what is proper.”—*Idem de bono viduitatis cap. 1.*

“Those things which the Scripture plainly contains, it speaks without disguise, like a familiar friend, to the heart of the learned and unlearned.”—*Idem Epist. 3.*

“Among those things which are plainly set down in Scripture, all those things are to be found, which comprehend faith and good morals, viz. hope and charity.”—*Idem de doct. Christ. l. 2. cap. 9.*

Rem. Can any reasonable man imagine, that St. Augustine would have spoken in this manner if it had been an article of his faith, that *Scripture is not a sufficient rule of our belief?*

“All things which our Lord did are not written, but only what the writers thought sufficient for our morals and faith.”—*St. Cyrill. lib. 12, in Joan.*

“Without the authority of the holy Scriptures, lo-

quacity has no credit.”—*St. Hieronymus in Titum cap. 1.*

“The doctrine of the Holy Ghost is that which is delivered in the canonical books, against which, if the councils should make any decree, I deem it impious.”—*Idem in Gallatas.*

“Whatever has no authority from the Scriptures, is despised as easily as it is alleged.”—*Idem in 23 cap. Math.*

“Let us not hear any more of these expressions, *I say so and so, and you say so and so, but rather thus says our Lord.* We have his books, which both of us profess to believe: there let us seek for the church, there let us discuss our pretensions. Again; Let every argument be suppressed, which we allege against each other, if it be drawn from any source but the canonical books. Perhaps somebody will ask, why do you wish such arguments to be suppressed? Because I am unwilling that the holy church should be demonstrated by human documents, but by the divine oracles. Wherefore, in the holy canonical Scriptures, let us seek for the church. (*Ct. cap. 6.*) Read us this from the psalms, from the law, from the prophets, from the gospel, read it from the epistles of the apostles, and then let us believe it. *Again, (cap. 16.)* Let them demonstrate their church if they can; not in the discourses and reports of the Africans, not in the councils of their bishops, not in the letters of obscure disputants, not in fallacious signs and prodigies, against which we are warned and prepared by the word of our Lord: but in the code of the law, in the predictions of the prophets, in the songs of the psalms, in the words of the Shepherd

himself, in the preaching and labours of the evangelists, that is, in all the canonical authorities of the holy books. *Again*: Let him not say *this is true*, because this or that person has wrought such and such miracles, or because some are heard who pray at the monuments (*ad memorias*) of the martyrs, or because such and such things happen there, or because he or she has seen such a vision whilst awake, or dreamed of it whilst asleep. Away with these fictions of lying men or prodigies of deceitful spirits! And (*cap. 20.*) Insist on their showing you some manifest testimonies from the canonical books. Remember that it is the saying of our Lord, *they have Moses and the prophets.*—*St. Aug. de unitate Ecclæ. cap. 3.*

Rem. What unprejudiced man can read these passages, and yet continue to believe that St. Augustine maintained, as Roman Catholics now do, that besides the Scriptures, there is another rule and ground of faith, of equal authority with them; viz. *unwritten tradition*? Where would a man have found in any part of the Scripture, that the church of Rome is the *mother and mistress of all churches, out of which no salvation can be obtained*; or that the Pope is by divine right the visible head of the Christian church, &c. &c. &c.

“If God be faithful in all his sayings, and all his commandments be righteous, it is a manifest apostacy from faith, and sin of pride, either to reject any of those things that are written, or to introduce any thing that is not written.”—*St. Basil. in serm. de conf. fidei.*

“Wherefore, let the divinely inspired Scripture be

appointed our umpire ; and let those be allowed to profess the truth, whose doctrines shall be found agreeing with the Scriptures ; (sermonibus divinis.)"—*Idem. Epist. 80.*

“ If any thing is alleged without the authority of Scripture, then the minds of the audience halt. But when the testimony of the divine word is produced from the Scripture, it confirms the discourse of the speaker and the mind of the hearer.”—*St. Chrys. in Psal. 95.*

“ Let us not attend to the opinions of the many, but let us inquire into the things themselves. For it is absurd, while we will not trust other people in pecuniary matters, but choose to count and calculate our money ourselves, that in affairs of much greater consequence we should implicitly follow the opinions of others ; especially as we are possessed of the most exact and perfect rule and measure, by which we may square and regulate our inquiries, viz. the regulations of the divine laws. Wherefore, I could wish that all of you would abandon what this or that man asserts for truth, and that you would investigate all these things in the Scriptures.”—*Idem in 2 ad. Corinth. hom. 13.*

Rem. How a learned and holy doctor could write this passage, and yet regard the doctrine of private judgment as *heretical*, is a paradox which, I fancy, can never be cleared up.

“ It is right that you should rest satisfied with those things only that are written ; and, (*lib. 7.*) no other discourse is left for the treatises of men upon divine subjects, except the word of God.”—*St. Hilarius, lib. 3. de Trinitate.*

“We stand in need of no curiosity since Jesus Christ, nor of any inquiry since the gospel.”—*Tertull. lib. de proscrip. Hæret.*

“We receive, acknowledge, and venerate all things delivered down to us by the law, the prophets, the apostles, and the evangelists, but besides these we seek for nothing else.”—*St. Joan. Damas. de fide Ortho. l. 1. c. 1.*

“The holy Scripture surpasses all science and doctrine. It is not therefore shut up, that it may frighten us, nor open, that it may become contemptible; but the tediousness of it goes off by use, and the more it is meditated upon, the more it is beloved.”—*St. Greg. in Moral.*

“What is there, either deficient or obscure? In the word of God all things are full and perfect, as coming from a full and perfect being.”—*St. Hilarius, lib. 2. de Trinitate.*

“All things are clear and perspicuous, and nothing contradictory is to be found in the Scripture.”—*St. Epiph. contra Noetianos hores. 57.*

“The Scripture expounds itself, and does not suffer the reader to err.”—*St. Chrysos. hom. 12, in Genesim.*

“Nor is it proper to assert any thing without witnesses, or from fancy only. For when any affirmation is not drawn from Scripture, the mind is in suspense, now it assents, the next moment it is dubious, now it rejects the frivolous assertion, and now again admits it as probable. But when the testimony of the divine word is produced from the Scriptures, it fixes both the discourse of the speaker, and the mind of the hearer.”—*Idem in Psalm 95.*

“Whence have you that tradition? comes it from

the authority of the Lord, and the gospel, or from the epistles of the apostles? for God testifies that we are to do those things that are written, &c. If it be commanded in the gospel, or contained in the epistles or acts of the apostles, then let us observe it as a divine and holy tradition.”—*St. Cyprianus, Epist. 74.*

Rem. This passage and some others of St. Cyprian are so very explicit, that Mr. Rushworth, a Roman Catholic controvertist of the last century, is compelled to acknowledge, that this father *seems to think that the resolution of faith was to be made into Scripture, and not into tradition.* (Dial. 3. sect. 13.)

“Of those things that are in use among us, relating either to doctrine or practice, some are expressly delivered in the Scriptures, and others omitted. What are written must by no means be overlooked, but as to what are omitted, we have a rule delivered to us by St. Paul: *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.*”—*St. Basil in reg. brevior. 1.*

Such being the notions of some of the most eminent among the primitive fathers, we cannot wonder at their zeal and eagerness in exhorting all Christians, of every sex and condition, to the unremitting reading and study of the Scriptures. Every reader, who is the least conversant in their writings, must be convinced of this fact. How different was the conduct of Christian teachers in the succeeding ages? During the middle centuries, those lamentable eras of astonishing ignorance, few of the laity being able to read at all, the greater part were of consequence totally excluded from the benefits arising from the meditation of the holy Scriptures, and the others were taught that the divine writings were not composed for

the use of the multitude, and that therefore they ought not to be permitted to read them. And as for the explanations with which their teachers favoured them, they were such as could contribute very little to their knowledge or improvement. Let any reasonable person peruse the commentators of the Roman Catholic church even down to the seventeenth century, and let him candidly assert what benefit or information he derived, in general, from such a perusal. Will he not acknowledge, that instead of the plain, obvious, genuine and literal sense of the Scriptures, he was chiefly amused with strained interpretations, with *allegorical*, *tropological* and *anagogical* significations, which superstition and ignorance first invented, and then made sacred?

Before we dismiss this subject, and take a final leave of the Rev. Gentleman and the Catholic Question together, it may not be amiss to notice the passport, which has been adopted to recommend it to the notice and patronage of the public. By a long and tremendous catalogue of penal laws enacted against the Roman Catholics of England and Ireland, the present hostile antipathies of the country were to be kindled into a fiercer flame; public compassion was to be excited for a persecuted sect, and its doctrines thus sheltered under the mantle of pity, and recommended by the horrors of oppression, were to experience a more ready and indulgent reception. It was calculated that the minds of Protestants, softened by these enormities, would be better disposed to receive the impressions which the bold display of unfounded doctrines in the Appendix was intended to make. But slender, indeed, must be the information of those, who

can be imposed upon by such an artifice. Can the Rev. Gentleman or his learned counsellors be ignorant, or presume that any intelligent reader is ignorant of the history of these statutes, and the policy which enacted them? Are they unacquainted with the bulls of popes and decrees of councils, which provoked them? Will they contend, that when they were made, a Protestant state or church could have subsisted without them? At present, indeed, the thunders of the Vatican are a mere *brutum fulmen, a telum imbelle sine ictu*. But they were not always so, and the co-existing spirit of the times must be taken into the account, when we would determine respecting these laws.

Having thrown off the papal yoke, and embraced the doctrines of the reformation, it was incumbent upon the British parliament to protect the independence of the nation against all the intrigues and attacks of the adherents and emissaries of Rome. Now, how could this be done but by penal statutes? The doctrine of religious persecution, previously to the reformation, had been so unquestionably the doctrine of the Romish church, that for some ages, we do not meet with a divine of any eminence, except Thomas Aquinas, who was not a zealous advocate for it. Neither has this antichristian tenet to this day been renounced by the see of Rome. The celebrated Bossuet says expressly, "that heretics and schismatics are no where *excepted* out of the number of those *evil doers*, against whom, St. Peter tells us, God has armed Christian princes." (1 *Pet.* ii. 14.) And in another place, writing against Jurieu, he places the advocates for *religious toleration* on the list of heretics.

The bull of pope Pius V. published in 1569, against queen Elizabeth, entitled "The declaratory sentence of the most holy lord Pius V. against Elizabeth, the pretended queen of England, and *the heretics adhering to her,*" and that of pope Sixtus V. in 1587, by which he bestows her kingdoms on the first that should seize them, were surely sufficient to rouse the British parliament, to enact and execute the severest statutes to obviate their baneful influence upon the peace of the nation. What will be said of the bull of Gregory XIII. May 13, 1580, which is directed "To all and singular archbishops and other prelates, princes, &c. and people of the kingdom of Ireland," and grants to all the Irish who would join the rebellion of the Fitzgeralds of Desmond, and fight against queen Elizabeth, the same plenary pardon and remission of all their sins, which is granted to those engaged in a holy war against the Turks? What of that published by Clement VIII. in 1600, exhorting the Irish nation to join unanimously in Tir Owen's rebellion against the said heretical queen; and followed in a few months after by an exhortatory letter to Tir Owen himself? And when the famous universities of Salamanca and Valladolid, were consulted on this point by the Irish Roman Catholics, they justify the conduct of Tir Owen, O'Neal, and their associates, in taking up arms against the queen; and condemn, as guilty of mortal sin, all the other Irish Catholics, that obeyed the queen, and fought in her defence. (*Vide O'Sullivan Beares. Hist. Cath. Iber. compend.*)

In 1626, pope Urban VIII. published a brief, exhorting the English Catholics to lose their lives rather than be drawn to take that noxious and unlawful oath

of English fidelity, (condemned as such by his predecessor of happy memory,) the object of which is, “not only that their faith to the king should be secured, but that the sacred sceptre of the universal church should be wrested from the vicars of Almighty God.” And again, the same pontiff, in the year 1643, granted a bull or brief of “plenary indulgence to all the Roman Catholics of Ireland, who joined in the rebellion and horrid massacre of 1641.” Now were not these unblushing usurpations of the Roman see, and the treasonable enormities which they encouraged and rewarded, to be encountered with rigorous laws and penalties by a Protestant government?

They who are acquainted with the perfidious machinations of king James II. to overturn the established religion of his country, in defiance of the most solemn promises and oaths; with the religious ferment which his persevering bigotry had excited in the nation, and was prepared to avail itself of the first opportunity to burst out into open rebellion, will not be surprised that very severe statutes were deemed necessary to curb the zeal of fiery bigots, during the reigns of his immediate successors.*

Men of a truly Christian spirit, have ever lamented the melancholy necessity which gave birth to the penal laws in England and Ireland, and had the churches of England or Scotland countenanced or exercised persecution for harmless and speculative opinions, which could have no bearing on the peace and stability of the government, there would be no

* If the reader wishes for full and satisfactory information on this subject, he will find it in an admirable speech of the earl of Clare, lord high chancellor of Ireland, delivered in the Irish house of peers, March 13, 1793.

hesitation in pronouncing them guilty of a manifest departure from the benevolent maxims and precepts of the gospel. Let Roman Catholics show that they have done so, and Protestants will acknowledge to have been themselves guilty of a grievous error in point of morality; and by this concession, they would act with a consistency unknown to those who have violated the most sacred laws of humanity and religion, by solemnly, and upon principle, shedding torrents of blood, for no other crime than maintaining the sacred rights of conscience, and doctrines totally unconnected with the state. These unchristian atrocities cannot be questioned, and yet the church, which for ages enforced and sanctified them, pretends to be an infallible guide, in morals as well as in faith, to the kingdom of the meek and compassionate Saviour of the world.

Mr. Berington, a sensible advocate of the Roman church, when apologizing for the laws enacted against the Hugonots in France, since the revocation of the edict of Nantes, acknowledges that they are “*extremely severe.*” “But it must be allowed,” says he, “that they were a dangerous and powerful party, from whom the religion, if not the civil constitution of France, had every thing to apprehend.” (*Reflec.* p. 92.) How applicable this reflection to the subject before us! For it is evident that the penal laws against Roman Catholics originated principally from apprehensions, not of a religious, but of a political nature; if ever they did not, no pretence can justify them. Let the fact, however, be briefly examined. The act of *supremacy* (1st Eliz.) was framed “for putting away all usurped and foreign powers and authorities; and for dis-

burthening subjects of divers great and intolerable charges and exactions," viz. the payment of *annates* or first fruits, Pope's bulls, indulgences, dispensations, &c. the amount of which was incredible. The next penal law against popish recusants, was 5th Eliz. cap. 1. "because of the dangers by the fautors of the usurped power of the see of Rome, at this time grown to marvellous outrage and licentious boldness, and now requiring more sharp restraint and correction of laws than hitherto," &c. This was followed by a third, (13th Eliz. cap. 11.) "because divers seditious and evil disposed people were minding, very fastidiously and unnaturally, not only to bring this realm into thralldom and subjection to the see of Rome, but also to estrange and alienate the minds and hearts of her majesty's subjects from their dutiful obedience, and to raise and stir up sedition and rebellion within this realm, to the disturbance of the most happy peace thereof." And in like manner, the succeeding restraints and penalties of her reign, and the same may be said of her successors, were levelled, not against the heretic or schismatic, but against the conspirator and the traitor; so that when some convicted priests and their pupils would have assumed the glory of suffering for their religion, Cecil, the most wise and honest statesman of that reign, published a tract, proving that their execution was not for *religion*, but for *treason* only.* It cannot, however, be denied, that

* The reader will find this whole subject discussed with the utmost candour, and illustrated by original and unquestionable documents, in "A survey of the modern state of the Church of Rome, &c." addressed to the Rev. Dr. Butler, &c. by William Hales, D. D. rector of Killesandra, and late fellow of Trinity College, Dublin. Among other important matters, the reader will see that there was no violation of the famous treaty of Limerick.

Elizabeth, to great and shining talents, united some portion of her father's arbitrary and persecuting spirit, and that a few of her subjects were put to death on account of their religious opinions; but among them were no Roman Catholics. The conviction of *these* was grounded only upon treasonable practices, and pardon was afterwards offered to them all, provided they would give the government *raisonnable security* for their allegiance, by disclaiming the foreign and hostile jurisdiction of the see of Rome, which, in those days, held out very different pretensions from the mitigated claims of the present times. Of these, however, we may still observe, that although they have received the sanction of so many Roman Catholic universities, yet have they never been confirmed by the present pontiff or his predecessor; and should their successors ever recover the former influence of the Roman Church, there can be little doubt, judging from past events and pretensions, but the liberal concessions of the present day will be stigmatized with her disapprobation and severest censures.*

But the period of her despotism is, we trust, gone by forever. Little more than a shadow is left of this do-

* That the reader may judge how far the Irish Roman Catholics agree with these foreign universities, let him peruse the following passage from the letters of Dr. O'Connor, published under the name of Columbanus: "Notwithstanding the oath of allegiance, by which Roman Catholics swear that the pope has no power over the temporalities of states, yet the Irish titular bishops assembled in synod at Tullow, so lately as the 6th of June, 1809, extolled, as *just, holy, and legitimate*, those bulls of Pius VII. by which he has absolved all Frenchmen from their allegiance to the Bourbons; expressly alienating, not only the crown of France, but also the property of all French loyalists, secular and ecclesiastical; and hurling down from their sees above a hundred French bishops, who were guilty of no other crime, than that of a conscientious regard to their oaths, and fidelity to their prince."—*Letters*, Part 2, p. 5.

mineering power. *Stat magni nominis umbra.* Mankind is become too enlightened to submit again to the intolerable yoke, which "neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." And could these pages contribute, in the smallest degree, to this truly *Christian emancipation*, by leading to a revision of some of the most obnoxious tenets and usages of our Roman Catholic brethren, the time and attention bestowed on them would be abundantly rewarded. The religious opinions of many Roman Catholics, especially in this country, are, we trust, undergoing a silent reformation, and the "dark monsters of superstition and bigotry," as was remarked on another occasion, "are retreating gradually before the light of *genuine religion and philosophy.*" In proof of this, the learned Dr. Hales refers us (p. 203.) to the formal answer of the doctors of Sorbonne to the consultation of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, recorded by Dr. Butler. "Compare, also," says he, "Veron's French rule of faith, subjoined to Hooke's *religionis naturalis, et revelatæ principia*, with the canons and creed of Pius IV. and the difference is most striking and satisfactory. "This (rule of Veron) at *present,*" says Mr. Berington, "is the great hinge on which our whole religion turns."* (p. 34, *reflect.* x.) If we peruse his "English Roman Catholic principles, in reference to God and the country," drawn up, as he tells us, in the reign of Charles II. but *retouched* by himself, we shall find many of the exceptionable tenets of the Roman church

* The rule is this: "For any doctrine to become an article of Catholic faith, two things are conjointly necessary: first, that it be revealed by God; secondly, that it be proposed by the Church"—i. e. by the Catholic Church, of which Protestant Churches are branches.

rejected or explained away. O, may the divine Head of the Church further this blessed approximation to each other, among all the members of his mystical body, until they meet together "in the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." But this will never be the case, unless modern apologists for the Roman Church, shall deem it a more wise and Christian measure, candidly to relinquish some untenable posts, than by roundly taxing Protestants with *misrepresentation*, to lay them under the disagreeable necessity, of exposing the tenets themselves, in all their weakness and futility, to the public eye.

And now, having been induced from a sense of duty, and the solicitations of friendship, partially to embark once more on the tide of controversy, the writer of this reply assures the Rev. Gentleman and his brethren, that it is neither his wish nor intention to be borne down the stream, into the boundless ocean of polemical contention. But, as a teacher of religious truth, it must ever be a branch of his bounden duty, to refute the fallacy of the most lofty pretensions, when they presume to confine *forgiveness of sins*, or, in other words, the benefits of redemption, within the limits of one particular communion; when they would shake that blessed assurance of safety and acceptance, which arises from faith in the word of God alone, and encumber practical religion, with observances unauthorized by the scripture, which have frequently driven the bold offender into atheism, and the timid into despair. In a word, as a watchman stationed by Providence on the walls of Zion, it is his duty to mark the approach of every error, and to re-

pel every attack upon the sanctuary, whether proceeding from open enemies, or mistaken friends, and to do this with weapons drawn exclusively from the sacred arsenal itself; namely, "with *love unfeigned* and that *meekness of wisdom*, which is from above, first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."—*James iii. 17.*

THE END.

SOME
R E M A R K S

ON

DR. O'GALLAGHER'S "BRIEF REPLY"

TO

DR. WHARTON'S "SHORT ANSWER

TO

A TRUE EXPOSITION

OF

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

TOUCHING

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE," &c.

BY CHARLES H. WHARTON, D. D.
Rector of St. Mary's Church, at Burlington, N. J.

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illustrious citizens, who has always been a member of a Protestant church, seems, at first, to exhibit some striking features, of what is vulgarly called a *bull*: It is, at any rate, an awkward compliment to a Protestant professor, to tell him, that the false and *impious consequences* in which his principles necessarily eventuate, prove the *falsehood* and *irreligion* of the principles themselves." (See p. 169.) Leaving, then, this matter to be adjusted between the worthy Gentleman and the Doctor, I proceed to make a few *short* remarks upon his *reply*—I say *short*, for if the reader will be pleased to revert to the "Answer to the Appendix," he will readily become acquainted with the state and merits of the controversy; and will there discover, I trust, an anticipated refutation of all the bold and sophistical assertions in which the Doctor's reply so copiously and confidently abounds. It would, therefore, be irksome, as well as unnecessary, to travel again over the beaten ground. I am willing still to rest the validity of the arguments against sacramental confession, or the sacrament of *penance*, (so the Doctor would have it called,) as defined by the council of Trent, on the authorities alleged in that answer.* The Doctor opens his battery against the *Short Answer*, by the discharge of a syllogism, which he feels confident will demolish all its bulwarks.

* Dr. O'G. is very angry at *auricular confession* being called a sacrament; (p. 11.) and yet, (p. 42.) he says, "the whole procedure of the sacrament, often goes under the appellation of confession, in the catechisms, instructions, and canons of the church." What will the Doctor say to one of the popes, who calls confession a sacrament, as Bellarm. informs us: (c. ad abolend. de hæret:) This pope was Lucius III "Greater accuracy," says the Doctor, "might surely be expected from a doctor of divinity;" what! greater accuracy than from a pope?

(p. 10.) The major, or first proposition of this syllogism, no Protestant will deny; viz. "that every doctrine of religion, which is founded in the scripture, and has been acknowledged and venerated as divine by the church, in the decrees of her councils, the declarations of her bishops and holy fathers, and the veneration and practice of the faithful through all ages, from the time of the apostles to the present day, must necessarily be orthodox and of divine institution. But the doctrine of the sacrament of penance, and the necessity of confession for the forgiveness of sins, is founded in the Scriptures, &c. &c.: therefore, the doctrine of the sacrament of penance, and of the necessity of confession for the forgiveness of sins, is orthodox and divine."

"To answer the *Exposition* or the Appendix," says Dr. O'Gallagher, "he," Dr. W. "should have solved the above syllogism, which constitutes the grand argument, and effectual lever of the whole work: and to solve that syllogism, it was necessary to disprove the minor proposition." Now, by what confusion of ideas could the Doctor be induced to imagine, that this minor proposition could be refuted in any other way, than by denying it altogether in the first instance, and then proving it to be utterly unfounded? This was done by showing, 1. "That the doctrine of auricular confession," or (to avoid a mere quibble raised by the Doctor, p. 11,) the doctrine of such confession, as constitutes an integral act or part of a divinely instituted sacrament of the Christian church, called the sacrament of penance, has no foundation in Scripture. 2. That this doctrine was unknown to the primitive church, and that previously to the thirteenth century

it had never been enacted, I say *enacted* into an article of faith and indispensable discipline. 3. That neither the council of Lateran, nor any other tribunal, has a right to impose such a grievous yoke upon the faithful, from a plea to infallibility, as this plea is altogether unsupported either by reason or revelation.

Now, will Dr. O'G. deny, that the proof of these three points, must contain the refutation of his minor proposition, and invalidate all the consequences of his syllogism. He acknowledges that the "first of these positions, is opposed to the assertion of the Exposition. The second, he pronounces partly *false* and partly *absurd*;" (p. 11.) that is, it is a *falsehood* to assert that this doctrine was unknown to the primitive church, and it is an *absurdity* to assert that previously to the thirteenth century, it had never been enacted into an article of faith and indispensable discipline. The third proposition, he styles "a mere jargon of unmeaning words, not expressing, or refuting any principle or tenet of Catholics." From the 9th to the 30th page of the *Short Answer to the Exposition*, the reader will find ample materials for refuting the first clause of the Doctor's formidable minor, and all the sophisms, plausible and irrelevant, with which he labours to uphold it. He will there see one probable meaning of the power of the keys as conveyed to St. Peter, and the other apostles: (*Matt.* xvi. 18.) or, at least, he will I trust be convinced, that, taken in any sense, it can never apply to sacramental confession. Passing by, therefore, the whole mass of sophistry, which the Doctor has accumulated around this text, his unsuccessful attack upon Dr. Adam Clark, and Grenville Sharp, his feeble endeavours to place St. Peter at

the foundation of the Christian church, by confounding his doctrines with his person, and in express contradiction to the assertion of St. Paul, (1 *Cor.* iii. 11.) "That other foundation can no man lay, than is laid, which is Christ Jesus;" passing by, I say, these and some other particulars altogether immaterial, such as the parade of Biblical criticism respecting the word *απερὸν ἀποστόλων*, which the learned Parkhurst, in his lexicon, composed expressly to explain all the words of the New Testament, interprets, "The foundation corner-stone," applied figuratively to Christ; I will here submit to the Doctor's consideration, a few remarks upon this text, from a sermon of the modern theological luminary, Bishop Horseley, which may probably come nearer to his ideas on this subject, than what he has met with in Protestant divines, although manifestly confirming the first proposition of the *Short Answer* to the Appendix.

*The learned bishop having proved to the entire satisfaction of his own mind, and probably also to that of his readers, "that St. Peter (*Matt.* xvi.) answered only for himself—that the blessing he obtained was for himself singly, the reward of his being foremost in the faith which he confessed; that to be the carrier of the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, to loose and bind on earth in any sense, which the expressions may bear in this passage, were personal distinctions of the venerable primate of the apostolic college, appropriated to him in positive and absolute exclusion of all other persons; in exclusion of the apostles his contemporaries, and of the bishops of Rome his successors, concludes by asserting, that "any interpretation of

* Bishop Horseley's Sermon, xiii.

this passage, or any part of it, founded upon a notion, that St. Peter, on this occasion, spake, or was spoken to, as the representative of the apostles, is groundless and erroneous." Having laid this foundation, he then proceeds to fix the sense of the first promise made to St. Peter: "This," he says, "consists of these two articles, that the keys of the kingdom of Heaven should be given to him, and that whatever he should bind or loose on earth, should be bound or loosed in Heaven."

"The keys of the kingdom of Heaven here promised to St. Peter, by the principles we have laid down for the exposition of this text, must be something quite distinct from that, with which it has generally been confounded; viz. the power of the remission and retention of sins, conferred by our Lord after his resurrection, upon the apostles in general, and transmitted through them, to the perpetual succession of the priesthood. This is the discretionary power lodged in the priesthood, of dispensing the sacraments, and of granting to the penitent, and refusing to the obdurate, the benefit and comfort of absolution. The object of this power, is the individual upon whom it is exercised, according to the particular circumstances of each man's case. It was exercised by the apostles in many striking instances; it is exercised now by every priest, when he administers or withholds the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, or, upon just grounds pronounces, or refuses to pronounce, upon an individual the sentence of absolution. St. Peter's custody of the keys was quite another thing. It was a temporary, not a perpetual authority; its object was not individuals, but the whole

human race. The kingdom of heaven upon earth, is the true church of God.* It is now, therefore, the Christian church: formerly the Jewish church was that kingdom. The true church is represented in this text, as in many passages of holy writ, under the image of a walled city, to be entered only at the gates. Under the Mosaic economy, these gates were shut, and particular persons only could obtain admittance; Israelites by birth, or by legal incorporation. The locks of these gates were the rites of the Mosaic law, which obstructed the entrance of aliens. But after our Lord's ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, the keys of the city were given to St. Peter by that vision, which taught him, and authorized him to teach others, that all distinctions of one nation from another, were at an end. By virtue of this special commission, the great apostle applied the key, pushed back the bolt of the lock, and threw the gates of the city open for the admission of the whole Gentile world, in the instance of Cornelius and his family. To this, and to this only, our Lord prophetically alludes, when he promises to Peter the custody of the keys. With this, the second article of the promise, the authority to loose and bind, is closely connected. This again being, by virtue of our rule of interpretation, peculiar to St. Peter, must be a distinct thing from the perpetual standing power of discipline, conveyed upon a latter occasion, to the church in general, in the same figurative terms. St. Peter was the first instrument of Providence in dissolving the obligation of the Mosaic law in the ceremonial, and of binding it in the moral part. The rescript, indeed, for that

* See Reply, p. 32.

purpose, was drawn by St. James, and confirmed by the authority of the apostles in general, under the direction of the Holy Ghost; but the Holy Ghost moved the apostles to this great business by the suggestion and persuasion of St. Peter, as we read in the 15th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: and this was his particular commission to bind and loose. The great apostle fulfilled his commission in his lifetime. He applied his key—he turned back the lock, he loosed and he bound: the gates of the kingdom of Heaven were thrown open; the ceremonial law was abrogated; and the successors of St. Peter in the see of Rome, can give neither furtherance nor obstruction to the business.”(a)

And now let the impartial reader determine, whether or not this promise to St. Peter, has any reference to sacramental confession and absolution, as defined by the council of Trent, to a power of unlocking, or binding up the consciences of men, by claiming a circumstantial disclosure of their most hidden sins; let him pronounce upon the modesty of the Doctor “in declaring an appropriate allusion of the very learned Dr. Lightfoot to be *nonsense*,” in stringing on it affected witticisms totally irrelevant, and very unbecoming a grave divine; in accusing Protestant theologians of a wilful perversion of the Scriptures, and in roundly and grossly asserting that by adopting their unanswerable arguments, and some indignant expressions against groundless and tyrannical pretensions, “the author of the *Answer* has *dearly* purchased favour by the merited contempt of learned, honest, and honourable

(a) See notes at the end.

men." (p. 41.) This would be a *dear purchase*, indeed; but as the Doctor probably means by *learned, honest, and honourable men*, the partisans of his own bigoted and unfounded opinions, their contempt, in addition to that of Dr. O'Gallagher, can weigh but lightly on a mind, which shares it with such Christian champions as Lightfoot and Clark. Perhaps the Doctor has met with the wise maxim of Seneca, "*Æquo animo audienda sunt imperitorum convicia, et ad honesta vadenti contemnendus est ipse contemptus.*" At any rate, however, the Doctor's contempt is very immaterial to the present discussion.

Men *truly* learned, honest, and honourable, will probably pity such a sentiment in a Christian divine, while they look, and look in vain, for any arguments drawn from holy Scripture, to support his assertions. If men of this description, will turn to the *Short Answer*, they will readily perceive what slender foundations are laid in the Scriptures, for sacramental confession. The strongest text is in Matt. xvi. 18., and that has been shown to be a baseless pretext. Hard, indeed, has the Doctor laboured to press others into his service, but let the candid reader refer to the discussion of them in the *Answer*; and, I trust, he will conclude, that something more is required to discover in holy writ, the most sacred and lofty pretensions of mortals, than wily sophisms and strained interpretations, influenced by the prejudices of preconceived opinions, and never daring to question them. The Scripture, therefore, affords no ground for sacramental confession. The proofs of this position may be found in the *Short Answer*, and Dr. O'Gallagher is defied to refute them.

Before we proceed to vindicate the *second part* of the *Short Answer*, it will be necessary to notice a transient reference to Peter Lombard, a celebrated schoolman of the 12th century, merely to show that in his day, sacramental confession was not deemed a scriptural practice of indispensable obligation, or that the texts alleged by the exposition to support it, were not deemed conclusive. It is really astonishing, that the mention of this old divine, merely *en passant*, should have put the Doctor's bile into such violent commotion. He cries out *imposition, imposture, Protestant credulity, &c.*, as if all the merits of his cause depended on the authority of Peter Lombard. But what will the reader say, when he sees that all the Doctor's fire evaporates into smoke, or rather into invisible gas? It was asserted in the *Short Answer* to the Appendix, (p. 30,) "That the famous master of the sentences, delivers the doctrine of the reformation respecting confession, and contradicts that of the council of Trent." Now, what is the doctrine of the reformation on this head? Is it not, as P. Lombard truly says, "that God *only* remits sins and retains them, and yet that he has granted power to the church to *bind* and to *loosen*; but he *binds* and *loosens* in a different manner from the church. For he remits sin by himself only, because he both cleanses the soul from the inward stain, and frees her from the debt of eternal death. But this he never granted to priests, to whom, nevertheless, he gave the power of binding and loosening, that is, of *declaring* men either bound or loosened. Hence our Lord first restored the leper to health by himself, then sent him to the priests, that by their judgment he might be *pronoun-*

ced to be cleansed." The power, then, of *declaring* penitent sinners absolved from their sins, is that which the master of sentences delivers, and I believe such power is considered, by every Protestant church, as constituting one part of "the ministry of reconciliation," committed to it by Christ. The Doctor has not questioned the authenticity of this passage. Had he done so, its doctrine might have been easily elucidated by corresponding passages from many of the fathers. One from Gregory the Great, bishop of Rome in the 7th century, shall stand in place of them all. When commenting on the 5th verse of the 32d Psalm, "Thou who alone sparest, who alone forgivest sins," he adds this paraphrase, "For who can forgive sins but God alone?" (*Greg. Expos. 2. Ps. Pœnitent.*) Who, indeed, can exercise a prerogative belonging exclusively to the Most High; or, as the prophet says, (Micah vii. 18.) "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" Such was the doctrine of the Christian church, before the councils of Lateran and Trent. Will the Doctor say that this is still the doctrine of the church of Rome? Will he say that the power of the priest is *declaratory only*, and not *judicial* and *absolute*? Will he subscribe to the explicit opinion of P. Lombard, in another passage of his works, "that in remitting or retaining sins, the priests of the gospel, have that right and office, which the legal priests had of old, under the law, of curing lepers? *These, therefore,*" these Christian priests, "forgive sins or retain them, whilst they *show and declare* that they are forgiven or retained by God." (*Lib. 4. sentent. dist. 14. f.*) Besides all this, the very *form* of the sacrament of penance, is de-

fined to consist in these words, "I absolve thee from thy sins," and, therefore, they constitute an essential part of it. "Forgiveness," says Bellarmine, (de pœnit. lib. 3. cap. 2.) "is denied to them, whom the priest will not forgive." His absolution is a sacramental act, which confers grace by the *work wrought*, that is, as this their most learned controvertist expounds it, "actively, and immediately, and instrumentally effects the grace of justification," in such as receive it. "Activê et proximê, atque instrumentally efficit gratiam justificationis."* In admitting all this as the doctrine of his church, the Doctor still maintains, that it was held by Peter Lombard, and all other orthodox theologians, who lived before the 13th century: and this he does, forsooth, because he takes it for granted, that if they held it not, they were not Catholic divines, as the church can never innovate in matters of faith. Thus, it appears, that even admitting the opinion of P. Lombard, appealed to by the Doctor, viz. that confession to a priest is necessary to salvation; it is still true, that with respect to the power of the priest, in this particular, the doctrine of the reformation prevailed, and that of the council of Trent was unknown before the 13th century. Again, can the Doctor demonstrate, that the confession to a priest deemed necessary by P. Lombard, is the same *particular, circumstantial, private confession*, enjoined on all Christians by the most bitter anathemas of that church in after ages, or that it was not that general, humble, and sincere acknowledgment of sins, accompanied with marks of hearty

* Id. in *sacram. in genere*, lib. 2. cap. 1.

repentance, still practised in the Protestant Episcopal church, and other churches of Christendom? Be this, however, as it may, the opinion of P. Lombard on this subject, is nothing more than that of a private divine, which he tells us was controverted by many doctors of his day. Among other questions which he propounds, (*lib. 4. senten. dist. 17.*.) he asks, “whether it be sufficient, that a man confess his sins to God alone, or whether he must confess to a priest?” He then mentions a variety of opinions upon the subject, and goes on to say, “to some it seemed to suffice if confession were made to God only, without the judgment of the priest, or the confession of the church; because David said, ‘I will confess unto the Lord:’ he says not unto a priest, and yet he shows that his sin was forgiven him.” “On these points,” he continues, (*ibid.*) “even the learned are found to have differed in their opinions, because the doctors seemed to deliver divers, and almost contrary judgments therein;” that is to say, the ancient doctors were divided in their opinions concerning auricular sacramental confession, and although P. Lombard appear obscurely to favour it, yet his idea of it was by no means such as afterwards prevailed, and of course, his authority, as cited in the *Short Answer*, remains unimpaired. I have dwelt more fully than I intended on this accusation of the Doctor, to show how easily his sophistry can be exposed, and to check his constant propensity to cry out victory, before he is sure that he has conquered. To persons not labouring under invincible prejudices, the express authority of Thomas Aquinas, might have appeared sufficient to settle this point: speaking of the opinion of those who

contended that it was lawful to maintain the validity of confession to God alone, he says, (*in 4. dist. 17.*) “Magister et Gratian^{us} hoc pro opinione ponunt, sed nunc post determinationem ecclesiæ sub Innocentio III. factam, hæresis reputanda est.” “The master of the sentences and Gratian, lay down this as an opinion; but now, after the determination of the church under Innocent III., it is to be reputed heresy.” So that previously to that determination, during 12 centuries, an opinion was suffered to be current in the church, which was afterwards proscribed as pernicious and heretical: a striking instance, among many others, that infallibility is a very inadequate and idle plea, to secure the faith and practice of Christians, when it suffers them to float with so much uncertainty, and for so many centuries, in the writings of theologians. But, says the Doctor, (p. 61.) in reply to the *second part of the Answer*, namely, “that the testimony of the ancient fathers does not prove sacramental confession,” “the first member is *false*, the other *absurd*.” To prove its *falsehood*, he parades again all the detached passages from the ancient fathers, brought forward in the *Appendix*, and explained in the *Answer*. He adduces many others equally irrelevant, which have a thousand times been invalidated and refuted, as, in turning to the *Answer*, the reader will readily perceive; as, also, how very irksome it would be to enter again upon their refutation. The merits of the question, in this particular, are confidently rested on the reasonings detailed in the *Answer*, from the 31st to the 47th page. As to the additional texts quoted by the Doctor, they confer no further weight on those in the *Appendix*; and all of them, of course,

may be safely disregarded, as unconnected with the Tridentine doctrine of sacramental confession. But the fact is, on this, as on many other points, solitary passages are culled both from the Scriptures and the fathers, which have little or no bearing on the subject under discussion: truths are contested which nobody denies, while the real difficulties of the case remain unnoticed. Great compilers by profession, the Doctor and his associates aim at astonishing their readers by an accumulation of citations, and a pretended tradition foreign to the question; which few persons will be at the pains of examining, and then decree to themselves a triumph, in which they are the only applauders, while the rest of the world is smiling at their folly. Like the theologians of the council of Trent, who, in order to prove their doctrine of confession from Scripture, cited *every* passage from the Old and New Testament, where the word *I confess*, or *confession* occurs, these confident gentlemen adduce from the ancient fathers a multiplicity of texts, which establish about as conclusively the divine right of confession, as they do any other dogma to which they might wish to apply them. (See *Answer*, p. 51.)

But the testimony of the fathers, the Doctor contends, clearly evinces that "confession (he must mean *sacramental confession*) was the solemn rite, and necessary means inculcated by the pastors, and practised by the faithful for obtaining forgiveness of sins, throughout all Christendom, from the earliest ages." (p. 63.) The reader will judge from what has already been said, what he is to think of this assertion; perhaps however he will pardon, and the Doctor will

challenge, a little further illustration of this matter. I find it ready to my hand in a short and learned dissertation of my venerable friend, the present bishop of the Protestant Episcopal church in the State of Pennsylvania, on auricular confession, p. 233 of his lectures. "The passage recorded, (*Acts* xix. 18.) 'Many that believed came and confessed, and showed their deeds,' means no more, than that their application to the apostles to be received to Christian communion, was accompanied by an acknowledgment of their former vicious courses: a matter not uncommon in every Protestant communion at this day. But that a *special* confession of all past miscarriages, was not a prerequisite of initiation into the church by baptism, may be presumed from the many places, in which it might otherwise have been expected to appear—as in the baptism of the eunuch—in that of Cornelius and his household—in that of Jairus and his household. (See *Answer*, p. 28.)

"On the present subject, the works of the early fathers have received a similar treatment with the holy Scriptures; that is, the absolute duty of confession to God, and the occasional one of opening the heart to the ministers of his word, has been confounded with the indispensable necessity of the latter, as a condition of divine pardon. Thus, Tertullian is introduced, as to the purpose, because in his treatise concerning patience, among many animated exhortations to persons fallen from the peace of the church, he counsels them to implore, on bended knees, the prayers of the presbyters, and of all others who were dear to God. Cyprian and Origen are quoted to the same effect, and on similar occasion given. But, on

the other hand, it would be easy to bring passages from the fathers—from St. Chrysostom in particular, in various passages of his works—prescribing confession to God in such a way as to show, that they thought no other necessary to the pardon of sins. Even in the legitimate releasing from church censures, there are sundry fathers who maintain, that the act of the minister is not *judicial*, but *declaratory*.” After tracing plainly the origin and progress, to the final *enacting* of auricular confession by the councils of Lateran and Trent, the Bishop proceeds, (p. 235.) “It would be easy to recite from ancient fathers, exhortations to repentance under a variety of circumstances; and expressed in such forms, as show that they are materially defective, if auricular confession, so evidently wanting in them, were thought universally a duty. There shall be given the instance of the Roman Clement—undoubtedly the person referred to (*Philip. iv. 3.*) as having “his name written in the book of life.” In his admirable epistle to the Corinthians, written for the express purpose of reclaiming them from a schism; after having set before them the heinousness of their offence, he exhorts them to beg God’s forgiveness, enlarging on the sentiment, without any intimation of a preparatory step of auricular confession. This, if required, might also have been pertinently introduced in another place, where he admonishes those who had laid the first foundation of the schism, “to submit themselves to their presbyters, and to be instructed to repentance, bending the knees of their hearts.” It may be alleged that confession was an appendage to the repentance, to which they were to be instructed. But this is the

matter in question; and it is contended that the general requisition of such a condition would naturally have introduced the mention of it in this place. The Corinthians, it is true, in the very return from their schism, must have acknowledged their fault therein. But it is easy to perceive the difference between *this*, and the disclosure of the heart, implied in the subject under consideration. The same inference may be drawn from the second epistle of St. Clement, if indeed it be his; and not rather, as some think, erroneously ascribed to him, although confessedly very ancient. Be this as it may, we have there an earnest exhortation to repentance, without a word of the necessity of confession to a minister. But there is no reason to confine to the first three centuries, what is here affirmed of the sense of the fathers. Those of the fourth century were equally strangers to the doctrine in question."

The Bishop then quotes from St. Chrysostom an explicit passage in proof of his assertion, which neither Dupin, nor any of his followers, were ever able to answer, and which might be supported by a crowd of other texts from contemporary writers, which those brought forward in the *Short Answer* render it unnecessary to allege, and which would probably rather tire the patience of the reader than add to his information. Before he proceeds to quote his authorities from the fathers, with a view of refuting the *second* part of the *Short Answer*, the Doctor becomes outrageously angry, and somewhat abusive, on account of a remark, that "the fathers frequently express themselves on the subject of confession, and many other points of discipline existing in their day, in a

language little consistent with that coolness and accuracy, which should always accompany polemical disquisitions." (p. —.) "What an argument!" exclaims the doughty Doctor, "he now attempts to criticise the style of the fathers." (p. 63.) Flimsy apology for argument! Horrid impiety, no doubt, and ignorance unparalleled, showing, clearly, "how well, in the estimation of every man of letters, the writer was qualified to censure the Cyprians, the Augustines, &c. and other luminaries of the Catholic church." If this is not finessing, as the Doctor calls it; if this is not *throwing*, not "handfuls," but basketfuls, "of dust in people's eyes, and giving them talk instead of truths," the Doctor will be puzzled to define what is so. Will he pretend to affirm that the ancient fathers were always *cool* and *accurate*? It surely can be only when measuring their tempers by the standard of his own, that he presumes to hazard such an assertion. In sincere respect, profound veneration, and heart-felt gratitude to the persons and writings of the ancient fathers of the church, the writer of these pages, will not yield to Dr. O'Gallagher, or any of his associates. He appreciates them as intrepid champions, faithful witnesses, enlightened instructors, and glorious martyrs of our holy religion; but to regard either their persons or writings as exempt from human infirmities and error, to hold up their testimony as uniform and constant, except, indeed, in the fundamental and leading doctrines of Christianity, is either to be unacquainted with their writings, to impose upon the ignorant, or to flatter the credulous.(b) "One does not know which to ad-

(b) See notes at the end.

mire most," says the Doctor, (p. 64.) "the falsehood implied, or the calumny expressed," in the assertion that the "fathers, being ignorant of any divine precept respecting sacramental confession, could not be expected to enter upon its discussion. The fact is, no controversy on this point existed in their day;" and if this had been the case, it is not to be doubted, but they would have entered into it with as much warmth, detail, and accuracy, as are to be found in modern manuals, casuists, and treatises innumerable. Let the Doctor produce his documents of this kind; let him show us from history, that kings and queens, and other great personages, had their stated confessors: that at certain seasons the churches were crowded with those who repaired thither for confession; that plenary indulgences were annexed to this exercise; and that the absolution of some crimes was reserved to the Bishop, and others to the Pope alone. Let him, I say, favour us with any authentic accounts of the primitive Christians, which state their devotions in this particular, to resemble those of the present Roman church, or give any countenance to these and other practices naturally resulting from sacramental, auricular confession, and I will admit his imputation of falsehood and accusation of calumny: if the Doctor cannot do this, then these vulgar terms must recoil upon himself. He would, however, do well to remember, that to take for granted the testimony of the fathers, and then to abuse all those who reject it, neither *implies* nor expresses *accuracy* or *candour*. "Bold and censured opinions," he tells us, (p. 98.) "have no weight with Catholic divines:" or, in other words, the Roman church has only to censure

any passages in the ancient fathers and modern divines, that clearly make against her; and such passages are immediately excluded from their testimony.—A summary method, truly, of getting rid of difficulties, which, nevertheless, runs through the Doctor's whole performance. Presuming on the infallible authority of his church, he presents this attribute as an impenetrable shield against every hostile weapon; he retires into this impregnable fortress, after all its outworks are demolished. But to this last asylum, also, we will endeavour to follow him, even through the many and intricate labyrinths, with which he labours to impede our way. Before we enter, however, on this subject, which constitutes the *third part of the Short Answer*, we entreat the reader to consider attentively the obvious meaning of the texts alleged on both sides of the question, and to decide impartially on their merits. Let him discard the idea of any existing authority, in an infallible church, to press some of them into her service, and to disown others as erroneous, and then, perhaps, should this infallibility be found chimerical and groundless, he will conclude that the author of the *Short Answer* did not “throw away any spare ammunition, (p. 20.) in strings of questions, and a rant of interrogation,” which the Doctor has endeavoured in vain to answer, by passing them by “as the common resort of school-boys in their juvenile compositions, to dazzle the eyes of youthful and inconsiderate readers.” But readers of a different description, will possibly perceive from the foregoing pages, that the Doctor also has made some proficiency in ranting; and, indeed, two thirds of his book consist of nothing else. As to his humour, take the

following specimen: it was said in the *Answer*, that the power of the keys, or the authority to bind and to loose, to forgive and retain sins, given by Christ to his apostles, &c. is very different from that exercised by the Romish priests, in the sacrament of penance; and that, consequently, the retention of sins is no part of this sacrament; of course, that this sacrament is not founded in the words of Christ's commission. This was all that was meant, and all that was said; but, "as well," exclaims the Doctor, "might he say, refusing to open a door, is not opening it: therefore, there is no such thing as opening a door." Very witty, indeed! as if the power, or commission of opening and shutting a door, could be completely exercised by opening it alone. One word more on a verbal quibble of the Doctor, and this part of the subject shall be dismissed. In the *Answer* (p. 8.) it was asserted, that "the doctrine of sacramental confession was unknown to the primitive church, and that previous to the 13th century it had never been enacted into an article of faith, and indispensable discipline." Throughout the preceding pages, and those of the *Answer*, the proofs of these propositions will readily be found, and to them the reader is again confidently referred. But the word *enact*, it seems, excites the Doctor's indignation, and *absurdity* and *imposture* are dealt out with great liberality upon his opponents; and this, forsooth, because "the church never creates a new article of faith;" but merely "declares and defines the ever-subsisting faith, once delivered to the saints, and always retained and venerated by the body of the faithful." (p. 60.) In other words, she will not acknowledge that she has ever erred, or that her

doctrines have not always been the same as they are at this day. Here is begging the very point in question; for Protestants contend and prove that, by enacting new articles of faith, she has erred from the truth. Was it not many ages after the Christian era, that the sacrament of penance was made one of the seven? Was not a practice, deemed previously optional, enacted into a law by the Lateran council? However, if the Doctor will curb his petulance and compose his temper, for the sake of such a benefit, we will abandon the obnoxious word, and agree that to *declare* a new article of faith, is the same as to *enact* it; and he will not refuse to admit the declaration of Thomas Aquinas, that “what was matter of opinion before the council of Lateran, became heresy after it;” and that, of course, a new article was added to the belief of his church.

But, no, says the Doctor, my church is infallible, she cannot err, she is secured from every possibility of mistake, so that all her declarations on matters of faith are irrefragable and binding, and without admitting them, there is no salvation,^(c)—so at least say all her confessors¹⁶⁹⁴ of faith. On her declaration, therefore, we are bound to receive and practise her doctrine of sacramental confession; and this declaration is manifestly founded on her claim to infallibility. Now, it was asserted in the *third part* of the *Short Answer*, (p. 72.) that “neither the councils of Lateran nor of Trent, nor any other earthly tribunal, had, or has, a right to impose such a grievous yoke as auricular confession upon the faithful, from a plea to in-

(c) See notes at the end.

fallibility: this plea being altogether unsupported either by reason or revelation."

This *third proposition*, the Doctor styles "a mere jargon of unmeaning words, not expressing or refuting (he probably meant contradicting) any principle or tenets of Catholics." "It is a mere jargon of unmeaning words," says the Doctor, "to assert that no authority upon earth can bind on the faithful such a grievous yoke as auricular confession, from a plea to infallibility:" and yet this is the very *plea* on which it is done; on what other plea could it be done? What but the claim of being an unerring guide in matters of faith, arising from a supposed right to fix the sense of the Scriptures, and to define traditions equally imperative, could have emboldened the Lateran council to decree, (*cap.* 21.) "Omnis utriusque sexus fidelis," and "Let every one of the faithful of either sex, being come to the years of discretion, by him, or herself alone, once in the year at least, faithfully confess their sins to their own priest, &c. Otherwise, let them, when living, be excluded from the church, and, when dead, be deprived of Christian burial." Nothing surely but a consciousness of an exemption from error, or the plea of infallibility, could induce the council to enact, or the faithful to obey, such an outrageous decree. The author of the Appendix, more logical, or more candid than the Doctor, saw this subject in its proper light, and, therefore, declares without hesitation, (*p.* 32.) "that his fourth and last argument in favour of the divine institution of confession, is drawn from the infallibility of the church, which has repeatedly and solemnly declared this truth in her general councils, and emphatically taught

the same in every age." On the plea of infallibility, therefore, this doctrine has been declared, and taught, and enforced by the Roman church. "This plea," says the *Answer*, "is unsupported either by reason or revelation:" and, therefore, with respect to sacramental confession, is totally null and void. So much for the Doctor's "mere jargon of unmeaning words," and his bold assertion, that the proposition "does not contradict any tenet of his church."

We proceed now to the Doctor's animadversions on the *third part* of the *Answer to the Appendix*. And we may begin by observing, that the refutation of each of his arguments and sophisms, has been anticipated in that *Answer*. Of this, the reader is invited to judge, and he is moreover entreated kindly to overlook any repetitions, which must necessarily occur in accompanying the Doctor over the very same ground which is traversed by the Appendix, or through any anomalous courses peculiar to himself. The texts on which the Doctor grounds the infallibility of his church, are noticed and explained in the *Answer*, from the 72d to the 83d page; and although they have supplied materials for many a ponderous volume, carry with them a meaning so simple and obvious, that to an unprejudiced mind they need no prolix discussion. The first that occurs in the *Answer*, (*Matt. xvi. 18.*) "The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church," is that, on which the Roman Catholic writers lay the greatest stress, and shall, therefore, receive, exclusively, some additional attention. I find a lucid and unanswerable explanation of this text, in a sermon of the profound and accurate Bishop Horsley, mentioned above. "On these words," says the

learned prelate, “that ‘the gates of hell,’ &c.—the time compels me to be brief, nor is there need I should be long. In the present state of sacred literature, it were an affront to this assembly,* to go about to prove that the expression of ‘the gates of hell,’ describes the invisible mansion of departed souls, with allusion to the sepulchres of the Jews and other eastern nations, under the image of a place secured by barricadoed gates, through which there is no escape, by natural means, to those who have once been compelled to enter. Promising that these gates shall not prevail against his church, our Lord promises not only perpetuity to the church, to the last moment of the world’s existence, notwithstanding the successive mortality of all its members in all ages; but, what is much more, a final triumph over the power of the grave. Firmly as the gates of Hades may be barred, they shall have no power to confine his departed saints, when the last trump shall sound, and the voice of the archangel shall thunder through the deep.”—“The promise of stability, in the text, is to the church Catholic: it affords no security to any particular church, if her faith, or her works should not be found perfect before God. The time shall never be, when a true church of God shall not be somewhere subsisting on the earth; but any individual church, if she fall from her first love, may sink in ruins; of this, history furnishes but too abundant proof, in the examples of churches, once illustrious, planted by the apostles, watered by the blood of the first saints and martyrs, which are now no more.

* The Society for the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts.

Where are now the seven churches of Asia, whose praise is in the Apocalypse? Where shall we now find the successors of those earliest archbishops, once stars in the Son of Man's right hand? Where are those boasted seals of Paul's apostleship, the churches of Corinth and Philippi? Where are the churches of Jerusalem and Alexandria?" As these ancient churches, so those of our day may be abandoned and disappear, and in some distant quarter of the globe, now lying in the gloom of superstition or idolatry, when become enlightened with the rays of the gospel, the question may be asked, where now is the church of England; where now is the church of Rome? "But," says the Doctor, "this latter supposition can never be realized, because the gates of hell can never prevail against the Catholic church, which is the Roman church." So that, in the idea of the Doctor, a *particular* and *universal* church is the same thing. But let that pass. "With any error in doctrine," says he, "there could be no church at all; for all errors destroy the church." This, indeed, is very high ground, and the Doctor maintains it with a train of sophistry seldom surpassed. He assumes all along, that the Catholic church, and the Roman church, are synonymous appellations. Now, this is the very point in question, and the difficulty is to prove it; "*hic labor, hoc opus est.*" The Catholic church is, indeed, the pillar and ground of truth; and, therefore, by teaching any doctrine subversive of, or contrary to, the Christian faith, she would cease to be a Christian church. As this is never to be the case, so the teaching of such doctrine can never take place. But can any individual church claim, from these premises,

an exemption from error? Protestants have proved that the Roman church has erred; and, if so, she cannot surely substantiate such a pretension. The whole of the controversy, indeed, turns upon this point, and, until it is settled, the contending parties must remain as they are. It is only from a comprehensive view, of all the points in litigation, that the matter can be determined: but when the Doctor asserts, (p. 111,) that, “in admitting a church to be subject to error, some men” (that is, the whole body of Protestants) “pretend to indulgence and liberality, and that this is an *impious indulgence* ;” he betrays a spirit very unbecoming his character. Protestants affirm, and have repeatedly proved, that the doctrines of religion generally maintained by *all* Christian churches, in all places, and at all times, constituted the code of Christian faith and morals; and that the great body of her pastors should always teach, and the great body of the faithful should always admit, these doctrines, in spite of all the attacks of the infernal powers. Let a period be pointed out, when God was left without a witness, when an error prevailed universally through Christendom, subversive of some fundamental tenet, and it will be acknowledged that the church ceased to exist. Against errors, however, of minor importance, errors neither damnable nor destructive, no security has been given, and none is necessary. Previously to the coming of Christ, the Jewish church was the church of God, it was instituted and taught by God himself through his servant Moses; his Spirit was always ready to lead this church into all truth, and high priests, priests, and Levites, were appointed to guard the sacred deposit

of its faith—the law and the prophets ; yet, who will say the Jewish church never erred ? Perpetuity, indeed, was not promised to this church, yet it was founded, and, while it existed, was guided by the Spirit of God. When, however, by the exercise of that freedom of the will, which is essential both to individuals and collective bodies, and which was not to be controlled by any special interference of Providence, it afterwards fell into gross idolatry and palpable superstitions ; when one great portion of this church denied the *resurrection* of the dead, and our Saviour cautions his disciples against the doctrines of the other, (Luke xii. 3.) who taught for doctrines the commandment of men, (Mark vii. 7.) and rejected the commandment of God, that they might keep their own traditions ; (v. 9.) then it was, that the Talmud, having defaced, and, in some points, invalidated essential points of the law, the Jewish church was abolished. And had not infinite wisdom decreed, that of the kingdom, or church of Christ, there should be no end, and that he would support it to the consummation of the world, the hay and stubble, which have occasionally been heaped upon its foundations, would probably ere now, have so far obscured them, that we should look in vain for this blessed society. But thanks be to God, these foundations are still conspicuous and evident ; the flimsy superstructures, at times erected upon them, have been thrown down by the strong hand of the Almighty ; and at this day, as in that in which they were first laid, they afford to every believer solid security, and the assurance which is of faith. These foundations are the essential doctrines of the gospel, and therefore styled *fundamental*.

The Doctor denies that there are any doctrines of this description, (p. 109,) and qualifies such a notion, as *false* and *absurd*. The reader, perhaps, with the Doctor's leave, may presume to think otherwise. What! are there then no doctrines that lie at the foundations of religion? Are all of equal intrinsic value, importance, and weight? Truth, indeed, as such, is incapable of augmentation, and one truth is as great as another. It is equally true, that *Isaac begat Jacob*, as that *Christ was born of the Virgin Mary*; but will any man of sense, who dares to think for himself, pronounce these truths to be equally essential to Christianity? Can, I say, any man, with his mind unshackled by prejudice, education, and sophistry, really believe, that the profession of faith, enjoined by Pope Pius IV., has added nothing to the foundations of Christian faith, contained in the Apostolic and Nicene creeds? Will he admit, "that the doctrine of *purgatory*, of the *invocation* of saints, of the *veneration* of their relics, are as fundamental articles, of a Christian's belief, as the mystery of the ever blessed Trinity; that the images of Christ, of the mother of God, even virgins, and also of other saints, ought to be had and retained, and that due honour and veneration is to be given them." (See *Pope Pius's Creed*.) Will he, I say, believe that these truths are as *fundamental*, as essential to the existence of the Christian church, as that of Adam's fall; of the incarnation and death, the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ; of the descent of the Holy Ghost; of a state of future retribution, and of the duty of worshipping God in spirit and in truth? Well may we say with the Doctor, "what does this jargon mean? What.

indeed, does it mean, but to bewilder the minds and consciences of Christians, and when they could no longer relish sound doctrine, to turn them to fables, often as oppressive in their tendency, as unfounded in their origin? Now, if some truths only be *fundamental*, of course, some errors only can partake of this denomination.

These errors may deform, but not destroy the church. She was, indeed, to be led into all truth necessarily connected with the ends of her establishment, but no promise is made her, that, besides such truths, none of her particular branches should ever teach and countenance errors of any kind. But the Doctor will say, with Pope Pius, that these doctrines, which Protestants style errors, constitute “the true Catholic faith, without which no one can be saved;” therefore they are *fundamental*. This I know is said, and rung perpetually in the ears of Roman Catholics. But by whom is it said—by Jesus Christ, their Lord and their God, or by those who, like Levi’s sons, have taken too much upon them? “Rash expositors, of points of doubtful disputation,” (says the late liberal and worthy Bishop of Llandaff, *Theol. Tracts*,) “intolerant fabricators of metaphysical creeds and incongruous systems of theology! Do you undertake to measure the extent of any man’s understanding, except your own, to estimate the strength and origin of his habits of thinking; to appreciate his merit or demerit in the use of the talents which God has given him; so as unerringly to pronounce that the belief of this or that doctrine, is necessary to his salvation? It is, undoubtedly, necessary to yours, if you are persuaded that it comes from God; but you take too much upon

you, when you erect yourself into an infallible judge of truth and falsehood. We, as Christians, are under no uncertainty as to the being of a God; as to his moral government of the world; as to the terms on which sinners may be reconciled to him; as to "the redemption which is in Jesus Christ; as to the resurrection from the dead; as to a future state of retribution, &c. : but there are other subjects, on which the academicorum *επισημη*, may be admitted, I apprehend, without injuring the foundations of our religion." But, unhappily for the peace of the church, the lust of dominion, and the rage for dogmatizing, has identified with these sacred foundations other extraneous materials, as the Spirit of God had explicitly foretold, and thus held them out as equally sacred and important. This subject might be prosecuted to any given length, and fresh arguments would continually spring up to show the slender grounds of the Doctor's triumph in this particular. The mazes of logical reasoning, with which he endeavours to convince his readers, (p. 112.) will serve only to bewilder them, and keep down the suggestions of common sense to untutored minds. To instance this in one short sentence. He says, "The church that would admit and teach an error in faith, would violate the whole faith." The church that would admit and teach such an error, knowingly and willingly, and if such an error were subversive of the Christian religion, would, certainly, violate the whole faith, and cease to be a church. But here the question returns, whether such an error be fundamental, or otherwise; for it is from such only that exemption is promised in the Scriptures. If the reader wishes to obtain fur-

ther satisfaction on this point, let him turn to the 3d chapter of that elegant and acute reasoner, Dr. Chillingworth, where the distinction between fundamentals and non-fundamentals, is logically and irrefragably established. Perhaps, however, before this subject is finally dismissed, the following passage, from the 3d ses. of the Council of Trent, may stagger the Doctor's confidence, or, at any rate, puzzle him to defend its consistency: "Symbolum fidei, quo sancta ecclesia Roman^a utitur, tanquam principium illud, in quo omnes, qui fidem Christi profitentur, necessario conveniunt, ac firmamentum firmum et *unicum* contra quod portæ inferi nunquam praevalerunt, totidem verbis quibus in omnibus ecclesiis legitur, exprimentum esse censuit." "The council has declared, that the *symbol* of faith used in the holy Roman church, as that principle in which all who profess the faith of Christ necessarily agree, and that *firm* and *only foundation*, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, shall be expressed in the same words, in which it is read in all the churches." (*d*) And now let the Doctor exclaim, as dogmatically as he pleases, "away, then, with these fictions of fundamental and non-fundamental faith;" (doctrines, he should have said;) "such language being calculated to amuse and mislead the credulous or interested abettors of particular systems." (p. 112.) Let him indulge himself in his usual style of dictatorial importance; enlightened Protestants will smile at his presumption, and still regard his realities as fictions, and their fictions as solemn realities.

(*d*) See notes at the end.

We proceed, next, to the third proposition collected from the *Answer*, and which is styled not only *false*, but *proved to be so*, by experience. (p. 109.) It is this: "That the church may always secure herself from capital errors, by taking for her guide the light of clear revelations, and the evidence of reason." "No," says Dr. O'Gallagher, "this is *false*; the light of clear revelation and the evidence of reason, are not sufficient to secure, nor ever did secure the church from capital errors." (p. 114.) Here, indeed, is a most extraordinary assertion. The Doctor is surely not aware into what a snare he is falling; but he is resolved to plunge on, heedless of consequences. "Neither the wisest man," says he, "nor the wisest set of men, can secure themselves against errors, whatever guide they may assume." So that they cannot secure themselves against errors, even by assuming for their guide the church of Rome herself. "It is God alone that can secure men from error:" so say Protestants likewise. But how can he do this, except by the instrumentality of revelation and reason? If these be not the means of coming at the truth, to what purpose are all the Doctor's appeals to Scripture and reason, to prove the infallibility and doctrines of his church? By omitting these appeals, he might have saved us both, considerable trouble.

But how he could have proved that "the church is secured against errors by the special assistance of Jesus Christ, (p. 114.) without exercising the faculty of his reason, to discover this promise in the volume of revelation, would require a train of sophistry more subtle than even that of the Doctor. The fact, then, is, that the Protestant churches, being lively branch-

es of the Catholic church, have the promise of Christ to secure them from destructive errors. This promise they find in their Bibles; on him who made it, they rely for its performance; and his unerring guidance they endeavour cordially to adopt and follow, as well as every other doctrine and precept which they read in his revealed word. As to the divisions among Protestants, which the Doctor attributes to their making the Scripture their sole rule of faith, they were such as did not aim at subverting the foundations of Christianity, or, if they did so, the communities thus guilty no longer deserved the name of Christian churches. Divisions or variations among the first reformers did, undoubtedly, exist, but they were not destructive. Unanimity was not to be expected from persons labouring under ancient prejudices, and striving to remove various errors and abuses, novel tenets, and unjustifiable observances, gradually accumulated through preceding ages. In this mighty work, the timid were afraid of advancing too far, and the intrepid knew not, sometimes, at what point to stop. Some years were necessary to calm the tempest, and bring order out of confusion. This was done much sooner than the most sanguine lovers of truth had anticipated; and the event was, that all the real or pretended *variations* of Bossuet, collected with so much ingenuity and research, prove nothing against the principles of Protestants; they serve only to show, that man, in spite of all his boasted knowledge, and best resolves, is still a frail, unsettled, and imperfect being, and that nothing but a plain, revealed, and written code of faith, can restrain

his wanderings into fatal and damnable errors. This elegant libel received a complete refutation from Basnage, in his "Historie de la Religion des Eglises Reformeès."

However, as the Doctor seems to lay great stress upon the authority of his *illustrious* Bossuet, famous for nothing so much as for his cruel animosity against the truly illustrious Fenelon; for his oppression of poor Madame Guion, and his heretical opinions respecting religious persecution, which he always maintained and realized when he could; it may be well enough to inform the reader, that his famous "exposition of the Roman Catholic faith," furnishes ample matter for retaliation, on the subject of religious variations. Although this little book be now considered by the Doctor (p. 183.) as the standard of orthodoxy, yet, many years elapsed, from its first publication, before it could obtain the approbation of the Pope, though sanctioned by the Archbishop of Rheims, and nine other prelates. Even the Sorbonne itself disavowed the doctrines it contained; and many Roman Catholic priests were severely persecuted, for maintaining its principles, which were formally condemned by the university of Louvain. The artifices employed in the composition of this book, and the tricks that were played off in the suppression and alteration of its first edition, may be seen fully detailed in Archbishop Wake's "introduction" to his "exposition of the doctrines of the church of England." The variations, therefore, among Protestant churches, afford no argument against the sufficiency of Scripture, as the only rule of their faith; and

their security in resting exclusively upon this immoveable foundation. To say that all sects professing to follow Scripture as their guide, have not actually secured themselves from fundamental errors, such as the Arians, Socinians, &c. (p. 14.) and that such a guide is of course insufficient for salvation, is only to say, that some men have actually “perverted the Scriptures, and denied the Lord who bought them.” Without impeaching her own rule of faith, does not the Roman church maintain, that they who have gone out from her, have broached “damnable heresies;” and may not Protestants pronounce the same opinion, of those who have abandoned the orthodox tenets of all antiquity, and of the great body of Protestants, from the time of the reformation. Is their rule of faith insecure, because pride, or prejudice, has chosen to abandon it? The Doctor’s reasoning on this head is palpable sophistry: he argues against the use of a thing, from its abuse. On the Scriptures, then, alone the Protestant builds his faith: because he believes them to be written by divine inspiration, and that the language of the Holy Ghost is full as intelligible as that of a pope or council can be: because, whatever the presumed unerring guide of the Roman Catholics could do for him, can be effected by the Bible with more certainty, and with equal security: because, in adhering to the Scriptures only, he would chiefly follow that by which they prove their infallibility, since he must be more sure of the proof, than of the thing proved: because, although in following Scripture, he must admit several doctrines, which reason never could have discovered; yet is he not required to assent to any thing,

which solid reason can refute, and which involves a palpable contradiction: because, in adhering to the church of Rome, he must believe that church to be exempt from error, upon much less evidence than that which points out many of her doctrines as unfounded and irrational: because the Scripture worship is replete with genuine dignity, simplicity, and plainness, which speak its divine original; whereas, he sees in her worship a ritual, repugnant both to his understanding and his feelings: because, in following the Scriptures, he cleaves to what universal tradition assures him to be the word of God; but, in believing the doctrines of the Roman church, he must yield to a very partial tradition, which many good and learned men have often contested: because, in following the Scripture, he follows a law, which the more he studies, the more he loves, and the more he understands; but in following her discriminating articles, the more he examines them, the more questionable they appear, the more obscure, and uncertain, from every appeal both to reason and revelation: because, in following the apostles, he follows disinterested guides; whereas, it is the interest of all Roman Catholic rulers and teachers, that their dominion should be upheld, and their influence over men's consciences be maintained. In one word, the faith of Protestants is built exclusively upon the Scriptures, because the inspired Psalmist assures us, that they are "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path: (*Ps.* 119.:) because our Lord continually refers to the Scriptures to determine controversies, commanding them to "be searched as testifying of him, who is the Author and Finisher of our faith:" because

his blessed apostle tells us, (2 *Tim.* iii. 16.,) “That all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, &c., that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works:” perfect *in his* faith, and walking in God’s commandments; wanting nothing more to perfect his Christian character; and, again, (*Rom.* xv. 4.,) “Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, for our instruction, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope;” thus expressly teaching that the hopes, and, consequently, the security of Christians, are grounded on the Scriptures. Now, if these, and many similar texts, be not conclusive, it must be because the Doctor lays it down (p. 151.) as an evident truth, that “these books (of the holy Bible) do not assert or vouch their own divine inspiration;” so that the prophets and apostles, when they wrote, did not, according to the Doctor, pretend to, or indicate any divine inspiration. A curious assertion, indeed, for a Christian divine!—But let this blunder also pass. We have thus far attended the Doctor pretty faithfully, though with that brevity which is consistent with a *few cursory* remarks upon his book. As to the various texts of holy Scripture, upon which he builds the infallibility of his church, they are all noticed, and, I trust, candidly explained in the *Short Answer* to the Appendix; and, if the reader should wish for further information on this head, he has only to turn to the polemical works of Chillingworth, Usher, Barrow, and an innumerable host of Protestant writers; who have repeatedly and completely annihilated these lofty pretensions of the Roman church, whenever men of real

erudition and candour have thought themselves at liberty, with unbiassed minds, to examine them to the bottom. In these works, the reader will find that all the arguments in support of her infallibility, drawn either from its expediency, necessity, or advantages, or from its vindicating the veracity of Christ and his apostles, are empty words and vain theology; that it affords no grounds for present consolation, or hopes of future happiness, which communion with Protestant churches, as integral parts of Christ's mystical body, does not equally and more satisfactorily supply, and that after all that can be said upon the subject, the great body of Christians have as powerful, nay, more powerful inducements to rely upon the teaching of a Protestant minister, than of a Romish priest; I say, *more powerful*, because the first refers them for his doctrines to the unerring oracles of God, while the latter enjoins implicit submission to his infallible church, without being able to tell him clearly where this infallibility can be found. All the pages of this part of the Doctor's reply, are laboured with much subtlety, and calculated to lead the reader through many intricate windings of his polemical labyrinth. But a clue may readily be found to enable us to penetrate into its most hidden recesses. Entrenched within these, the Doctor delivers his oracular dogmata, and, like Virgil's Sybil, thunders out his dark denunciations, blending truth with obscurity, and, like her, surrounded only with sapless eaves.

“ Talibus ex adyto dictis Cumœa Sibilla
Horrendas canit ambages, antroque remugit;
Obscuris vera involvens.”

The clue alluded to, is this; in every instance, the Doctor confounds the *Catholic* with the *Roman* church; all the promises and privileges belonging to the former, he appropriates to the latter, under the pretension, that to her alone belongs the monopoly of all gospel blessings, and the name of a Christian church. Let him prove this, and his *dark sayings* will appear luminous, and the controversy will be ended. But, “she is the Mother and Mistress of all churches;” so says Pope Pius; so has the Doctor sworn. She has never swerved from the primitive faith, nor can she do so; she has never innovated, nor can she innovate. In her the *man of sin*, the false *prophet*, can never be found: in her the *mystery of iniquity* can never begin to work. She *sitteth as a queen*, and never can be driven into the wilderness; and this, because “every succeeding generation of Christians (p. 130, 131.) bore constant and uniform testimony to the truth of her doctrines, from the apostolic to the present times. These numerous generations, constituting, at every period of time, the Catholic church, were all simultaneous witnesses of the doctrine received, preached, and approved by common consent: so that no one of these generations could make a change, or a false report of the faith of its predecessors, to the ensuing generation, without being contradicted and confounded by all the other generations existing at the same time.” This is a favourite argument with Roman Catholic divines, and the Doctor prosecutes it with tiresome prolixity. But what does it amount to? Merely to prove, what Protestants never denied, that when destructive heresies arose in the church, great bodies of the faithful immediately opposed and con-

demned them, as levelled at those common and essential doctrines of Christianity, which have been delivered down, through successive generations, to the present day. These, however, have been greatly obscured in some particular churches, while others have preserved them in all their purity; and it might readily be shown, and Dr. Milner has shown in his *History of the Church*, that in every age, even the most ignorant and flagitious, individuals and communities have adhered to the scriptural doctrines of salvation; while surrounding churches, and that of Rome in particular, encumbered them with idle and superstitious innovations. But *when*, or *where*, or by *whom*, were these innovations introduced? As well might we be required to ascertain the origin of every nation and language upon the earth, as to trace each religious opinion or practice to its source. The beginning and progress of innumerable errors and superstitions, are wrapt in obscurity. There was a time when the church of Rome, like others of Christendom, was pure and evangelical, and "her faith was spoken of throughout the whole world;" but, like others, founded by the apostles, she fell away, gradually, from her first love, and during the long prevalence of brutal ignorance, and more than Cimmerian darkness, in which all Christendom was enveloped, from the irruption of the northern hordes almost down to the period of the reformation, she enjoyed ample opportunities of introducing any opinions, of imposing any burthens that might swell her treasures, or gratify her ambition. When the Doctor, then, contends, that to prove the existence of an error, we must show when it began, or that it cannot be re-

ceived by one generation without being condemned by the following, he is not aware of the consequences to which his opinion leads him ; for, should it be well founded, idolatry could never have existed in the world. It is, I believe, admitted on all hands, that the worship of Jehovah was originally universal, without any mixture of idolatry among the sons of Adam, for some time after the creation ; and that it became universal again among the descendants of Noah for some ages after the flood ; but in neither of these periods did this worship remain long uncorrupted. The antediluvian church was gradually infected with error, and, like the Christian, had her watchmen ready to refute it. “ In the days of Enos men began to call themselves by the name of Jehovah.” (*Gen. iv. 26.*) At this time pious men became alarmed at the beginning of idolatry in the reprobate family of Cain, and, like many communities in the most gloomy night of the Christian era, formed themselves into a distinct party from the dominant religion, and assumed to themselves a name indicative of the pure worshippers of God. Now, when or where did this idolatrous worship begin ? Will the Doctor question it, because he cannot fix its date or its authors ? The case in the postdiluvian church is precisely the same—Noah and his family came forth from the ark the pure worshippers of the true God ; but their posterity soon began to exhibit symptoms of idolatrous propensities, and to blend superstitious observances with the worship of the Eternal. Instead of every successive generation protesting against the innovations of the preceding, it rather embraced them with increasing eagerness, until at length incorrigible su-

perstition separated all the ancient idolaters from the patriarchal church, and ended in total apostacy.

Now, when, or by whom, was this mixture of idolatry and superstition introduced? We find "Terah, the father of Abraham, serving *other* gods;" and little doubt can remain, that the ancestors of Abraham, and Abraham himself, before God's gracious call, were infected with the idolatry which prevailed in that age. But in the interval between the deluge and the calling of Abraham, an interval of 426 years, when, or where, did this idolatry begin? This discussion might be extended to any length; but enough has been said to check the triumphant strain of the Doctor, and likewise to convince the reader, that with the worship of the true God, and the acknowledgment of his providence, some superstitious errors, not destructive of either, may subsist: "Just as at this day, in the Roman church, the worship of the ever blessed Trinity subsists in preposterous conjunction with the worship of canonized men, and inanimate relics."—(See *Bishop Horsey's Dissertation on the Prophecies of the Messiah, &c.*) We cannot, therefore, fix, with precision, the exact period when erroneous opinions and practices crept into the church. It is sufficient for Protestants to show, that they have existed, do exist, and have been refuted and renounced. But, blessed be God, we can readily point to a time when such opinions were unknown. We can turn to the books of the New Testament, and shall there find nothing of them. "If," says Dr. A. Clark, "they be not met with in an apostolic epistle directed to this very Roman church, it would be absurd to look for them any where else. But there

is not one distinguishing *doctrine*, or *practice*, of the Romish church, found in this epistle. Here is no pope, no exclusive churchship, no indulgences, no auricular confessions, purgatories, masses, prayers for the dead, justification by works, transubstantiation, extreme unction, invocation of saints and angels, worship of images, &c. &c. Here are no inquisitions, no writs *de hæretico comburendo* ; nor, it may be added, that *holy incompatibility*, which the *illustrious* Bossuet claims for his church, and which, he tells us exultingly, renders *her the most intolerant of all churches*. “But,” continues the learned commentator, “here is nothing puerile, nugatory, or superstitious ; no dogma degrading to the understanding ; no religious act unworthy of the spirit and dignity of the gospel ; nothing that has not the most immediate tendency to enlighten the mind, and mend the heart of man. In a word, every thing is suitable to the state of man, and worthy of the majesty, justice, and benevolence of that God from whom this epistle came. Nor should we look for these doctrines and practices with more success in the writings of the primitive fathers. To pretend that there was a universal consent or agreement, upon these points, during the first ages of the church, is to support a paradox, which deserves no consideration. It is utterly destitute of all historical evidence, which, however, is pointed and conclusive, that for several centuries they were not known in the church: Providence has mercifully furnished this evidence in our day—the star of truth has appeared in the East. A precious remnant of primitive Christians has been discovered in India, which, for more than thirteen centuries, has preserved the great and fun-

damental doctrines of religion, pure and unadulterated from more modern corruptions. When, in the beginning of the 16th century, the Portuguese arrived in India, they found upwards of a hundred churches on the coast of Malabar. They immediately claimed these churches as belonging to the Pope: but the answer was, "Who is the Pope? we never heard of him." "We," said they, "are of the true faith, whatever you from the West may be, for we come from the place, where the followers of Christ were first called Christians." They came, indeed, from Syria, while churches founded by the apostles were flourishing in that country, and boasted of enjoying, for 1,300 years past, a succession of Bishops, appointed by the patriarch of Antioch. The Portuguese soon perceived, how formidable these churches might prove against many of their doctrines and superstitious observances. They invaded these harmless people, and lighted up against the refractory the flames of the inquisition. A compulsory synod was held, at which 150 of the Syrian clergy appeared, where they were accused of the following practices and opinions: "That they had married wives; that they owned but two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper; that they neither invoked saints, nor worshipped images, nor believed in purgatory; and that they had no other orders, or names of dignity in the church, than Bishop, Priest, and Deacon." These tenets, they were called on to abjure, or to suffer suspension from all church benefices. It was also decreed, that all the Syrian books on ecclesiastical subjects, that could be found, should be burned; "in order," said the inquisitors, "that no pretended apostolical monuments

may remain.” (See *Buchanan's Christian Researches in India*, p. 149.) “The doctrines of the Syrian churches,” says this apostolic and learned man, (p. 159.) “are few in number, but pure, and agree in essential points with those of the church of England.”

“Here is a fact, a clear, unquestionable, historical fact, that sets all the Doctor's sophistry at defiance. Here is a branch of the primitive apostolic church, subsisting uncorrupted through a long series of ages, and miraculously preserved as a living witness, that neither the head, nor many doctrines of the present church of Rome, were known to antiquity. The candid attention of Roman Catholics, is confidently invited to this fact, for it appears of sufficient weight to silence every cavil on the subject, and to render perfectly nugatory, the very tedious train of sophistical reasonings, with which the Doctor concludes his book. I say, his arguments all vanish before this luminous fact; for it is incumbent on him to prove, that either through a long lapse of ages, these churches held the discriminating doctrines and discipline of his church, or, that, at the period of their emigration, they were no churches at all. Now, the facts mentioned by Dr. Buchanan, refute both these suppositions. They were, undoubtedly, sound and lively branches of the Catholic church. They claimed no infallibility, but that which they derived from the Scriptures; no traditions, but such as are evidently apostolical; no scriptural canon, but that of the Old and New Testament, which prevailed in the eastern churches when they arrived in India, and which is nearly the same with that of the Protestant churches at this day. For 1,300 years they professed and experienced the

sufficiency of the Holy Scripture for salvation, as the sixth article of the Protestant Episcopal church expresses it.

Against this article, the Doctor puts forth all his skill, and calls up, through several pages, (146, &c.,) all his resources of polemical sophistry: resources, which have a thousand times been proved empty and futile, but which, notwithstanding, it is perhaps expedient briefly to notice in this place. This notice, however, can be nothing more than a further illustration of the argument in the *Short Answer*, (p. 110.) which the Doctor embarrasses, but does not confute. He tells us, that, in forming our religious faith, we are not “to convince ourselves, in the first instance, that the Scriptures are inspired by Almighty God, and consequently possess a plenary authority; and that then we are to believe the doctrines which they contain, because they are revealed.” All this the Doctor denies: but, can he show how faith can be produced in any other way? Can it be founded on any thing but the veracity of God, as its formal and ultimate motive, and the rational conviction that God has revealed his will to man? “But,” says the Doctor, “every man is bound to believe the articles of his faith, with an entire certainty of their being revealed by God.” This belief, he calls “an *act of faith*, totally distinct from *opinion*, moral *certainty*, and every *persuasion*, which admits of doubt, hesitation, or possibility of being mistaken.” (p. 147.) This is the groundwork of all his following reasonings, in favour of an infallible authority in his church. If once subverted, the whole fabric tumbles together. Now, this can easily be done, for what is an act of religious

faith, but a belief of a religious doctrine, because God has revealed it, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. But, how are we to know that God has revealed it? "Because," says the Doctor, "my infallible church has decreed that he has done so." But how shall I know, rejoins the person who is instructed, either that your church is infallible, or that she has made such a decree? "Because," says Dr. O'Gallagher, "I solemnly assure you, that this infallibility is revealed in the Scriptures, and these decrees have been made by popes and councils." Thus, the Roman Catholic acquiesces ultimately in the authority of his teacher, while the Protestant "searches the Scriptures, as he is commanded, in order to examine if these things be so." They both believe the doctrine, because God has revealed it; but supposing each incapable of close and deep investigation, the first is referred by a fallible priest to an infallible church, and the latter by his fallible teacher to the acknowledged oracles of God. Which of the two will feel most secure, let the reader determine. When, therefore, the Doctor asserts, "The Scriptures contain a revelation from God, and of course their doctrines are articles of Christian faith;" the first of these propositions must be previously established by the deductions of reason, founded either on actual investigation, or satisfactory authority, before the second can be admitted, and become an act of faith. A firm and rational conviction that a doctrine is revealed in the word of God, is sufficient to elevate it to an object of our faith; but still it remains to be proved that the Scriptures are the word of God, and

his infallible oracles. This can only be done by their own intrinsic excellence, and the collateral arguments adduced for this purpose. These indeed are unanswerable, but they are not articles of faith, but only motives of believing. Now, motives for believing a fact cannot be belief itself, or an act of religious faith. All, therefore, except those who delight in cavilling, will readily understand the meaning of the above-mentioned article to be nothing more than that all the divine truths, which Christ revealed to his apostles, and which they delivered to the churches, are contained in the Scriptures; in other words, all the material objects of our faith, of which the Scripture is not one, but only the means of conveying them unto us; which we believe not ultimately, and on its own account, but on account of the matter contained in it. So that, if we should believe the doctrines of the Scripture, and live accordingly, our salvation would not be affected, even if we were ignorant of the existence of any Scripture whatever. The end proposed by the Almighty is the belief of the gospel, the covenant between him and man; God has provided the Scripture as a mean for this end, and this we must believe, not as the ultimate object of our faith, but as its instrument only. It follows, then, from what has been said, and from much more that might readily be said on this subject, that the Protestant grounds his faith upon the veracity of God, and so far possesses an infallible assurance that it is sound and divine. He wants no living, unerring interpreter, to inform him what doctrines are contained in the Scriptures; he discovers them himself, written in as plain and intelligible language as any pope or councils can em-

ploy; and which he is satisfied to learn from pious, intelligent, and confidential instructors, fully as competent, he conceives, to teach and demonstrate what are scriptural doctrines, as the highest pretenders to infallible decisions. Is any infallible tribunal necessary to ascertain the articles of the apostles' creed, the great doctrines of man's fall and redemption, the influences of the Holy Spirit, and other essential tenets of the Catholic church, which she always professed to receive on the authority of the Scriptures? Now, these being the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, the Protestant requires no living authority to assure him that they are contained in his Bible: he has only to open it to find them there; and when he learns, moreover, that the universal church has always received them, he endeavours to excite in his heart such teachable dispositions as, with the grace of God, eventuate in unwavering faith and assurance. The Doctor, probably, never attended a pious Protestant on his dying bed; but he may be assured, that never was any uneasiness felt or expressed, with regard to his faith being grounded on the Scriptures alone: a few appropriate passages from these divine oracles compose and animate his departing spirit, much more rationally and effectually, than any reference to the intercession of saints, or other practices, of a church self-denominated infallible, can do. But, continues the Doctor, (p. 151.) "to follow up Protestant principles with consistency, he must learn from the *Scripture itself* what books of the Holy Bible are divinely inspired, and what is the true canon thereof." The fallacy of the first part of this position has already been shown, and, as to the canon of the Scripture, no

infallibility is requisite to ascertain it. Protestants admit their canon of the Scripture upon the credibility of *universal tradition*, not upon the authority of any particular church; and it might readily be proved, that of the authority of the canon of Scripture, generally adopted by Protestants, there never was any doubt in the Catholic church. But, supposing we should submit in this, and all other points, to the decision of the Roman church, how could she assure us that we should not be misled? She pretends, indeed, to infallibility; but how can she convince us that she possesses it? Will it be from Scripture? That, says the Doctor, cannot assure us of its own infallibility, and, therefore, not of his church's. Will it be from reason? *That*, surely, may deceive us in other things; and why not in this? How then will she convince us? by saying so. But of this very affirmation, the same question will return, How can it prove itself to be infallibly true? So that there can be no end of multiplying such questions, until we can rest upon something self-evident, which demonstrates to the world that this church is infallible. Now, since no such rock can be found, on which to build this mighty claim, it must of necessity, like the island of Delos, float up and down for ever; and yet upon this point, according to Roman Catholics, all other controversies of faith depend.

Wherefore, the Doctor needed not to urge any reason to prove, "that questions about Scripture are not to be decided by Scripture:" it is a self-evident proposition, and readily granted: but the corollary which he infers from it, that "therefore they are to be decided by his, or any *visible* church, is an illogi-

real conclusion, much like that of the sophist, who, because Pamphilus was not to have Glyariam for his wife, concluded that he must have her himself: as if there had been no more men in the world but he and Pamphilus. So, the Doctor, having concluded that such questions could not be settled by Scripture, appeals to his infallible church, as the only authority remaining. But the truth is, neither the one, nor the other, has any thing to do with this matter. For the question, "whether such or such a book be canonical Scripture," although it may be decided negatively out of Scripture, by showing apparent and irreconcilable contradictions between it and some other book confessedly canonical, yet *affirmatively* it cannot be, except by the concurrent testimony of the ancient churches. "But Protestants," says the Doctor, (p. 152.) "have excluded several books from the canon of Scripture," which are made part of it by the council of Trent. He then enumerates these books, of all which, it would be easy to prove, that doubts existed in the ancient church. In every learned commentator, the reader will find these proofs; so that the *sacrilegious cheat, Luther*, (p. 153.) and all the Protestant churches, whom the Doctor classes with the *Old Manicheans*, are reprobated for not admitting many books as canonical, which were deemed apocryphal by the primitive fathers. Did not, for instance, Melito, Athanasius, and Gregory Nazianzen, exclude the book of Esther from the canon: why then was Luther more guilty than they? Many similar instances might readily be alleged, which, for brevity's sake, are omitted. Protestants then receive all the books as canonical, which were always

deemed such by the ancient church. But, the Doctor will say, “is not this to make the church a judge in this matter?” It certainly is so, but not the present church, much less the present Roman church, but the general consent of the *ancient and primitive church of Christ*. The Doctor will not pretend, that any Scriptures, retained as canonical by Protestants, for instance, by the church of England, are not canonical. He will not allow, that the infallibility of his church, and all her discriminating doctrines, cannot be proved from these Scriptures; why then is he so angry at others being omitted, which never had the sanction of the universal church, and without which all necessary articles of Christianity may be known? The book of Maccabees, indeed, is deemed canonical in the Roman church, as favouring the doctrine of purgatory; but the very learned Lyranus,* and many other Roman Catholic doctors, consider it as apocryphal, and so did several ancient writers.

The Doctor passes from “the determination of the canon of the Scriptures, to the consideration and study of the books themselves;” (p. 153.) and here he indulges himself in a vein of obloquy and sophistry, that is really surprising. He asserts, that the German translation of the New Testament, by Luther, corrupts more than a thousand places in the New Testament alone: among others, (and this is probably selected as the most material,) he quotes *Rom. iii. 28*. “A man is justified by faith:” Luther adds to the text a word, and makes it *faith alone*. “Other instances,” says he, “are unnecessary:” and so indeed

* Among others, Gregory the Great did not hold this book to be a canonical Scripture. *Mor. lib. 19. c. 13.*

they are, if this be the most flagrant, for Luther adds nothing to the important or evangelical tenet delivered in the text, that man is really justified by *faith alone*; for the whole verse is, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law;”—surely, then, “by faith alone.” The fact, however, is, we have nothing to do with the corruptions and falsifications with which the Doctor charges Luther, and other Protestant translators; and these charges may be readily retorted upon Lyranus, or Lucas Brugensis, or Laurentius Valla, or Cajetan, or many others, who have committed palpable errors in their several translations. “Now, let me ask,” says the Doctor, “from which of those translations of the Holy Scripture, a sincere and intelligent Protestant can derive an infallible certainty of the divine revelation of the doctrines apparently expressed in them?” (p. 155.) The answer is, he derives his certainty from arguments applicable to them all, for all of them, I believe, express the great doctrines of religion; and, if they do not, they must be rejected as heretical. The Doctor possibly might not have perceived, that his question would involve him in considerable difficulty; for it may be asked with equal propriety, which, among the various translations in the primitive church, the fathers and doctors were to adopt. Let us hear St. Augustin, *lib. 2. de Chris. doc. cap. 11.* “They who have translated the Scriptures out of the Hebrew into Greek, may be numbered; but the Latin interpreters are innumerable: for, whensoever any one, in the first times of Christianity, met with a Greek Bible, and seemed to himself to have some skill in both languages, he

presently ventured upon an interpretation," or translation: of all these, that which was called the *Italian* was esteemed the best; as St. Austin assures us: (*ibid. chap. 15.*) "Among all these interpretations," says he, "let the *Italian* be preferred." Yet, so far was the church at that day from presuming upon the absolute purity and perfection of even this best translation, that St. Jerom thought it necessary to make a new translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew, and to correct the vulgar version of the New, from the original Greek. (*See lib. de Viris. illustribus.*) This work he undertook and performed, at the request of Damasus, Bishop of Rome. Now, how was the sincere Christian to discover Scripture truth, from all this variety of versions, or where, all this while, was the infallible authority to point out to him, which version contained the orthodox tenets of religion? It was silent, it was unknown, and, if unnecessary at that period, is unnecessary still, and, therefore, in this matter, Protestants must either stand or fall with the primitive church.

It was expected, that something would be said of the Vulgate in this place, but the Doctor has very prudently omitted any mention of this standard version of his church. He well knows that it abounds with erroneous translations: the departure from the original, at the 15th verse of the third chap. of Genesis, where the important promise of a Redeemer is generally supposed to be expressed, and where the Vulgate has it, "*ipsa conteret caput tuum,*" "*she* (instead of it, or *he*) shall *bruise thy head,* is one among the many mistakes that could be selected from this version." Nay, its warmest advocates allow, that

“it is impossible to discern which is the true reading of the vulgar edition, but by having recourse to the originals, and dependence upon them.” (*Bell. de verbo Dei. lib. 2. c. 11.*) And Fr. Laynes, the general of the Jesuits, who was present at the council of Trent, and took a leading part in all its deliberations, expressly tells us, (*Pro. Edit. Vulg. c. 21. p. 99.*) that, “If the council had purposed to approve an edition in all respects, and to make it of equal credit and authority with the fountains, certainly they ought, with exact care, first to have corrected the errors of the interpreter.” Yet this was what they did not, and thus omitted a favourable opportunity of creating in the minds of the faithful “an assurance of the true Scriptures,” which the Doctor contends can only be done by having recourse to his church. But of what service was her claim to infallibility, when she suffered *whole books* of Scripture to be utterly lost, and the originals of those that remain to be corrupted.

From this train of reasoning, which is reluctantly repeated, in order to meet the Doctor’s sophistry, continually recurring in a hundred different shapes, it will readily be perceived, that the three propositions, which he lays down as “the foundation, plan, and rule of the Protestant creed and faith,” (p. 159.) are combated with the weapons of errant sophistry and polemical chicanery. The first proposition is, “that, in his last religious inquiry, the first instruction the Protestant receives from his teacher is this, “that the Scriptures alone contain every article of the Christian faith;” and a very wise instruction it is, whether such a Protestant be competent to examine the Scriptures or not. In the first supposition he is

referred to them; in the second, he must rely for his motives in believing the Scriptures to be God's word, on the learning and integrity of his authorized teacher, whom God commands him to hear as his appointed minister, and whose doctrines he can readily compare with those of the Christian church in general. Now, how will the Doctor adopt any other mode of instruction? How will he convince his pupil that the Scriptures alone do not contain every article of faith? Will he not refer him to his unerring church, and tell him that she teaches many articles *not* to be found in Scripture alone? Here is a dilemma, on one of the horns of which the Doctor must be tossed. He must either acknowledge that every article of faith is contained in the Scriptures, or that his doctrines of purgatory, confession, transubstantiation, &c. &c. are not to be found in them. If this latter be the case, why appeal to the Scriptures for the truth of these doctrines; if it be not, then it is clear that all the articles of the Doctor's faith are contained in them.

But, adds he, Scripture does not teach us that it contains every article of faith; nor does it teach that "no doctrine is to be received as divinely revealed which is not expressly contained in it." *Quo teneam vultus mutantem Protea nodo?* How often must we repeat, that, provided we be assured from other sources, from which moral certitude can be derived, that the Scriptures are the word of God, no assertions of their own, are necessary in the first instance, because these, being part of them, cannot be proved satisfactory from themselves; but when once demonstrated, by arguments drawn from any source whatever, to be the oracles of truth, they then be-

come solid foundations of our Christian faith. This source, the Doctor contends, is his infallible church; without her, we cannot believe, with a divine faith, that the Scriptures are God's word. But where is this infallibility, this tenet of his church, to be found? He will answer, in the Scriptures. But these do not contain every article of Christian faith; and, therefore, possibly not this tenet of infallibility among the rest; so that, after all, the assurance of the Scriptures being a divine revelation, is as much an act of religious faith with the Protestant as the Romanist. The two churches, then, though from different motives of credibility, and different sanctions, finally agree in confessing the divinity of the Scriptures: this point once established, whatever they afterwards declare of themselves becomes an article of our belief. The Doctor contends, that in no passage in Scripture, "from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelations, can be discovered even one of the above-mentioned propositions:" (p. 158.) though, indeed, if the *first* of them be there, the other two must necessarily follow; for nothing can be more evident than this conclusion, that "if the Scriptures alone contain all the articles of Christian faith, none but such articles can be received as divinely revealed; and that from the Scripture alone, every sincere inquirer may derive all the articles of his faith." The two last inferences are perfectly superfluous. To prove the Protestant principle, "to wit, that each individual *should* (rather say *can*) discover and ascertain all the articles of his faith by his own personal examination and discussion of the Scriptures," three texts, says the Doctor, are usually alleged. In this statement of the matter,

there is a palpable, I will not say a wilful, misrepresentation. It is intimated, that "each individual Protestant is obliged to discover and ascertain all the articles of his faith, by his own personal examination and discussion of the Scriptures." It is not necessary to repeat the refutation of this obstinate sophism. Let us proceed to the three texts in question: if carefully examined, they evidently countenance the Protestant rule of faith; but the Doctor has omitted others, which positively establish it. In "reading the Scriptures, from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelations," how can we account for the following text having escaped his notice? "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." (2 *Tim.* iii. 14.) Here the apostle points out from whom his pupil had received the assurance of the Scriptures; evidently not from the Scriptures themselves. Then, verses 15, 16, and 17, he continues: "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by 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*." This text wants no comment; it establishes, without a doubt, the full sufficiency of the Scriptures for every purpose of Christian doctrine and Christian morality; it supersedes the necessity of mentioning other Scripture declarations to the same effect, and utterly annihilates the cavils of the Doctor, in pages 159, and the two following, of his *Reply*. When, therefore, the

Doctor argues, that *unlearned* and ignorant men cannot understand the Scriptures, we should be glad to know whether he means *all*, or *any* Scriptures whatever, or, whether he means they cannot understand them sufficiently, either from their own investigation, or from the faithful preaching of the gospel, to “make them wise unto salvation:” if the first, the most learned are in the same situation: if the second, daily experience will confute him; for, in the usual distribution of intellectual blessings, every person can understand the story, the precepts, the promises and threats of the gospel: if the third, the above text most positively contradicts him; so that we may safely conclude, with St. Austin, “Ea quæ manifeste posita sunt in sacris Scripturis, omnia continent, quæ pertinent ad fidem, moresque vivendi.”* Whatsoever things are clearly set down in the Holy Scriptures, contain all things appertaining to faith and moral conduct.

“But,” says the Doctor, (p. 161.) “I go farther, and affirm, that no Protestant doctrine,” that is, as he explains it, no doctrine, which distinguishes Protestants from Roman Catholics, “can be proved, or maintained by Scripture alone:” which is merely saying, in other words, that such doctrines must be false. This opens the whole controversy between the churches anew; for a Protestant is equally authorized to say, that the discriminating doctrines of the Roman church cannot be proved from Scripture, or otherwise. The Doctor has not probably remembered, in prosecuting this argument, how unnecessary it

* See many other texts to the same purpose, p. 115 et seq. *Short Answer.*

is to prove a negative, when an opposite truth can be clearly demonstrated. If it be shown, that the three angles of a triangle be equal to two right angles, will it be necessary to prove that they are not equal to four? If the unity of the Godhead be proved from the Scriptures, will it be necessary to demonstrate the falsity of polytheism? And here the Doctor indulges his usual propensity to quibble: he says, for instance, (p. 162.) that the Protestant tenet is, "the church of Christ is fallible, and subject to errors in point of faith." Now, the Protestant tenet is no such thing; it merely asserts, that *particular churches are fallible*, and subject to error; that in fact, many have been destroyed by adopting fundamental errors, and that none are secure from sharing their fate, but such as adhere to the foundations of truth, delivered in the Scriptures, against which alone, the gates of hell shall never prevail. It is not necessary, therefore, for "the Protestant divine, to lay his finger on any particular text, expressing the church of Christ to be fallible, and subject to error," (p. 163.) but merely to show that some *particular church* has erred, and is therefore subject to error. With respect to the church of Rome, this has been abundantly shown. Suppose the Doctor should be asked, how he proves that the Roman church is the *mother and mistress of all churches*, (See *Pope Pius's creed*.) Would he not have recourse to the text, "Thou art Peter," &c., and to others of the same tendency? "But no," says a Protestant, "the church of Jerusalem was the mother of all churches." Now, how can this assertion be refuted, but by showing either that the Scripture teaches the supremacy of the Roman church, or that she

declares herself to be supreme? The reader will therefore see the fallacy of the Doctor's argument. It is equally evident in what he says of purgatory, (p. 164, &c.) "The Scripture," says he, "nowhere teaches that there is no purgatory:" therefore, this Protestant doctrine is unscriptural, and oversets the Protestant rule of *faith*. But let it be asked, how the Scriptures could say any thing on a question, which had never been agitated when the Scriptures were written? The word of God deals not with chimeras. As well might it be said, that the metempsychosis of Pythagoras, or the craniology of Dr. Gall, cannot be refuted by the Scriptures. The idea, indeed, of a state between final happiness and misery, furnished matter for poetical fiction, but could never have gained admission into a system founded upon a full, "perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

As to the doctrine of transubstantiation, which the Doctor alleges as another irresistible argument in his favour, it cannot surely be refuted explicitly from the Bible; because the writers of the Bible knew nothing about it. The word with them could have carried no meaning, of course not that of its modern advocates. Protestants, therefore, do not say that the refutation of this tenet is clearly contained in the Bible; but that the institution and nature of the Lord's supper, is recorded and delivered in such terms as must absolutely preclude the admission of this doctrine. (e) Sincerely is it regretted that the Doctor mentions this tenet at all. At the present day of deep research,

(e) See notes at the end.

and biblical accuracy, when the human mind revolts at any authority that countenances contradictions, which the obvious use of our senses is competent to discover, it would be gratifying to every liberal person, that as little as possible should be said on this subject. The many illustrious members of the Roman church, who have defended by their writings, and illustrated in their lives, the common doctrines and precepts of our holy religion, have established a claim to the veneration of the writer of these sheets, which he would forfeit with reluctance, and he is willing to believe that in refusing to examine impartially the arguments of Protestant divines against this tenet of their church, they have also overlooked the spirit of intolerance, and horrid persecutions which have been inflicted on mankind, for merely adhering, in this instance, to the testimony of their senses. The detail of these atrocities, is too disgusting to repeat, unless it were to create a suspicion in honest, though misguided minds, that a doctrine, which countenances the heresy of persecution, and has filled Christendom with blood, cannot descend from the Father of mercies, and "the Giver of every good gift." May I presume to suggest to pious Roman Catholics the expression of Averroes, as the dictate of unsophisticated reason, "*Quandoquidam Christiani comedunt quod adorant, sit anima mea cum philosophis:*"—"since Christians eat what they adore, let my soul be with the philosopher's:" may I entreat them to consider, if transubstantiation be a fiction, to what a dangerous delusion they are exposed in adopting it: for can any act of idolatry be more explicit, than the adoration of a wafer, instead of the body, and blood, and

divinity of Christ? Their own writers allow, there cannot. There is a passage in the first Epistle to the *Cor.* x. 14, which seems to indicate that some danger of this kind was communicated to the prophetic mind of the apostle: "Wherefore, my dearly beloved," says he, "flee from idolatry. I speak unto wise men: judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the *communion* of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" He says not, that the cup, or its contents, is the blood, or the bread the body of Christ, but only the *communion*, or participation of both, in all their pardoning and sanctifying effects.

The seven concluding pages of the Doctor's book, containing little more than a repetition of his preceding arguments against the Protestant rule of faith, require, of course, no additional attention. They are made up of the same bold assertions, and sophistical reasonings, which run through all the other parts of his work. He takes it for granted, that no Protestant community is entitled to the venerable appellation of a church, and therefore, "Whilst each individual Protestant," says he, (p. 171.) "fondly flatters himself that he is a member of some church, in the unity of some faith, and in the communion of saints, expressed in the apostles' creed—he is, in fact, destitute of any settled tenets of faith, devoid of any church to direct and instruct him therein, deprived of any certain rule or principle for the interpretation of the Scriptures, delivered over to the suggestions of his own weak reason, exposed to the delusions of his own imagination, and even to the influence of his own local prejudices, and personal attachments." Now, the prece-

ding *remarks* will, I trust, be sufficient to put every reader upon his guard, against these dismal phantoms, conjured up by the Doctor to frighten weak and untutored minds: in them he will perceive the efficacy of the Scriptures “to make us wise unto salvation,” and to enable us “to know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, if we do his will:” he will clearly understand, that by no other means can a man convince himself that religious truth is delivered in the Scriptures, than by the exercise of his reason, in a candid and personal investigation, or a well-founded deference to the authority of his teachers: and that by these same means only, can the Roman Catholic attain to the persuasion, that his church is infallible; unless, indeed, in fixing the first principles of his faith, he deem it his duty, to lull his reasoning faculty asleep, in obedience to a church, which claims an exemption from all error, without permitting him to investigate this claim. Wherefore, if in these circumstances, if in a blind renunciation of his reason, to the imposing dictates of any branch of the Catholic church, founded upon vague and uncertain traditions, and palpable usurpation, the Roman Catholic can flatter himself with a complete security, and “repose in conscious safety on the bosom of his spiritual mother,” how much more solid must be the security of the regular and conscientious member of any other branch of the Christian church, which refers him exclusively to the oracles of God, and teaches him to acquiesce ultimately in them. In complying with this direction, he may humbly, yet confidently trust, that the same “blessed Lord God, who has caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, will grant, that he may in

such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of his holy word, he may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which has been given him in our Saviour Jesus Christ." (*Collect for 4th Sun. in Advent.*) Such is the divine source of genuine consolation to every believer; and, blessed be God, the streams are now flowing copiously from it, which are to water the whole earth. Among every people, tongue, and nation, their circulation is hailed with rapturous eagerness and joy, as the truth which they contain, is the only ground of present comfort and cheering expectation of future blessedness: it is welcomed by many thoughtful Christians, as ushering in that *one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic* church, which they conceive to be rather the *future* than *present* object of their faith: and which, considered in this light, would lessen some difficulties attending this article of our belief. The Doctor may think as lightly as he pleases, of these fountains of gospel security and assurance; but, it is hoped that his opinions have not many advocates in America. Lamentable, indeed, would be the reflection, that bigotry of any kind, no longer able to hold its ground in Europe, should find an asylum in any churches among us. The Doctor will probably reply, that his opinions are those of all Roman Catholic divines. (*f*) But, what will he say to the following sentiments, expressed in an address of a Roman Catholic priest in Swabia, to the British and Foreign Bible Society, in 1804? After passing the highest encomiums, and warmest approbation on this

(*f*) See notes at the end.

institution, he rejoices “at the great number of zealous friends of the Bible in London, who are filled with the desire to send out the pure word of God, *as the best preacher*, into the world.” He then goes on to explain the meaning of the council of Trent, in prohibiting the indiscriminate reading of the Scriptures, and concludes—“Now, I beg you, my dear brother in Christ, (meaning the Protestant Secretary to the Society, Dr. Owen,) to receive these few lines in love—I cannot express, in terms sufficiently strong, the fervency of my joy, and of my love towards all who, throughout England, heartily believe in Jesus Christ, as their only Saviour, and zealously endeavour to extend the Redeemer’s kingdom. *I embrace them all, as the beloved and elect of God, as friends and brethren in Christ, let them be of whatever name, or belong to whatever church, or denomination.*”—Here are sentiments truly becoming an enlightened minister of the gospel. Nor, are those of the Rev. Mr. Wittman, Director of the Ecclesiastical Seminary at Ratisbon, where a Roman Catholic Bible Society had been established, less grateful and dear to every Christian. In an address to the Roman Catholics throughout Germany, in 1805, peculiarly simple, liberal, and devout, he begins by saying, “It is desirable that the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament, might be put into the hands of many pious Christians at a low price : thereby they would be comforted in their afflictions, strengthened in their trials, and better preserved from the temptations of the world. *Many excellent persons do not find in the public religious instruction, that, for which they hunger : they are also, often, in the confessional, only judged for their outward deeds, without*

being led to an acknowledgment of their inward corruption, and to faith in the blood of Jesus their Redeemer: if these could read the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament, in the quiet time of holidays, their faith in the simple doctrines from the mouth of Jesus Christ, would, by the mercy of their Saviour, be thereby enlivened; and the Lord's gifts in the Holy Spirit, be quickened in them. They would hear the voice of the Father in their inward part, drawing them to their Saviour, of which Christ saith, "They shall be all taught of God; and whosoever hath learned of the Father, and received it, cometh unto me." (*John xi. 14.*—German translation.) And he concludes a prayer with this sentiment, "O Lord, Redeemer of our souls—if it please thee, let thy holy history, the history of thy childhood, of thy ministry, of thy suffering, and of the victory in the Holy Spirit, in the apostles and firstlings of the Christian church, come into the hands of thy little ones, for their comfort and consolation." Now, would these good men have subscribed to the Doctor's opinion, that, in reading the Scriptures, a Protestant cannot experience equal consolation and peace?

But I have done: solemnly protesting, that on this, as well as on every other occasion, my aim has been to contend not for victory, but for truth; not to nourish, but to tear up the old and baneful root of bitterness; to turn the attention of every fellow Christian to those fundamental principles of our common religion, which are delivered in the Bible; to bring to every tenet not discovered there, a jealous, candid, and patient examination; that all the truth revealed by Almighty God may be received and supported, in

order to promote all the charity and godliness which it enjoins. In dismissing this controversy, the writer of these sheets, however indignant may be his feelings at some of the high pretensions of the Roman church, and their direful consequences, discards from his bosom every spark of animosity towards any of her liberal, pious, and enlightened adherents, "who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity"—Towards all such, he would willingly adopt the language of a Roman Catholic priest, in an animated address to the British and Foreign Bible Society, and pray that it might be universal: "United to Christ," says he, "we are united to each other: neither continents, nor seas; neither various forms of government, nor different outward confessions of religion, can separate us: all things pass away—but love abideth."

N O T E S.

Note (a) page 10. Perhaps the confidence of the Doctor, in this passage, will be somewhat abated, when he finds several of the ancient fathers, and divines of his own church, interpreting it in the sense commonly adopted by Protestants. Thus St. Chrysostom; "Christ says, *super hanc Petram, upon this Rock*. He says not *super hunc Petram*; that is, *upon this Peter*; for Christ built his church upon the faith, and not upon the man, *non enim super hominem, sed super fidem edificabat ecclesiam*. (*Hom. de cruce Domini. Hom. de Pentecost, et 55 in Matt.*) Hilary, Gregory Nyssene, and Cyril, all declare, "That was the Rock which Peter confessed, saying of Christ, Thou art the Son of God." (*Hil. l. 2. de Trin. cap. 6. Greg. Nyss. in Testimo. vet. test. de Trin. contra Judæos. Cyril de Trin. lib. 4.*) The learned Theophylact interprets the words in the same way; "Upon this Rock, meaning Christ." (*Comment. in Matt. 16.*) Eusebius, Emisenus, or, as some think, Empserius, are explicit on this subject. Theodoret, Anselm, and others, are of the same opinion; and as for the great St. Austin, though he sometimes varies his interpretation, yet, as Dr. Stapleton, an eminent Roman Catholic divine, acknowledges, (*Doctr. Princip. Controv. 2. lib. 6. c. 3.*) "he is inclined rather by the word rock, to understand Christ; and to conceive him saying to Peter, I will not build me upon thee, but thee upon me." The Latin is explicit, "*Super hanc Petram, &c. id est super hanc Petram quam confessus es, quam cognovisti, dicens, tu es Christus filius Dei vivi, super hanc ædificabo ecclesiam meam, super me ædificabo te, non me super te.*" (*Augus. de verbo dom. secund. Matt. serm. 13.*) And again, (*Tract. 124. in John.*) "*Petra erat Christus, super quam ipse ædificatus est Petrus;*" "the Rock was Christ, upon which Peter was built." Of the same opinion was Gregory the Great, bishop of Rome, when sitting in the very supposed chair of St. Peter—"Christ himself is the Rock, from which Peter received his name." (*Greg. in Psal. Penitent. in illa verba Initio tu domine, &c.*) So that Calvin had good reason to say, that it was not from want of clear and ample testimony of antiquity that he objected to the authority of the fathers on this head, but from fear of tiring his readers." (*Inst. lib. 4. c. 6.*) Nor are the declarations of several Roman Catholic divines less explicit on this head: Nicholas Lyranus, a celebrated expositor of the 14th century; Nicholas de Cusa, commonly known by the name of Cardinal Cusanus; and Cardinal Hugo, all agree in asserting, that by the Rock in this place is meant Christ." (*Lyr. in Matt. c. 16.*) "*Quamquam Petro dictum est, tu es Petrus, &c. tamen per Petram, Christum, quem confessus est, intelligimus.*" (*Cus. Concord. Cath. lib. 2. cap. 13.*) The learned Jesuits, Pererius and Salmeron, interpret the words in the same manner; the first declaring, (*Comment. in Dan. 2.*) "Christ is that Rock upon which the church is built;" and the other contending, with Ven. Bede, that whenever the word *foundation* occurs in the singular number, it means Christ alone." These authorities are surely abundantly sufficient to satisfy any reasonable mind, and to demolish all the Doctor's arguments built upon this passage.

Note (b) page 21. If the Doctor had ever looked into the work of the learned Daille *de usu Patrum*, he would have discovered there many opinions of the fathers, calculated to check his implicit deference to their authority. To instance only a few of the many that might be mentioned: Justin Martyr held the millenarian system; and it was for some time regarded as an article of

Christian faith, though afterwards anathematized. Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, says, that it was a tradition from St. John, that Christ was forty or fifty years of age when he began to preach; and expressly affirms, that all the elders who were in Asia with St. John witnessed that he delivered it to them; and that they who had seen the other apostles, attested that they also delivered the same tradition. (*Adv. Hæres. lib. 2. c. 39.*) Here we may learn what we are to think of many other traditions, far less authenticated, and which, notwithstanding, have been imposed upon the faithful as of equal authority with the Scriptures. Clement of Alexandria taught, that the pains of hell are merely purgatorial, and are not to be eternal; that the angels discovered to the women whom they loved upon earth, many secrets which they ought not to have revealed. St. Cyprian thought that the Eucharist was necessary to the salvation of children, and should be administered to them almost as soon as they are born. St. Hilary held, that Christ suffered no sense of pain in his passion; that baptism does not cleanse us from all our sins; that even the Virgin Mary must pass through an expiatory fire. Origen is allowed by all to have written many great and material errors. "St. Basil," says the learned Jesuit Petavius, has "multæ mirifica, et si verum quærimus, parum Catholica;" i. e. "many wonderful things, and, in truth, by no means Catholic;" he also seems to have thought that the torments of hell were not to be eternal; and St. Gregory Naz. appears to have been of the same opinion. St. Gregory of Nyssa taught this doctrine in the most express manner. St. Ambrose thought that all, without exception, even St. Peter and the blessed Virgin, must pass through the cleansing fire. St. Epiphanius advanced many strange and unwarranted doctrines, as may be seen in Petavius's notes upon his writings. St. Chrysostom appears to have believed that the sin of Adam only made us subject to corporal death: he admitted none into heaven before the general resurrection, and recommended praying for the damned; as did also St. Augustin and John Damascen. The rash and erroneous notions of St. Jerom were very numerous, and his acrimonious vulgarisms fully as offensive as those of Luther; but he offers as an apology, "that he sometimes indulged himself a little in rhetorical flourishes." "In morem declamatorum paululum lusimus." (*In. Helv.*) St. Augustin maintained the necessity of infant communion; that children dying without baptism were condemned to the torments of hell: he also advanced other extraordinary sentiments, many of which, however, he afterwards recalled in his *retractations*. No satisfaction is felt in adducing these aberrations of the human mind, even in the best of men; and it is done merely to show upon what weak foundations every religious doctrine rests, when once we lose sight of revelation. The several passages from the ancient fathers, containing the above, and many other exceptionable opinions, are quoted at full length in Daille's work above mentioned.

Note (c) page 25. See Notes at pages 26 and 35 of the Letter to the Roman Catholics of the city of Worcester.

Note (d) page 35. Of the council of Trent, no mention was at first intended in these Remarks. To unbiassed minds, the authority of Fra. Paolo, Vargas, &c., was deemed amply sufficient. The accusation of *wilful* and *reflect-ed* mistatement, (p. 100.) only excites a smile. For surely, when it was said, in the *Short Answer*, "that the whole business was conducted by the haughty legate Crescentio," it could only allude to the business done during his presidency. It was unwise in the Doctor, by a high wrought panegyric on this council, to provoke any discussion of its merits. However, in case the Doctor should ever wish to renew his inquiries respecting this assembly, the 5th chap. of the 4th book of *Richer's History of General Councils*, is recommended to his perusal. *Richer*, though professedly a Roman Catholic doctor, was, it is acknowledged, no friend to the court of Rome; on which account his life was attempted, as that of Paolo Sarpi had been: but he was a man of integrity and erudition, whom Cardinal Richelieu and his adherents could no otherwise confute, than by endeavouring to raise a party against him, and to ensnare him into the hands of the inquisitors. "In the council of Trent,"

says he, "the apostolic legates were alone permitted to propose, and to prescribe whatever was to be done; and this was artfully contrived on purpose to prevent any effectual reformation of the church and Roman court." He tells us, "that the Pope contrived that of 267 prelates who assisted at the council, at least two-thirds should be Italians, who, accustomed to the dominion of the Roman court, were entirely at the beck of the Pontiff, as of their absolute sovereign." Hence we cease to wonder that Sanctius, a doctor of Sorbonne, who accompanied the Cardinal of Lorraine to the council, should congratulate his friend Dr. D'Espence for not following him thither, as he intended. "You never had," says he, "a better inspiration, than when you determined not to come to Trent. For, I believe you would have died at seeing the indignities, which are here committed to prevent a reform. There is not one of us, who would not wish, at the hazard of his life, to be back at the Sorbonne. It is impossible to give you a distinct account of all I have seen and heard in the council." And Richer, continues to remark, that "it is inbred in the court of Rome to regard her own temporal rights and absolute monarchy, more than the patrimony of Christ, and the salvation of souls; that is, to prefer human claims to the eternal law of God: from whence so many heresies and schisms have arisen, have been propagated, and are daily more and more increasing." "In short," adds this learned Sorbonist, "this was the end and aim of the reform carrying on at Trent; not to have any real good in view, but merely to attend to a certain outward show, and specious semblance; while, in the mean time, every thing was accommodated to the private convenience and splendour of the Roman court. Hence that magnificent and almost theatrical manner of ornamenting their churches, and their altars; their sacerdotal dresses of gold and silver tissue—those frequent, and solemn censures and condemnations of books—those swarms of new religious orders, which are daily arriving from Rome. By these, and similar artifices, the attention of their people is dexterously called off from every thought and hope of a reform, that the princes and prelates of the Roman church may still continue to gratify every wish, and to indulge themselves, without control, in all their accustomed luxuries and enjoyments." Can this be the result of those decrees, which, we are told, "seemed good to the Holy Ghost?" But more reflections are unnecessary.—(See *Short Answer*, p. 64, &c.)

Note (e) page 65. As some readers of these *Remarks* may not possibly possess the valuable commentary of the learned Dr. Adam Clark, I cannot forbear soliciting their attention to a note of his, at the end of chap. xii. 1 *Cor.*—"It may be necessary," says he, "to show, that without the *cup* there can be no Eucharist. With respect to the *bread*, our Lord had simply said, "Take, eat, this is my body:" but concerning the *cup* he says, "Drink ye all of this:" for as this pointed out the very essence of the institution, viz. "the blood of atonement," it was necessary that each should have a particular application of it; therefore, he says, "Drink ye all of this." By this we are taught that the *cup* is essential to the Lord's supper: so that they who deny the *cup* to the people, sin against God's institution; and they who receive not the *cup*, are not partakers of the body and blood of Christ. If either could, without mortal prejudice, be omitted, it might be the *bread*; but the *cup*, as pointing out the blood poured out, i. e. the life, by which alone this great sacrificial act is performed, and remission of sins procured, is absolutely indispensable. On this ground, it is demonstrable, that there is not a Popish priest under heaven, who denies the *cup* to the people, (and they all do this,) that can be said to celebrate the Lord's supper at all; nor is there one of their votaries that ever received the holy sacrament. How strange is it, that the very men who plead so much for the bare, literal meaning of "this is my body," in the preceding verse, should deny all meaning to "Drink ye all of this cup," in this verse! And, though Christ has, in the most positive manner enjoined it, will not permit one of the laity to taste it!" "See," he adds, "the whole of this argument at large, in my discourse 'On the Nature and Design of the Eu-

charist." On this subject, it may be useful just to add, that had the doctrine of transubstantiation prevailed generally in the ancient church, when the Arian heresy arose, how readily might it have been refuted by alleging the practice of all Christendom in adoring Christ in the Eucharist as the Supreme God? And yet no such argument occurs in the writings of the orthodox fathers.

Note (f) page 69. That the Doctor's theology is by no means in unison with the system generally prevailing at this day among Roman Catholic divines in Europe, will readily appear, by comparing it with Veron's famous *rule of faith*, to which an appeal is commonly made, by modern apologists for the Roman church. If this be in reality the rule of her faith, the writer of these sheets, however he may approve of it in many points, solemnly declares, and in this the Doctor will probably agree with him, that the doctrines which he was taught in early life as articles of faith, were very different. A few extracts from this famous rule are here presented to the reader, in which he will perceive such an approximation to Protestant principles, as with mutual candour might possibly be ripened into church communion. According to this rule we are informed, that nothing is of faith, or necessary to be believed, which was not revealed to us through the prophets, apostles, or canonical writers: nothing is of faith, which we know from revelations made since the times of the apostles: no doctrine founded on the word of God, or any text of Scripture, which has been variously expounded by the fathers, is a doctrine of faith: no conclusion, however certainly and evidently deduced from any proposition of faith, is a doctrine of Catholic faith: not all the practices even of the universal church, are sufficient to make any thing an article of Christian belief: even a general council may err, in controversies which chiefly depend on the information, and testimony of men: although the Pope be not infallible in respect to his decrees of excommunication, yet a person who should not obey them, would sin mortally, and incur the excommunication: it is not of faith, that *all* our good works are meritorious of eternal life: it is not of faith, that a just man can make satisfaction for another: it is not of faith, that there is a treasure in the church, consisting of the satisfaction of the saints: it is not of faith, that the church has power to grant such indulgences, by which the punishment due either in this life, or in purgatory, for sins already remitted, are relaxed: it is not of faith that the saints are our mediators, and not Christ alone: it is not of faith that the canonized saints are really saints, or that such persons ever existed: it is not of faith that the body of Christ is contained in the symbols, as in a place: it is not of faith that the sacrifice of the mass is of infinite value; that saints can hear our prayers, or that Christians are bound to pray to them; that images, pictures, and relics, *must* be venerated and honoured. All these opinions *are*, or *were*, universally taught in the Gallican church; and no man was deemed a heretic for maintaining them. Now, let me ask, if one Roman Catholic, out of one hundred, would recognise, in this exposition of his faith, the doctrines he has always been taught to believe? Will Doctor O'Gallagher allow this exposition to be fair and candid? Will he allow, that any person, who should all his life refuse to address any prayers to saints, or ever to invoke the Virgin Mary; who should never strive to gain indulgences, plenary or partial; who should withhold every kind of veneration to images and relics; who should never pray for, nor assist at prayers for the dead; who should deny that the saints are our mediators, &c., would such a person, I ask, be considered as an orthodox Roman Catholic? This argument might be carried much further, and illustrated in many other instances, so as to show that the boasted infallibility of the Roman church, is of little service in settling either the principles or practices of her adherents.







