

LETTERS TO A WAVERER.

ON THE

ROMISH CONTROVERSY.

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How can God's glory be sought, where his word and commandment are wilfully broken? How can charity to man stand, when charity to God, which is obedience to his word, is overthrown? As for the doctrine which I have professed and preached, I do confess unto you in writing, as to the whole world I shortly shall, by God's grace, in suffering, that it is the very true doctrine of Jesus Christ, of his apostles, and all good men. . . . Therefore waver not.—BRADFORD, MARTYR, 1555.

 Seeleys.

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PREFACE.

THE author was induced to compose the Letters which are here presented to the public by the following circumstance :—A friend of the writer, attracted by the pomp and splendour, and yielding to the fascination of the Romish mode of worship, had at length become entangled in the snares of Popery. Being persuaded that ignorance of the nature, constitution, and operation of the respective churches of England and Rome had greatly contributed to this unhappy event, the writer was anxious to put into the hands of the straying sheep, an easy and compendious statement of the privileges and benefits afforded in the former communion, and of the erroneous doctrines and practices which are sanctioned and inculcated by the latter. But he did not know of any work which seemed to him adapted to the case in question. The important points on which we are at issue with the Church of Rome are, indeed, to be found clearly stated in the voluminous works of the Reformers and their successors : but few persons, comparatively, have either time, or inclination, or opportunity, to ex-

mine them carefully. Our Cranmers, and Riddleys, and Jewells, and Hookers, and other learned men have bequeathed to us abundant resources ; but this very abundance causes difficulty and embarrassment. It is therefore necessary to select from these vast stores of learning, " here a little and there a little," and to place the subject in a somewhat popular form before the generality of readers, or it will fail to attract that attention which its great importance merits.

It is the object of the author, or rather, compiler of this little work, to exhibit to the members of the Church of England, the more essential points on which Romanists and ourselves differ ; and to contrast the errors and corruptions of Popery, with the scriptural purity and excellence of that Church which, through the labours of our venerable Reformers, under the providence and blessing of God, has been established in this United Kingdom.

Were the members of the Church of Rome permitted, or, had they the moral courage to determine, to think for themselves in spiritual things, the writer would also entreat *them* to consider seriously, which of the respective churches has the better claim to their confidence and affection. But the spiritual bondage, to which they are subjected, renders such an appeal almost hopeless. Yet there are some individuals of that communion, it has been repeatedly stated, who do not feel quite satisfied to be deprived of the liberty of using their understanding in a concern, on which their eternal hap-

piness depends. To such persons he would say, in the words of Archbishop Tillotson :—“ *Consider, and shew yourselves men. . . .* Let not the authority of any priest or church persuade you out of your senses. Credulity is certainly a fault, as well as infidelity : and He who said, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed* : hath no where said, *Blessed are they that have seen and yet have not believed* : much less, *Blessed are they that believe directly contrary to what they see.*”

The destructive nature of the doctrines and practices, avowed and maintained by the Church of Rome, is abundantly shewn in the following pages. And should any Romanist flatter himself that the charges, here preferred against his church, are unworthy of notice, as being but the inventions of its enemies, it will be his own fault if he should continue under such a delusion. Rome is condemned, not on the testimony of enemies, but out of her own mouth ; for references will be found, at the end of this volume, to documents and authorities which every Romanist must respect, so long as he believes his church to be infallible.

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LETTERS TO A WAVERER.

LETTER I.

OUTWARD ATTRACTIONS OF ROMANISM—THE TEST OF TRUTH.

DEAR SIR,

ALTHOUGH your communication, which I received two days ago, gave me considerable uneasiness, it did not greatly surprise me. For after I heard of your frequent visits to the Roman Catholic Chapel at M—, I was somewhat prepared to hear that your affections were turned towards Rome. You speak of the devout feelings which arose in your mind, while you were beholding the solemn and imposing services at the chapel, and you contrast them with the lukewarmness of your frame whenever you attended divine service in your parish church. And hence you have drawn conclusions very unfavourable to the Church of England, as an instrument for promoting true religion. Before, however, you had come to the conclusion, that the Church of Rome is much better calculated than your own Church, to call forth a devotional spirit in its congregations, it is to be regretted that you did not duly consider, what ought to be the object for which Chris-

tians meet together in the sanctuary? Is it that the eye may be gratified by rich and gorgeous scenery, and the ear delighted by the thrilling notes of the organ and the melodious voices of the choristers? That object can just as well be attained by an attendance at the opera, or at an oratorio. Remember, my dear Sir, that feeling is not devotion. However deeply you may have been excited, while engaged in witnessing the solemn pomp and brilliant pageantry at the Roman Catholic Chapel, you will hardly assert, that by these exhibitions your judgment has been improved, your understanding enlightened, or your affections sanctified. Those services, therefore, pleasing and attractive as they may be to some minds, do not promote the object for which you should go to the House of God. That object should be spiritual worship. "God is a Spirit," says our Blessed Lord, "and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." *John* iv. 24. It may justly be doubted, whether the spirit be engaged in worshipping God, when a man feels cold and indifferent during divine worship, unless he be surrounded by all those outward, meretricious, eye-pleasing, and ear-gratifying accompaniments, which the Church of Rome so lavishly introduces into her services. These, instead of disposing the heart to spiritual worship, distract the attention, and prevent the mind from thinking about heavenly things.

The religion of Christ is simple and sublime. It is calculated to enlighten the understanding, and to soften and improve the heart, not to please and dazzle the outward senses. It is meek, gentle, unobtrusive, pure, self-denying. And Christian worship, in order to be profitable to man and acceptable to God, must be suitable to that disposition of mind which the Spirit of

God produces. It will be spiritual, not worldly; simple and inartificial, not gorgeous and magnificent; adapted to the nobler faculties of the soul, not to the gross and sensual nature of the unrenewed mind.

But all false religions, being of "the earth and earthly," minister to the lust of the eye, and to the pride of the mind, and to the fashion of the world. Such is Paganism. It nourishes the propensities of the fleshly mind; it raises stately and magnificent fabrics; it exalts its idols, arrayed in sumptuous robes and glittering with costly oblations, before the eyes of admiring multitudes; it multiplies its priests, and its ceremonies, and its imposing spectacles, and has recourse to every art to please the eye and to debase the understanding. Grandeur and costliness are distinguishing features in its superstructure; but the foundations are laid in vice and impurity. Its walls are cemented by blood; its interior is full of darkness, cruelty, and abominations.

And such is the tendency of every corrupt form of Christianity. In proportion as it deviates from the simplicity of the Gospel, it substitutes the form for the power of godliness, and vain oblations, and incense, and material sacrifices, for the pure and acceptable offerings of prayer and praise from unfeigned lips. Consider whether Rome is not guilty of substituting the form for the power of godliness. "Mysteriously and rapidly" observes an eloquent writer, "the simple Christian house of prayer was transformed into the meretricious and elaborate temple; the heathen idols were replaced by the images of angels, apostles, and saints; yea, some of the very idols, by a strange metempsychosis, reappeared as christian gods,—Jupiter and Mars became Peter and Paul! . . . Instead of the pure,

simple, majestic service of the early sanctuary,—instead of the preaching of Christ crucified, and the artless offerings of prayer and praise,—lo, the mystic and awful sacrifice of the Mass ; lo, the pompous procession, arrayed in many-coloured vestments, bearing aloft the once simple Supper of the Saviour, now transubstantiated into the mighty idol of Rome, amid genuflections, and prostrations, waving censers, flaming torches, tinkling bells, witching music, and ‘ dim religious light streaming through tinted windows.’ ”

Judge, my dear Sir, whether such things are calculated to promote that spiritual worship in which God delights, and which alone he will accept. Consider whether this gorgeous scenery, these imposing spectacles, these numerous ritual observances, forms, and ceremonies, have the smallest tendency to humble the sinner, to edify the saint, and to prepare “ living stones ” for that “ glorious Church which is without spot or wrinkle.” They may affect the imagination, and be a means of working up the feelings of the spectators—they can hardly be called worshippers—to a high pitch of excitement ; but they will not lead them to “ pray with the Spirit, and with the understanding also.”

If the services of the Roman Church could any where produce that devotional spirit to which you allude, it would surely be experienced at the fountain-head, at Rome itself ; but examine the following picture, delineated by the hand of an eye-witness. He is describing the performance of High Mass, on Christmas-day, at Rome, and in the presence of the Pope.

“ A cardinal officiated at the altar—rich and solemn music swelled out from the choir, and filled the mighty building in which we were ; sweet incense floated through the air, thousands and thousands were gathered

under that golden dome, and no single thing was omitted which could add to the magnificence of the pageant. In this respect it is probably unequalled in the world ; yet to most who were present it could have been nothing but an empty show. The priests crossed and re-crossed, censers waved, candles were lighted and put out, dresses were changed and re-changed, the cardinals walked back and forth, until the mind became utterly bewildered. All things about us indeed—the vastness of the edifice, the works of art, the rich dresses, the splendid music—contributed to heighten the effect ; yet, with all this, the seriousness of devotion seemed to be wanting.

“ Had I known nothing of Christianity, I should have supposed the Pope to be the object of their worship. His throne was far more gorgeous than the altar ; where they kneeled before the latter once, they kneeled before the former five times ; and the amount of incense offered before each was about in the same proportion. He was evidently the central point of attraction. The entrance of the old man, so gorgeously attired, among kneeling thousands, and the splendour of the whole service, shewed more fully than ever, how far the Church of Rome had wandered from the simplicity of the faith, and how much of ceremony it had substituted for the pure worship of the early Christians. The day before, I had gone over the service for Christmas, with an ecclesiastic of the Romish Church, and received from him every explanation, and I now followed it through with the missal in my hand. I wished to form an opinion for myself, and after investigating, as far as possible, the meaning of the many ceremonies we had witnessed, I could not but feel the truth of the remark I have somewhere seen, that ‘ the Romanist has been the

Pagan's heir' At length the service ended. The Pope was once more raised on his lofty seat, and carried down the church, the Roman nobles formed around him, his body-guards shouldered their halberds, the cardinals, with their train-bearers fell into their places, and the gay procession went as it came. While it passed down, the Pope gently waved his hand from side to side to dispense his blessing—the immense multitude sunk upon their knees as he went by—until the train disappeared through the door, and the successor of St. Peter departed to his dwelling in the Vatican. The released ecclesiastics proceeded to pay their respects to the ladies—violet and scarlet stockings appeared in the crowd amid the brilliant uniforms—'nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,' were visible on all sides—compliments in French and Italian mingled into one chaos of sound—and the whole broke up like a gay pleasure party." So far were these additions to, and fancied improvements of the primitive mode of Christian worship, from exciting a devotional spirit, that the writer felt that he had been doing nothing to keep the solemn festival of the Nativity. And it was only when he retired to "an upper room," where a few Protestants met together (as in the infancy of the Church) to worship God in truth and simplicity, that he felt that he was offering a true and acceptable service. "Never," he exclaims, "did I feel so grateful to the Reformers of the Church of England, that at the cost of their own lives they had bequeathed to us primitive purity. I thought of the time when, eighteen centuries ago, while the magnificence of a heathen ritual was going on in old Rome, perhaps some little band of Christians had met beyond its walls, in seclusion, to offer up their simple worship. How great must have been the con-

trast between the two scenes—the splendour of those forms and ceremonies with which thousands bowed around the altars of the Capitoline Jupiter, and the simplicity and purity with which the few disciples of Christ prayed to their crucified Master !”

Well might this clergyman, on witnessing such a contrast, feel grateful for the labours of our venerable Reformers. And similar will be the feelings of every sound-hearted Protestant. There are some individuals, however, and those too who profess to be the best friends of the Church of England, who complain that the Reformers went too far—that in cleansing our ecclesiastical fabric of the incrustations of antiquity, they deprived it of nearly all its ornaments and attractions ; and they are very anxious to see these excrescences restored. They seem far more earnest about the casket than for the jewel which it contains. Their desire to introduce the dresses and scenery of the Romish ritual into our Reformed Church, evinces that kind of taste which would cover the pure ermine of the judicial bench, with the tawdry habiliments of the harlequin. Our Reformers happily were men of a different spirit. They thought more of securing those things which tend to the edification of the members of the Church, than of attracting their eyes by the exhibition of a splendid pageantry, and of wasting their time in performing numerous vain ceremonies. We cannot indeed sufficiently admire the sobriety and wisdom displayed by those excellent men in retaining what was conducive to decency and order, and in removing only what was superfluous and tending to formality and superstition.

Their moderation will appear the more remarkable when we consider their ardent zeal, the times in which

they lived, and the habits and prejudices which they had to overcome.

The Reformers did not object, any more than do their advocates in the present day, to such ornaments as are not inconsistent with the simplicity of Christian worship. They rejected every thing which had a tendency to sensualize spiritual desires and affections, and, consequently, to corrupt and degrade religion—such as altars, images, tapers, incense, relics, and the other ingenious devices for reducing heavenly things to the standard of sense; but that they were far from wishing to strip either the Sanctuary or the Ritual of anything which might really conduce to decency and edification, their writings abundantly testify. Nor are those members of our Church, who desire that no innovations should be made in that pure and scriptural mode of worship which we have enjoyed since the Reformation, indifferent about the material Sanctuary. They consider that every building which is devoted to the service of God should be preserved with the utmost care and attention; and that indifference to the state of God's house, or an unwillingness to make some sacrifice to render it decent, and suitable for the purpose for which it was set apart, is a melancholy proof that, however much the form of godliness may be kept up, the power is wanting. We desire to see “ a large-hearted bountifulness toward the sanctuary and the service of God; we love to witness a generous self-denying spirit on their behalf; neither are we finding fault with the exercise of taste, and the use of befitting embellishment in our modern churches; but we do protest against borrowing our ornaments from the appurtenances and peculiarities of Rome. Those things which are in character in the Romish temple, are quite out of place in the Reformed Church.

In the former the niche has its images,—the stone basin its holy water,—the altar its sacrifice,—the dim light its service in an unknown tongue. . They belong to a mode of worship which dramatizes Christianity, and by dramatizing debases it.”

As to the practices, which certain Romanizing teachers are so anxious to introduce into our Church, they are worse than useless, they render the minds of men very unfit for spiritual worship. They are calculated to bewilder the thoughts, and to make men offer a mechanical worship, in which neither the spirit nor the understanding has any share. This is only what we ought to expect, when men attempt to improve that mode of worship which the early Church followed. The minds of the worshippers being gradually “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ,” they at length degenerate into mere superstitious worshippers, or vain formalists. “God has laid down the manner,” observes a learned writer, “in which he wishes that we should worship him, and has included in his law the perfection of holiness. Yet a vast number of men, as if it were a light and trivial matter to obey God and to keep what he enjoins, collect for themselves, on every hand, many additions. Those who occupy places of authority bring forward their inventions for this purpose, as if they were in possession of something more perfect than the word of the Lord. This is followed by the slow growth of tyranny ; for when men have once assumed to themselves the right to issue commands, they demand a rigid adherence to their laws, and do not allow the smallest iota to be left out, either through contempt or through forgetfulness. The world cannot endure lawful authority, and most violently rebels against enduring the Lord’s yoke, and yet easily and willingly becomes entangled in

the snares of vain traditions ; nay, such bondage appears to be, in the case of many, an object of desire. Meanwhile the worship of God is corrupted, of which the first and leading principle is obedience. The authority of men is preferred to the command of God. Sternly, and therefore tyrannically, are the common people compelled to give their whole attention to trifles."

Although you appear to be entangled in the meshes of what I cannot but consider a degrading superstition, and are in great danger of being utterly enslaved by a Church, which has been emphatically called " a Church without religion ;" I am not without hope that you will be enabled to extricate yourself, and to retrace your steps. I am encouraged thus to hope from your own declaration,—that you are determined to break through all obstacles to embrace the truth, whenever it shall please God to make it known to you. This is a right determination ; and if you will seek diligently, and with earnest prayer to God for assistance, I doubt not that you will find the truth in those Holy Scriptures which were written for our learning. The Bible is the only infallible standard by which all doctrines and practices can be duly tried. This is the doctrine of the Church of England. And while she tells you that she holds and teaches the truth, she fearlessly appeals to the Word of God for a confirmation of every thing which she enjoins as necessary to salvation. So long as you belong to this Church, you have the liberty of trying and examining whether the doctrines which she propounds are agreeable to the Holy Scriptures. You are not required to render a blind obedience to her. Her service, like that of her Supreme Head, Jesus Christ, is perfect freedom. She not only allows but exhorts her members to exercise their own reason and

judgment, that they may offer unto God not a superstitious, but an intelligent and reasonable service.

The Church of Rome also declares that she holds the truth, but she will permit no appeal to be made to the Word of God. She claims to be the only infallible propounder of what is truth, and maintains that, as she never has erred, and never can err, in matters of faith, it is both superfluous and presumptuous to call in question any of her doctrines, or even to compare them with the Bible, in order to know whether they agree with the word of inspiration. When she speaks, her members must receive her decisions with the same implicit faith, as if they heard the voice of Christ himself. She saves them the trouble of searching and trying the doctrine whether it be of God, and teaches them to give this reason for the faith which they hold ;—“I believe all which the Church teaches, because she is infallible.”

I am glad to see that with all the bias which you unfortunately have towards Rome, you are not yet willing to prostrate your understanding before the arrogant and unreasonable pretensions of that corrupt Church. You still, it appears, consider that it is both the right and duty of a Christian “to prove all things.” And yet, there is one expression in your letter which leads me to fear that you do not duly estimate this great and inalienable right. In noticing some of the evils which the liberty of private judgment has produced in the Christian world, you ask, Would it not have been better if all persons had abstained from using this right in matters of religion? Had you said, It would have been well if none had abused this right; or that they who abuse it for purposes of spiritual lawlessness incur a heavy responsibility, this would have been an undoubted truth. But surely, you cannot seriously maintain that, because a

right or privilege has been greatly abused by some persons, therefore all others should be deprived of the privilege. You would, I am persuaded, be very unwilling to argue thus in other matters. For instance, the tongue is an unruly member, and through its means innumerable evils have been spread among the community: jealousies, suspicions, enmities, and murderous conflicts have been produced by the lawless use of this little member, let it therefore be doomed to silence, let all men become Trappists!

The question is, Has God bestowed on men the right of private judgment? If he has, it is not only a duty to exercise the right, but it is sinful to surrender it. Now it is very certain that man has been endowed with this right, and, consequently, he is responsible for the duty of trying and judging what are true and what false doctrines. "Beloved," says an inspired Apostle, "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." 1 *John* iv. 1.

"Now if St. John had believed that God had constituted an infallible judge in his Church, to whose sentence and determination all Christians are bound to submit, he ought in all reason to have referred christians to him for the trial of the spirits, and not to have left it to every man's private judgment to examine and to determine these things. But it seems St. Paul was likewise of the same mind; and though he was guided by an infallible Spirit, yet he did not expect that men should blindly submit to his doctrine. Nay, so far is he from that, that he commends the Bereans for that very thing for which, I dare say, the Church of Rome would have checked them most severely, namely, for searching the Scriptures to see whether those things which the

Apostles delivered were so or not. This liberty St. Paul allowed: and though he was inspired by God, yet he treated those whom he taught like men. And indeed it were a hard case that a necessity of believing divine revelations, and rejecting impostures, should be imposed upon Christians; and yet the liberty of judging, whether a doctrine be from God or not, should be taken away from them."

To deprive men of a privilege of this sort which God has given them, in order to prevent evils from arising, is a daring invasion of the divine prerogative. It is to assume that man knows better than his Creator what will best conduce to the true interests and happiness of the human race. Did not God know when he granted this right, and commanded men to exercise it, that the abuse of it would be followed by many evils, and that some persons would abuse it? And yet his knowledge of the evils which might ensue did not hinder the all-wise Governor of the universe from conferring the privilege. And though Christ and his Apostles frequently inculcate the duty of searching, and trying, and judging respecting spiritual matters, the man, who arrogates to himself the title of Christ's Vicar, presumes to denounce as enemies to the faith those who endeavour to perform this duty. "They abuse the gift of reason," says the Pope, "and taking the divine word for a human law, dare to interpret that word according to their own private judgment, whilst God has established a living authority, charged with the duty of teaching the true meaning of his celestial revelation, and of avoiding all controversies respecting matters of faith, by an infallible decision." A stranger to the Bible would naturally suppose from this language, that, instead of being a *revelation* of God's will, Holy Scripture contained little

else than dark oracular sentences, which none could understand but the priests. This is far from the truth. Although there are some things hard to be understood, yet the great doctrines which are necessary to salvation, are so plainly declared that even the simple and unlearned man, who reads or hears in a right spirit, cannot fail to comprehend them. The man who reads his Bible, with prayer to God, will never be at a loss to know what he is to believe and what he is to do. He is not required to interpret it. "We interpret what is enigmatical, we understand what is plain. The word of God is not a system of hieroglyphics, nor a collection of dark sayings, that it should need interpretation: the great proportion of it is as simple in style, as it is sublime in import. A lowly mind therefore, whilst hearing or searching the inspired record, in dependence on the Spirit of God, does not interpret but understand; and it will generally be found that the meaning which presents itself first to such a mind, is the meaning which was intended to be conveyed." It is not the use of private judgment which has caused such a diversity of notions, and produced so many schisms and parties in what is called the religious world; it is the neglect of duly exercising that important faculty which has led to these evils. "Nothing is more common," observes the writer just quoted, "than for the very men who talk most loudly of their right to judge for themselves, who are most sensitive of any invasion of that right, and who plume themselves most on their uncompromising maintenance of it, to be at the same time regardless of the weight of responsibility which it entails, and the consequent duty which they ought to discharge. It feeds their vanity and serves their purpose to be champions for the right; but when they come to the duty,

the self-denying, painful, toilsome duty, of striving after 'a right judgment in all things,' then they would fain be excused. Vehement for the shadow, they are indifferent about the substance."

The Church of Rome, adapting itself to this natural slothfulness of the human mind, has provided a substitute which cannot fail to be extremely acceptable to the generality of men. By the splendid fiction of "a living authority to determine controversies," and to interpret what is already plain enough to all who are willing to use their eyes, and to exercise their understandings honestly and faithfully, she saves them the trouble of inquiry and examination into spiritual matters, and allows them to gratify their love of the world and earthly vanities in indolent security. By means of this fiction she has established a spiritual despotism over the minds of her members, which is no less degrading to them as reasonable beings, than dangerous to their eternal interests. The Pope, indeed, acknowledges that the Bible is an inspired writing containing nothing but the truth, but then he strenuously insists that no other interpretation shall be put upon any part of that sacred book but such as the Church of Rome sanctions, and that no person or persons whatever shall dare to question the truth and fidelity of her interpretations. Is not this to set the authority of the Church above that of God Himself? In a well-regulated empire the Law is considered as the only rule of conduct for all subjects. But if the Sovereign should insist that only his own interpretation of the Law should be received, and that none of his subjects should dare even to think that he could or would interpret the Law contrary to its meaning and intent, the people would not be under a free, but an absolute government. They would be ruled

not by the Law, but according to the will and pleasure of the Sovereign.

This matter is set in a very clear light by the learned Chillingworth. "He that would usurp an absolute lordship and tyranny over any people, need not put himself to the trouble and difficulty of abrogating and disannulling the laws made to maintain the common liberty; for he may frustrate their intent, and compass his own design as well, if he can get the power and authority to interpret them as he pleases, and to have his interpretations and additions stand for laws; if he can rule his people by his laws, and his laws by his lawyers. So the Church of Rome, to establish her tyranny over men's consciences, needed not either to abolish or corrupt the Holy Scriptures, the pillars and supporters of Christian liberty. But the more expedite way, and therefore the more likely to be successful, was to gain the opinion and esteem of being the public and authorized interpreter of them, and the authority of adding to them what doctrine she pleased, under the title of traditions or definitions. For by this means she might both serve herself of all those clauses of Scripture which might be drawn to cast a favourable countenance upon her ambitious pretences,—which, had the Scriptures been abolished, she could not have done; and yet be secure enough by having neither her power limited, nor her corruptions and abuses reformed by them; this being once settled in the minds of men, that unwritten doctrines, if proposed by her, were to be received with equal reverence to those that were written; and that the sense of Scripture was not that which it seemed to reason and understanding to be, but that which the Church of Rome should declare it, seem that never so unreasonable and incongruous."

It is sometimes objected by those who deny the right of private judgment,—That a private individual would act very rashly and foolishly who should venture to interpret the laws of the realm himself, and in a sense contrary to that which the duly constituted authorities put upon it. Were such a man to commence an action at law, because he supposed that he knew better than the lawyers what was the true meaning of an enactment, he would deservedly suffer for his folly and self-conceit. True. In a free country like ours, where judges of unquestionable skill in the Law, and of unimpeachable integrity, are appointed to determine causes, not according to the will and pleasure of the Sovereign, but according to the true and obvious meaning of the Law, such a proceeding would be ridiculous. No man of sound understanding would ever think of questioning the unanimous decisions of the highest judicial authorities. But the case is very different with regard to the interpretations and decisions of the Church of Rome. Her lawyers and expounders are not directed, or permitted, to interpret according to the word of God, but they are commanded to *interpret only in that sense which is agreeable to the will and pleasure of the Sovereign ecclesiastical authority*. Where the decisions of the Church of Rome therefore, are manifestly repugnant to the plain declaration of God's word, our duty is evident.—We are to obey God rather than man.

As in a free country the Law of the land is the rule of conduct for all her citizens, so in the Church of Christ, the Bible,—which is the Statute-book of our Supreme Head—is the sole rule and arbiter in spiritual things. THE BIBLE—not as every man *chooses* to interpret and expound it, as we are most unjustly accused of maintaining—but 'THE BIBLE,—I say, THE BIBLE *only* is

the religion of Protestants.' This celebrated declaration of the learned Chillingworth has been greatly misunderstood; I will therefore transcribe the passage in which it occurs for your perusal:—"Know then, Sir, that when I say, the religion of Protestants is in prudence to be preferred before yours; as on the one side I do not understand by *your* religion, the doctrine of Bellarmine, or Baronius, or any other private man amongst you, nor the doctrine of the Sorbonne, or of the Jesuits, or of the Dominicans, or of any other particular company among you, but *that wherein you all agree, or profess to agree*, THE DOCTRINE OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT: so accordingly, on the other side, by *the religion of Protestants*, I do not understand the doctrine of Luther, or Calvin, or Melancthon, nor the Confession of Augsburg, or Geneva, nor the Catechism of Heidelberg, nor the Articles of the Church of England, no, nor the Harmony of the Protestant Confessions; *but that wherein all agree*, and which they all subscribe, with a greater harmony, as a perfect rule of their faith and actions; that is, THE BIBLE. THE BIBLE, I say, THE BIBLE ONLY is the religion of Protestants. *Whatsoever else they believe besides it*, and the plain, irrefragable, indubitable consequences of it, well may they hold it *as a matter of opinion*: but as matter of *faith and religion*, neither can they, with coherence to their own grounds, *believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others*, without most high and most schismatical presumption."

See then how little weight is to be attached to the assertion which Romanists and Romanizers are so fond of repeating—"that Protestantism is a mere negation." It is not a mere negation. It affirms a great, an important, an irrefragable truth. And much as the Protestant world may differ on minor and non-essential

points, there is not a Christian within it, who will not cordially subscribe to the AFFIRMATION which the Church of England makes as to the *Sufficiency* of the *Bible*.—"Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." Hence our Church may well be esteemed the bulwark of Protestantism, and the irreconcilable enemy of Popery and Infidelity.

But though the Romish Church permits not her members to try and prove her doctrines, it is to be observed that she unwittingly allows the right of private judgment to heretics, as she calls those who are not under her yoke. She does not say to them,—“This is the true Church, enter it without enquiry, or examination;—it is enough that I, who am infallible, declare that there can be no salvation out of it;” but she endeavours to convince them by various arguments that it is their duty to become her members. Now what is this but to make the persons whom she is trying to convert, judges, whether hers is the true religion or not? “Because,” says an eminent prelate, “it would be ridiculous to persuade a man to turn to their religion, and to urge him with reasons to do so, and yet to deny him the use of his own judgment whether their reasons be sufficient to move them to make such a change. Now, as the apostle reasons in another case, if men be fit to judge for themselves in so great and important a matter as the choice of their religion, why should they be thought unworthy to judge in lesser matters? They tell us indeed that a man may use his judgment in the choice of his religion; but when he hath once chosen,

he is then for ever to resign up his judgment to their church. But what tolerable reason can any man give, why a man should be fit to judge upon the *whole*, and yet be unfit to judge upon *particular* points? Especially if it be considered, that no man can make a discreet judgment of any religion, before he hath examined the particular doctrines of it, and made a judgment concerning *them*. Is it credible, that God should give a man judgment in the most fundamental and important matter of all, viz. *To discern the true religion, and the true church from the false*;—for no other end, but to enable him to choose, once for all, to whom he should resign and enslave his judgment for ever? Which is just as reasonable as if one should say, That God hath given a man eyes for no other end, but to look out, once for all, and to pitch upon a discreet person to lead him about blindfold all the days of his life.” The Church of England makes no attempt to enslave her members, under the pretence of securing them from injury. She does not forbid them to use their eyes, lest they should not see aright; but she sets truth before them, and bids them to examine well all its features. She does not teach them, as her enemies erroneously state, that each may interpret the Bible according to his fancy; but she puts into their hands the whole body of Christian doctrine, collected from the Holy Scriptures, and tells them that a belief in those doctrines is necessary to salvation, not because she teaches them, but *because they all have the warrant of God’s word*. Hence her members have but to prove and hold fast, and to put in practice, what they have thus learned. And she enables them to try and prove these things by putting the Scriptures into their hands, as well as by constantly reading them in their hearing; so that they may know

the certainty of those things "wherein they have been instructed." Thus, while our Church holds up the Bible, as the only infallible guide or standard, she supplies her members with a Liturgy and Articles and Homilies, as a compendium of the instructions contained in the Bible, and as a guide to those unstable and unskilful souls, who might otherwise wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. She points out the way to salvation so clearly in all her formularies, that "he may run that reads," and she urges her members to examine and see how every step of that way is the path prescribed by God Himself. If any of them abuse this duty and privilege, and, through perverseness, self-conceit, and pride, deviate from the right way into crooked and dangerous paths, they must bear the consequences of their folly and presumption. But she will not—she dares not seal up the fountain of truth, or prohibit her members from approaching it, when God has graciously opened it, and allowed free access to its living waters. That many divisions and factions have been caused by the abuse of this right is unquestionable; and it is equally true that those who are least able to judge are the "most forward and confident, the most peremptory and perverse; and instead of demeaning themselves with the submission of learners, they assume to themselves the authority of judges, even in the most doubtful and disputable matters." Still there is no more reason why the liberty of private judgment should be taken away, than that men should be deprived of civil liberty because many have perverted it into licentiousness. Let us endeavour by the employment of all judicious means to cure this spiritual lawlessness—let us promote sound Scriptural education—let us shew men how very little they know, and how necessary it is to be hum-

ble and docile—let us point out to them how plainly and intelligibly all things really needful to salvation are declared in the Holy Scriptures, and teach them the sinfulness of making schisms, and forming new sects, merely on account of things indifferent, such as forms, ceremonies &c., and then let us leave them to the only infallible Judge. To their own master they stand or fall. We have no right assuredly to put a yoke on the minds and consciences of men, under the pretence of preventing abuses.

The Church of Rome has long been contending for this power, and whenever she was strong enough to enforce her claims, and to compel a people to obey her implicitly, the consequence was the utter extinction of civil and religious liberty. And yet with all her power, with all her arrogant pretensions to infallibility, she has been unable to cure divisions, even in her own pale. One Pope give his infallible sanction to certain writings, and declares them to be full of sound and wholesome doctrines, and his equally infallible successor denounces the same writings as heretical, and anathematizes all who receive them. We find also two Popes at the same time, each claiming the right to occupy the papal throne, and each hurling denunciations against the adherents of his rival, A Pope at Rome publishes his withering curses against a Pope at Avignon; and his angry rival is equally active in the employment of similar weapons against the Pope at Rome. Where was Infallibility, and where the boasted unity of the Church of Rome, during the seventy or eighty years of this remarkable schism? If we go back to earlier times, we shall find that heresies abounded in the Christian world. Augustine enumerates upwards of eighty sects which had divided and disturbed the Christian Church,

before it had existed four centuries. While the council of Nice, where more than three hundred bishops were assembled, maintained the true Scriptural doctrine, respecting the Trinity; the Councils of Ariminum and of Selcucia, which met twenty-five years afterwards, and consisted of a far greater number of bishops than were collected together in the Nicene Council, deliberately gave their sanction to the Arian heresy. Even in the apostolic age, there was not that unity in the Church which Popery boasts that she possesses. Though men who were unquestionably under the guidance of an infallible Teacher, even the Spirit of truth, had then the care of the Churches, schisms, heresies, and sects arose:—"As ye have heard," says St. John, "that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us." 1 *John* ii. 18, 19. And again, in the beginning of the fourth chapter, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." In the epistle of Jude, and in the book of Revelation are also abundant evidences, that false teachers and "damnable heresies" were to be found in the early Christian Church. What folly and presumption then does the Church of Rome manifest, by assuming, that it can put an end to all controversies, and bring about universal unity, by its visionary prerogative of infallibility. The Apostles really spake and acted under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and yet, as we have seen, heresies and schisms abounded. Let not Popery by its false miracles and usurped authority, hope to produce what the inspired Apostles, by the exhibition of true miracles and the exercise of legitimate authority, failed to establish,—a church undisturbed by divisions and heresies.

But if even the Church of Rome could obtain that plenitude of power which it once possessed, and could compel all men to receive without dispute every doctrine that it teaches, this universal conformity would not prevent men from secretly holding diverse opinions, and, consequently, real unity would still be at a distance. And were it possible to secure the unity which Popery aims at, this would afford no proof that her doctrines were true. There was a marvellous unity among those who cried, "Crucify him, crucify him!" therefore unanimity cannot prove that men are in the right. When resting on a right foundation, unity is indeed a blessing, and a powerful instrument to promote the glory of God, and the best interests of men; but when it rests on false principles, it is only a combination of misguided men against the truth. Such was the unity which prevailed in the Western Empire during the dark ages. Men received implicitly whatever the Church of Rome dictated, and willingly closed their eyes to the most glaring errors, and silenced every doubt by—"thus saith the Church;" but how many abuses, absurdities, and superstitions did that unanimity produce? "There may be," says Lord Bacon, "an universal consent, which is derived from ignorance, as all colours are confounded in the dark."

"The present condition of human nature," observes Archbishop Tillotson, "doth not admit of any constitution of things, whether in religion or civil matters, which is free from all kind of exception and inconvenience: that is the best state of things which is liable to the least and fewest. If men be modest and humble, and willing to learn, God has done that which is sufficient for the assurance of our faith, and for the peace of his church without an infallible Judge. And if men will

not be so, I cannot tell what would be sufficient. I am sure there were heresies and schisms in the Apostles' times, when those who governed the Church were certainly guided by an infallible Spirit. God hath appointed guides and teachers for us in matters of religion, and if we will be contented to be instructed by them in those necessary articles and duties of religion, which are plainly contained in Scripture; and to be counselled and directed by them in things that are more doubtful and difficult, I do not see why we might not do well enough without any infallible judge or guide. But still it will be said, Who shall judge what things are plain and what doubtful? The answer to this, in my opinion, is not difficult. For if there be any thing plain in religion, every man that hath been duly instructed in the principles of religion can judge of it, or else it is not plain. But there are some things in religion so very plain, that no guide or judge can in reason claim that authority over men, as to oblige them to believe or do the contrary; no, though he were an *Apostle*,—though he were an *Angel* from Heaven. St. Paul puts the case so high: *Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than what you have received, let him be accursed!*—which plainly supposeth that christians may and can judge when doctrines are contrary to the gospel. What? not believe an *Apostle*? nor an *Angel from heaven*, if he should teach anything evidently contrary to the plain doctrine of the gospel? If he should determine virtue to be vice, and vice to be virtue? No: not an *Apostle*, nor an *Angel*, because such a doctrine as this would confound and overturn all things in religion."

You seem to think that it is hardly consistent with the wisdom and goodness of God to leave men without

some unerring and living guide, in so important a concern as religion. Have you then forgotten that our heavenly Father has not only given to us those *Holy Scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ*, but has also promised to bestow upon us a Teacher, who shall guide us into all truth—even his blessed Spirit? “Howbeit,” says our divine Lord, “when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” *John* xvi. 13. Do not suppose that this promise applies merely to the Apostles and their successors in the ministry of reconciliation: it belongs to true Christians generally, for the same Apostle, in his first epistle *general*, thus writes;—“Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” *1 John* ii. 20.

If men are not led to embrace the truth by their ordinary ministers, by the hearing and reading of God’s word, and by using the other means of grace which God has appointed, neither would they be persuaded by a living, infallible guide; no, not even by one who rose from the dead.

It may also be observed, that God has done as much to secure men from mistake in matters of belief, as he hath done to keep them from sin in matters of practice. “He hath made no effectual and infallible provision that men shall not sin: and yet it would puzzle any man to give a good reason, why God should take more care to secure men against errors in belief, than against sin and wickedness in their lives.”

If the Pope of Rome is fully persuaded that his Church holds the faith of Christ pure and unadulterated, why is he so much afraid to have this faith tried and examined? Truth has nothing to fear from exposure to public view. It will pass through the most rigid

scrutiny without any diminution of its value and excellence. Nay, the more carefully it is examined, the more beautiful and desirable it will appear. Why then does the Church of Rome debar her members from using their own eyes, and their own understandings, in a matter of so much importance to their eternal interests? "Can any thing be more suspicious," asks the learned prelate above quoted, "than to persuade men to put out their eyes, upon promise that they will help them to a much better and more faithful guide? If any Church, any profession of men, be unwilling that their doctrines should be exposed to trial, it is a certain sign that they know something by them that is faulty, and which will not endure the light. This is the account which our Saviour gives us in a like case; it was *because men's deeds were evil that they loved darkness rather than light. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light; neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be re-proved: but he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.* John iii. 19—21.

You have not yet, I venture to hope, consented to give up the use of your eyes, and to see only with the eyes of a spiritual guide. Much as your mind has been bewildered by the sophistry of Romanists and Romanizing teachers, I trust that you are still able to form a right judgment. Had you advanced a very few steps nearer to Rome, had you once passed the Rubicon—the opportunity of trying and judging what is true religion would, most probably, have been utterly lost. Your understanding would have been prostrated at the feet of your spiritual director. Every book, containing doctrines at variance with those of the Church of Rome, however agreeable they might be to the teaching of the

Church of Christ, would be interdicted; and you would be forbidden to read even the Holy Scriptures, unless it were previously ascertained that you would read them only through your director's spectacles. This is, doubtless, considered a privilege, rather than a privation, by all who submit with blind faith to the authority of the Roman Church. To be saved from the trouble of thinking, and trying, and proving, like the Bereans, whether the doctrines that are taught are of God; to have nothing to do but to repeat a certain number of prayers, and to go through a number of ceremonial observances; to make a periodical confession to man, to receive absolution, and then to commence another catalogue of transgressions which, in its turn, is to be confessed and cancelled; all this is very agreeable to the corrupt nature of man; it affords a delusive peace to the minds of all who are alienated from God, through the darkness that is in them, and who are content to follow wherever they are led, *tanquam bos*, as the ox to the slaughter.

This prostration of all the faculties of the mind, in regard to spiritual matters, which Popery exacts from all her members, will sufficiently account for what would otherwise be inexplicable, that so many pious and learned men have been, and are, members of the Church of Rome, notwithstanding the glaring errors and superstitions which she maintains. They dare not use their reason. It is their duty, as subjects of the Pope, to check every sentiment as it rises in their minds, which is at variance with anything taught by their church. If they have unwittingly said or written anything which the Pope disapproves, they are bound to denounce it as false, however they may be inwardly persuaded of its truth. This was the course pursued by the pious and

amiable Fenelon. He was fully satisfied of the truth of the propositions in his "Maxims of the Saints," which the Pope condemned as erroneous. But he knew that, as a member of the Church of Rome, he had given up his right to form an independent judgment, and he therefore meekly submitted to the decision of his judge. While we cannot but admire the meekness and humility of this pious and excellent man, we ought not to close our eyes to the fact, that he sacrificed his reason, prostrated his understanding, and silenced the dictates of his conscience, through a mistaken sense of duty. "He was," it has been well observed, "a devoted though a pious child of Popery; and in prostrating his understanding at the shrine of his Church, he only did what that Church prescribes to all who enlist themselves under her banners."

Nor is it any proof that the Church of Rome holds the pure faith, because some pious and learned men who were members, and even ministers of the Church of England, have embraced Popery. There may be great zeal and great learning where there is very little judgment. They may have been permitted to fall into this dangerous error, because they trusted too much to their own understanding, and did not sufficiently value, nor diligently seek for, the assistance of the Spirit of truth. There might be no lack of intellectual wisdom. They might be powerful reasoners, mighty in the letter of the Scriptures as well as in the learning of antiquity, most ingenious critics, and profound theologians; and yet, if the moral disposition were wanting, if they looked not for the teaching of God, we need not be surprised at the result. They were leaning too much on their own understanding, and trusting too much to their own wisdom, while searching for truth. They seemed to

think that the truths of revelation, like those of natural science, were to be mastered by the force of reason alone. "This is a cardinal error—as though the seaman should take the meteor of the night instead of the polar star to pilot him! "God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble," and no pride does he more resist than intellectual pride—the very pride of Satan." They neglected a really infallible Teacher, and they seem to have been given up to a strong delusion, so as to yield implicit faith and obedience to a human, and consequently, to a fallible authority. While many who, in comparison of them, might be called little children in wisdom and knowledge, have been guided by the Spirit of God into the paths of truth and righteousness, these wise and learned triflers have bewildered, and ultimately lost themselves in the maze of error and superstition. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." *Matt.* xi. 25. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. . . . But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." *1 Cor.* ii. 11, 14.

"Cease then from man," if you would secure the light of truth. Let the authority neither of an individual, nor of a multitude, induce you to receive without examination any doctrine or commandment. Bring it "to the Law and to the Testimony;" compare it with the written Word, and pray for the guidance of the Spirit of truth, that you may be enabled to form a right judgment. This is no less your privilege than your duty. And if you despise or neglect it, you may very soon be permitted to fall into the grossest errors. For

if the members of the Church of Rome, whose ignorance of spiritual things is owing to their slavish submission to human authority, are, with few exceptions, given up to “a strong delusion that they should believe a lie;” 2 *Thess.* ii. 11. how shall they escape who, having full permission to consult the infallible oracles of truth, deliberately turn from them, and choose rather to follow the traditions and commandments of men? “Error convicted,” says the judicious Hooker, “and afterwards maintained, is more than error; for although opinion be the same it was, in which respect I still call it error, yet they are not now the same they were when they are taught what the truth is, and plainly taught.” Do not then, I entreat you, surrender your birthright—the sacred and inestimable privilege of studying that Word, which is given as *a lamp unto your feet, and a light unto your path*. You are at present in the land of freedom; let not the indulgences that are promised, nor the allurements which are provided for the eye and the ear, tempt you to take up your abode in the land of bondage. A woe was denounced against those Israelites, whose eyes and hearts were turned towards Egypt; consider whether this may not be applied to those who, despising the blessings and privileges of a pure and scriptural Church, are seeking to become the vassals of a Church which tramples on the Bible and destroys Christian liberty. “Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin: That walk to go down unto Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.” *Isai.* xxx. 1—3.

LETTER II.

OPPOSITION OF THE ROMISH CHURCH TO THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

DEAR SIR,

THE assertion of the Roman Catholic priest at M—, appears to have made a far deeper impression on your mind than it deserves. He stated that no persons in his Church were hindered from reading the Holy Scriptures, but those who were too ignorant to make any good use of the permission; and that the really intelligent and enlightened members of his communion would have no difficulty whatever in obtaining the requisite licence. You therefore conclude that the Roman Church has been most unjustly accused of withholding the Scriptures from the people.

It is, however, most true that Popery prevents the people, as far as she can, from reading God's holy word. In Protestant countries it is her policy to relax in some degree this prohibition: and individual bishops and priests are sometimes found to allow the liberty of reading the Bible to all who desire it. But these exceptions only prove the rule. The Church of Rome is not

to be judged of by the practice of a few, or even of many of her clergy, but by her own authoritative decrees. Where the light of truth prevails, through the regular preaching of the Gospel and the free circulation of the Bible, the advocates of Popery affect a liberality on this matter which their Church utterly condemns. They well know that if they were to be too rigid on this point, they would have little prospect of making proselytes. They will therefore sometimes permit even the members of their own Church to read the Bible, though at the same time they carefully warn them, that they are not to interpret, or rather to understand, any passage, however plain and easy it may be, in a sense different to that which the Church affixes to it. They may read, but they must not presume to exercise their judgment on what they read. Were a person once to do this, he would, as soon as his spiritual director knew that he was thus using his privilege, be immediately deprived of the liberty of reading the Bible, lest he should be injured. A priest of the Roman Church must, under such circumstances, take away the license, or he disobeys his Church. For observe to *whom* this permission may be granted,—it is only to “those persons whose faith and piety they apprehend will be augmented and not injured by it. But if any one shall have the presumption to read or possess it (the Bible) without a written permission, he shall not receive absolution, until he have first delivered up such Bible to the ordinary.”

The Church of Rome has for many hundred years acted on this principle. Where her power is predominant, this permission to read the Scriptures is a mockery. For if a member of the Roman Church seeks for and obtains permission to read the Bible, where is he to

find a copy such as his Church can sanction? No where. In Spain, Portugal, Italy, Ireland, and other Popish countries, the Bible is unknown to the mass of the people. In the former country, where that terrible engine of spiritual despotism, the Inquisition, was so long in activity, every copy of the Bible disappeared. Not only the Holy Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, but even copies in the learned languages were prohibited. "The Oriental professors, in the chief seat of Spanish theology, Salamanca, were commanded, on pain of excommunication, to give up their *Greek* and *Hebrew* Bibles to the Holy Office!" In the year 1558, the "terrible law" of Philip II. was published, which decreed confiscation and *death* for all who should sell, buy, keep or read, any of the books prohibited by the Holy Office. Even penitents at confession were compelled to denounce the transgressors of this edict; and in this hideous aggravation of tyranny, which turned a professed act of religion into an act of blood, and armed child and parent against the life of each other, the Pope was a fellow-conspirator with the king and the Inquisition: the law was sanctioned by a Bull issued in 1559. An additional proof of the utter darkness and slavery of conscience demanded by Popery, was furnished in the ordinance of Valdez, the Inquisitor General, in the same year. His catalogue prohibited "all Hebrew books, and those in other tongues treating of the Jewish customs; all Arabic, or treating of Mahometanism; all works written or translated by a heretic, or an individual condemned by the Holy Office; all works in Spanish with a preface, letter, glossary, comment, &c., by a heretic; all unpublished manuscripts, sermons, writings, treatises on Christianity, its Sacraments, and its Scriptures, &c." "Such is the age,"

says Perez del Prado, the successor of Valdez, "that some men have carried their audacity to the *execrable extremity* of demanding permission to *read* the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, without fearing to encounter *mortal poison* therein."

The hostility of Popery to the practice of reading God's word, is also shewn in the condemnation which it denounces against the following reasonable and scriptural propositions:—

"Articles condemned in the BULL UNIGENITUS.

"80. The reading of the Holy Scriptures is for all men.

"81. The obscurity of the Word of God is no reason why laymen should excuse themselves from reading it.

"82. The Lord's Day ought to be sanctified by Christians, by reading pious books, and above all others, the Holy Scriptures. It is very hurtful to endeavour to withdraw a Christian from reading of this kind.

"83. 'Tis an illusion to persuade oneself that the knowledge of the mysteries of religion ought not to be communicated to women, by the reading of the sacred books. The abuses of the Scriptures have manifested themselves, not from the simplicity of women, but from the proud science of men."

The above propositions are declared by this *infallible* Bull Unigenitus, to be false, scandalous, offensive to pious ears, pernicious, injurious to the Church and her customs, infamous, blasphemous, &c. !

You seem to think that Popery is now more liberal. This is a great mistake. The opposition to the reading of the Bible is still maintained, and must be maintained so long as the Church of Rome retains her present doctrines. Permission to read the Scriptures is undoubtedly, as the Bull declares, *injurious to the* (Romish)

Church and her customs. Hence we find succeeding Popes strongly denouncing the circulation of the Bible in the vulgar tongue. "We exhort you," says Leo XII., in a Letter of May 3. 1824, "to turn away your flocks by all means, from these *poisonous* pastures. Reprove, beseech, be instant in season and out of season, in all patience and doctrine, that the faithful entrusted to you (adhering strictly to the rules of our congregation of the Index) be persuaded that, if the Sacred Scriptures be every where indiscriminately published, more evil than advantage will arise thence, on account of the rashness of men."

To the same effect speaks the present occupier of the Roman See, Pius IX, in his Letter, dated November 9. 1846.—"You are already well acquainted, venerable brethren, with other masters of error, and the frauds with which the present age strives bitterly to beset the Catholic religion, and the divine authority of the Church. . . . This is also the tendency and design of those insidious Bible Societies, which, renewing the crafts of the ancient heretics, cease not to obtrude upon all kinds of men, even the least instructed, gratuitously and at immense expence, copies in vast numbers of the books of the sacred Scriptures, translated, against the holiest rules of the Church, into various vulgar tongues, and very often with the most perverse and erroneous interpretations, to the end that divine tradition, the doctrine of the Fathers, and the authority of the Catholic Church being rejected, every man may interpret the revelations of the Almighty according to his own private judgment, and perverting their sense, fall into the most dangerous errors."

"In Italy," a recent traveller in that country remarks, "when king and people are alike placed by circum-

stances under the unlimited sway of Roman Catholicism, the Bible is a sealed book, and the Church of Rome guards with the utmost vigilance against the introduction of the light of Scripture. So great is the anxiety felt by the government, lest, through the influence of Protestants, the Holy Scriptures should be disseminated, that a most careful search is made at intervals in all the booksellers' shops, to ascertain that no Bible is upon their shelves. Having occasion to make some purchases in one of these places, I asked if I could procure an Italian Bible, but the answer was, that the bookseller dared not keep any in stock ; and that a short time previously, an English gentleman, who had distributed tracts and Bibles, was obliged, upon discovery, immediately to leave Nice ; while those who received the books were punished in a still more severe manner. . . . The feeling of the lower classes with regard to the Word of eternal life, has been manifested to us in several ways. The mother of our landlady is a poor afflicted cripple, entirely confined to her room. I have several times offered to read a few verses to her from my Italian Bible, but the proposal has always been met by a degree of alarm, which proves the spiritual bondage in which these poor people are held by their priests."

But we need not go so far as Italy, in order to see how carefully the Church of Rome keeps her members from perusing God's word. When the letter of Leo XII, which condemns the reading of the Holy Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, was published in Ireland, the Roman Catholic bishops observed in their pastoral instructions—" His Holiness wisely remarks that more evil than good is found to result from the indiscriminate perusal of them, on account of the rashness of men.

In this sentiment of our Head and Chief we fully concur." And when some of these bishops were examined before the Parliamentary Commissioners in 1825, the following answers were elicited from them :—" Is it a venial or a mortal sin in an adult peasant to persevere in reading the New Testament in the authorized version of the Church of England, after his priest has forbidden it? *Answer.* I should feel great delicacy in fixing the amount of guilt which constitutes the one or the other. *Question.* Would you allow any of the peasantry of Ireland, who might persevere in reading the Scriptures in the authorized version, after having been prohibited by your clergy, to be received to the sacrament? *Answer.* No; I certainly would not. *Question.* Should you think it improper for such an individual to bury the Word of God? *Answer.* I should be highly amused with such a proceeding. *Question.* Would you think him highly deserving of approbation? *Answer.* I do not know but I would. It might shew a disposition which I would prize highly, though I do not think the act a very laudable one; but attending to the disposition more than the act itself, I would reward the man. *Question.* You would consider it in the main a proof of orthodoxy? *Answer.* Yes; a proof that he was filled with a right faith, only pushed to an extreme."

The following conversation was held between Dr. Logan, Roman Catholic bishop of Meath, and Michael Farrelly, Inspector of Irish schools, in 1827 :—" I then asked his Lordship, Are we to read the Scriptures? *Answer.* No! *Question.* If we read them with reverence and awe? *Answer.* No! *Question.* If we read them with sincerity and humility? *Answer.* No! *Question.* If we read them with note and comment?

Answer. No! *Question.* If we read them in the spirit of prayer? *Answer.* No! You can pray without them.”

The conditional license to read the Bible, which your Popish friend alleges as a proof of the liberality of his Church, is evidently then a mere subterfuge, and acts as a prohibition wherever the people are completely under the dominion of Popery. It has this effect on the mass of the Irish people. However desirous any of them may be to peruse the words of eternal life, they cannot do so without incurring imminent danger. “ Hundreds of Irish Roman Catholic Scripture readers have been publicly denounced from the altar by the Irish priests, and many of them, in consequence, have been persecuted and mal-treated, and four of them brutally murdered. This has been offered to be proved at the Bar at the House of Commons in the presence of the Roman Catholic members, who have not demanded the proof, and it is ready to be proved to-morrow if required.”

I have already stated what efforts the Church of Rome makes to keep the people from reading the Bible in the Italian States. I will now bring before you the evidence of Drs. Doyle, Murray, and Kelly, Irish Roman Catholic bishops, respecting the effects of this prohibition in other countries. *Question*, by the Parliamentary Committee, to Dr. Doyle.—“ You were educated in Portugal?—Yes. Did you ever see in Portugal any translation (of the Scriptures) into the vulgar tongue, whether allowed or not?—No, I did not. To Dr. Murray:—You were educated in Salamanca?—I was. Can you give me information as to any authenticated version of the Scriptures into the Spanish language?—I did hear that there was a Spanish version of the Holy

Scriptures: but I do not happen to know the fact.—Have the Scriptures any practical circulation in the vulgar tongue in Spain?—They had not then. Have the people seen the Scriptures in a language they could understand?—I do not know that they have.”

Instead of circulating the Scriptures, the Roman Church provides legendary tales about monks, nuns, hermits, and canonized saints, which vitiate the mind, and render it unable to appreciate sound Scriptural instruction. Her object is evidently to excite a repugnance to the Holy Scriptures, or she would never sanction such a principle as is inculcated in the following anecdote. It is stated in a French work, entitled, *The Life of St. Theresa, Foundress of the order of the Carmelites*, and one of the most popular and distinguished saints which Popery has fabricated, that “a young lady presenting herself to take the veil, said that she had brought her Bible with her; whereupon the saint said, ‘Your Bible! Come not then here; for we are only poor nuns, *who know nothing but to spin and obey.*’”

“That which the Church of Rome would find fault with if they durst,” says Archbishop Tillotson, “is that there should be any such book in the world, and that it should be in any body’s hands, learned or unlearned; for if it be dangerous to any, none are so capable of doing mischief with it as men of wit and learning. So that at the bottom, if they would speak out, the quarrel is against the Scriptures themselves. This is too evident by the counsel given to Pope Julius III, by the bishops met at Bononia to consult about the establishment of the Roman See. Where among other things they give this as their last advice, and as the greatest and weightiest of all. *That by all means as little of the Gospel as might be, especially in the vulgar tongue, should be read*

to the people : and that little which was in the Mass ought to be sufficient ; neither should it be permitted to any mortal to read more. For so long (say they) as men were contented with that little, all things went well with them ; but quite otherwise since more was commonly read. And, speaking of the Scripture, they give this remarkable testimony and commendation of it : This, in short, is that Book which, above all others, hath raised those tempests and whirlwinds with which we were almost carried away. And, in truth, if any one diligently considers it, AND COMPARES IT WITH WHAT IS DONE IN OUR CHURCH, HE WILL FIND THEM VERY CONTRARY TO EACH OTHER, AND OUR DOCTRINE NOT ONLY TO BE VERY DIFFERENT FROM IT, BUT REPUGNANT TO IT."

This is a candid acknowledgment, and sufficiently accounts for the repugnance which Popery has always manifested to the circulation of God's Word. As the Roman Church was, and is still, unwilling to regulate its doctrines by the Holy Scriptures ; as it resolved, and still resolves, to consider all its decrees exempt from error, however contrary they may be to the Word of God ; as it loves darkness rather than light ;—this is the only safe course which it can pursue—to keep its members from approaching to the light—lest its errors should be made manifest.

Hence we may account for the extreme severity with which that corrupt Church treated, in former times, those who read the Scriptures. It was quite enough to convict a man of heresy if he were known to be a reader of the Bible. This you will clearly see if you read the account of the examination of John Marbeck, before the bishop of Winchester, A. D. 1543. His *crime* was, that he had been making a Concordance of the Bible in the English language. On this *heinous* charge he was

taken into custody, and treated as a felon.—“The next day, which was Wednesday, by eight of the clock in the morning, the bishop sent for Marbeck to his house at St. Mary Overy’s, and as he was entering into the bishop’s hall, he saw the bishop himself coming out at a door in the upper end thereof, with a roll in his hand; and going toward the great window, he called the poor man unto him, and said, ‘Marbeck! wilt thou cast away thyself?’ No, my Lord,’ quoth he, ‘I trust.’ ‘Yes,’ quoth the bishop, ‘thou goest about it, for thou wilt utter nothing. What a devil made thee to meddle with the Scriptures? Thy vocation was another way, wherein thou hast a goodly gift, if thou didst esteem it.’ For this *meddling with the Scriptures*, and because he would not betray those who had assisted him in preparing the Concordance, he was cast into prison; and the bishop commanded the under-keeper to put irons upon him, and to keep him fast shut in a chamber alone. His poor wife, “who at the time of her husband’s apprehension, had a young child of a quarter old, sucking upon her breast,” came to the prison, and entreated to be allowed to see her husband. Her request was refused. She applied to the bishop of Winchester, whom she found in the Court at St. James, and cried, “Oh, my Lord; these eighteen days I have troubled your Lordship. Now for the love of God, and as ever ye came of a woman, put me off no longer, but let me go to my husband.” And as she was standing with the bishop and his men, in a blind corner going to his chamber, one of the king’s servants, called Henry Carricke, and her next neighbour, chanced to be by; and hearing the talk between the bishop and her, desired his Lordship to be good Lord unto the poor woman, who had her own mother lying bed-rid upon her hands, beside

five or six children. "I promise you," quoth the bishop, "*her husband is a great heretic, and hath read more Scripture than any man in the realm hath done.*" "I cannot tell, my Lord," quoth Carricke, "what he is inwardly, but outwardly he is as honest a quiet neighbour as ever I dwelt by."

This was "the head and front of his offending,"—he had read diligently the Holy Scriptures. It mattered not that his outward conduct was honest, quiet, and exemplary, he must be a heretic because he had read God's Word! For this grievous crime he was kept for some months in prison, and at length condemned to suffer death by burning. But so strong was the feeling in favour of poor Marbeck, that some of the Commissioners wrote to the bishop of Winchester in his behalf, and the king's pardon was obtained for him. It was lauded as an act of great mercy in the bishop, that he had allowed a reader of the Bible to escape from a cruel death!

The history of those dreadful times when the Roman Church was predominant, abounds with such records as the following:—"Christopher, a Dutchman, of Antwerp, A. D. 1531. This man, for *selling certain New Testaments in English*, to John Row aforesaid, was put in prison at Westminster, *and there died.*" "John Mel, of Boxted, A. D. 1532. His heresy was this; for having and reading the New Testament in English, the Psalter in English, and the book called 'A. B. C.' "Heresies and errors collected by the bishops out of the book named 'THE SUM OF THE SCRIPTURES,' with the places of the book annexed to the same—A. D. 1546. Article III. "Godfathers and Godmothers be bound to help their children that they may be put to school that they may understand the gospel, and the epistles of St. Paul." Fol. 15.

The place out of the said book, which is thus condemned as *heretical*, is as follows : “ The Godfathers and Godmothers be bound to help the children that they be put to school, to the intent that they may understand the gospel, the joyful message of God, with the epistles of St. Paul. God hath commanded to publish and to shew the gospel, not only to priests, but to every creature : Go ye (saith Christ unto his disciples) into the universal world, and preach the gospel to every creature. For we be all equally bound to know the gospel, and the doctrine of the New Testament, &c. And St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, confesseth that he sendeth his epistles to all the Church ; that is to say, to all the assembly of christian men, and to all them that call on the name of Jesus, &c.”

“ Porter was a fresh young man, and of a big stature ; who by diligent reading of the Scripture, and by hearing of such sermons as then were preached by them that were the setters-forth of God’s truth, became very expert. The Bible then being set up by Bonner’s commandment, upon divers pillars in Paul’s Church, fixed unto the same with chains for all men to read in them that would, great multitudes would resort thither to hear this Porter, because he could read well, and had an audible voice. Bonner and his chaplains being grieved withal, (and the world beginning then to frown upon the Gospellers), sent for the aforesaid Porter, and rebuked him very sharply for his reading. But Porter answered him that he trusted he had done nothing contrary to the law, neither contrary to his advertisements, which he had fixed in print over every Bible. Bonner then laid unto his charge that he had made expositions upon the text, and gathered great multitudes about him to make tumults. He answered, he trusted that should

not be proved by him. But, in fine, Bonner sent him to Newgate, *where he was miserably fettered in irons, both legs and arms, with a collar of iron about his neck fastened to the wall in the dungeon*; being there so cruelly handled, that he was compelled to send for a kinsman of his, whose name is also Porter, a man yet alive, and can testify that it is true, and dwelleth yet without Newgate. He, seeing his kinsman, in this miserable case, entreated Jewet, then keeper of Newgate, that he might be released out of those cruel irons; and so, through friendship and money, *had him up among other prisoners who lay there for felony and murder*; where Porter, being amongst them, hearing and seeing their wickedness and blasphemy, *exhorted them to amendment of life, and gave unto them such instructions as he had learned of the Scriptures*; for which his so doing he was complained on, and so carried down, *and laid on the lower dungeon of all, oppressed with bolts and irons, where, within six or eight days after, he was found dead.*"

This cruel bishop had placed Bibles in his cathedral because the king had expressly commanded it; but, you see, he endeavoured, as far as he could, to deter people from reading them. Afterwards, when he had full power given to him, during Queen Mary's awful reign, he was very careful to have the passages of Scripture, which had been painted on the walls of churches, blotted out. It is well to observe the reasons which he assigns why such passages ought not to be seen or read. "The children of iniquity," said he, in his mandate. "given up to carnal desires and novelties . . . have procured, as a stay to their heresies, (as they thought), certain Scriptures wrongly applied to be painted upon the church-walls; all which persons tend chiefly to this end—that they might uphold the liberty of the

flesh, and marriage of priests, and destroy as much as lay in them, the reverent sacrament of the altar, and might extinguish and enervate holy-days, fasting-days, and other laudable discipline of the Catholic Church ; opening a window to all vices, and utterly closing up the way unto virtue." It is worthy of observation, how the encyclical letters of modern Popes agree with this language of the bigotted and merciless Bonner. The circulation and reading of God's Word tend only, in their estimation, to the production of vice and crime. Bonner alludes to certain passages of Scripture which *uphold the marriage of priests*, and the present Pope, Pius IX, exclaims with well-affected horror and indignation :—" To this point tends that infamous conspiracy against the sacred celibacy of the clergy, which, oh shame ! has been encouraged even by some ecclesiastics ! "

The case of William Hunter, an apprentice nineteen years of age, so well illustrates the policy of the Church of Rome respecting the reading of the Bible, that I cannot but submit it to your serious consideration. " William going into the chapel of Brentwood, and finding there a Bible lying on a desk, did read therein. In the mean time there came in one Father Atwell, a sumner, who hearing William read in the Bible, said to him, " What ! meddlest thou with the Bible ? Knowest thou what thou readest, and canst thou expound the Scriptures ? " To whom William answered and said, " Father Atwell, I take not upon me to expound the Scriptures, except I were dispensed withal ; but I, finding the Bible here when I came, read in it to my comfort." To whom Father Atwell said, " It was never merry world, since the Bible came abroad in English." To the which word, William answered, saying, " Father

Atwell, say not so for God's sake : for it is God's book, out of the which every one that hath grace may learn to know both what things please God, and also what displeaseth him." Then said Father Atwell, " Could we not tell before this time as well as now, how God was served ? " William answered, " No, Father Atwell ; nothing as well as we may now, if that we might have his blessed Word amongst us still as we have had." " It is true," said Father Atwell, " if it be as you say." " Well," said William Hunter, " it liketh me very well, and I pray God that we may have the blessed Bible amongst us continually." To the which words Father Atwell said, " I perceive your mind well enough : you are one of them that mislike the Queen's laws ; and therefore you came from London, I hear say. You learned these ways at London ; but for all that," said Father Atwell, " you must turn another leaf ; or else yet, and a great sort more heretics will broil for this gear I warrant you." To the which words William said, " God give me grace that I may believe his Word, and confess his name, whatsoever come thereof." " Confess his name ! " quoth old Atwell, " No, no ; ye will go to the devil all of you, and confess his name." " What ? " said William, " you say not well, Father Atwell." At the which words he went out of the chapel in a great fury, saying, " I am not able to reason with thee, but I will fetch one straightway which shall talk with thee, I warrant thee, thou heretic ! " And he, leaving William Hunter reading in the Bible, straightway brought one Thomas Wood, who was the Vicar of Southwell, who was at an alehouse even over against the said chapel : who, hearing old Atwell say, that William Hunter was reading of the Bible in the chapel, came by and by to him ; and finding him reading in

the Bible, took the matter very heinously, saying, "Sirrah, who gave thee leave to read in the Bible and to expound it?" Then William answered, "I expound not the Scriptures, Sir, but read them for my comfort." "What meddlest thou with them at all?" said the vicar; "It becometh not ~~they~~ nor any such to meddle with the Scriptures." But William answered, "I will read the Scriptures (God willing) while I live; and you ought, master vicar, not to discourage any man for that matter, but rather exhort men diligently to read the Scriptures for your discharge and their own." Unto the which the vicar answered, "It becometh thee well to tell me what I have to do. I see thou art a heretic by thy word." This poor youth was afterwards denounced by this priest, to a magistrate as a heretic, and though he fled from his home, and might have escaped from the hands of his enemies, yet, on learning that his father was likely to be sent to prison on his account, he returned and surrendered himself. He was questioned as to his belief in transubstantiation, and, on his reply that bread, consecrated by the priest in the Mass, still remained bread, he was sent up to London to Bishop Bonner. After several examinations by the bishop he was condemned to death. His answers to Bonner shewed that he had made some progress in Scriptural knowledge notwithstanding his youth, and the times in which he lived. When he confessed that he received Christ's body spiritually, on partaking of the Lord's Supper; "Dost thou mean," quoth the bishop, "that the bread is Christ's body spiritually?" William answered, "I mean not so, but rather when I receive the holy communion rightly and worthily, I do feed upon Christ spiritually, through faith in my soul, and am made partaker of all the benefits which Christ hath brought unto

all faithful believers through his precious death, passion, and resurrection ; and not that the bread is his body spiritually or corporally.” Then said the bishop to William, “ Dost thou not think,” holding up his cap, “ that, for example here of my cap, thou mayest see the squareness and colour of it, and yet that not to be the substance which thou judgest by the accidents ? ” William answered, “ If you can separate the accidents from the substance, and shew me the substance without the accidents, I would believe.” Then said the bishop, “ Thou wilt not believe that God can do any thing above man’s capacity ? ” “ Yes,” said William, “ I must needs believe that ; for daily experience teacheth all men that thing plainly : *but our question is not what God can do, but what he will have us to learn in his holy Supper.*” Then the bishop said, “ I always have found thee at this point, and I see no hope in thee to reclaim thee unto the Catholic faith, but thou wilt continue a corrupt member : ” and then pronounced sentence upon him, how that he should go from that place to Newgate for a time, and so from thence to Brentwood, “ where,” said he, “ thou shalt be burned.” After refusing some great offers, made to him by Bonner, on the condition of his recanting, he suffered at the stake with the utmost firmness and constancy.

Is it not strange that, in the face of all this evidence of the hostility of the Roman Church to the reading of the Bible in the vulgar tongue ; and notwithstanding the repeated boasts of her advocates that their Church is unchanged and unchangeable ; that in spite of the acknowledged fact, that no authorized translations of the Scriptures have yet been prepared for her members ; and that the prohibition of the Council of Trent, which I have before noticed, is still in force ; and that Popes,

and bishops, and priests conspire, in the present day, to denounce every attempt to circulate the Scriptures; is it not strange that any persons can be found so daring as to assert, and so credulous as to believe, that the Roman Church does not prohibit the circulation and reading of the Holy Scriptures? It will hardly be necessary for me to adduce farther evidence on this point; for the fact, that the Church of Rome discountenances, and, where she has the power, rigidly prohibits the reading of the Bible, is so notorious, that a man must be wilfully blind who does not know it. I will, therefore, next proceed to show how contrary is this prohibition not only to the revealed will of God, but also to the opinions of those ancient Fathers whom Romanists and Romanizers seem to hold in greater veneration, and of higher authority than even the Bible. But as you will probably consider this letter quite long enough, I will bring forward this important testimony against the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome, with respect to the Scriptures, in a future communication.

LETTER III.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

DEAR SIR,

It may seem a superfluous labour to collect passages from the Bible in order to prove to a member of the Church of England, that our Church is right in countenancing, and the Romish Church wrong in prohibiting, the reading of God's Word; but as you acknowledge that you have paid but little attention to this subject, and express a wish for further information, I cannot think that in bringing before you the following Scriptural quotations, I shall engage in a superfluous work. May you "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them!" And then neither my labour in writing, nor yours in perusing them, "will be in vain in the Lord."

"And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep and do them. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the com-

mandments of the Lord your God, which I command you. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart : and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law. And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words ; for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth ; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayst observe to do according to all that is written therein ; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

“ The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul : the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple : the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart : the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned : and in keeping of them there is great reward.”

“ Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way ? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. Through thy precepts, I get understanding : therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes ; for

their deceit is falsehood. The entrance of thy words giveth light ; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

"Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed ; but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded. To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater : so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth : it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

"Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken : lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord : and what wisdom is in them ? He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat ? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire ? saith the Lord ; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces : Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour."

"Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin. I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord : And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east ; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. They refused to hearken, and pulled away

the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings."

From the preceding passages of Scripture, it is evident that the people, under the Mosaic dispensation, were allowed the privilege of hearing and reading the law and the prophets: that it was their duty to meditate upon the word of God: that they excited divine wrath against themselves when they neglected this duty; and that one of the greatest evils which could befall them was, to be deprived of this privilege, and to lose the opportunity of obtaining wisdom, and light, and knowledge. It is equally clear that there were false prophets, or teachers, who sought not counsel of the Lord, and taught not the people according to his law, but caused them to "err by their lies, and by their lightness," and by "perverting the words of the living God." They endeavoured to deceive their hearers by publishing their own inventions, instead of declaring the will and counsel of God:—"They prophesy unto you," says Jeremiah, "a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart." How were the people to detect the erroneous doctrines of such teachers? By applying to some living infallible guide? No: they were to compare them with the Scriptures? "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not

according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Are the people, under the Christian dispensation, less capable of understanding what they read or hear, than were the Israelites, that they should be deprived of this privilege, and be regarded as unfit to discharge the duty of studying God's word? Does the easiness of Christ's yoke consist in this :—that his people are no longer required to exercise their understandings, and to meditate upon the Holy Scriptures ; but that an indolent assent to all the doctrines which the church teaches them, will be sufficient for salvation? Let the following passages from the New Testament answer these questions :—

“ Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life ; and they are they which testify of me. Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name.”

“ And the next Sabbath-day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets. For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures

might have hope. The revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. 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, throughly furnished unto all good works. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man : but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. We have also a more sure word of prophecy ; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and to exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein : for the time is at hand. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are

written in this book : And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God : because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Prove all things. There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Now what is the conclusion which any person must draw from reading the preceding passages, and comparing them with the decrees and practices of the Roman Church, but this :—Either these are not the words of Christ, and of his evangelists and apostles, or the Church of Rome sets herself in opposition to Christ's authority. How can the people "prove all things" that they hear, and "try the spirits," or teachers, whether they be of God, if they are not permitted to examine and meditate upon God's Holy Word? What if some portions be obscure and difficult, and their meaning be sometimes perverted by rash and ignorant men, did not Christ know this, when he uttered the command, "Search the Scriptures?" He did not say, Read only the comments and interpretations which the Church may put into your hands, but, Read the Scriptures; and he ascribes the error into which the Sadducees had fallen, to their ignorance of the Scriptures :—"Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures."

And "how did Christ confute the devil? With

Scripture, or expounding the Scriptures. The which was written for our instruction, that we should repair unto the Scriptures in all doubts and controversies; the which is the only touchstone to examine and try all doctrine, the forged, pretended, and false, from the sincere, germane, and true. Verily the gospel is that "power of God," for so Paul termeth it, "unto salvation to all them that believe." The gospel is a sermon of God's mercy, that he hath blotted out our sins by faith only in Christ's blood. It maketh no heretics. Twelve men, by preaching of it, made the unfaithful and heretics, faithful and true Christians. This candle was not light (lighted) to be put under a bushel, but to be set in the candlestick, to give light to them that be in God's house. For Christ crieth,—“Woe worth them, that take away the key of knowledge, neither entering themselves, no (nor) yet suffering other to enter. The key of knowledge is God's holy Testament and Word, that which before we called the touchstone to discern good doctrine from evil.”

This key of knowledge must be taken away, lest men should know more of the truth than is agreeable or convenient to the *infallible* Pontiff! He is to speak what he pleases, and men are without any hesitation to believe every doctrine that he orders to be published; and they must beware of trying whether such doctrine agree with God's word, lest they become heretics! But whatever may be the object of the Church of Rome in keeping her members from perusing the Holy Scriptures, she subjects herself to the divine displeasure by pursuing this course. For observe how God speaks to those priests of his ancient Church, who neglected to give the people sound instruction:—“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected know-

ledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me : seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." *Hosea* iv. 6. Hence is it evident, that the blood of all those who may perish through lack of knowledge, will be required at the hands of those who deprived them of that Book, through the reading or hearing of which they might have been made "wise unto salvation."

· "To deprive men of the Holy Scriptures, and to keep them ignorant of the service of God, and yet while they do so, to make a shew of an earnest desire of their salvation, is just such a mockery, as if one of you that is a master should tell his apprentice how much you desire that he should thrive in the world, and be a rich man, but all the while keep him in ignorance of his trade in order to his being rich ; and with the strictest care imaginable, conceal from him the best means of learning that whereby alone he is likely to thrive and get an estate. *Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.* The woe denounced by our Saviour here against the Scribes and Pharisees, falls every whit as heavy upon the pastors and teachers of the Roman Church. They have taken away the key of knowledge with a witness ; not only depriving the people of the right understanding of the Scriptures, but of the very use of them. This tyranny that Church hath exercised over those of her communion for several hundreds of years. It grew upon them indeed by degrees : for as by the inundation of barbarous nations upon the Roman Empire the Romans lost their language by degrees, so the governors of that Church still kept up the Scriptures and the service of God in the Latin tongue ; which at last was wholly unknown to the common people. And about the ninth and tenth centuries, when by the general

consent of all their historians, gross darkness and ignorance covered this part of the world, the Pope and the priests took away the key of knowledge, and did (as I may so say) put it under the door for several ages : till the Reformation fetched it out again, and rubbed off the rust from it. And I profess seriously that hardly any thing in the world was ever to me more astonishing, than this uncharitable and cruel usage of the people in the Church of Rome. And I cannot tell which to wonder at most, the insolence of their governors in imposing upon men this senseless way of serving God, or the patience, shall I call it, or rather stupidity of the people in enduring to be so intolerably abused. Why should reasonable creatures be treated at this rude and barbarous rate ? As if they were unworthy to be acquainted with the will of God ; and as if that which every man ought to do, were not fit for every man to know. As if the common people had only bodies to be present at the service of God, but no souls ; or as if they were all distracted and out of their wits, and it were a dangerous thing to let in the light upon them."

It is usual with the advocates of Popery to appeal to the writings of the ancient Fathers, in support of any doctrines and practices of their Church, which cannot stand the test of God's word. They do not indeed assert that the ancient Fathers opposed Scripture, but that their interpretations of it were different from those of modern commentators. And as those Fathers, say they, lived so near the times of the apostles, they are much more likely to give the true meaning of Scripture than divines of the present day. But while they boast much of the consent of Catholic antiquity, they take good care not to produce their proofs. And the members of the Roman Catholic Church in general, are

content to be told that such and such doctrines and practices are agreeable to Catholic antiquity ; and they make no inquiry into the matter. But the truth is, Popery receives no more countenance from the earliest Christian Fathers, than it does from Scripture, in regard to its principal tenets. As to the point under consideration—the right of the people to read and study the Bible—the ancient Fathers are decidedly against the modern Church of Rome. This I will prove by various quotations from the most ancient and esteemed Christian writers. On examining the writings of Chrysostom we find that eminent Father using very different language from that of “ the Congregation of the Index.” He frequently reproves the people for neglecting the duty and privilege of reading and studying the Holy Scriptures. He exhorts them to buy the Scriptures, to peruse them diligently, and to converse about them with their families. Instead of allowing that the difficulty and obscurity of some parts of God’s word afford a valid reason why simple and unlearned men should not read the Bible. he says that even such persons may obtain the knowledge of it, by prayer to God for his divine teaching :—“ If thou be accustomed to pray constantly, there is no reason why thou shouldst wish for the teaching of thy fellow-servant, since God himself, without any other interpreter, will abundantly enlighten thy mind.” And in another place he observes :—“ It cannot be that any one who with great study and fervent desire meditates on the divine Scriptures, should always be neglected. For although we may be destitute of the teaching of man, yet God himself from above entering our hearts, will illumine our mind, and pour a beam of light upon our reason, and reveal things that are

hidden, and become a teacher of the things we know not.”

Hippolytus, bishop and martyr, who flourished about the year A. D. 220, thus writes :—“ As he that would profess the wisdom of this world, cannot otherwise attain to it than by reading the opinions of the philosophers ; so whosoever of us would exercise piety towards God, we cannot otherwise learn it than out of the Holy Scriptures.”

Clemens, of Alexandria, who lived A. D. 200, gives the following advice :—“ Let us not simply attend to the words of man, which it is as lawful for us also to gain-say ; but if it be not enough only to say what we think, but what is said ought to be believed, let us not only look for testimony from men, but *let us confirm what is questioned by the word of God, which is the surest of all demonstrations, nay, it is itself the only demonstration.*”

His cotemporary, Tertullian, appeals to the same unerring standard—the Bible ;—“ Let the shop of Hermogenes shew where it is written. *If it be not written,* let him fear that woe which is appointed to those who add any thing to, or take any thing from, the word of God.”

Origen, who wrote about the year of our Lord 230, anticipates the objections which Romanists bring against the free circulation and reading of the Scriptures :—“ It may be said ; The Scriptures are hard ; yet, that notwithstanding, if thou read them they shall do thee good. For the Lord Jesus Christ, if he find us occupied in the Scriptures, and exercised in the study thereof, not only vouchsafeth himself to be refreshed and fed in us, but also seeing such a banquet prepared, bringeth with him his Father unto us. I would,” he says in

another place, "that we all performed what is written, —Search the Scriptures."

Cyril, of Jerusalem, A. D. 370, writes as if it were universally admitted, that men were not only to read and study the Holy Scriptures, but also that they were to try the doctrines which they heard by that infallible standard :—"There ought nothing at all to be delivered concerning the divine and holy mysteries of faith without the Holy Scriptures, nor ought we to be moved at all with probabilities and prepared orations, or compositions of speech. Neither do thou believe me that say these things, unless thou takest the demonstrations of the things which are said out of the Holy Scriptures."

Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, A. D. 250, writing on the subject of traditions, requires that they should all be brought to the test of Scripture :—"From whence is that tradition? Does it descend from divine and evangelical authority? Or doth it come from the commands of the apostles, or their epistles? For that those things ought to be done which are written, God himself testifies and propounds, saying to Jesus Nave (Joshua) *Let not the book of this Law depart from thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate in it night and day, and thou shalt observe all the things that are written in them.* And the Lord also sending the apostles, commands that *all nations should be baptized and taught that they should observe whatever he commanded.*"

Theophilus Alexandrinus, A. D. 390, is very far from approving of that implicit and indolent faith which members of the Church of Rome are required to yield to all its doctrines. He would have men to examine whether the things, which may be propounded as matters of faith, are agreeable to God's word :—"It is an instinct of the devil to follow the sophisms of human minds,

and to think any thing divine without the authority of the Scriptures."

"At the coming of Christ," says Jerome, "the people shall be lifted up and shall make haste, and shall go to the mountains of the Scriptures, and there shall they find mountains Moses, and Joshua the son of Nave (Nun), the mountains of the prophets, the mountains of the New Testament, the apostles and the evangelists. And when they shall flee to such mountains, and shall be occupied in the reading thereof, if they find not one to teach them, yet shall their endeavour and goodwill be allowed, for that they have fled unto the mountains."

Thus you see that Scripture and antiquity are alike opposed to the Church of Rome on this point—the prohibition to circulate or read the Bible in the vulgar tongue. The early Christian Church knew of no such prohibition. It was only in those times, which are emphatically called the dark ages, that writers were found to prostitute their talents in defence of so monstrous a practice. But though Popery may boast of its thousands of schoolmen who endeavour to persuade men, by their sophistry, that it is a good, and wise, and benevolent act in their holy mother, the Church, to keep them from what a modern Pope blasphemously calls "those poisonous pastures"—the sacred writings; that corrupt Church cannot bring any authority from Scripture, or any countenance from Catholic antiquity, in its behalf. The writers on which it relies for support, are those alone who commend ignorance as the mother of devotion. Such advocates are indeed well suited to a Church which requires an utter prostration of the mind from all its members, and makes religion to consist in little else than formality and superstition. Writers of

this description may succeed in exalting the Church and her ministers, but it will be at the expense and by the degradation of the laity, and to the dishonour of Him, who requires men to worship in spirit and in truth,—not merely to bow the knee before Him, but to “pray with the spirit and with the understanding also.”

“There is no doubt,” says the eminent prelate whom I have before quoted, “but that men of wit and confidence will always make a shift to say something for any thing; and some way or other blanch over the blackest and most absurd things in the world. But I leave it to the judgment of mankind, whether anything be more unreasonable than to tell men, in effect, that it is fit they should understand as little of religion as is possible; that God hath published a very dangerous book, with which it is not safe for the people to be familiarly acquainted; that our blessed Saviour and his apostles, and the ancient Christian Church, for more than six hundred years, were not wise managers of religion, nor prudent dispensers of the Scriptures; but like fond and foolish fathers, put a knife and a sword into the hands of their children, with which, they might easily have foreseen, what mischief they would do to themselves and others! And who would not choose to be of such a Church, which is provided of such excellent and effectual means of ignorance, such wise and infallible methods for the prevention of knowledge in the people, and such variety of close shutters to keep out the light?”

How different a course is pursued by the Church of England! Not only is her admirable Liturgy composed, for the most part, of expressions taken from the word of God, but the reading of the Holy Scriptures before her congregations is so arranged, that the greater part

of the Old Testament may be read every year once, and the New Testament thrice, "besides the Epistles and Gospels; except the Apocalypse, out of which there are only certain Proper Lessons appointed upon divers Feasts." "Here," the venerable Compilers observe, "you have an Order for Prayer, and for the reading of the Holy Scripture, much agreeable to the mind and purpose of the old Fathers; and a great deal more profitable and commodious, than that which of late was used. It is more profitable, because here are left out many things, whereof some are untrue, some uncertain, some vain and superstitious; and nothing is ordained to be read, but the very pure Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, or that which is agreeable to the same; and that in such a language and order as is most easy and plain for the understanding both of the readers and hearers."

Instead of prohibiting her members from reading the word of God in private, our Church strongly inculcates upon them the duty and importance of diligently searching and meditating upon it: "Unto a Christian man," she declares that "there can be nothing either more necessary or profitable, than the knowledge of Holy Scripture, forasmuch as in it is contained God's true Word, setting forth his glory, and also man's duty. And there is no truth nor doctrine necessary for our justification and everlasting salvation, but that is, or may be drawn out of that fountain and well of truth. . . Let us reverently hear and read Holy Scripture, which is the food of the soul. Let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the New and Old Testament. . . . We may learn also in these books to know God's will and pleasure, as much as, for this present time, is convenient for us to know. And as the great

clerk and godly preacher, St. John Chrysostom, saith, whatsoever is required to the salvation of man, is fully contained in the Scripture of God. He that is ignorant may there learn and have knowledge. He that is hard-hearted and an obstinate sinner, shall there find everlasting torments, prepared of God's justice, to make him afraid, and to mollify or soften him. He that is oppressed with misery in this world shall there find relief in the promises of everlasting life. to his great consolation and comfort. He that is wounded by the devil unto death, shall find there medicine whereby he may be restored again unto health: if it shall require to teach any truth, or reprove any false doctrine, to rebuke any vice, to commend any virtue, to give good counsel, and to comfort or to exhort, or to do any other thing requisite for our salvation, all those things, saith St. Chrysostom, we may learn plentifully of the Scripture. There is, saith Fulgentius, abundantly enough, both for men to eat, and children to suck. There is whatsoever is meet for all ages, and for all degrees and sorts of men. These books therefore ought to be much in our hands, in our eyes, in our mouths, but most of all in our hearts. . . . This Word whosoever is diligent to read, and in his heart to print that he readeth, the great affection to the transitory things of this world shall be minished in him, and the great desire of heavenly things (that be therein promised of God) shall increase in him. And there is nothing that so much strengtheneth our faith and trust in God, that so much keepeth up innocency and pureness of the heart, and also of outward godly life and conversation, as continual reading and recording of God's word.

“ Although other sciences be good, and to be learned, yet no man can deny but this is the chief, and passeth

all other incomparably. What excuse shall we therefore make, at the last day before Christ, that delight to read or hear men's fantasies and inventions, more than his most holy Gospel? And will find no time to do that which chiefly, above all things, we should do, and will rather read other things than that, for the which we ought rather to leave reading of all other things."

Our Church thus answers the vain and absurd language of those who defend the prohibition to read the Bible in the vulgar tongue, under the plea, that ignorant and unlearned persons will fall into error; and that the difficulty of understanding the Scriptures is so great that none but clergy and learned men can overcome it: "How," it is asked, "should they come out of ignorance, that will not read or hear that thing which should give them knowledge? He that now hath most knowledge, was at the first ignorant; yet he forbore not to read, for fear he should fall into error; but he diligently read, lest he should remain in ignorance, and through ignorance in error. And if you will not know the truth of God (a thing most necessary for you) lest you fall into error; by the same reason you may then lie still, and never go, lest if you go, you fall into the mire; nor eat any good meat, lest you take a surfeit: nor sow your corn, nor labour in your occupation, nor use your merchandise, for fear you lose your seed, your labour, your stock; and so by that reason it should be best for you to live idly, and never to take in hand to do any manner of good thing, lest peradventure some evil thing may chance thereof. And if you be afraid to fall into error by reading of Holy Scripture, I shall shew you how you may read without danger of error. Read it humbly with a meek and with a lowly heart, to the intent you may glorify God, and not yourself, with the knowledge of it: and

read it not without daily praying to God, that he would direct your reading to good effect ; and take upon you to expound it no further than you can plainly understand it. For, as St. Augustine saith, the knowledge of Holy Scripture is a great, large, and a high place ; but the door is very low, and (he must) humble himself, that shall enter into it. Presumption and arrogancy are the mother of all error ; and humility needeth to fear no error. For humility will only search to know the truth ; it will search and will bring together one place with another, and where it cannot find out the meaning, it will pray, it will ask of others that know, and will not presumptuously and rashly define any thing which it knoweth not. Therefore the humble man may search any truth boldly in the Scripture without any danger of error. And if he be ignorant, he ought the more to read and to search Holy Scripture, to bring him out of ignorance.

“ And concerning the hardness of Scripture . . . (it) is full, as well as of low vallies, plain ways, and easy for every man to use and to walk in ; as also of high hills and mountains, which few men can climb unto. And whosoever giveth his mind to Holy Scriptures with diligent study and burning desire, it cannot be, saith St. John Chrysostom, that he should be left without help. And those things in the Scripture that be plain to understand, and necessary for salvation, every man's duty is to learn them, to print them in memory, and effectually to exercise them. And as for the dark mysteries, to be contented to be ignorant in them, until such time as it shall please God to open these things unto him. . . . And briefly to conclude, as St. Augustine saith, by the Scripture all men be amended, weak men be strengthened, and strong men be comforted. So that surely none be enemies to the reading of God's Word,

but such as either be so ignorant, that they know not how wholesome a thing it is ; or else be so sick, that they hate the most comfortable medicine that should heal them : or so ungodly that they would wish the people still to continue in blindness and ignorance of God."

Now, my dear Sir, compare this language of our Church with the arrogant declaration of the Church of Rome :—"That if the Holy Bible translated into the vulgar tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to every one, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it :"—compare the preceding extracts from the Homilies of the Church of England with the following Popish decree :—"If any one shall have the *presumption* to read or possess it (the Bible) without such written permission (of the bishop, priest, or confessor), he shall not receive absolution until he have first delivered up such Bible to the ordinary. Booksellers who shall sell, or otherwise dispose of Bibles in the vulgar tongue to any person not having such permission, shall forfeit the value of the books, to be applied by the bishop to some pious use, *and shall be subjected to such other penalties as the bishop shall judge proper.*"

The one Church, like a careful mother, provides the most wholesome and nourishing food for her children ;—gives them day by day that bread by which the soul of man is supported ; earnestly beseeches the thoughtless and negligent to come and eat and inwardly digest it ; and prepares such ample provision for all who come to her house that they may eat and be satisfied, and none need go empty away. While the Church of Rome, like a cruel and unnatural parent, takes away her children's bread ;—tells them it is poisoned and will do them harm ;—prohibits them from touching, tasting, or hand-

ling it, under the heaviest penalties ;—and substitutes for it that “ which is not bread,” and which cannot satisfy the soul that is hungering for the bread of life.

“ We refer it to the common sense of mankind,” says Archbishop Tillotson, “ which Church, that of Rome or ours, hath all the right and reason in the world on her side in these debates ? And who they are that tyrannize over christians, the governors of their Church or ours ; who use the people like sons and freemen, and who like slaves ; who feed the flock of Christ committed to them, and who take the children’s bread from them ? Who they are that, when their children ask bread, for bread give them a stone, and for an egg a serpent ; I mean the *Legends* of their *saints*, instead of the *Holy Scriptures*, which are able to make men wise unto salvation. And who they are that lie most justly under the suspicion of errors and corruptions ;—they who bring their doctrine and practices into the open light, and are willing to have them tried by the true touchstone, the word of God ; or they who shun the light and decline all manner of trial and examination ? And who are most likely to carry on a worldly design,—they who drive a trade of such mighty gain and advantage under pretence of religion, and make such markets of the ignorance and sins of the people ; or we, whom malice itself cannot charge with any worldly design by any allowed doctrine or practice of our religion ? For we make no money of the mistakes of the people, nor do we fill their heads with vain fears of new places of torment, to make them willing to empty their purses in a vainer hope of being delivered out of them. We do not, like them, pretend to a mighty bank and treasure of merits in the Church, which they sell to the people for ready money, giving them bills of exchange from the Pope to

Purgatory ; when they who grant them have no reason to believe they will avail them, or be accepted in the other world. For our part, we have no fear that our people should understand religion too well : we could wish, with Moses, *that all the Lord's people were prophets*. We should be heartily glad if the people would read the Holy Scriptures more diligently, being sufficiently assured that it is their own fault if they learn any thing but what is good from thence. We have no doctrines or practices contrary to Scripture, and, consequently, no occasion to keep it close from the sight of the people, or to hide any of the commandments of God from them."

Consider, then, seriously, what privileges you will surrender, and to what a mental and spiritual bondage you will submit, if you at length become a member of that Church, whose ostentatious but empty worship seems to have so dazzled your eyes and obscured your judgment. Examine well her pretensions to be a true mother, before you transfer your affections and allegiance to her ; and try by that infallible test, the word of God, whether the bread of which you have enough and to spare, in the house of your venerable mother, the Church of England, be not the pure and "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

LETTER IV.

SUPREMACY AND INFALLIBILITY.

DEAR SIR,

You express much astonishment at the proofs which I have laid before you, both from Scripture and the ancient Fathers, that the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome respecting the circulation and reading of God's Word, are unscriptural, and plainly contrary to the voice of Catholic antiquity. If this be so, you ask, how it can be possible for any sensible and intelligent Roman Catholic to allow himself to be deprived, or patiently to see his poor and unlearned brethren robbed, of a privilege so valuable? This is easily accounted for. A member of the Church of Rome, it should be borne in mind, is taught from his childhood to believe, without any doubt or hesitation, all the doctrines which his Church teaches, *because she is infallible*. A belief that the Church of Rome cannot err, must obviously preclude any inquiry into the truth of her doctrines, or into the lawfulness of any practices which she has sanctioned by her *infallible* authority.

On other subjects, Romanists may exercise their reason and judgment with the same freedom that Protestants do ; but on the doctrines and practices of their Church they must not presume to use their reason and understanding. They are not to think and examine, but to OBEY. In the words of their Catechism : “ They must believe these things, because God has revealed them to his infallible Church.”

“ I am not ashamed to confess,” says the Rev. C. H. Wharton, “ 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 supposed 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 to disregard all authority that clashes with reason.”

It is evident that if you allow to the Church of Rome what she so arrogantly claims, the power of determining with unerring judgment all matters of religion ; and that consequently it is the duty of her members to interpret the Holy Scriptures, in no other sense than she has determined, the Bible will become a dead letter. It may be read with the eye, but not with the eyes of the

understanding. The permission to read it, therefore, being accompanied by such a restriction, you need not be surprised that Roman Catholics are generally indifferent about it, and quietly submit to the policy of their Church, which is, to give as small a portion of the Scriptures as possible to the people. It will be advisable, then, to examine into this claim of infallibility; for if it be well-founded, there is an end of all controversy, and it becomes our duty to yield, without any doubt or hesitation, to all the decisions of the Church of Rome.

What then are the proofs, which the advocates of Popery adduce, in support of this pretension to infallibility? They quote the high commendation which St. Paul gives of the Church of Rome, at the time when he wrote his epistle to the Romans; "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." *Romans* i. 8. This testimony, of course, applies to the state of that Church at the period when it was given; it affords no proof that Rome now holds "the faith which was once delivered to the saints." For the same apostle speaks in equally high terms of the Church at Thessalonica; "Not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad." *1 Thess.* i. 8.

The other passages of Scripture, on which the Church of Rome founds her pretension to infallibility, are the following: "I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 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." *Matt.* xvi. 18, 19. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." "Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." *Luke* xxii. 31, 32. *John* xxi. 17.

Are we to infer from these texts that Christ not only bestowed some peculiar dignity and power on Peter, which he did not confer on the rest of the Apostles, but also extended the same favour to all the successors of Peter? This is surely not the sense of the words here quoted. Whatever be the meaning of the expression, "I will build my Church on this rock," it is very certain that the promise is not limited to Peter. St. Paul tells the Ephesians, that they "are built upon the foundation of the apostles (not of the apostle Peter alone) and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." *Eph.* ii. 20. And St. John, in the book of Revelation, tells us that the wall of the heavenly Jerusalem "had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." *Rev.* xxi. 14.

But the Saviour prayed that the faith of Peter might not fail: and did he not also pray for the other disciples, that God would keep them from falling? "Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are." *John* xvii. 11.

And what is the meaning of the expression, "Feed my sheep?" Is it not that Peter should preach that Word of truth which should nourish their souls? But all the other apostles are commanded to do the same:—"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 whatsoever I have commanded you, and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." *Matt.* xxviii. 19, 20, And if when our blessed Saviour conferred the power of the keys on Peter, he signified that he was to be the supreme ruler of his Church on earth ; how could Christ, without inconsistency, use the same language towards the other apostles ? Yet he does use similar expressions :—" I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." " Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." *Luke* xxii. 29. *Matt.* xviii. 18. It is surely then evident that no power or right was conferred upon Peter above the other apostles. Had he been invested with the dignity of Supreme Pontiff and Infallible Guide of the Church, would an inspired apostle have so far forgot himself as to censure the conduct of his Superior—a Superior too who could not err ? Yet we find St. Paul severely reproving him,—not privately, but publicly—for his dissimulation ;—" When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. . . . I said unto Peter before them all, If thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews ?" *Gal.* ii. 11, 14. This was strange presumption in St. Paul, if Peter were really that supreme, unerring Ruler, which each of his pretended successors boasts to be. It is also remarkable that we can see no shadow of evidence in the New Testament, that Peter and his successors were endowed with this high prerogative of Infallibility. And though the advocates of the Roman Church have for several centuries obstinately main-

tained this absurd claim, yet they are not to this day agreed where this Infallibility is seated !

“When you shall know,” says bishop Jeremy Taylor, “that learned men, even of the Roman party, are not agreed concerning the Catholic Church that is infallibly to guide you, some saying that it is the virtual Church, that is, the Pope ; some, that it is the representative Church, that is, a Council ; some, that it is the Pope and the Council, the virtual Church and the representative Church together : some, that neither of these, nor both together, are infallible ; but only the essential Church, or the diffusive Church, is the Catholic, from which we must at no hand dissent ; you will quickly find yourself in a wood, and uncertain whether you have more than a word in exchange for your soul, when you are told you are in the Catholic Church.”

“They are sure they have it,” says Archbishop Tiltonson, “though they know not where it is. And is this no prejudice against it ? Can any man think that this privilege was at first conferred upon the Church of Rome, and that Christians in all ages did believe it, and had constant recourse to it for determining their differences, and yet that that very Church, which hath enjoyed and used it so long, should now be at a loss where to find it ? Nothing could have fallen out more unluckily, than that there should be such differences among them about that which they pretend to be the only means of ending all differences. There is not the least intimation in Scripture of this privilege conferred upon the Roman Church ; nor do the apostles, in all their epistles, even so much as give the least direction to Christians to appeal to the bishop of Rome for a determination of the many differences, which, even in

those times, happened among them. And it is strange they should be silent in this matter, when there were many occasions to speak of it, if our Saviour had plainly appointed such an infallible judge of controversies for this very end, to decide the differences that should happen among Christians. It is strange that the ancient Fathers, in their disputes with heretics, should never appeal to this judge; nay, it is strange, they should not constantly do it in all cases, it being so short and expedite a way for the ending of controversies. And this very consideration to a wise man is instead of a thousand arguments to satisfy him, that in those times no such thing was believed in the world. Now this doctrine of Infallibility, if it be not true, is of so much the more pernicious consequence to Christianity, because the conceit of it does confirm them that think they have it, in all their other errors; and gives them a pretence of assuming an authority to themselves, to impose their own fancies and mistakes upon the whole Christian world."

"What reason," says another learned prelate, "have I to believe one man more than another? Are they not all men? No; the Pope is more than a man, acted with an infallible spirit, and therefore in believing him, I do not believe a mere man, but God himself speaking by him. But what ground can I have to believe this? Is it written in the Scriptures that the Pope is infallible? No, but that all men are liars. And so that the Pope is infallible I have no certain ground to believe it, and therefore no certain ground to believe any thing he saith to be true."

But it is objected that if the Church be not infallible, so as to maintain no doctrines as essential to salvation which, in truth, are repugnant to the divine will, the

promise of Christ will not be fulfilled ; for the gates of hell *will then prevail against the Church*. This promise pertains to the UNIVERSAL CHURCH, which, no doubt, has ever held in one place or another, all the great and essential doctrines of the Gospel. Popery claims that for a particular Church which belongs only to the Church Catholic, or universal ; or rather, she would have all men believe that she is herself the Catholic Church. The assertion may be received when it shall be demonstrated, that a part is the whole, that a branch is an entire tree, that one college in Cambridge or Oxford, is the University, and that Italy is the world ; but not till then.

It is necessary to bear in mind this distinction between a particular Church and the Church Catholic, whenever you converse with Romanists. For if you quietly admit that their Church is not a branch of, but actually the entire Catholic Church, Infallibility, Supremacy, and every other assumption of Popery, may easily be allowed. It is on this account that the advocates of Popery are so anxious to maintain the Supremacy of Peter, and all his successors. Only let it be granted that the seat of the Universal Bishop is at Rome, and there will be no difficulty in acknowledging that the Roman Church has, or ought to have, jurisdiction over all the Churches in the world. Some of their writers employ the following *weighty* argument in order to prove this point. Is not Peter mentioned first, in the catalogue of the apostles ? then, of course, he is Universal Bishop, and superior to all the other apostles ! By parity of argument, Mary, the mother of Jesus, whose name occurs after the other names of the women, in the same passage of Scripture, was inferior to all other women. But as nothing can be brought from

Scripture to prove either the infallibility, or the supremacy of Peter, or of the Church of Rome, let us see whether the Romanists are more successful in their appeal to antiquity in support of these claims.

It appears that in the Council of Nice, A. D. 325, the Bishop of Rome had assigned to him the first place among the patriarchs. This, of course, does not make him either Universal bishop, or infallible. The respective jurisdictions of the bishop of Rome and other patriarchs were defined by this Council, but it made no acknowledgment, or declaration, that the Roman See was head over all others in the world. The bishop of Rome was merely *Primus inter æquales*—the first amongst equals. Hosius presided at this Council, which he would not surely have been allowed to do, had the bishop of Rome been considered as the Supreme Bishop. At the Council of Chalcedon indeed, Leo presided, but not as a matter of right. He states to the emperor Marcion, that the Eastern bishops who presided in the Council of Ephesus, had acted improperly, and therefore requested that in this Council the office might be conferred on himself. It is not likely that a Pope of Rome would have requested as a favour that to which he was entitled as a right. At other Councils which were held in different places, we do not find the Roman Pontiff, or his Legates, presiding, but the bishops of the places in which they were respectively held.

In the Council of Carthage it was decreed ;—“ That the bishop of the first See be not called the chief of priests, or the highest priest, or by any other like name ; but only the bishop of the first See.” And in the Council of Milevi it was determined that no appeals should be made to Rome. Now would this have been done if

that See had been acknowledged as Supreme and Infallible? “If they think it needful to appeal from their own bishops, let them not appeal but only unto councils to be holden within the country of Africa. But whosoever shall think it needful to *appeal to the judgment of any beyond the sea, let no man within Africa receive him to his communion.*”

But it seems that the Emperor Justinian confirmed to the Pope of Rome that title, of head of all churches in the world, which the decrees of Councils had acknowledged (which councils however, it appears from the preceding quotations, had decreed very differently;) for he says:—“We ordain that the Pope of the elder Rome shall be the first of all priests; and that the most holy archbishop of Constantinople, which is named new Rome, have the second place.”

This is an acknowledgment, say the Romanists, that Rome is the head of all churches, and that all others should be in subjection to her. But even this feeble support of the Supremacy of Rome must fall to the ground, when the words which immediately follow are read:—“We ordain that the most holy archbishop of Justiniana the first, which is in our country, shall have for ever under his jurisdiction the bishops of the provinces of Dacia, Dania, Dardania, Mysia and Pannonia; and that they shall be *invested by him*; and he *only by his own council*; and that he, in the provinces subject unto him, *shall have the place of the apostolic See of Rome.*”

As to the title which the Pope claims, of Universal Bishop and chief governor of all Christ’s flock, in matters pertaining to faith, this was certainly not given to him in early times. The well-known saying of Gregory shews how much he was opposed to such a title:—“Whosoever either calleth himself the Universal Bishop,

or desires so to be called, he in his pride is a forerunner of Antichrist." And with regard to that text of Scripture on which Romanists found this claim, the ancient Fathers attach a very different meaning to the words : "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church."

"This," says Hilary, "is that only blessed rock of faith, that Peter confessed with his mouth." And in another place the same writer observes:—"Upon this rock of (Peter's) confession is the building of the Church."

"The rock," says Cyril, "is nothing else but the firm and unshaken faith of the disciple."

To the same effect Chrysostom writes:—"And upon this rock, that is, upon the faith of this confession, I will build my Church."

So also Augustine;—"The rock was Christ, upon which foundation Peter himself was built." And in another place: "I will not build myself upon thee, but thee upon me?"

Origen coincides in opinion with the writers just quoted, as to the meaning of this declaration and promise, *Upon this rock, &c.*—"Whosoever is a disciple of Christ is the rock; and upon such a rock is built all ecclesiastical learning. But if thou think that the whole Church is built upon Peter alone, what wilt thou say of John, the son of thunder, and of each other apostle? Shall we dare to say, that against Peter only the gates of hell shall not prevail? Or has Christ given the keys of the kingdom of heaven only to Peter?"

What then becomes of the appeal to catholic antiquity, which the advocates of Popery so unblushingly make, in order to prove that the Pope was, in early times, acknowledged as Universal Bishop? No doubt

they presume upon the ignorance and credulity of the members of the Church of Rome in general, or they would never venture to assert that the ancient Fathers countenanced this Universal Supremacy. They are well aware that not one in ten thousand will ever think of examining what the ancient Fathers write, and that hundreds of thousands are willing to receive with implicit faith, whatever their priests may teach them. Hence we need not be surprised to find even Gregory produced as a witness that the title—Universal Bishop—belonged to Peter and his successors. In order to prove this, they quote from his writings any passage which seems to favour this arrogant claim ; but they give not the slightest intimation that, in other places, he speaks in plain and decided terms against such a title. Thus they readily cite from one of his epistles the following passage :—“ Behold ! Peter receives the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And the power of binding and loosing is given to him. The care and chief rule of the church are entrusted to him.” This is triumphantly brought forward in favour of the Pope’s Supremacy ; and yet, had the remainder of the passage been fairly given, every one must have seen how different was Gregory’s meaning :—“ Yet,” he continues, “ he (that is Peter) is not called the Universal Apostle.”

Can the prevalence of truth be the object of men who act in this way ? Is this conduct such as we might expect from the advocates of a Church which boasts of infallibility ? No, says the Council of Constantinople, “ it does not become the orthodox thus to pare and diminish the declarations of the holy Fathers. This rather is the property of heretics.” But when the Church of Rome itself dares to take away portions even of the Word of God—when it presumes to withhold

the sacred Volume itself from multitudes of its members, it is not surprising that the ancient Fathers receive such treatment at the hands of her advocates. A Church which can omit the second Commandment, in order to maintain its own vain traditions and practices, will not, of course, scruple to conceal or pervert any passages of the Fathers, which are repugnant to its doctrines.

It can hardly be said that Gregory meant, that any one, *except the Pope of Rome*, who should call himself Universal Bishop, would be the fore-runner of Antichrist, for his language in other parts of his epistle is quite opposed to such a meaning ;—“ Do not say that to use this title is of no consequence ; for if we bear this thing patiently *we shall corrupt the faith of the Catholic Church.*” But he declares that the very title “is a puff of arrogancy, a new name, a rash, a foolish, a proud, a pompous, a perverse, a superstitious, an ungodly, and a wicked title, a name of error, a name of singularity, a name of vanity, a name of hypocrisy, and a name of blasphemy.” “ And does M. Harding think,” Bishop Jewel asks, “ or would he have the world believe, that St. Gregory would ever take these names and titles from John, the bishop of Constantinople, to the intent to lay them upon his own See of Rome ? Or is it likely that M. Harding knoweth St. Gregory’s mind better than even St. Gregory knew it himself ? Verily, St. Gregory not only misliketh these titles in others, but also disclaimed the same from himself, and from his See of Rome for ever. . . . *Nullus . . . decessorum meorum hoc tam profano vocabulo uti consensit* : None of my predecessors ever consented to use this ungodly name. *Nos hunc honorem nolumus oblatum susciperi* : We (being bishops of Rome) will not take this honour being offered to us. And the reason that he forceth

against the bishop of Constantinople may serve as well against the bishop of Rome. For thus he saith: *Quid tu Christo universalis . . . ecclesie capiti in extremi iudicii dicturus es examine, qui cuncta ejus membra tibi met conaris universalis appellatione supponere.* What answer wilt thou make unto Christ that indeed is the Head of the Universal Church, at the trial of the last Judgment, that thus goest about, under the name of universal bishop, to subdue all his members to thee?"

"This is the very definition," observes Jewell, "of an universal bishop. Thus the bishop of Rome attempteth to subdue the whole Church of God, and all the members of Christ unto himself. Therefore, by St. Gregory's judgment, he is the fore-runner of Antichrist."

And though quotations are given from other early christian writers which, at first sight, may seem to countenance the Pope's Supremacy, they will be found, on examination, to have a very different meaning. Thus Cyprian is alleged to have written, that the contempt of *Christ's Vicar on earth* is the cause of schisms and heresies: what he really says is this,—that sects and schisms and confusion will arise in any province, or diocese, where the authority of the bishop is disregarded:—"For every bishop," says he, "*within his own diocese* is the priest of God, and for his time is a judge appointed in the place of Christ; and, as the Church is one, so ought he likewise to be but one." Hence, he urges Cornelius, bishop of Rome, to maintain firmly and boldly his authority, and to exercise discipline wherever it was necessary, in *his own particular diocese of Rome*. But as that ancient writer had said, the whole brotherhood (*universa fraternitas*) ought to be subject to the bishop, the advocates of the Pope's

Supremacy conclude, that all christian people in the world ought to be obedient to the Church of Rome. His meaning however is,—that the whole company of christians in every diocese should obey their chief shepherd, the bishop of that diocese. “This order,” says he, “is generally kept in all provinces, that unto the due ordination of a bishop, the bishops of the same province that dwell nearest come together to the people of that city, unto which a new bishop is appointed; and that the bishop be chosen in the presence of the people. Which thing we saw done in the ordination of our colleague, Sabinus, that the bishopric was bestowed upon him with the consent (*universæ fraternitatis*) of the whole brotherhood.”

The various arts by which Popish writers have endeavoured to support this extravagant claim, have been so clearly exposed by the learned Bishop Jewell, that if you desire to see more proofs of the unsoundness of the Pope’s pretensions to universal Supremacy, you cannot do better than to read his controversy with Harding.

History informs us that the title of Universal Bishop was first conferred on Boniface III, Pope of Rome, A. D. 608, by the cruel usurper Phocas. This man was a centurion in the army of the Emperor Maurice. Availing himself of the discontents that had been excited amongst the troops, he conspired against his master, and succeeded in dethroning him. Though bold in sedition, he was said to be timid in the face of danger. Such characters are ever the most cruel; and soon did he manifest how sanguinary was his disposition. Scarcely had he mounted the throne, before he dispatched the ministers of his vengeance to Chalcedon, where the deposed Emperor and his family were living.

“ They dragged the Emperor from his sanctuary : and the five sons of Maurice were successively murdered before the eyes of their agonizing parent. At each stroke, which he felt in his heart, he found strength to rehearse a pious ejaculation,—*Thou art just, O Lord! and thy judgments are righteous.* . . . The tragic scene was finally closed by the execution of the Emperor himself, in the twentieth year of his reign, and the sixty-third year of his age. The bodies of the father and his five sons were cast into the sea, their heads were exposed at Constantinople to the insults or pity of the multitude, and it was not till some signs of putrefaction had appeared, that Phocas connived at the private burial of these venerable remains.” His widow was not left to mourn over her loss for a long period. Being suspected of trying to excite an insurrection, she rekindled the fury of the tyrant : and “ a matron who commanded the respect and pity of mankind, the daughter, wife, and mother of Emperors, was tortured like the vilest malefactor, to force a confession of her designs and associates : and the Empress Constantina, with her three innocent daughters, was beheaded at Chalcedon, on the same ground which had been stained with the blood of her husband and five sons.”

Such was the polluted fountain from which Boniface derived this proud and anti-christian title. Romish writers, indeed, contend that this Universal Supremacy was conferred on the Popes of Rome, not by Phocas, but by the Emperor Justinian, A. D. 533. Instead of wasting their time in disputing whether the title were given seventy or eighty years earlier or later, they would have done far more for the cause which they advocate, if they had proved that either the usurper, or the lawful Emperor, had any right to bestow a title, in virtue of

which the bishops of Rome might claim dominion over all the Churches in the world.

The Pope's Infallibility has no better foundation than his Supremacy, according to the opinion of writers whom the Church of Rome claims as her own. "The Lord always judgeth truly," says Augustine, "but ecclesiastical judges, as they are men, are very commonly deceived."

"Seeing it is well known," Alphonso de Castro writes, "that many Popes be so void of learning, that they be utterly ignorant of their grammar, how may it be that they can expound the Holy Scriptures?" "Every man," he also observes, "may err in the faith; yea, although it be the Pope." And he gives as an instance, Pope Liberius, of whom he says, "It is certain he was an Arian heretic."

"Many Popes," Nicolas Lyra declares, "have been apostates from the faith."

When certain learned men, in the time of Ambrose, had laid some difficult questions before the bishop of Rome, and received his answer, they were far from considering that the matter was *infallibly* determined. "After the determination of the Church of Rome," says Ambrose, "they yet await my sentence."

"We read," say the bishops and presbyters, assembled at the Council of St. Basil, "that many bishops of Rome have fallen into errors and heresies."

And is unity only to be attained when all men subject themselves to a Church which maintains such extravagant, presumptuous, and blasphemous pretensions? Surely this would not be christian unity, but the irrational submission of abject slaves to the will of a spiritual tyrant. "Infidelity," observes Jerome, "hath been written under the name of faith and unity. For

at that time nothing seemed either so godly or so meet for the servant of God, as to follow unity, and not to be divided from the communion of the whole world." They who unite together ought to be allowed the exercise of a modest judgment and sober understanding, or they will be in great danger of falling into superstition, or infidelity. They may become the dupes of any designing hypocrite, if they are not permitted to examine the Holy Scriptures, and to try whether the doctrines which are published to them, are in accordance with God's Word. "Such hearers," says Basil, "as are instructed in the Scriptures, ought to examine those things that are spoken by their teachers, and to receive such things as are consonant to the Scriptures, but to reject such things as are contrary to them, and by all means to turn away from those that persist in such doctrines."

This language, you will perceive, is agreeable to the exhortation which St. Paul gives to his converts, respecting those teachers who publish a gospel, which is contrary to that preached by him and the other apostles. Had there been nothing in the conduct of the pretended successors of St. Peter to excite suspicion: had they been always diligent, earnest, self-denying, pious overseers of the churches under their charge; yet we must have hesitated about yielding an implicit faith to all their doctrines. But how much more careful ought we to be, when we are required to "receive for doctrines the commandments of men," who have been convicted of various errors and heresies! "In the sixth general Council, Honorius by name, bishop of Rome, was condemned for a heretic. For in the acts of the same Council it is expressly said,—'But with these, viz. Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paulus, Petrus, bishops of Constan-

tinople, Cyrus of Alexandria, Theodorus of Pharan, with these we saw that Honorius, who was bishop of old Rome, cast out of the Catholic Church, and anathematized, because we find by writings from him to Sergius, that in all things he followed his judgment and confirmed his wicked opinions.' . . . And in the epistle of Leo the Second to Constantine, ' We also anathematize the inventors of the new errors, viz. Theodorus, bishop of Pharan, Cyrus of Alexandria. . . . and Honorius also, who adorned not this apostolical church with doctrine of apostolical tradition, but by profane treachery endeavoured to subvert the unspotted faith.' From all which it is clear, 1. That the bishop of Rome is not infallible, and by consequence no successor of St. Peter in his apostolical privileges ; for here we see Honorius, a bishop of that place, is condemned for monothelitism, (i. e. for asserting that in Jesus Christ there was, after the union of the two natures, but one will and one operation ;) as Eleutherius, Liberius, Anastatius the Second, John the twenty-second, and many other of the bishops of that place, were tainted with other heresies. 2. Here we may also see that the bishop of Rome is not the head of the Church ; for if he had (been), certainly so many learned men as there were met together, would not have presumed to have passed such a sentence upon him. But we see they make no more of him than they did of the other heretics, even condemned him for joining with them."

It will perhaps be said that, although individual Popes might be heretical and abandoned characters, yet the Church still maintained "the faith once delivered to the saints : " and consequently, that the members of the Roman Church, who implicitly followed her instructions, would be safe. But allowing that the Church of

Rome held, and still holds, most of the doctrines which are necessary for every man to believe, if he would be saved, yet let it never be forgotten that these are mixed and united with other doctrines which are merely the inventions of men, and which are not only unscriptural, but absolutely subversive of the doctrines found in the Bible. It is not enough that the bread, which is provided for the family, should contain a large portion of the purest flour; it should also be free from any deleterious ingredient, or the children may perish. Even a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump: how pernicious then must be the effect, when a large quantity of evil leaven is infused into the children's bread! Beware then of the leaven of these modern Scribes and Pharisees; receive not as sound and wholesome doctrines the traditions and decrees of the Roman Church.

These doctrines, remember, may be multiplied continually, by the power which blasphemously calls itself infallible. For as its appeals to catholic antiquity, in support of its peculiar doctrines, have been repeatedly proved to be vain; as the Fathers are now much better known than they formerly were, and they who are open to conviction may soon be fully satisfied, that the early christian writers give no countenance to the presumptuous claims, or to the erroneous doctrines of Popery;—that corrupt Church has recourse to another scheme in order to maintain its pretensions. This is its scheme of "Development." What Christ and his apostles delivered to the early Church were, it is argued, but the seeds of future doctrines. These seeds were to be fostered and watered by the Church, until they grew up into a vast and stately tree, whose branches should overspread the whole earth. This very convenient

theory of Developement is not a modern invention. It has often before appeared in the Church of Rome, and has encountered no small opposition from some eminent members of that communion. "They have contended" says Dr. Wordsworth, "as earnestly for an unvarying and invariable *Tradition* of doctrine, as he (Mr. Newman) does for an unlimited and illimitable *Expansion* of it. Some of your Doctors say, that 'the Church believes as she has always believed,' as vehemently as *others* among you affirm, that 'the Church is always learning new truths.' . . . It will be found that on *this* fundamental question, you have, as in many *others* in your Church, Doctors against Doctors, Bishops against Bishops, Councils against Councils, Popes against Popes. But though you have no *unity of teaching* on this subject, yet there is a ruling idea which runs through the *acts* of the Church of Rome : and what Mr. Newman's Essay is in *Theory*, that the Papacy is in *Practice*. . . . It is, and *must* be, the Theory of all consistent Romanists. It follows necessarily from the doctrine of the Papal Infallibility ; a living Infallible Power must be creative."

Acting on this principle the Church of Rome has, from time to time, introduced new doctrines into her creed : and when accused of departing from the faith of the primitive Church, she has boldly asserted that these things were received from the beginning. In order to prove this assertion, quotations were adduced from early writers ; and passages, from writings generally acknowledged to be spurious, were confidently cited. But when the matter was fully investigated, it was found that the early Fathers gave no support to such doctrines, and that the Holy Scriptures were utterly at variance with these traditions. Being thus

driven from the ground of the Universal Consent of the Fathers, and of God's Word, the advocates of Popery were constrained to take refuge in the principle of Developement. This ingenious theory will, of course, remove every difficulty from the way of those who receive it. Is a doctrine or practice enforced on the members of the Roman Church, on which Scripture is silent? Oh, it is answered, this was delivered by tradition to the Fathers. But it can nowhere be found in the early Fathers. Then, it is replied, it must be one of those things which, for wise reasons, were hidden in obscurity during the infancy of the Church, but when the proper time arrived, it became fully developed, and must now be received as a divine revelation. Is it objected, How then can you assert, as the Council of Trent has asserted concerning many things which had no existence in the apostolic age, or for many centuries afterwards, that they were of divine institution and *held* by the Church from the beginning? The *semina rerum*, it is answered,—the seeds of those things were in the early Church, and were gradually and imperceptibly advancing to maturity. That venerable and majestic oak, you might as well assert, had no existence fifteen hundred years ago; but you are mistaken. There was an acorn from which the tree gradually developed itself, until at length it attained its present magnificent proportions!

This Theory makes religion entirely dependent on the Pope for the time being. No matter that former Popes propounded articles of faith, different from those of subsequent possessors of St. Peter's chair. The latest are the most orthodox, because the most fully developed. Thus "the faith once delivered to the saints," for which we are earnestly to contend, is to be overwhelmed with

progressive additions and developements, until it entirely disappears. The ark of Christ's Church is treated like the ship which was so often repaired, that at length no portion of the original vessel could be seen.

LETTER V.

POPISH SUPREMACY ARROGANT AND UNREASONABLE—
THE SUPREMACY CLAIMED BY ENGLISH SOVEREIGNS
AGREEABLE TO SCRIPTURE.

DEAR SIR,

IF the Scribes and Pharisees rendered the Word of God of none effect by their traditions, is it not to be expected that a Church, which makes the commandments of men of equal authority with the doctrines revealed in the Bible, will cause her members to reject the truth of God, and to embrace the most dangerous errors? And if a church may fall into fatal errors (as you will surely allow if you listen to God's declarations, or even to the voice of catholic antiquity), consider the tendency which the presumptuous claim of Universal Supremacy and Infallibility has to perpetuate such errors. A church with these arrogant pretensions may, like Capernaum, be exalted unto heaven;—she may be able to trample upon all human laws and authority, and to exercise universal dominion:—she may utter the proud boast;—"I sit a Queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow;" *Rev.* xviii. 7. : and may say in her heart, "I am, and there is none beside me;" *Zephaniah.* ii. 15. : she may exalt herself "above all that is called God,

or that is worshipped," and her bishop may sit "as God in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God:" 2 *Thess.* ii. 4, 8: (but that which led to her exaltation will hang like a millstone about her neck, and sink her deeper and deeper in the pit of error and destruction. For her there can be no *locus penitentiæ*—no place of repentance,—because Infallibility has been proudly written on her forehead; and though her sins be exposed as with a sunbeam, she must still defend and maintain them, until the cup of her iniquities becomes full, and "her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine;" when the Lord shall consume her "with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy her with the brightness of his coming."

How much the pride and arrogancy of the Church of Rome increased after the usurper, Phocas, had conferred on her bishop the title of Universal Bishop, you may learn from the following extract from the writings of Bishop Jewell:—"After that, by great suit made unto the Emperor Phocas, the bishops of Rome themselves had once obtained the same title, and had possessed and enjoyed the same a long while, in the end their pride was such, that it seemed intolerable. Then they began to decree and determine, that every mortal man is bound to be subject to the see of Rome, and that upon pain of damnation; and that without the obedience of that See no man is saved: that the bishop of Rome is a Universal Judge over all men; and that he himself may be judged by no man, neither by Emperor, nor by king, nor by all the clergy, nor by the whole people, for that it is written by the prophet Elisha,—'The axe shall not glory against him that heweth with it;' that whatsoever he do, no man may presume to say unto him, *Domine cur ita facis?* 'Sir,

why do you thus ?' that he hath all manner, law, and right *in scrinio pectoris sui*,—' in the closet of his breast : ' that ' all other bishops receive of his fulness ; ' that no Councils can make laws for the Church of Rome ; and that the bishop of Rome's authority is plainly excepted out of all councils ; that notwithstanding the Pope draws innumerable companies of people after him into hell, ' yet no mortal man may dare to reprove him ; ' that the Pope's will or pleasure standeth as a law : *In illis quæ vult, est ei pro ratione voluntas* ; and that there is none other reason to be yielded of his doings but this ; *Quia ipse voluit* : ' For he would.' For of that that is nothing, he is able to make something : *Quia de eo, quod nihil est, potest facere aliquid* : that he hath the right of both swords, as well of the temporal as of the spiritual ; that the temporal prince may not draw his sword, but only at his beck and sufferance, *ad nutum et patientiam ecclesiæ* ; that he is *hæres-imperii*, ' the heir apparent of the empire,' and is seven and fifty degrees greater than the Emperor ; and that, because in such proportion the sun is greater than the moon ; that it is lawful for him to depose kings and emperors ; as he did the emperor Henry the sixth, and Childeric the French king. Then he made the emperor of Christendom to lie down flat before him, and spared not to set his foot upon his neck, adding withal these words of the prophet David, 'Thou shalt walk over the asp and the cockatrice ;' then he was content that the emperor should be called *procurator. . . . ecclesiæ Romanæ*, 'The proctor, or steward, of the Church of Rome : ' then, as if he had been Nebuchadonosor, or Alexander, or Antiochus, or Domitian, he claimed unto himself the name and title of Almighty God ; and said further that, being God, he might not be judged of

any mortal man : then he suffereth men to say, *Dominus Deus noster papa* : ‘ Our Lord God the Pope : ’ *Tu es omnia et super omnia* : ‘ Thou art all, and above all. All power is given unto thee, as well in heaven as in earth.’ I leave,” continues the bishop, “ the miserable spoil of the Empire, the losing of sundry great countries and nations that sometimes were chastened, the weakening of the faith, the encouraging of the Turk, the ignorance and blindness of the people. These and other like be the effects of the Pope’s universal power.”

On reading this statement you will probably imagine, that the enemies of the Church of Rome have invented these things, in order to bring discredit on the *infallible* See ; but they are no inventions. This proud and impious language is found in the authorised documents of the Papacy,—in the Bulls, Decretals, Epistles, &c., of various Pontiffs, and you will find references given, by the learned bishop Jewell, to works of unquestionable authority in the Roman Church.

But deeply as the Church of Rome has sinned,—often as she has acted like the unjust judge, who neither feared God, nor regarded man,—and dark as is the catalogue of crimes, blasphemies, and other abominations, exhibited against her, she might still have repented and done her first works, and been admitted to the communion and fellowship of pure and scriptural Churches, but for her obstinate adherence to the claim of Infallibility. “ It is a most lamentable and fearful case,” says bishop Hall, “ that a Church which, of her own favourites, is justly accused of many and dangerous errors, should block up against herself, the way whereby she should return into the truth ; and (as *Francis a Victoria* honestly complains) should endure neither her

own evils, nor their remedies. For whilst she stands upon it that she cannot err, and stubbornly challenges unto her chair a certain impeccancy of judgment, (that we may borrow a word from Tertullian) what hope can now remain of recovering the truth? How are we now too saucy, that dare mutter aught against her? The first hope of health must needs be fetched from the sense and acknowledgment of the disease. That of the Epicure is common and true: The beginning of recovery is the knowledge of the fault. Thou must find thyself amiss, saith *Seneca*, ere thou canst amend thyself.

“Rome brags that she cannot be sick. What do we now talk of medicines for her? These doctrinal principles (as our *Stapleton* calls them) are they, from which a certain fatal necessity of erring must needs follow. For what purpose is all this we do? If upon the sentence of this Romish Oracle (for in the closet, or rather prison, of his breast, as Jerome objected to John of Jerusalem, the Church is included) all things do so depend, that whatsoever he shall determine, must be received without all contradiction, and his decree can by no inferior means be repealed, in vain do we wrangle for truth. In vain have all those former Synods both met and defined. In vain do we either teach, or learn aught of any other master. Is it possible she should ever be drawn to remorse for her error, which eagerly defends that she cannot err? Either, therefore, let our Papists suffer this vain opinion of Infallibility to be pulled up by the roots out of their breasts, or else there can be no hope so much as of a consultation of peace.”

Such is the Church, my dear Sir, to which your affections have been allured; a Church which not only clings to errors, but boldly maintains that her errors are virtues, and which, therefore, subjects herself to God's

heavy displeasure: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! *Isaiah* v. 20.

And now contrast with Rome's lofty pretensions the modest and reasonable language of that Church, which you are tempted to forsake on the ground, that it is not calculated to lead its members into the way of salvation. The Church of England has indeed been accused of claiming, not for herself, but for the temporal Sovereign, that very supremacy in the British dominions, which the Pope considers that he has a right to possess over the whole world. "You attribute," say our Popish and other adversaries, "spiritual power to him whom you call the temporal head of the Church of England:" But how unjust this accusation is, will be seen by a reference to our thirty-seventh Article. "Where we attribute to the Queen's majesty the chief government, by which title we understand the minds of some slanderous folks to be offended, we *give not to our princes the ministering either of God's word or of the sacraments*; the which thing the injunctions also lately set forth by Elizabeth our Queen, do most plainly testify; but that only prerogative *which we see to have been given always to all godly princes in Holy Scripture by God himself*: that is, that they should rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be ecclesiastical or temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil-doers."

Neither in this Article, nor in the oath of Supremacy, is there any acknowledgment that the Sovereign has the keys as well as "the sword committed to him, and that he might administer the Word and Sacraments in spiritual, as well as justice and judgment in secular

affairs; whereas the same power that asserted the king's supremacy, hath still denied it to extend to the exercise of any spiritual function. . . . He may command ecclesiastical as well as civil persons to give obedience to ecclesiastical as well as civil laws, yea, and punish them for their disobedience. What disorders are brought into the Church, he may, and ought to reform them; what needless or dangerous controversies arise in the Church, he may and ought to still them; as also he may and ought to see *that all things be done decently and in order*, and to that end, may either of himself, or by the advice of a Council, prescribe rules and canons to be observed *in the external order* of divine worship; so that he may call a council when he pleaseth, dismiss it when he pleaseth, and confirm their decrees and constitutions so far as himself pleaseth; so that nothing they prescribe is obligatory under any temporal penalty without his consent, though what he prescribes is obligatory without their consent. And thus king James, who was a person well acquainted with the extent of his own power; 'The king's supremacy, saith he, implies a power to *command obedience to be given to the Word of God*, by reforming religion according to *his prescribed will*, by assisting the spiritual power with his temporal sword, by reformation of corruption, by procuring due obedience to the Church, by judging and cutting off all frivolous questions and schisms, as Constantine did, and finally, by making decorum to be observed *in all indifferent things* for that purpose; which is the only intent of the oath of supremacy.' "

This is similar to the power which was exercised by king David. It is stated in the twenty-third chapter of the first book of Chronicles, that he "gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and

the Levites." And in the latter part of the chapter various canons or rules for the due performance of divine worship, are given, as sanctioned and enforced by his authority. King Josiah also had this supremacy, and he employed it in restoring and reforming the Church ; as you may read in the twenty-second and twenty-third chapters of the second book of Kings. We find also that Abiathar, the high priest, was removed from his office by Solomon ; and that Mordecai, to whom the Jews looked as to their prince or head, ordained the feast of Purim. In virtue of a similar delegated power our sovereigns can, and occasionally do, appoint a day for a general fast and humiliation, as well as days for public thanksgivings to God for great and signal mercies received at his hands.

So far is this supremacy from interfering with the allegiance which all Christians owe to Christ, the Great Head of the Church, that it is clearly recognized and commanded in the New Testament : " Let every soul," says St. Paul, " be subject to the higher powers." And Peter commands in his first general Epistle ; " Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake ; whether it be *to the king as supreme* ; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

And the Apostle Paul, who taught others to be subject to the higher powers, acknowledges his own subjection to them, by appealing publicly to the emperor, as supreme, in an ecclesiastical matter, viz., when it was to be determined whether he was a seducer, or whether his doctrine were not according to truth and godliness : " Then said Paul, I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, *where I ought to be judged*. . . if I be an

offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death. I refuse not to die : but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar." *Acts* xxv. 8—11.

The primitive Church acknowledged this power to be in kings and emperors :—" We often comprehend kings in our history," says Socrates, " because that from the time they began to be Christians, the business of the Church, or ecclesiastical causes, depended upon them." It was by their authority and power that the canons and decrees of Councils were confirmed and enforced :—" Athanasius," says Theodoret, " going to Constans, the emperor, minded him of his father ; and of the great Synod, or Council, which he gathered together, and how he being present at the assembly, *confirmèd by a law what was written by them.*"

Thus, you see, the Church of England, instead of proudly arrogating a power over princes, which the Pope of Rome once usurped, and which he has long been struggling to resume, attributes to our sovereigns that " prerogative, which we see to have been given always to all godly princes, in holy Scripture, by God himself." And with respect to the authority which she claims over her members, it is, as you will find by referring to her twentieth Article, reasonable, scriptural, and similar to that which the early Christian Church exercised :—

" The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith."

They who refuse this power to the Church, on the ground, that we should thereby allow that it can make additions to the worship of God, which are not found nor commanded in Scripture, are evidently labouring under a mistake. They confound external with internal

things. Rites and ceremonies are no more additions to, or component parts of, divine worship, than the scaffolding which is used in building, is a part of the edifice. The real worship of God proceeds from the heart. It consists in love to God, and in the exercise of all those graces by which *He* is magnified and glorified. But rites and ceremonies are outward things. In themselves they are indifferent, neither commanded nor forbidden by God's word, they may therefore be increased, or diminished, or altered, as those in authority may determine. And they need only then to be observed, when they are thus determined by lawful authority. Things indifferent in themselves cannot, after such determination, be neglected, or despised, without sin ; because they who resist or despise them, are not obeying those " who have the rule over them," and are not submitting " to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."

" And therefore, when it is here said, that the Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, we must always by the words, rites and ceremonies, understand nothing else but the *particular circumstances and customs* to be observed in the service and worship of God ; *not as any cause or part thereof.*"

It is agreeable to the Scripture that the Church should have this power. The Church at Corinth had evidently power and authority to " determine what things tended to edification and order in the congregation ; because St. Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians, says, " Let all things be done unto edifying ; " and, " Let all things be done decently and in order." Here then is one general rule out of which " all Churches whatsoever, according to the variety of times and places they live in, were to frame other particular rules and canons for the edifying (of the people) and

orderly performance of God's worship; who being a God, not of confusion, but of order in himself, he requires such worship as is done in order, not in confusion, from us." Hence it is plainly the Christian's duty to follow the directions of the Church respecting the performance of divine worship. We may think the regulations to be matters of indifference, (and so they are *in themselves*, although when ordered by the proper authorities they cease to be indifferent, and become obligatory) but by refusing to follow them we shew any thing but a Christian spirit. "All things should be done decently and in order, that we may have uniformity without slavery, and liberty without irregularity. . . . Punctuality in attendance on the house of prayer, observance of the postures prescribed by the rubric, and above all, individual participation in the responsive and musical portions of divine worship,—these are matters of no small importance. . . . Throughout divine worship, remember that you are not come to *hear* prayers, but to pray; you are not come to *listen* to psalmody, but to *sing psalms*; you are not come to criticize but to profit; not to be amused, but to be saved. Thus using, whilst not abusing, our liturgical services, you will find them alike edifying and delightful.'

The authority of the Church to settle controversies of faith is also founded on the practice of the apostles. For instance, a controversy arose respecting the observance of the Law of Moses. Several of the apostles and elders met together, as the representatives of the Church, and discussed the matter. The result of their deliberations was committed to writing and sent to the other churches. Now if Peter had been, what each of his pretended successors boasts of being, the sole judge of controversies, he would have determined the matter

himself. But it was referred to the decision of the whole Church, represented by those who assembled in Council.

“ If the Church had that power then, “ says bishop Beveridge, “ it cannot be denied to have the same still : for it is the same Church now that it was then, governed by the same Head now as it was then, directed by the same Spirit now that it was then, enjoys the same Scriptures to decide controversies by now, as it did then, and therefore cannot be denied to have the same power in decision of controversies now as it had then.” Yet the Church does not, like that of Rome, claim a despotic authority. It is an authority under due limitations. “ It is not lawful,” the Article continues, “ to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.”

Hence our Church cannot, like the Church of Rome, render void the word of God by the traditions and commandments of men. If any article of faith be called in question, she can at once prove that it is of God by appealing to the Scriptures; but no article which the Church of Rome requires to be believed, is allowed to be put to the test of Scripture : “ I declare it to be right,” says the Pope, “ in virtue of my Infallibility, and I require you all to receive it without doubt or hesitation on pain of *anathema*.” If a member of the Church of England be in doubt as to any essential doctrine in religion, he can consult the Church concerning it, and he will find her decision (or any of her ministers will shew him where to find it) in her Liturgy, Articles, or Homilies. Should he think that the Church has determined wrong on such essential point, as for instance, the Divinity of Christ, or justification by faith alone, he can, of course, retain his opinion,

but he can no longer be considered a member of our Church, or as in a safe condition.

But he may differ from the decision of the Church, on indifferent matters, such as customs, rites and ceremonies, and yet continue a member of, and be conscientiously attached to our Church. He will not, however, despise or neglect such indifferent things, because he may think that they would be better omitted. As they are ordained by lawful authority, he submits to them. To refuse to do it, would argue a proud and self-sufficient disposition. For as the customs and ceremonies retained in our Church are not, say the venerable compilers of our Liturgy, "forbidden by, or repugnant to the word of God, he ought not to neglect or despise them. For although the keeping or omitting of a ceremony, in itself considered, is but a small thing; yet the wilful and contemptuous transgression and breaking of a common order and discipline is no small offence before God; 'Let all things be done among you,' saith St. Paul, 'in a seemly and due order: ' the appointment of the which order pertaineth not to private men.'"

This is in accordance with the advice of an early christian writer; "Although no certain example can be brought out of the canonical Scriptures of this thing, yet in this very thing do we hold the truth, when we do that which pleaseth the whole Church, which the authority of the Scriptures themselves commendeth; that seeing the holy Scripture cannot deceive, whosoever fears to be deceived in the obscurity of this question (whether heretics are to be again baptized,) *let him consult the same Church* concerning it, which the Scripture clearly demonstrates."

And surely no man of an humble and teachable spirit would think of maintaining an opinion against the judg-

ment of the whole Church; especially, when that Church decrees nothing which is contrary to the Scriptures, nor so "expounds one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another;" nor "enforces any thing to be believed for necessity of salvation," which is not agreeable to the word of God.

That the authority of the Church should be limited by the preceding three rules (given in the twentieth Article of our Church) is agreeable to the opinion of the most eminent Christian Fathers: "If we say," observes Chrysostom, "we ought to believe the Scriptures, and they are simple and true, it is easy for thee to judge. If any one agrees with them, he is a Christian; if any one contradicts them, he is far from that canon." "We ought," says Origen, "for the testimony of the words we produce in doctrine, to produce the sense of the Scripture, as it were confirming the sense that we expound." And in another place he observes; "As it is his custom, the apostle will confirm what he hath said from the holy Scriptures, setting also before the doctors of the Church an example, that in those things which they speak to the people, they do not utter what is presumed upon in their own opinions, but what is strengthened by divine testimony. For if he, such and so great an apostle, did not believe that the authority of his words could be sufficient, unless he shews that what he saith is written in the Law and in the Prophets, how much more we, the weakest of creatures, ought to observe this, *that when we teach we should not produce our own, but the doctrines of the Holy Spirit.*" "A kind of familiarity with the language of the holy Scripture being attained," Augustine says, "we must seek to open and discuss such things as are obscure; that for the illustrating of darker speeches, examples be taken

from the more manifest, and some testimonies of certain sentences take away doubting about uncertain." To the same effect writes Clemens Alexandrinus:—"Truth is not found in the changing of significations, for so they overturn all true doctrine: but in the searching out what is most perfectly proper and becoming to the Lord, and the Almighty God, and *in confirming whatsoever is demonstrated by the Scriptures out of the like Scriptures.*"

Now, my dear Sir, compare the mild and easy yoke which the Church of England puts upon her members, with the despotism and tyranny exercised by the Roman Church over all her subjects. Think seriously of the privileges which you must surrender, and of the bondage to which you will subject yourself, if you shall at length be persuaded to embrace the Roman Catholic religion. A Briton who has long been living under the just laws and mild government of a limited monarchy, would scarcely be regarded as of sane mind, were he voluntarily and deliberately to renounce his allegiance to his Sovereign, and to transfer it to some foreign tyrant. What then should be thought of the individual who ceases to be a son of the Church of England, where he has perfect freedom and abundant privileges, to become the slave of the Church of Rome?

Let me again remind you that the unity of which Popery makes her boast is, like its worship, only a magnificent delusion. Do not be attracted by it, for being founded on error it is merely a rope of sand. Seek rather the unity which has truth for its foundation, and you will find strength and safety.

The Church which you are tempted to forsake, teaches the truth as it is revealed in God's word, and, together with apostolical order, possesses those marks of a true church—"the preaching of the pure word of

God, and the sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same;"—and therefore affords a centre of union where all christians may meet together. Had the Roman Church at the time of the Reformation, consented to reform those abuses, and to reject those errors, which even her advocates acknowledged to exist, unity might, in a great measure, have been attained. She would have been esteemed and revered by other national churches as an elder sister (though not the eldest), and might have greatly contributed to the peace and happiness of the whole christian world. Had she agreed to repudiate those doctrines and practices which the word of God clearly condemns, all the most pious and learned of the Reformers would have remained in communion with her. For it should be remembered, that those eminent and holy men had few, if any, of those unreasonable scruples, which prevent modern dissenters from conforming to the Church of England. Observe how decidedly one of their number protests against any separation from a Church, in which are found (as in ours) the preaching of the word of God, and the due administration of the Sacraments: and in his sentiments most of the other Reformers coincided.

“ When the preaching of the gospel is reverently heard, and the sacraments are not neglected, there, for the time, the face of the Church appears without deception or ambiguity; *and no man may with impunity spurn her authority, or reject her admonitions, or resist her counsels, or make sport of her censures,* FAR LESS REVOLT FROM HER, AND VIOLATE HER UNITY. For such is the value which the Lord sets on the communion of his Church, that all who contumaciously alienate themselves from any christian society, in which the true ministry of

his Word and Sacraments is maintained, HE REGARDS AS DESERTERS OF RELIGION. So highly does he recommend her authority, that when it is violated, he considers that his own authority is impaired. For there is no small weight in the designation given to her. 'The house of God : ' 'The pillar and ground of the truth.' By these words Paul intimates that to prevent the truth from perishing in the world, the Church is its faithful guardian, because God has been pleased to preserve the pure preaching of his Word by her instrumentality, and to exhibit himself to us as a parent, while he feeds us with spiritual nourishment, and provides whatever is conducive to our salvation. Moreover, no mean praise is conferred on the Church, when she is said to have been chosen and set apart by Christ as his spouse, 'not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,'—as 'his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.' Whence it follows, that revolt from the Church is denial of God and Christ. Wherefore there is the more necessity to beware of a dissent so iniquitous ; for seeing by it we aim, as far as in us lies, at the destruction of God's truth, we deserve to be crushed by the full thunder of his anger. No crime can be imagined more atrocious than that of sacrilegiously and perfidiously violating the sacred marriage, which the only-begotten Son of God has condescended to contract with us. . . How perilous then, nay, how fatal the temptation, when we even entertain a thought of separating ourselves from that assembly, in which are beheld the signs and badges which the Lord has deemed sufficient to characterize his Church ! We see how great caution should be employed in both respects. That we may not be imposed upon by the name of Church, every congregation which claims the name must be brought to that test as to a

Lydian stone. If it holds the order instituted by the Lord in Word and Sacraments, there will be no deception; we may safely pay it the honour due to a Church: on the other hand, if it exhibit itself without Word and Sacraments, we must, in this case, be no less careful to avoid the imposture, than we were to shun pride and presumption in the other.”

This learned Reformer utterly discountenanced the plea which some modern dissenters advance for separation from the Church of England, viz, a few faults and imperfections, or what they deem to be such;—he says:—“We are never to discard it (the Church) so long as these (the pure ministry of the Word and the due celebration of the Sacraments) remain, though it may otherwise teem with numerous faults. Nay, even in the administration of Word and Sacraments defects may creep in, *which ought not to alienate us from its communion*. . . . The words of the apostle are:—‘Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.’ *Phil. iii. 15*. Does he not sufficiently intimate that a difference of opinion as to these matters which are not absolutely necessary, *ought not to be a ground of dissension among christians?* The best thing, indeed, is to be perfectly agreed; but seeing there is no man who is not involved in some mist of ignorance, we must either have no Church at all, or pardon delusion in those things of which one may be ignorant, without violating the substance of religion and forfeiting salvation. Here, however, I have no wish to patronize even the minutest errors, as if I thought it right to foster them by flattery or connivance; what I say is, *that we are not on account of every minute difference to abandon a Church, provided it retain sound and*

unimpaired that doctrine in which the safety of piety consists, and keep the use of the Sacraments instituted by the Lord. Meanwhile, if we strive to reform what is offensive, we act in the discharge of duty. To this effect are the words of Paul :—‘ If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.’ 1 Cor. xiv. 30. From this it is evident that to each member of the Church, according to his measure of grace, the study of public edification has been assigned, provided it be done decently and in order. In other words, *we must neither renounce the communion of the Church, nor, continuing in it, disturb peace and discipline when duly arranged.*”

It was not any objection to the name, or office, or authority of bishops, which led the Reformers to forsake the Church of Rome. There were, indeed, some of their disciples, whose zeal was exceeded only by their ignorance, who considered episcopacy itself a sufficient cause for separation ; but the language of the leading Reformers was very different. “ Let them shew us a hierarchy,” said one whose words I have just quoted, “ in which the bishops are distinguished, but not for refusing to be subject to Christ,—in which they depend upon him as the only head, and act solely with reference to him,—in which they cultivate brotherly fellowship with each other, bound together by no other tie than his truth ; *then indeed I will confess that there is no anathema too strong for those who do not regard them with reverence, and yield them the fullest obedience.*”

Another eminent Reformer, adverting to certain persons who were exciting disputes about indifferent matters in the Church of England, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, observes :—“ It appears to me better to bear with patience the imperfections of the kingdoms

of this world, so long as purity of doctrine and liberty of conscience remain inviolate, *than by disputing about the external government of the Church to bring the whole into danger.* And I wonder that they entertain such an aversion to the name of bishops, which they cannot but know was in use in the time of the apostles, and always retained in the churches in after times: we know too that archbishops existed of old, whom they called by another name, *Patriarchs.* And if in later times they have occasioned so much offence, by reason of their tyranny and ambition, that these titles are, not without reason, become odious to the godly; I do not yet see what is to hinder, that, on the removal of the abuse, those persons may be bishops and called such, who, placed over a certain number of churches, have the management of such things as appertain to the purity of religion and doctrine. . . I wish that all who profess the christian name would make for peace, and exercise themselves with united efforts for the advancement of the kingdom of God, and bear with patience one another's burdens. They would then see, that they would never have so much leisure as that, intermeddling with things that do not belong to them, they could raise disputes about things either necessary, or even injurious, to the great offence of the people. For I am greatly afraid that those very persons who now treat with harshness the ministers of Christ, and cannot bear those bishops who are the patrons of purer doctrine, will find out some time or other, that there are wolves on both sides, who will harass them with new contests, and horribly oppress the Church. For thus does God avenge the dissensions of ministers, and the distractions of his Church."

Another of the foreign Reformers thus writes:—

“The young orators however, whom you describe to me, as busying themselves in changing the whole face of your Church, and putting on it a new shape, with the confiscation too of all ecclesiastical property, seem to me to imitate those seditious Roman tribunes, who gave away the public possessions by the Agrarian laws, that they might obtain wealth and honour to themselves as individuals; that is, that when we are turned out, they may come into our places, &c. But these parties are endeavouring to erect a church which they will never raise to the height they wish; nor if they erect it, will they be able to maintain it. . . . The first proposition, *that the civil magistrute has no authority in ecclesiastical matters*; and also the second, *that the church admits of no other government than that of presbyters, or the presbytery*; these two, I say, they hold in common with the papists, who also displace the magistrate from the government of the church, and substitute themselves alone in his place. . . . I wish that there were no lust of dominion in the originators of this presbytery! Nay. I think the greatest caution is necessary, that the supreme power be not placed in this presbytery, much more that it be not an exclusive government.”

The breach of unity then, you see, is not chargeable on the Reformers, who desired nothing but what was reasonable and scriptural: the guilt rests upon that corrupt Church, which not only retained her false doctrines and anti-scriptural practices, but also required her members to receive them as of divine revelation and institution. Communion with a Church ought never to be held on such sinful conditions. We are, indeed, commanded to be “of one accord, of one mind,” but we are also to take care that we have “the mind which was in Christ Jesus.” But our Blessed Lord ever

sought the honour of his heavenly Father, and made the Holy Scriptures of paramount authority. If then the Church of Rome requires us to believe things which are plainly repugnant to God's word, and to regard the doctrines and commandments of men as of equal authority with the Bible, and we are willing to obey her commands, we dishonour God, and, consequently, cannot have the mind that was in Christ. But these are the only terms on which we can be allowed to have communion with this Church; therefore the Christian's duty is plain, he must keep separate from the Roman Church, if he would preserve his allegiance to the Saviour. She is herself the cause of the divisions and separations, which have disturbed the Universal Church, and as such she is to be avoided:—"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." *Rom. xvi. 17: Matt. xviii. 7.*

LETTER VI.

ROME AND GENEVA.

Dear Sir,

BEFORE I call your attention to any more of the erroneous doctrines of Popery, I feel it necessary to make some remarks on an expression in your last letter. After candidly acknowledging that there were many things in Popery so objectionable, that you did not see how any man could sincerely embrace them, you nevertheless thought that, taking the Roman Church altogether, it is a beautiful and wonderful system, and infinitely to be preferred to any schismatical communion. "Had I no other alternative," you observe, "but Rome or Geneva, I would without hesitation choose Rome." Now I cannot but think that, on mature consideration, you would make no such choice; for I cannot believe that you would really prefer an edifice built, for the most part, of worthless materials, however beautiful and imposing the scaffolding by which it is surrounded may be, to a building whose materials are confessedly of the best and most precious description, although it may not be guarded and strengthened by such scaffolding as

the other. You will hardly venture to maintain, that the form of Church government is of more consequence than the truth and purity of the doctrines which a church holds and inculcates. That episcopacy is necessary to the welfare of a church ; that it had the sanction and approbation of the apostles, and that it was universally received and maintained, in all christian churches, from the apostolic age to the period of the Reformation, I readily admit ; but that it is so essential to the very nature of a church, and to the validity of the sacraments, that non-episcopalians are, solely on this account, excluded from the Catholic Church, I totally deny. The Church of England no where countenances so uncharitable and indefensible an opinion. She tells us that, “ It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the apostles’ times there have been these orders of ministers in Christ’s Church : Bishops, Priests, and Deacons ; ” but she does not say, as an ancient writer is stated to have said that—‘ Without the Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons *there is no Church.*’ Had this been her opinion it would have been so stated in her definition of “ The Church,” in the nineteenth article.

The most learned and pious of her sons from the period of the Reformation have always maintained, that episcopacy was not essential to the existence of a church. Cranmer, Jewel, Whitgift, Hooker, Bramhall, Sancroft, Wake, and other eminent men, down to the present Archbishop of Canterbury, acknowledge, without any hesitation, the reformed churches as “ sister churches.”

Archbishop Wake observes : “ I bless God that I was born and have been bred in an episcopal church, which, I am convinced, has been the government established in the Christian Church from the very time of

the Apostles. But I should be unwilling to affirm, that where the ministry is not episcopal, there is no church nor any true administration of the Sacraments." And even Archbishop Sancroft, high churchman as he confessedly was, urges his clergy, "that they warmly and most affectionately exhort them ('our brethren the Protestant Dissenters') to join with us in daily fervent prayer to the God of peace, for the universal blessed union of *all Reformed churches both at home and abroad* against our common enemies; that all they who do confess the holy name of our dear Lord, and do agree in the truth of his holy Word, may also meet in one holy communion, and live in perfect unity and godly love."

You are a great admirer of "the judicious Hooker," and therefore will read with interest what he states upon this point. He strongly, as you are aware, asserts that episcopacy is a scriptural institution, and holds the doctrine of the apostolical succession; but does he therefore conclude, that no other than episcopal ordination is valid? By no means:—"When the exigence of necessity," says he, "doth constrain to leave the usual ways of the Church, which otherwise we would willingly keep: where the Church must needs have some ordained, and neither hath nor can have possibly, a bishop to ordain; in case of such necessity, the ordinary institution of God hath given oftentimes, and may give, place. And therefore we are not, simply without exception, to urge a lineal descent of power from the Apostles by continued succession of Bishops *in every effectual Ordination.*"

Our Church, as you have already seen in the quotation from the Preface to her Ordination Service, considers Episcopacy an apostolic Institution, or as existing

from the apostolic age ; but she does not regard it as essential to the existence of a Church and to the validity of the sacraments. This is evident from her twenty-third Article. " Those (ministers) we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by—" whom? Bishops, the successors of the Apostles in all their ordinary functions, and by these alone? No—" by men who have public authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's Vineyard." Bishop Tomline observes on this article :—" No particular mode of ordination is here declared to be a necessary object of faith, nor any persons specified by whom ministers are to be ordained to their sacred function ; it is only asserted in general terms, that they are to receive their appointment from the authority prescribed by the church to which they belong ; and as this proposition is not contrary to any precept of Scripture, its truth will be allowed by all who admit the necessity of an established ministry."

Bishop Burnet, in his exposition of this Article, observes :—" We are very sure, that not only those who penned the Articles, but the body of this Church, for above half an age after, did notwithstanding those irregularities, acknowledge the Foreign Churches so constituted (that is, without episcopal ordination, or superintendence), *to be true Churches as to all the essentials of a Church*, though they had been at first irregularly formed, and continued still to be in an imperfect state."

Episcopacy, then, is to be highly valued as a scriptural and apostolical mode of Church*government, and as essential to the well-being of a church ; but (not being absolutely commanded in Scripture) it cannot justly be regarded as essential to the very existence of

a church and to the validity of the sacraments. We have great reason for thankfulness that our Church retains this primitive and scriptural mode of Church government—this “singular bounty of God,” as Beza calls it; but let us not invade God’s prerogative, and condemn, or, which seems very much like condemning, consign to His uncovenanted mercy, those who, through misfortune, or ignorance, or “the exigence of necessity,” are not in the possession of this privilege.

The evils which have arisen in churches, under a different form of government, ought to teach us the value and importance of episcopacy combined with pure doctrine. Although the continental churches which, at the time of the Reformation, adopted the presbyterian mode of government, had a pure and scriptural Confession of faith, this did not prevent them from gradually receding from the truth, until most of them became, to a great degree, leavened with Socinianism and Neology. It was the same in America where, for a long time, no efforts were made to extend the Protestant Episcopal Church. Neither Presbyterianism, nor Independency, afforded much security against the insidious approaches of rationalism and infidelity: and it was observed that, while Popery on the one hand, and Socinianism on the other, were making rapid conquests in the territories occupied by the various bodies of non-episcopalians, those dangerous enemies made little or no impression upon the episcopal church. The English Liturgy which, with a few alterations, the American episcopalians had adopted, together with our Articles, served as a bulwark, under the divine blessing, against that flood of heresy and false doctrine which had deeply penetrated into many other societies of christians.

In Scotland, Presbyterianism was found very ineffi-

cient, notwithstanding its scriptural Confession, to prevent the most dangerous errors from pervading its Church. "There are many," says an eminent minister of that Church in the middle of the eighteenth century, "who have departed from the old Protestant principles contained in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms. And is it possible to deny this fact? Is it not the general complaint of the people through the whole kingdom, that from many pulpits there is little to be heard of the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel? Or, if they be mentioned at all, it is no more than an awkward and cold compliment to save appearances, while something very different is chiefly insisted on. . . . Many a clergyman will not yield the one half of those things to be sins, that were admitted to be so a century ago; while in regard to the extent of corruption of doctrine which simultaneously prevailed, we recal to our remembrance an anecdote of a venerable lady of rank, who thanked God that she did not know of a single Trinitarian in ———, a considerable town which she named."

This preaching of erroneous doctrines from many pulpits in the Scotch established Church, produced numerous secessions; and these seceders did not long retain that love of the gospel, which was the alleged cause of their secession. "The Secession body, the fruit of the early departure from the Church of the Erskines, (while useful in its day and useful in its measure still) is chiefly distinguished by what our own Milner described as "barren orthodoxy." . . . While that body of Independents who left the Church at the beginning of the century, have differed, and separated, and are distinguished neither for soundness of doctrine, nor accuracy of Christian practice. . . . The recent admirable work

of the Rev. James Haldane, against the unsound doctrinal views of the most distinguished individual of their body, proves, that as little in doctrine as in practice, is that class of dissenters from the Church likely to prove safe or enduring guides."

And within the last two or three years another large body has seceded from the established Church of Scotland, and assumed the designation of "The Free Church." Into the reasons assigned for this secession it is not necessary for me to enter; the fact itself proves the tendency that is in non-episcopal communions, to strife, disorder, and disruption.

In this country we behold the same deteriorating and decomposing process at work in all the non-episcopalian societies. Presbyterianism and Independency have, to an alarming extent, degenerated from the Scriptural rule by which they professed to be solely guided, into Socinianism, Latitudinarianism, and Political Dissent. It was acknowledged, a few years ago, in a periodical, which was devoted to the cause of Dissent, that of two hundred and fifty-eight old Non-conformist chapels, no fewer than two hundred and thirty-five were transformed into Socinian meeting-houses. And in order to see how low Dissent, in general, has fallen, we have only to examine the statements which its own advocates have put forward. "Schism," says a highly popular and esteemed dissenting minister, with equal truth and candour, "is our sin, and schism our punishment. Distraction and division of Churches have frequently resulted from the election of ministers. At this perilous crisis, secret canvassing, cabals, intrigues, and the most disgusting tyranny, take place. . . . We have been accused of wrangling about a teacher of religion, till we have lost our religion itself in the affray; and the

state of many of our congregations proves, that the charge is not altogether without foundation. . . . The feeling of too many of our members, may be thus summarily expressed, 'I will have my way.' Such a spirit is the source of all the evils to which our Churches are ever exposed, and of which, it must be confessed, they are but too frequently the miserable victims."

"The power of choosing a minister," observes another dissenting writer, "produces a feeling unfavourable to religious result, as it leads all, in some degree, to listen rather as judges than disciples. At certain periods, this is essential, but in the minds of many, the feeling frequently continues; it is too congenial to the dominant propensity of human nature, to be readily relinquished; hence often a variety of evils; hence the rude remarks, the vulgar impertinence of some of all ranks, and both sexes; hence the general custom of regarding how a thing is said rather than the thing itself, though the most momentous perhaps, within the compass of thought. With the consciousness of a minister as 'their servant for Christ's sake,' many are disposed to think him such for their own, and to occasion disorder by unreasonable demands on his time, attention, and docility. The freedom from priestly domination, laid as the basis of the system, will excite, at times, such a feeling of independence, as will expand into something like popular tyranny."

"During the time of my residence at ———," another dissenting minister states, "I saw and felt so much of the evil of a vulgar democracy, that it almost made me disaffected to the system. It is much easier to find fault with others, than to construct a good theory for yourself; this I am bound in justice to admit, and every honest and impartial Dissenter will unite with me, in

saying, that our system is not devoid of practical mischief, however beautiful it looks in theory."

"It does not unfrequently happen, that where two or more Churches of the same denomination exist in a town, a most unhappy, unscriptural, disgraceful temper is manifested towards each other. All the feelings of envy, jealousy, and ill-will, are cherished and displayed with as much, or more bitterness, than two rival tradesmen would exhibit in the most determined opposition of interests. This is peculiarly the case where two Churches have been formed by a schism out of one. Oftentimes the feud has been perpetuated through one generation, and has been bequeathed to the generation following."

Another dissenting writer, in noticing the evils arising from the selection of inexperienced or ignorant ministers, which must often occur where the power of choosing their minister is vested in the people, observes; "It is one of the properties of ignorance to pronounce with confidence, and hence it is that difficulties vanish so fast before many persons, who can solve mysteries and disentangle knots, that for many a long and weary hour have exercised the faculties of the wise and prudent; yet all is smooth and clear to these shallow pretenders, who, mounting upon the wings of their own fancy, make good the fable of Icarus, and lose themselves in the abyss of their own presumption. I would here ask, is it nothing to Dissenters that they should cause their way to be evil spoken of—that they should furnish hostile weapons to their adversaries—and above all, that they should expose religion itself to the mockery of the profane? If these should be thought hard sayings, let any candid and judicious man look around him, and

survey in silence, the state of their Churches and the qualifications of their Pastors,"

And the effect of those levelling principles which are usually imbibed by Dissenters, and which manifest themselves in the refusal to pay "honour to whom honour" is due, is to cause well-educated and intelligent persons to withdraw from their societies. For "it is a common feeling," observes the same writer, "amongst persons of education, that any government is better than that of a mob." Nor can they hope, while such a system as that of Congregationalism is followed, for a better state of things. The minister, being liable to be dismissed whenever the people choose, can possess very little moral influence over them; and being himself little better educated than many of his congregation, he cannot raise them to a higher level. "The people being in his own rank of life, receive their tone from their instructor, and, insensible to the distinctions of society, they value themselves upon their spiritual phraseology; which becomes a substitute for decency and good manners."

The bad effects of such principles on a very large and useful class of persons, the right training of which would conduce greatly to the comfort of society, are thus noticed by Mr. James, who, while he sees and deplores such effects, does not seem to be aware that they are the natural fruits of the system to which he clings: "It is no uncommon thing for religious servants (he means, of course, servants brought up in the principles of dissent) to give themselves such airs, to manifest such a degree of consequence, and to expect so much deference, as to lead some heads of families to say, that they would rather have good, merely moral servants, than religious ones."

“Should the day ever arrive,” said the late Mr. Orme, a pious and much-respected dissenting minister, “when the dissenting body shall be distinguished for the number of its members who adorn the walks of public life, and wear its honours, rather than for the number of its humble, active, and holy disciples; *for its weight in politics, rather than for its weight in religion; for its zeal in contending for public rights, rather than for its devoted attachment to the cause of a suffering Saviour; its glory will then have passed away.*”

The conduct of Dissenters, as a body, during the last few years, proves that the day has arrived which Mr. Orme seems mournfully to have anticipated. They have been seen to combine with Romanists, Socinians, and Infidels in an unholy crusade against our Protestant Established Church. It is not long since a large number of these political zealots sent an address to the Irish Romanists, expressing sympathy for the wrongs inflicted upon them by the maintenance of that monster grievance of Ireland, the Protestant Church! Thus not only has schism been their sin, and schism their punishment, but they have sunk into a still lower depth of degradation—they flatter, assist, and unite with, the open and avowed enemies of the Protestant religion!

How very far the dissenting body has fallen from the spirit of the Henrys, Wattses, Doddridges, &c., may be seen from the language of a Periodical which has an immense circulation amongst Congregationalists. It is called, by a strange misnomer, ‘*The Christian Witness.*’ In the number for April, 1847, amongst other falsehoods unblushingly proclaimed, and, doubtless, implicitly believed by multitudes of its readers, it states that the revenues of the Church of England amount to nearly nine and a half millions! And yet a Report was laid

before Parliament, and *printed* by authority, which states that the whole endowments of the Church incomes of the bishops, cathedrals, and incumbents of parishes, did not amount to three millions and a half! Although this, and other false statements, were pointed out to the Editor, by a highly respectable layman, he would not acknowledge the wrong which he had done, nor even promise to insert a short and temperate communication, —in less than two or three months. The falsehoods were to be allowed to circulate amongst the dissenting body for three months, and then the Editor would insert, he said, “the main passages” of the reply, “with a comment:” the antidote was to be administered with such a dilution as would probably satisfy most of the readers of the “Witness,” that the false accusation had a great deal of truth in it. Thus is the Editor deliberately doing evil that some fancied good may come.

This is another fruit of the dissenting system. Voluntaryism and Republicanism in religion tend to spiritual lawlessness and to moral obliquity. There is no counterbalancing power in Dissent, no fixed principles, no Articles, Liturgy, or other authorized formularies, which might serve as a restraint to the wayward, and a guide to the inexperienced. Many dissenting catechisms are, indeed, in circulation; but, as is too often the case when men are left to choose what is most agreeable to their inclinations, the very *worst* are the most popular. Those which contain sound and scriptural doctrine are confined to the more pious and quiet portion of the Denomination.

Palmer’s catechism, for instance, has gone through thirteen editions, or upwards. It is placed early in the hands of nearly all the dissenting youth in the

kingdom, and from it they imbibe their notions of the value and excellence of the dissenting system, and their prejudices against the Church of England. The *accuracy* and *knowledge* displayed by the writer of this popular catechism may be estimated by the fact, that he teaches the rising generation of dissenters that the “ *Benedictus, Magnificat, Nunc Dimittis,*” and other “exceptionable things in the Liturgy,” are taken from “the old Popish Liturgy,” and, consequently, ought to be abhorred as a remnant of Antichrist: although the three first “exceptionable things” are taken from Holy Scripture, and the others were used in the Primitive Church before Popery came into existence!

Bishop Horsley characterized Palmer’s Catechism, many years ago, as inculcating “no one principle of the christian religion, or of any religion under the sun:” and by the celebrated Edmund Burke it was designated as “a catechism of misanthropy, anarchy, and confusion.”

It would be strange, indeed, if the Congregational system did work well, when its supporters are, almost universally, indoctrinated in the principles of such a catechism. But it has proved a miserable failure, as is acknowledged by the same dissenting writer whom I have already quoted. “The experience of two centuries,” says he, “has brought it to a sufficient test, and placed us in a position the most undesirable to a well-ordered mind.” It is, however, still more remarkable that Dissenters after so long an experience of the inefficiency of this modern system of Church government (for it is allowed that it has been tried only two hundred years,) cannot yet persuade themselves that the system which we derived from the Apostles, eighteen hundred years ago, is much more likely to be successful, and especially when that plan is united, as in our

Church, with purity of doctrine. Even Dissenters themselves are constrained to acknowledge that her confession of Faith is pure and scriptural. "The Church of England," says the Eclectic Review, "professes the life-giving doctrines of the Gospel, favours every great principle rescued from Rome by the Reformers, and puts into the lips of the people a language of devotion, unrivalled in majesty, beauty, propriety, and comprehension."

After perusing the preceding statement of the bad working of the non-episcopal system you will, perhaps, be tempted to exclaim: "I would sooner become a Romanist than a Dissenter!" Were you under the necessity of joining the communion of Rome or that of some dissenting denomination, I should have endeavoured to shew you how dangerous it would be to choose the former, and that you would be much safer as a Dissenter, notwithstanding the numerous evils of which Dissent is the prolific source. But this is not necessary. You are still a member of a Church, which is free alike from spiritual lawlessness and spiritual despotism. From the evils which have manifested themselves both among Dissenters at home, and among non-episcopal Churches in other countries, the Church of England has been, in a great measure, preserved. Individuals holding palpable heresies have, indeed, at different times, been found within her precincts; but their pernicious doctrines could not make much progress among a people, instructed by her scriptural Liturgy and Homilies, and who had only to refer to her Articles to prove that such teachers were false prophets. And in such cases our Church has provided a remedy. For when the sermons in the pulpit can be proved to be opposed to the doctrines contained in the Liturgy and

Articles, the unfaithful and dishonest minister may be removed by an appeal to the bishop. Thus the flock has not only a fold in which it can be gathered together, and abundance of wholesome and nourishing food provided for it, but also shepherds to lead it into safe pastures, and chief shepherds to encourage the diligent and faithful, to admonish the careless and slothful, and to remove the vicious and incorrigible.

Hence is our Church regarded by a vast majority of pious and intelligent Christians, both in this country and in foreign lands, as the firmest bulwark, under God, against the enemies of true religion. It is to her constant and uncompromising opposition to Popish ascendancy, that her dissenting enemies are indebted for the civil and religious liberty which they enjoy, and which they now seem so intent on employing to effect her downfall.

From the confessedly low condition (I mean as to their spiritual state) to which most of the non-episcopal bodies have fallen, I think we may fairly infer, that a sound and scriptural confession of Faith is not the only thing requisite for the well-being of a Church; and also that no theory of man's devising, no form of Church government, is so well calculated to promote stability and unity, as that which was universally followed from the apostolic age to the Reformation, namely, episcopacy. But we have no scriptural warrant for asserting that episcopacy is essential to the very existence of a Church. "It is your mistake" (to adopt the words of Archbishop Bramhall) "in not distinguishing between the true nature and essence of a Church, which we do readily grant them (non-episcopal Churches), and the integrity and perfection of a Church," that led you to use the unguarded expression to which I have adverted.

Apostolical succession, and apostolical order, without

apostolical doctrine, is a body without a soul. There may be animal life, but there can be no spiritual life. The tree may become large and flourishing, but the fruits will be corrupt and baneful.

As a Church, Rome is without vitality; although we may charitably hope that some of her members may be saved. But observe, if they be saved it will be in consequence of their believing purer doctrines than those which their Church teaches. A pure and scriptural Confession of Faith, on the contrary, is professed by most of the non-episcopal bodies of Christians; and the members will, consequently, be safe while they faithfully adhere to it; it is only when they reject the doctrines contained in their Confession, that their salvation is endangered. Had you then, no other alternative but *Rome* or *Geneva*, you would be perfectly safe in choosing the latter, if you embraced and diligently practised her scriptural Confession, the Confession of Helvetia, which, in all *essential points*, agrees with the thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England.

But if you were to choose Rome, that is, episcopacy, with a decidedly corrupt and anti-scriptural Confession, you would be led into gross error and delusion; from which, although you might possibly be saved as a brand plucked from the burning, yet it would be presumptuous in you to expect salvation, since you had deliberately embraced false doctrines. "It is far *less* safe," says Dr. Cosin, "to join with these men that alter the *cre-
denda*, the vitals of religion, than with those that meddle only with the *agenda* and *rules* of religion, if they meddle no further." In the former case you would be in far greater danger than the Jews were, while under the teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees. Those teachers read the Scriptures to the people without re-

serve, and so long as their hearers followed the directions of Moses and the Prophets, they were safe. Our Blessed Lord commanded the people to *do* whatsoever the Scribes and the Pharisees taught them, while those teachers sat in Moses's seat, that is, while they inculcated upon them the precepts of Moses, but not to follow their works. At Rome, however, you must neither *believe* nor *do* as the priests teach you, for their instructions are directly contrary to the Scriptures; and therefore, the more consistent a Romanist you may be, the more dangerous will be your condition. But, as I have already observed, you are not reduced to the necessity of choosing either Rome or Geneva. You live in a country where, through the mercy and favour of God, a Church has been established which combines apostolical order with apostolical doctrine. In following her teaching you cannot fail of your object—the attainment of everlasting life; for all her instructions can be proved to be agreeable to those “Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.”

LETTER VII.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION—CONSUBSTANTIATION.

DEAR SIR,

I WILL now proceed to give you additional evidence that the Church of Rome teaches unscriptural and dangerous doctrines.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION. What this doctrine, is the Roman Church herself shall state, or you might, perhaps, accuse me of exaggeration :—“ In the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist there is really and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and there is a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into his body, and of the whole substance of the wine into his blood ; which conversion the Catholic Church calls Transubstantiation.” By the Council of Trent it is also declared :—“ But because Christ our Redeemer said, that that which he offered under the shape of bread was truly his body, therefore it was always believed in the Church of God, and last of all this holy Synod doth now declare it, that by the consecration of bread and wine is made the changing of the whole

substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of wine into the substance of his blood ; which change is fitly and properly called by the holy Catholic Church, Transubstantiation.”

Although the Romish Church so confidently asserts that this doctrine *was always believed in the Church of God*, it is certain that it was *invented* about the time of Pope Gregory III. In the Eastern Church it was opposed as an heretical doctrine by a Council at Constantinople, the same which condemned the worship of idols, in the year of our Lord 754. But it gradually obtained favour with the Church of Rome, which was ever ready to sanction any doctrine that tended to its own power and elevation. It was not, however, until the Council of Lateran, held A. D. 1215, that the carnal presence of Christ in the Sacrament was authoritatively confirmed, under the name of Transubstantiation. Previously to this time many eminent Romanists had opposed this opinion, as a monstrous and dangerous error. Amongst these may be mentioned Berengarius, principal of the public school at Tours, and afterwards Archbishop of Angers. He was overpowered by the threats of his enemies, and especially by the fierce and overbearing language of Hildebrand, and consented to abjure his opinions on this point. On afterwards retracting his recantation he was summoned to Rome by Nicolas II., and, under the influence of terror, he agreed to embrace whatever the Pope and his Council should determine, as a matter of faith. He then signed a confession which this *infallible* Pontiff dictated ; in which, amongst other absurdities, it is stated, that “the bread and wine, after consecration, were not only a Sacrament, but also the real body and blood of

Jesus Christ; and that this body and blood were handled by the priests, and consumed by the faithful, and not in a sacramental sense, but in reality and truth, as other sensible objects are."

The absurdity of declaring that a body, which was received into heaven, and is to continue there until the Saviour return to judge the world, and which, as a human body, cannot be in heaven and on a thousand different altars on earth at the same time, was so glaring that the schoolmen employed all their skill and ingenuity to explain it. They durst not deny that Christ's body is in heaven, but they deluded themselves, and endeavoured to satisfy others with the following curious explanation:—that though his body is contained in the sacrament, it is still in heaven, but has no other presence there than that of abode! It is very evident that they had so puzzled themselves on this subject as not to know what nonsense they were writing; but it is equally plain that they were determined, in spite of the contradictions, and absurdities, and blasphemies which are involved in this fiction, to maintain the carnal presence of Christ in the Eucharist. "The body of Christ," says Peter Lombard, "which is visible in itself, lurks and lies covered, after the act of consecration, under the species of bread." In other words, the figure of the bread is a cloke or mask to conceal the flesh from our eyes! Is it any wonder that men, who are taught a doctrine so revolting to reason and common sense, and who are led to believe that the Church, which teaches it, is the only one that can be considered the true Church, should, on venturing to think for themselves, reject such an absurdity, and, having no better Creed to rest upon, sink into infidelity?

Such a fiction would never have been entertained for

a moment, had it not favoured that spiritual despotism over mankind which Rome is continually seeking to establish. Once let it be allowed that a priest can, by uttering a few words, change a piece of bread into the sacred body of Christ, and, (to use the daring expression of some Romanists) create the Creator, and there will be no limit to the authority of a Church, which boasts of conveying this supernatural power even to her lowest priests.

I have already told you when this monstrous notion began to be entertained. It had no existence in the apostolic age, nor for many centuries afterwards. Some of the early Fathers, indeed, employ the word *conversion*, when speaking of the elements used at the Lord's Supper, but assuredly they did not mean thereby that carnal and gross notion which the Romanists entertain, and which they express by the word Transubstantiation. By *conversion*, as applied to the elements in the Eucharist, the early Fathers meant, not that the bread and wine are so changed as to be no longer bread and wine, but that they are to be regarded not as common or ordinary food for the nourishment of the body, but as representing that spiritual food by which the soul is nourished. They apply the same word to the consecration, or the setting apart, of the element of water in Baptism. It still remains water; but it so far differs from ordinary water which cleanses the body, as by it is signified and represented, the washing away of sin. The Saviour shewed by an outward visible sign that his flesh was food for the soul of man; and thus he leads us from things on earth to a contemplation of things in heaven. But if the things which he employs to teach us what spiritual blessings the believer will receive, are not really the things we suppose them to be;—if

bread be not bread, and wine not wine, but merely *appearances* of those elements;—then are we led to suppose that the heavenly blessings, which they represent, are not real but only *apparent*. “The nature of the sacrament therefore,” observes a learned Commentator, “is overthrown, if, in the mode of signifying, the earthly sign corresponds not to the heavenly reality; and, accordingly, the truth of the mystery is lost if true bread does not represent the true body of Christ. I again repeat, since the Supper is nothing but a conspicuous attestation to the promise which is contained in the sixth chapter of John, viz. that Christ is the bread of life who came down from heaven, that visible bread must intervene, in order that spiritual bread may be figured, unless we would destroy all the benefits with which God here favours us for the purpose of sustaining our infirmity. Then on what ground could Paul infer, that we are all one bread, if only the semblance of bread, and not the reality remained? . . . Bread is a sacrament to none but those to whom the word is addressed, just as the water of Baptism is not changed in itself, but begins to be to us what it formerly was not, as soon as the promise is annexed. This will better appear from the example of a similar sacrament. The water gushing from the rock in the desert was, to the Israelites, a badge and sign of the same thing that is figured to us in the Supper by wine. For Paul declares that *they drank the same spiritual drink*. But the water was common to the herds and flocks of the people. Hence it is easy to infer, that in the earthly elements when employed for a spiritual use, no other conversion takes place than in respect of men, inasmuch as they are to them seals of promises.”

This doctrine of Transubstantiation has no foundation

in Scripture. The words 'This is my body,' no more prove the bread to be really his body, than the expression, 'I am the vine,' proves that Christ is really a vine. The phrase may be explained by a reference to similar phrases used by the Jews at the Passover. When the Lamb, prepared for the Paschal-supper was set 'on the table, it was called, 'The body of the Passover.' To this form of speech among the Jews, "Christ must probably allude," says Hammond, "when he saith, *This is my body*, making himself that was now to be slain for them, answerable to that Paschal Lamb (as by *Paul* he is called *our Passover*, that is sacrificed for us) and so mentioning this crucifixion of his, in that form, by which the presentation of the Lamb on the table in the Jewish feast, whereof they were to eat by God's appointment, was wont to be expressed. . . . It seems to be by Christ substituted instead of the Paschal form—' *This is the bread of affliction which our fathers eat in Egypt, &c.*' Where it is evident that that is not the identical bread, which their fathers in Egypt eat, but only the transcript of it, the commemoration of that Egyptian state of slavery, from which they had been delivered, and the celebration of that annual feast, which in Egypt was first instituted."

Nor does the still more forcible language which the Saviour uses, on another occasion, prove that the real body and blood of Christ are eaten in the Eucharist:—
 "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. . . . Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." *John* vi. 55, 53. Neither of these passages proves that bread and wine are changed into the actual body and blood of Christ. They both, indeed, declare that Christ's body and blood are necessary to the spiritual life of men, but

they must have some other meaning than a partaking of the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, or else all are consigned to destruction who do not receive this Sacrament. But our Lord declares:—"He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." He that hath true faith in Jesus Christ, then, spiritually eats of his flesh and drinks his blood, although he may not have the opportunity to receive the bread and wine at the Lord's Table. And he that believeth not, even if he had the real body of Christ set before him, and if he were to partake of it, would not have life in him:—"It is the Spirit," he says, "that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." This declaration seemed a hard saying to some of the disciples, because they misunderstood him, and thought that he meant a carnal eating, whereas he meant only an internal and spiritual feeding upon him by faith. For, after telling them that such a carnal eating as they were thinking of would not profit, he shews them why they did not partake of that "living bread which came down from heaven," and, consequently, why they were without spiritual life:—"There are some of you that *believe not.*"

This figurative language is referred to by Augustine in one of his treatises. He teaches us how we are to know when the Scriptures speak figuratively:—"If they seem to command a wicked or ungodly thing, or to forbid what is useful or beneficent, the language is figurative—'Unless ye eat (says He) the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye shall not have life in you.' It seems here to command a wicked and ungodly thing; it is therefore a figure of speech, commanding us to have communion with our Lord's pas-

sion, and devoutly and wholesomely to keep in memory, that his flesh was crucified and wounded for us."

"Eating and drinking, by a very common figure, means receiving: and here what is the thing to be received? Christ himself in his whole person:—'I am the bread of life;' 'He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.' But more particularly He is to be considered as giving his body to be broken, and his blood to be shed, for an atonement. And so the fruits of his death are what we are to receive as our spiritual food. 'His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.' His passion is our redemption, and by his death we live. It is right to apply the *general doctrine* of this chapter to the particular case of the Lord's Supper, considered as worthily received, because the spiritual feeding here mentioned is the thing signified and effected in the Lord's Supper. After we have sufficiently proved by the Scriptures that, in and by the holy Sacrament, ordinarily such spiritual food is conveyed; it is then right to apply all that our Lord says in the general to that particular case; but such application does not amount to interpreting this chapter of the holy sacrament. For example, the words, 'Except ye eat the flesh, &c., ye have no life in you,' do not mean directly, 'Ye have no life without the Lord's Supper,' but 'Ye have no life without participating in our Lord's passion.'"

The expressions in the sixth of John which Romanists usually bring forward in favour of Transubstantiation, cannot be proved even to refer to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, because they were uttered a considerable time before that holy ordinance was instituted.

Nor do the words of Christ, or of his apostles, give

any support to this absurd doctrine:—"As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take eat; this is my body." *This what?* Was it not the *bread* which he held in his hand? There can be no other meaning, then, than this; This bread signifies or represents my body which is about to be broken for the benefit of mankind. And the wine represented his blood; for if it had been changed after he had taken the cup into his hand, it could no longer have been called the *fruit of the vine*; and yet the cup of wine which, after consecration, he designates *his blood*, and bids his disciples to drink of it, he still calls *wine*:—"I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this *fruit of the vine*, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

The apostle Paul, as if to guard against this gross error, is careful to call the elements not, as Romanists do—his body and blood—but *bread* and *wine*:—"As oft as ye eat this *bread* and drink this *cup*. . . . Whosoever shall eat this *bread* and drink this *cup* of the Lord unworthily. . . . But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that *bread* and drink of that *cup*."

But now, let us inquire what were the views of the early christians respecting this Sacrament. Do we find any account of the people assembling together before the altar,—waiting in solemn silence until the sacrificing priest had pronounced the words:—"This is my body," and had holden up the bread, changed into the "body, soul, and divinity," of the Saviour of the world,—and then bowing their knees in adoration of their Incarnate God now corporeally present, under the mask of the consecrated bread? No: the words neither of the

inspired writers, nor of the early christian Fathers, afford any evidence that such a doctrine as that of the carnal presence was believed. There is no testimony whatever that the primitive christians offered divine worship to their Lord, as bodily present in the Eucharist. If such a belief had existed amongst them, is it likely that any congregation would have been guilty of that great profanation of the Lord's Supper, which the apostle Paul so severely condemns? This abuse of the holy ordinance, by some members of the Corinthian Church, is adduced by a learned prelate, as incidentally proving that, in the time of the apostle, the corporal presence of Christ at the Eucharist was not believed:—“The consciousness of a Deity,” says he, “leads men to adoration, to acts of worship; and, in a case like this, may easily lead to superstitious rites and gross idolatry. Such is the danger to be considered on this assumption (that our Lord became corporeally present—present in his entire human and divine nature) . . . Let us now in the same point of view, consider the Eucharist, according to the Protestant interpretation, as exhibiting the symbols of our Lord's body and blood. If, along with this doctrine, the notion of the Lord's Table—the Lord's Supper—be taken into account, we can imagine that the rite may insensibly acquire too much an appearance of a social repast; and thus at length the religious character of the meeting be nearly lost in the convivial. On this side, the danger lies in the profanation of sacred things. . . . Idolatry, then, results from the perversion of the Roman Catholic system, and profaneness from that of the Protestant system; and so obviously do these consequences follow, that no reasonable person, I am persuaded, would hesitate to declare the causes, when the consequences

were laid before him. Now profaneness was the sin of the Corinthians in this matter. Here therefore we have what I take to be a clear proof that they had never heard of the doctrine of Transubstantiation."

The early Fathers considered that our Blessed Lord was speaking figuratively when he used the words in question at the institution of this sacred Ordinance:—"Having received bread," says Tertullian, "and distributed it to his disciples, he made it his body, saying, This is my body, that is, the figure of my body." "Our Lord therefore at the table where he partook of the last banquet with his apostles," says Cyprian, "*with his own hands gave BREAD and WINE*; but in the cross he *gave his body* to be wounded by the hands of the soldiers, that in the apostles the sincere truth and true sincerity being more secretly impressed, might expound to the Gentiles how wine and bread are his flesh and blood, and by what reasons the causes agree with the effects, and divers names or species are brought to one essence, *and the things signifying and the things signified should be called by the same names.*" "If therefore," says Chrysostom, "it be dangerous to convert to private uses those holy vessels, in which, *not the true body of Christ*, but the mystery of his body, is contained, how much more dangerous to abuse the vessels of our body, &c." "He that called his natural body corn and bread," says Theodoret, "and also named himself a vine-tree; even the same hath honoured *the symbols or signs with the names of his body and blood, not changing indeed the nature itself*, but adding grace unto the nature." And in another place he says: "Those mystical symbols (or sacraments) after the sanctification do not go out of their own nature, but they tarry and abide still in their substance, figure, and

shape ; yea, and are sensibly seen, and touched as they were before.”

There are many passages in the works of Augustine which plainly contradict this Popish invention, but it will be sufficient to quote the following words of that eminent Father :—“ By his majesty, his providence, his unspeakable and invisible grace, that is fulfilled which was spoken by him, ‘ Behold, I am with you unto the end of the world.’ But as to his flesh which the Word assumed ; as to that which was born of the Virgin : as to that which was apprehended by the Jews, and fixed to a tree, and which was taken down from the cross, wrapped in linen clothes, placed in the sepulchre, and afterwards rose again, this ye shall not always have with you. Why ? Because as to his bodily presence, he was with his disciples during forty days ; and they accompanying, seeing, and not following him, he ascended into heaven, and is not here. There he sits at the right hand of his Father : and he is here, for the presence of his majesty did not depart. As to his divine presence we have Christ always with us ; as to his bodily presence, he said truly to his disciples— ‘ Me ye shall not have always with you.’ For as to the presence of his flesh the Church had him only a few days : now it holdeth him by faith, though it doth not see him.” “ Before the blessing of the heavenly words,” says Ambrose, “ it (the bread) is called another kind ; after the consecration the body of Christ is *signified*.” “ We have oftentimes marked,” says Basil, “ that the inward powers of the mind have their names of the outward members of the body. Therefore, forasmuch as our Lord is the true bread, and his flesh the true food, it must needs be that the delight and pleasure of the same are caused within us by a

spiritual kind of taste. . . Moreover we say, that there is a certain spiritual mouth of the inner man wherewith he is fed, receiving the word of life, which is the bread that came from heaven." "Of this oblation," says Jerome, "which is marvellously made in the remembrance of Christ, it is lawful to eat; but of that oblation which Christ offered upon the altar of the cross, according to itself, it is lawful for no man to eat:" and hence Chrysostom observes:—"If a man take it fleshly, he gaineth nothing." "There are two sorts of Christ's blood," says Clement of Alexandria, "the one fleshly, wherewith we are redeemed; the other spiritual, wherewith we are anointed. And *this is the drinking of the blood of Christ, to be partakers of his immortality.*"

You may judge from the preceding quotations what dependance is to be placed on the assertion of the Roman Church, that this gross notion of Transubstantiation has always been believed in the Catholic Church. Not one early christian writer can be adduced in favour of this doctrine. Passages have, indeed, been given from some of the Christian Fathers, which seem to countenance this absurd invention; but it is well known that the Church of Rome has shamefully corrupted and altered many of their writings, in order to serve her own purposes. But even if the quotations in favour of Transubstantiation were proved to be from the genuine writings of the Fathers, they are still to be brought to "the Law and to the Testimony:" they are to be weighed in the balances of the Sanctuary, and to be rejected if found wanting. Follow this equitable and safe course, with respect to the reasons and opinions which are brought forward in favour of, or against, the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and I have no fear as to the result. I am persuaded that you will reject it with

abhorrence. This is not too strong an expression in reference to this doctrine ; for nothing is more calculated to make men infidels than this fiction of the Church of Rome ; it undermines the very foundation of our holy religion. “ Surely,” says Archbishop Tillotson, “ nothing ought to be admitted to be a part of the Christian doctrine which destroys the reason of our belief of the whole. And that this doctrine does so will appear evidently, if we consider what was the main argument which the apostles used to convince the world of *the truth of Christianity* ; and that was this, *That our Blessed Saviour, the Author of this doctrine, wrought such and such miracles, and particularly, that He rose again from the dead.* And this they proved because they were eye-witnesses of his miracles, and had seen him and conversed with him after he was risen from the dead. But what if their senses did deceive them in this matter ? Then it cannot be denied but that the main proof of Christianity falls to the ground ? Well ! we will now suppose (as the Church of Rome does) *Transubstantiation* to have been one principal part of the christian doctrine which the apostles preached. But if this doctrine be true, then all men’s senses are deceived in a plain, sensible matter, wherein it is as hard for them to be deceived as in any thing in the world. For two things can hardly be imagined more different, than *a little bit of wafer* and the whole body of a man. So that the apostles persuading men to believe this doctrine, persuaded them not to trust their senses, and yet the argument which they used to persuade them was built upon the direct contrary principle, viz. that *men’s senses are to be trusted.* For if they be not, then notwithstanding all the evidence the apostles offered for the resurrection of our Saviour, he might not be risen,

and so the faith of christians was vain. So that they represent the apostles as absurd as is possible, viz. going about to persuade men out of their senses by virtue of an argument, the whole strength whereof depends upon the certainty of sense. And now the matter is brought to a fair issue : If the testimony of sense be to be relied upon, then *Transubstantiation* is false : if it be not, then no man is sure that Christianity is true. For the utmost assurance that the apostles had of the truth of Christianity, was the testimony of their own senses concerning our Saviour's miracles, and this testimony every man hath against *Transubstantiation*. From whence it plainly follows, that no man (no, not the apostles themselves) had more reason to believe *Christianity* to be true, than every man hath to believe *Transubstantiation* to be false. And we who did not see our Saviour's miracles (as the apostles did) and have only a credible relation of them, but do see the *Sacrament*, have less evidence of the truth of *Christianity* than of the *falsehood* of *Transubstantiation*. . . I shall press the business a little further. Supposing the *Scripture* to be a Divine Revelation, and that these words (*This is my Body,*) if they be in Scripture, must necessarily be taken in the strict and literal sense ; I ask now, What greater evidence any man has that these words (*This is my Body*) are in the Bible, than every man has that the Bread is not changed in the sacrament ? Nay, no man has so much : for we have only the evidence of *one* sense that these words are in the Bible, but that the Bread is not changed, we have the concurring testimony of *several* of our senses. In a word, if this be once admitted, that the *senses* of all men are deceived in one of the most plain sensible matters that can be, there is no certain means left either to convey or to prove a

Divine Revelation to men ; nor is there any way to confute the grossest impostures in the world. For if the clear evidence of all men's senses be not sufficient for this purpose, let every man, if he can, find a better and more convincing argument."

" ' *When,*' says Cicero, ' *we call the fruits of the earth Ceres, and wine Bacchus, we use but the common language ; but do you think any man so mad as to believe that which he eats to be God !*' It seems that he could not believe that so extravagant a folly had even entered into the mind of man. It is a very severe saying of *Averroes* the *Arabian* Philosopher (who lived after this doctrine was entertained among Christians), and ought to make the Church of Rome blush, if she can :— ' *I have travelled,*' says he, ' *over the world, and have found divers sects ; but so sottish a Sect or Law I never found, as is the sect of the Christians ; because with their own teeth they devour their God whom they worship.*' It was great stupidity in the people of *Israel* to say, *Come, let us make Gods ;* but it was civilly said of them, ' *Let us make us Gods that may go before us,*' in comparison of the Church of Rome, which says, *Let us make a God that we may eat him.* So that upon the whole matter I cannot but wonder that they should choose thus to expose *Faith* to the contempt of all who are endowed with reason. And to speak the plain truth, the christian religion was never so horribly exposed to the scorn of Atheists and Infidels, as it hath been by this most absurd and senseless doctrine. But thus it was foretold that the *Man of Sin* should come with *power and signs and lying miracles,* and with *all deceivableness of unrighteousness,* with all the *legerdemain* and *juggling tricks* of falsehood and imposture ; amongst which this of *Transubstantiation,* which they call a *miracle,* and we a *cheat,* is one of the chief."

It is a subject of astonishment to every one, who has even a superficial knowledge of the Liturgy and Articles of our Church, that she has been condemned by one party, and *half-commended* by another, because (they state) she favours the doctrine of the real or corporal presence of Christ in the Eucharist! The attempt of certain deluded persons, who profess to be members of the Church of England, to reconcile her declarations on this point with the decisions of the Council of Trent, is far more injurious to her, than the accusation of her open enemies, who say that she teaches Transubstantiation. The latter charge can be easily shewn to be utterly unfounded; but the sophistry of Romanizers (who may probably be disguised Jesuits) may lead multitudes astray. They begin by inserting the sharp edge, and then they urge it deeper and deeper until the whole wedge has been admitted, It is shocking, say they, to consider the sacramental bread and wine only as common bread and wine, and leads to a profanation of the blessed Sacrament: they therefore insinuate that some *change* is made in the elements after consecration. This being admitted, all the rest follows as a matter of course; and Transubstantiation virtually, if not in name, is boldly declared to be a doctrine of our Church! Observe the stealthy pace with which these Romanizers advance towards Rome:—"It was part of the vague way of thinking in a past period, to suppose that *any change* in the sacred elements involved Transubstantiation; whereas that word designates only that particular change, 'whereby the substance of the sacred elements ceases to be.' When then he (the Bishop of Chester) condemns, as departing from the sense of the Articles, those who 'speak of the consecrated elements as not remaining simply what they were before, and what to

sight they seem,' and refers as his authority, to the Article condemning Transubstantiation, we may plainly limit his condemnation to this, and not suppose him to contravene Antiquity, which continually affirms a change."

You may judge from the quotations already given from early christian writers, how far the learned Professor is correct in stating, that "Antiquity continually affirms a change." If he means the antiquity of the dark ages, it may be conceded. But the antiquity on which alone any reliance can be placed, viz. the apostolic age, affirms no change whatever in the elements. They remained bread and wine after consecration as well as before; although by that solemn act they were *set apart from a common to a sacred use*. The object which these Romanizers aim at is evident. Once admit that some, it matters not what, change is effected in the elements at the Lord's Table, and you will then be led to think that a sacrifice—not merely a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving—but a real though unbloody sacrifice is offered:—"To the participation, indeed, which the word Table implies, all are admitted; *but the oblation which the term Altar indicates* is more removed. Thus they are received at 'God's Board,' indeed, but not made so sensible of *the presence of Him* who admits them as his guests; and therefore, as the Jews of old, receive not equally the benefits of his presence. Such a loss is therefore, doubtless, a great one, *which withholds the Altar from our due acknowledgment*: but who reads not in this, the visitation upon the children's children, of the *sacrilegious pollution it has undergone in this country?*"

The plain meaning of this is, that members of the Church of England sustain a heavy loss, because altars

are no longer allowed in our churches, on which the priests might offer, as in Popish temples, the sacrifice of Christ's real body and blood. These Altars have been changed into Tables, where the Lord's Supper may be administered according to the primitive institution of that holy Sacrament. The eyes of our venerable Reformers had been opened, so that they could see how contrary to the Scriptures were those alterations which Popery had made in that sacred ordinance. The following passage, they clearly saw, was totally opposed to the notion of a *real* sacrifice:—"Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high-priest entereth into the holy place every year, with blood of others. For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." *Heb. ix. 24—26.*

This removal of the Altars is the "*sacrilegious*" act which the writer of the Tract referred to, so pathetically laments as being the cause, why "the higher mysteries which this word 'Altar' represents are. . . partially withdrawn from view." These *higher mysteries* are the oblation of Christ's actual body and blood by the priest; and these Romanizers fancy that the word, *oblation*, in our Communion Service, sanctions this preposterous notion. But the word means only *the free-will offerings* of the people, which the churchwardens are directed by the Rubric to receive for the poor. And when *no alms and oblations* have been received, these words are to be omitted in the prayer.

Hence it is evident that this expression affords not the smallest support to this popish notion.

And now having taught that in the Eucharist, there are, or should be, an Altar and a Sacrifice, and a change of some kind in the elements of bread and wine, these scarcely-disguised Romanists tell us (in the words of one of their late co-adjutors) that,—“The angel of the Lord was as really standing in the way before Balaam saw him as afterwards; and (that) the bread and wine may become as really *the body and blood of Christ* though we perceive it not, as though we perceived it.”

The chief leader of this Romanizing sect is as anxious as was the person whose words I have just quoted, to persuade men to pay no regard to their senses, and even to renounce common sense, when it prevents the admission of Romish doctrines. He teaches Transubstantiation as plainly as any priest of the Church of Rome can do it. We are informed by him that our churches are infinitely more holy and sacred than the Temple of Jerusalem, because of “the Sacrifice of Christ’s Body and Blood, which is offered in ours.” . . . Again :—“The Holy Eucharist, in which the Blood of Jesus is shed, and His adorable Flesh given, and where this same Sacrifice wherein the Victim is a Saviour and a God, is offered for the remission of our sins to an all-powerful God. . . . He gave Himself and by His own hands, to this sacrilegious traitor (Judas)! How sad an abiding must He have had in the heart of that perfidious man. . . . Miserable and sorrowful union of the Flesh and Blood of this Lamb without spot, with the flesh and blood of this wretched and infamous profaner, who is about to cause that Divine Flesh to be

torn, and that adorable Blood which he drank, to be shed from a thousand wounds !”

No wonder that some individuals, following implicitly the guidance of these deluded, or, (if not under a delusion) Jesuitical teachers, have found themselves at length so near to Rome that they could no longer resist her blandishments. It is greatly to be lamented (for their own sake) that they had not made themselves better acquainted with what our Church really taught, and that they had not compared her doctrines with the Holy Scriptures, instead of blindly going into the by-paths to which these false teachers directed their feet, You will find, on examining the declarations of the Church of England on this point, that no language can be more clear and decided than hers against Transubstantiation. Thus in her twenty-eighth Article our Church declares that :—“ Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Lord) cannot be proved by Holy Writ; but it is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions. The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, *only after a heavenly and spiritual manner*; and the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper, is faith.”

The above quotation from an Article of our Church is a sufficient answer to the charge, which certain dissenters have so rashly and uncharitably brought against her, viz. that she teaches Transubstantiation, or at least, “ the equally irrational, unscriptural, and scarcely distinguishable dogma of consubstantiation.” Had the writers and the circulators of this shameful calumny, read over carefully, and without prejudice,

our Communion Service, they would surely have been restrained from bringing such a groundless charge against our Protestant and Scriptural Church. The communicants are exhorted “diligently to try and examine themselves, before they presume to eat of that *bread* and drink of that cup. For as the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament: (for then we *spiritually* eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood; then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us; we are one with Christ and Christ with us:)” These are almost literally the words of the Saviour:—“He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.” And the minister prays in the name of all the communicants:—“Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, *so* to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood.” What is this but to pray that we may apply, by faith, all the benefits of his cross and passion to the nourishment and purifying of our souls? Again:—After the elements are consecrated, or set apart for the holy purpose of commemorating our Blessed Lord’s sacrifice, the Minister is directed, “when he delivereth the *bread* to any one,” to say:—“The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this”—*this what?* the *bread* which the minister delivers to each communicant—“in *remembrance* that Christ died for thee, and feed on him *in thy heart by faith* with thanksgiving.” When he delivers the cup of wine, and prays that the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the wine represents, may preserve the communicant’s body and soul unto everlasting life, he tells him to

drink it in remembrance, or as a memorial to remind him, "that Christ's blood was shed for him."

But should any one confound the outward signs—bread and wine—with the things signified—the body and blood of Christ—the following direction in the Rubric, would, it might be supposed, prevent him from retaining so gross an error: "If the consecrated *bread and wine* be all spent before all have communicated, the priest is to consecrate more." Now, if our Church in the least degree sanctioned the Popish notion of Transubstantiation, it would invariably denominate the elements after consecration, the *body and blood of Christ*, but it calls them still *bread and wine*. In the Church Catechism similar language is used; for we are there told that the *bread and wine signify*—"The body and blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by *the faithful* in the Lord's Supper." Were the elements changed into the *real* body of Christ, that body would be received by *all* the communicants whether *faithful* or *unfaithful*; and the benefits of which all who *duly*, that is, with a *lively faith*, receive those holy mysteries, are partakers, are these:—"The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the *bread and wine*." And the declaration of our Church respecting the *posture* in which the communicants should receive the Lord's Supper, shews very clearly that she gives no countenance to the notion entertained either by Romanists or Lutherans, of any *corporal* presence of Christ in the Eucharist:—"Which order (for kneeling) is well meant for a signification of our humble and grateful acknowledgment of the benefits of Christ therein given to all worthy receivers, and for the avoiding of all such profanations and disorder in the holy

Communion, as might otherwise ensue ; yet, lest the same kneeling should by any persons, either out of ignorance and infirmity, or out of malice and obstinacy, be misconstrued and depraved ; it is hereby declared, That thereby no adoration is intended, or ought to be done, either unto the Sacramental Bread or Wine there bodily received, or unto *any corporal presence of Christ's natural flesh and blood*. For the Sacramental Bread and Wine remain still *in their very natural substances*, and therefore may not be adored ; (for that were idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful christians :) and the natural body and blood of our Saviour Christ are in heaven, and not here ; it being against the truth of Christ's natural Body to be at one time in more places than one."

Passages from the writings of Archbishop Cranmer have been brought forward to prove, that he believed in the corporal presence of Christ in the Eucharist : and, considering how long he had held this Popish tenet, we need not wonder if his language (especially in his earlier writings) seems to favour Transubstantiation ; but it is only justice to that venerable Martyr to give his more matured judgment on this matter. Read then the following explanation which he gives, in his answer to Gardiner, and you will see that his views of the Eucharist were any thing but Popish :—" When I say and repeat many times in my Book, that the body of Christ is present in them that worthily receive the Sacrament, lest any man should mistake my words, and think that I mean that, although Christ be not corporally in the outward visible sign, yet he is corporally in the persons that duly receive them, this is to advertise the reader, that *I mean no such thing*. But my meaning is, that the *force, the grace, the virtue, and benefits*

of Christ's Body that was crucified for us, and of his blood that was shed for us, be *really and effectually present with all them that duly receive the Sacrament.*"

"It appeareth not," says Hooker, "that of all the ancient Fathers of the Church any one did ever conceive or imaginé other than only a mystical participation of Christ's both body and blood in the Sacrament; neither are their speeches concerning the change of the elements themselves into the body and blood of Christ such, that a man can thereby in conscience assure himself it was their meaning to persuade the world, either of a corporal *Consubstantiation* of Christ with those sanctified and blessed elements before we receive them, or of the like *Transubstantiation* of them into the body and blood of Christ. . . . There are but three expositions made of 'This is my body.' The first, This is in itself before participation really and truly the natural substance of my body, by reason of the co-existence which my omnipotent body hath with the sanctified element of bread,—which is the Lutheran interpretation: The second, This is in itself and before participation the very true and natural substance of my body, by force of that Deity, which with the words of consecration abolisheth the substance of bread, and substituteth in the place thereof my body,—which is the Popish construction: The last, This hallowed food, through concurrence of divine power, is, in verity and truth, unto faithful receivers, instrumentally a cause of that mystical participation, whereby as I make myself wholly theirs, so I give them in hand an actual possession of all such saving grace as my sacrificed body can yield, and as their souls do presently need; this is to them and in them, my Body. Of these three rehearsed interpretations, the last hath in it nothing but what the rest do

all approve and acknowledge to be most true ; nothing but that which the words of Christ are, on all sides, confessed to enforce ; nothing but that which the Church of God hath always thought necessary ; nothing but that which alone is sufficient for every christian man to believe concerning the use and force of this Sacrament ; finally, nothing but that wherewith the writings of all antiquity are consonant, and all Christian Confessions agreeable.”

This last interpretation of the words, ‘ This is my body,’ is agreeable to the Articles and Homilies of our Church. And hence, that Church offers a centre of union to both Romanists and Lutherans, so soon as they reject the unscriptural tenets which are peculiar to their respective Churches. The Church of England neither exalts the Sacraments so high as to produce superstition and idolatry, nor holds them in such small estimation as to lead men to despise or profane them.

“ As of necessity,” she says in one of her Homilies, “ we must be ourselves partakers of this Table, and not beholders of other : so we must address ourselves to frequent the same in reverent and comely manner, lest, as physic provided for the body, being misused, more hurteth than profiteth ; so this comfortable medicine of the soul undevoutly received, tendeth to our greater harm and sorrow. . . . This we must be sure of especially, that this supper be in such wise done and ministered, as our Lord and Saviour did, and commanded to be done ; as his holy Apostles used it, and the good Fathers in the primitive Church frequented it. For (as that worthy man, St. Ambrose saith) he is unworthy of the Lord, that otherwise doth celebrate that mystery, than it was delivered by him. Neither can he be devout, that otherwise doth presume than it was given by

the Author. We must then take heed, lest of the memory, it be made a sacrifice; lest of a communion, it be made a private eating; lest of two parts we have but one; lest applying it for the dead, we lose the fruit that be alive. . . . Let us therefore so travail to understand the Lord's Supper that we be no cause of the decay of God's worship, of no idolatry, of no dumb massing, of no hate and malice; so may we the bolder have access thither to our comfort. Neither need we to think that such exact knowledge is required of every man, that he be able to discuss all high points in the doctrine thereof; but thus much we must be sure to hold, that in the Supper of the Lord there is no vain ceremony, no bare sign, no untrue figure of a thing absent: *but, as the Scripture, saith the table of the Lord, the bread and cup of the Lord, the memory of Christ, the annunciation of his death, yea, the communion of the body and blood of the Lord, in a marvellous incorporation, which by the operation of the Holy Ghost (the very bond of our conjunction with Christ) is through faith wrought in the souls of the faithful, whereby not only their souls live to eternal life, but they surely trust to win to their bodies a resurrection to immortality.* . . . Now it followeth to have with this knowledge a sure and constant faith, not only that the death of Christ is available for the redemption of all the world, for the remission of sins, and reconciliation with God the Father; but also that he hath made upon his cross a full and sufficient sacrifice *for thee*, a perfect cleansing of *thy sins*, so that thou acknowledgest no other Saviour, Redeemer, Mediator, Advocate, Intercessor, but Christ only; and that thou mayest say with the apostle, *that he loved thee and gave himself for thee.* For this is to stick fast to Christ's promise, made in his institution, to make Christ thine own, and to apply his

merits unto thyself. . . . It is well known that the meat we seek for in this Supper is spiritual food, the nourishment of our souls, a heavenly refection, and not earthly; an invisible meat, and not bodily; a ghostly substance, and not carnal: so that to think that *without faith* we may enjoy the eating and drinking thereof, or that this is the fruition of it, is but to dream a gross carnal feeding, basely objecting and binding ourselves to the elements and creatures. Whereas by the advice of the Council of Nicene, we ought to lift up our mind by faith, and leaving these inferior and earthly things, there seek it, where the Sun of Righteousness ever shineth. Take then this lesson, O thou that art desirous of this table, of Emissenus, a godly Father, that when thou goest up to the reverend communion, to be satisfied with spiritual meats, *thou look up with faith* upon the holy body and blood of thy God, thou marvel with reverence, thou *touch it with thy mind*, thou receive it with the *hand of thy heart*, and thou take it fully *with thy inward man*. . . . For the unbelievers and faithless *cannot feed upon that precious body*. Whereas the *faithful* have their life, their abiding in him, their union, and as it were, their incorporation with him."

The whole of the Homily, from which the preceding quotations are given, is so excellent that I would strongly advise you to peruse it carefully and repeatedly. You will then see how reasonable, Scriptural, and agreeable to the writings of the early Christian Fathers, is the doctrine which our Church holds with regard to this holy Sacrament: and, I trust, that you will be fully satisfied that *Transubstantiation* is a comparatively modern fiction, repugnant to reason and common sense, totally opposed to the plain and obvious meaning of Scripture, and destructive of the very nature of a Sacrament.

LETTER VIII.

GROSS NOTION OF THE CORPORAL PRESENCE ENTER-
TAINED BY ROMANISTS AND ROMANIZERS—DENIAL OF
THE CUP TO THE LAITY—ABSURD REASONS FOR THIS
INNOVATION—WILFUL BLINDNESS INEXCUSABLE—THE
DOCTRINE OF INTENTION—SECRET OF THE MASS.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR friend, the priest at M——, who was with you when my last letter was put into your hands, and to whom you read some parts of it, may tell you that such a gross and carnal Transubstantiation as I have noticed, is not taught by his Church ; but a far higher authority affirms that it is. The catechism which he shewed you is not correctly translated ; or, at least, it omits certain passages which are deemed unfit for circulation in this country, where the light of the Gospel is so extensively diffused. His indignation at what he calls my *calumnious* charge against the Romish Church, should be transferred from me to the *infallible* Council of Trent ; for it is the Catechism published by that learned assembly, which teaches this *gross and carnal conversion* of the Sacramental elements. The following direction is given to Romish priests, in that part of the Catechism which treats of the Holy Eucharist :—“ The pastors must here explain, that not only the true body of

Christ, and whatever appertains to the true mode of existence of a body, as *the bones and nerves*, but also that entire Christ is contained in the Sacrament." The catechism which your friend shewed you, purports to be a translation from that by the Council of Trent, but the words, "*as the bones and nerves,*" are omitted for obvious reasons. Had you been able to shew him a copy of the original and duly-sanctioned Catechism, you would have been spared the hearing of all these ingenious explanations about the doctrine in question, by which the priest would gladly have persuaded you, that Transubstantiation is agreeable to reason and Scripture. I am, however, surprised that you did not tell him, when he asserted, that on Christ's repeating the words, 'This is my body,' the bread was changed into his *glorified* body,—that the Saviour's body had not then suffered, and, consequently, "was not yet glorified."

The doctrines of the Church of Rome are to be found in the Canons and Catechism of the Council of Trent, and of this your friend is well aware: but, perhaps, he has a dispensation to teach just so much or so little as his hearers are able to bear. In Italy, Spain, and Portugal, he would not hesitate to teach, according to the direction of the infallible Council, "that whatever appertains to the true mode of existence of a body, as the bones and nerves," is contained in the Sacrament, and, consequently, is thus eaten by the communicants: but this sort of explanation is not suited to the meridian of London or Edinburgh, and therefore a more prudent and reserved kind of teaching must be followed, until the people are sufficiently Romanized, that is, sunk deep enough in ignorance, superstition, and credulity, to believe without doubt whatever absurdities the Pope would impose upon them. The pioneers of the Roman

legions do not, indeed, always act in this prudent way ; for you will find, in some of their writings, expressions as startling as the one which your Popish friend seems to repudiate. For instance, Dr. Pusey scruples not to tell us that, “ It is a matter of faith that the words which Jesus Christ pronounced over the bread and over the wine *make them His body and His Blood*, . yea, convey to us His Flesh, His Blood, His Heart, His Spirit, His Soul, His Life, and His Divinity ; in a word, perfect GOD and perfect Man. . . . The adorable Flesh of CHRIST, Which is purity itself, because It is the Work of the Holy Spirit, and the chaste production of a *Virgin more pure than angels, unites Itself to ours* by the Communion. . . . His precious and Divine Blood unites *Itself to ours* ; It quickens it, It purifies it ; and by this exalted Union we acquire a glorious relationship with Jesus Christ.” But it is a matter of daily experience that the zeal of new converts often outruns their discretion. When the learned Professor shall at length do, what conscience and consistency, it may naturally be supposed must frequently have urged him to do— attach himself openly to the Church of Rome— he will, doubtless, be admonished by the General of the Jesuitical army, to use more guarded language.

But I will now proceed to notice another error of the Church of Rome, and that is, the denial of the cup to the laity in the Eucharist. This is a manifest departure from Christ’s institution of that holy ordinance, a daring and presumptuous innovation, a contemptuous disregard of the command, and of the example of our Blessed Saviour. The Romanists cannot deny that the Eucharist was administered in both kinds, in the early Christian Church ; for though some Popish writers have maintained, that the cup was given to the Ministers

only, their reasons are so futile, that the more learned and intelligent advocates of Popery defend the practice on different grounds. Who, indeed, does not see that if the command, "Drink ye all of this," pertains only to ministers, the same must be said of the words, "Take and eat," and thus the laity would be altogether excluded from the Lord's Supper. It is also to be observed that St. Paul, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, did not address merely the presbyters, or ministers, but the whole Church, when he wrote: "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

Communion in both kinds was undoubtedly the practice of the Christian Church for more than fourteen hundred years after the death of Christ. The cup was afterwards withheld from the laity, and various reasons were assigned for this innovation; but the true reason was, *the exaltation of the priesthood, and the consequent increase of the power of the Roman Church*. The denial of the cup to the laity was first authoritatively decreed by the Council of Constance, in the year 1416; and this was afterwards confirmed by the Council of Trent. "If any one shall say," declares that *infallible* authority, "that, according to the command of God, or of necessity for salvation, all and each of the faithful in Christ ought to receive both elements of the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, *let him be accursed*. . . . If any one shall say that the Holy Catholic Church was not induced by just reasons and arguments to give communion in the one element only of the bread to the laity, and also to the clergy not celebrating, or that she erred in that point, *let him be accursed*."

This alteration of the primitive mode of administering the Eucharist, which was made, not by the Holy

Catholic Church, but by the Romish section of it, met with some opposition. "They be false Catholics," wrote Gerardus Lorichius, a learned Romanist, "who are not ashamed by any means to delay the reformation of the Church. They spare no blasphemies in order to prevent the other part of the Sacrament from being restored to the laity. For they say that Christ spoke to his apostles only, 'Drink ye all of this.' But the words of the canon are, 'Take and eat ye all of this.' Here, I pray, let them tell me whether this speech also was addressed only to the apostles? Then must the laity also abstain from the bread. To assert this is a heresy and a pernicious and execrable blasphemy. It follows therefore, that both speeches were addressed to the whole Church."

Pope Julius, on hearing that some priests were in the habit of dipping the bread into the wine, and then delivering it, without the cup, to the people, reproved them for thus departing from the primitive mode of administering that holy sacrament:—"Whereas for accomplishment of the communion they dip the Sacrament and deliver it unto the people, they have not received this witness from the Gospel; for," he adds, "the delivery of the bread and the delivery of the cup are mentioned asunder."

Cyprian thus admonishes some priests, who did not strictly adhere to the example of Christ in the administration of the Eucharist:—"There are some who, in consecrating the cup of the Lord and in delivering it to the people, do not do that which Jesus Christ our Lord and God, the author and teacher of this sacrifice, both did and taught. If any man be in this error, seeing the light of the truth, let him return again unto the root and unto the original of the Lord's tradition.

We keep not the thing that is commanded us, *unless we do the same that the Lord did.*”

“And if St. Cyprian,” observes bishop Jewell, “might well write thus against the heretics called *Aquarii*, which in the holy ministration would use no wine, but instead thereof did consecrate water, and ministered it unto the people; much more may we say the same against our adversaries, which consecrate and minister unto the people no cup at all. Wherefore at the end of the same epistle he concludeth with these words:—“Not to do that which the Lord did, what is it else than to cast off his word, and to despise his discipline, and to commit not worldly but spiritual robbery and adultery, while as a man from the truth of the Gospel stealeth away both the sayings and doings of the Lord, and corrupteth and defileth God’s commandments? So it is written in the prophet Jeremy:—‘What is chaff in comparison of corn? Therefore am I against these prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words each one of them from his neighbour, and deceive my people in their lies and in their errors.’”

What would this early christian Father say of the treatment of the laity, by the Church of Rome, in the present day? If he calls those heretics, who gave the people water instead of wine in the Eucharist, robbers, what name would he have fixed on these Romish priests who deprive the laity of half the Sacrament? If those persons are justly designated robbers and spiritual adulterers, who deviate in one particular from the institution and command of the Lord, how much more applicable would Cyprian have thought these names to the Romish Hierarchy, who rob and adulterate God’s commandments in so many ways! What would he call those who steal out of the Decalogue the second com-

and will render them guiltless before God. But there is no excuse for that ignorance to which men voluntarily subject themselves. Romanists are as capable as others of using their understanding, and if they will not think and examine for themselves in a matter of so much importance as religion, they must bear the consequences of their indolence, or weakness, or indifference. The denial of the cup to the laity is a plain breach of the divine command. Romanists can, if they please, ascertain this by reading the Word of God: but if they will not do this;—if they choose rather to be led blindfold by their deceiving guides, it will be their own fault if both perish together. “If,” says Cyprian, “any of my predecessors have not followed and kept that thing which the Lord, by his example and commandment, hath taught us, he for his *simplicity* may be pardoned; but if we wilfully offend, there is no pardon for us, that are already warned and instructed of the Lord. We give God thanks that, whilst he instructeth us what we shall do for the time to come, he forgiveth us that is past, because we have erred of simplicity. . . . But after that God hath *once opened and revealed* (this truth) whoso continueth still in his error, *willingly and wittingly offendeth*, without hope of pardon, as being overcome with presumption and wilfulness.”

Ignorance of the laws of our country is not allowed as an excuse for the breach of any law, nor will it exempt the offender from punishment. It may, indeed, under particular circumstances, induce the magistrate, or judge, to pass a more lenient sentence; but if it be ascertained that the offender could not only read, but had many opportunities of becoming acquainted with the law on the matter in question, no mitigation of the punishment due to his crime would be allowed, for this

would encourage the commission of offences. It is the same with respect to the divine Law. But in this case ignorance is still less excusable, on account of the immense importance and value of the soul; and also in consequence of the facilities which are offered, especially in this country, for acquiring a knowledge of that Law. God's Word is not only publicly read and expounded every Sabbath, in ten thousand places throughout the land, but innumerable copies of it are circulated among the people.

If any persons therefore are destroyed for lack of knowledge, may not their ruin be attributable to the neglect of the opportunities afforded them? This will especially be the case with the better educated classes of society. In them a continuance in errors, which the Word of God plainly condemns, must be dangerous and fatal to them, even if they are ignorant of that Word, because their ignorance is wilful. Neither Romanists nor Protestants, therefore, can be safe while they suppose, that the teaching of their respective Churches will supersede the duty of trying and examining whether the instructions they receive are agreeable to the divine Will and Counsel. All holy Scripture was given for our learning, and we are bound to search for the truth in that Book where it may surely be found. If we neglect this duty, and continue in error (and error is, for the most part, attributable to ignorance of the Scriptures), then, as the ancient Father, just quoted, declares, we "willingly and wittingly offend, without hope of pardon."

But observe another dangerous consequence to which Popish teaching leads. The Sacraments are declared to be generally necessary to salvation; and yet the members of the Roman Church can never be quite certain that they have received any of them. For the validity

of a sacrament, according to the Popish doctrine, depends on the mind or *intention* of the officiating priest. Should the priest be an infidel (and many of them have been stated, on very good authority, to be in this awful condition), and have, consequently, no intention to consecrate the elements in the Eucharist, then there is no Sacrament. Or even if he be a pious and honest man, and sincerely desirous of administering the Lord's Supper to the communicants, yet so many things may happen to destroy its efficacy, that the Romanist is left altogether in uncertainty whether he hath partaken of the Sacrament or not.—“If any one shall say,” the Council of Trent decrees, “that the *intention* of doing at least what the Church does, is not required in ministers, whilst they *make* and administer the sacraments, let him be accursed.” “If any one does not intend to consecrate,” it is stated in the Missal, “but only to act *deceitfully* : also, if any hosts remain on the altar through *forgetfulness* ; or if any part of the wine, or any host is *concealed*, and he only intends to consecrate what he sees : also, if any priest has before him *eleven* hosts, and only intends to consecrate *ten*, not deciding which *ten* he intends to consecrate ; *in these cases he does not consecrate*, because intention is necessary. . . If the bread be not wheaten, or if the wheaten be mixed with grains of another kind, in so great a quantity as the bread remains not wheaten, *or if it be otherwise adulterated*, there is no Sacrament celebrated. . . If the wine have become entirely sour, or entirely tainted, or if it have been pressed from grapes, sour or unripe ; or if so much water has been mixed with it as to adulterate the wine, there is no Sacrament performed.”

In what a situation, then, is even the most pious and sincere Romanist placed !

Unless he be sure “ that no adulteration of the flour of which the wafer was made has taken place, and that no adulteration of the wine has taken place, he cannot be certain that he is not, after all, worshipping an idol of bread or wine. The Romanist is brought to this position by the Rubrics of his Mass-book, and the Canons of his Church, and there is only a *guess* between his soul and idolatry; he just *conjectures* that the host is God, whilst, even on his own principles, a thousand probabilities start up against this conjecture.”

All these difficulties and uncertainties arise from the absurd and unscriptural notion, that a *change* is effected in the elements used at the Lord's Supper, not a change from common to sacred uses, but a change in the substance of the bread and wine. The outward sign becomes by consecration the thing signified, and has a certain efficacy in itself;—that is, if the priest *intend* to consecrate, and if all other particulars be duly observed. The signs are both causes of that which they signify, and signs of that which they truly cause:—“ To this opinion concerning Sacraments,” says Hooker, ‘ they are now tied by expounding a Canon in the Florentine Council according to the former Ecclesiastical invention received from Thomas. For his deceit it was, that the mercy of God, which useth Sacraments as instruments whereby to work, endueth them at the time of their administration *with supernatural force and ability to induce grace into the souls of men*; even as the axe and saw do seem to bring timber into that fashion which the mind of the artificer intendeth.” Hence you see, if a Romanist approach the Altar to partake of the memorials, (or, what he supposes the real body) of his crucified Saviour, that his soul may be strengthened and refreshed, his hopes may be disappointed, however

lively be his faith, because the priest may not have duly consecrated the host. If it be not duly consecrated, it has no "supernatural force," to induce grace into his soul. He comes sincerely desirous of eating that meat which shall nourish his soul, but, owing to circumstances over which he has no control, or in consequence of the carelessness, hypocrisy, or bad intention of the priest, he may be sent empty away.

How different from this is the doctrine taught by the Church of England! Those communicants who "draw near with faith," may take this holy Sacrament to their comfort. The forgetfulness or unworthiness of the minister, will not prevent them from receiving the benefits which God vouchsafes to all, who with penitent hearts and lively faith attend that sacred ordinance. It is not the bread or the wine which has received a supernatural virtue, so that it can convey grace to the soul; but God hath so "instituted and ordained, that, together with *due administration and receipt of sacramental signs*, there shall proceed from Himself grace effectual to sanctify, to cure, to comfort, and whatsoever else is for the good of the souls of men."

Ample provision is made for the *due administration* of this Sacrament in all our churches, and if the communicant partake of it with a true penitent heart and lively faith, it will be blessed to his soul, whatever may be the character, or *intention*, of the minister who officiates:—"Forasmuch as they (ministers)" our Church declares, "do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their ministry, both in hearing the word of God, and in receiving of the Sacraments. Neither is the *effect* of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts

diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them ; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men."

It would occupy too much time, and would probably weary you, if I were to point out the various other ways by which the Church of Rome has so greatly disfigured and abused the Eucharist : you will be sufficiently aware of the wide difference which there is between the Romish Mass and the Lord's Supper, if you will read over "the Canon of the Mass." The Church of Rome cannot be accused of a want of *prudence*, however guilty she may be of disobeying God's word, in requiring that her priests shall use a language unknown to the people, while they perform this blasphemous and idolatrous service. For if the people could understand what was said and done at such celebrations, and would compare the present mode of administering the Eucharist with the account, which the Evangelists and St. Paul give of its institution, they would recoil with disgust from such a tissue of superstitious observances. If it were not a matter rather to excite sorrow than to provoke a smile, you would be amused with the reason which the Roman Church gives for having this *imposing service* (as it is often called, and, in more than one sense, correctly so) read not only in an unknown tongue, but, as it formerly was, *in silence*. The Canon of the Mass is designated '*Secretum*,' that is, 'The secret of the Mass,' because the priest was wont to read it in secret or in silence. "The reason thereof Pope Innocent III. declareth in his third book :—'For that the holy words,' saith he, 'of the Canon should not grow in contempt with the people, by the daily use and hearing thereof.' And he bringeth an example concerning the same of certain shepherds,

who in the fields using the same words of the Canon upon their bread and wine; 'the matter was turned,' saith he, 'into *flesh and blood*, and they plagued therefore from heaven:' but with such Popish tales the Church hath been long replenished." This tale was, no doubt, circulated in order to make the credulous people believe, that the elements were really changed into the body and blood of Christ, and that the priests offered a true, propitiatory sacrifice, whenever the Eucharist was celebrated.

"But where," asks one of the early Reformers, "does Christ once mention sacrifice? He bids us take, eat, and drink. Who authorises men to convert *taking* into *offering*? And what is the effect of the change, but to make the perpetual and inviolable edict of Christ yield to their devices? This is, indeed, a grievous evil. But still worse is the superstition which applies this work to the living and the dead, as a procuring cause of grace. In this way the efficacy of Christ's death has been transferred to a vain theatrical show, and the dignity of an eternal priesthood wrested from him to be bestowed upon men."

LETTER IX.

BAPTISM IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH—IN THE MODERN CHURCH OF ROME—OPUS OPERATUM IN BAPTISM—BAPTISMAL REGENERATION—SIN AFTER BAPTISM—MODERN NOVATIANS—PENANCE—POPISH SAINTS—A CONFESSOR'S STATEMENT—THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST'S ATONEMENT.

DEAR SIR,

POPERY in attempting to improve or to adapt to its own purposes the other Sacrament, has so corrupted and disguised it, that Baptism amongst the Romanists is a very different thing from the Baptism of the primitive Christians. As instituted by Jesus Christ, and as practised by the early Church, it was a service characterized by decency and simplicity. There were no theatrical gestures and ridiculous ceremonies to amuse the eyes and confound the understandings of the people. The candidates were introduced to the congregation, and were "*interrogated*" by the Bishop concerning their breaking off all their former leagues and commerce with sin, and the powers of Hell; the Bishop asking, *Dost thou renounce the Devil and all his works, powers and service?* To which the party answered, *I do renounce them.* *Dost thou renounce the world and all its pomps and pleasures?* Answer, *I do renounce them.* . . . Next they made an open confession of their faith, the Bishop

asking, *Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, &c. in Jesus Christ his only Son, who &c.—dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost : the Holy Catholic Church, and in one Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and life everlasting?* To all which the person answered, *I do believe.* . . . These answers and actions in the *adult* were done by the persons themselves, in *children* by their *sponsores*, as *Tertullian* calls them, their *sureties* and *undertakers.*” Certain symbolic rites were also used, as a kind of EXORCISM, and an *insufflation*, or breathing in the face of the person baptized, to signify the expulsion of the Evil Spirit, and the breathing in the good Spirit of God. And after they were baptized, they were anointed to shew either that they were cut off from the *wild Olive*, and were *engrafted* into Christ the *true Olive-tree*, or, that they had entered upon a warfare with the snares and temptations of the world, as the *Athletæ* were anointed before they engaged in their solemn games, or, that they had become “ a royal priesthood, a holy nation.” By degrees, however, so many additions were made to this ordinance ; that it resembled rather a magic incantation than a Christian rite. The Church of Rome, instead of wisely abolishing these unmeaning and superstitious ceremonies, increased them to a degree that is hardly credible. “ Baptism they ministered,” says an old writer, “ in corners and where few were present, yea, and that in a strange tongue, which few or none did understand. They added moreover, of their own brain, without any authority of God’s Word, certain exorcisms or conjurations to drive the devil out of the seely simple poor infant. They put also into it salt, spittle, oil, cream, candle, chrisome, crossing, blessing, and what not? Neither was it accounted a perfect Baptism if any of

these beggarly ceremonies wanted (were omitted) or if the water were not first of all hallowed with their Popish benedictions and other trifling traditions. Moreover how wickedly did the Papists apply baptism to dumb creatures, as to the christening of bells, &c. Is this any other thing than a plain mockery of God's ordinance, and a very profanation of his holy Sacrament?"

This is no exaggerated description of the manner in which Baptism is performed at the present day among the Romanists. You have only to compare the simple, scriptural, edifying mode of administering this sacrament in our Church, with the vain and superstitious ceremonies with which Popery encumbers and degrades this ordinance, and you will surely thank God for the Protestant Reformation.

However ancient some of these ceremonies may be, especially *Exorcism*, *Insufflation*, and *Unction*, yet as they have no warrant of Scripture, and have been so greatly abused, they were very properly abolished by our Reformers:—"Some entered into the Church," the Compilers of our Liturgy state, "by such indiscreet devotion, and such a zeal as was without knowledge; and for because they were winked at in the beginning, they grew daily to more and more abuses, which not only for their unprofitableness, but also because they have much blinded the people, and obscured the glory of God, are worthy to be cut away and clean rejected."

A blind imitation of the practices of antiquity leads men to commit the greatest follies. For certain things may have been used in early times for good and sufficient reasons, as, for instance, was the custom of lighting candles; but how absurd it is to continue this custom either at baptism, or any other religious service, when

the same reasons no longer exist! "As for the burning of tapers at noon-day," says Calhill, "(it) is mere foolish, and taken out of the fond gentility (Heathenism.) In the old time the Christians, in their assemblies, used burning candles at time of God's service; but in the night-time, because they durst not resort together in the day-time; and it had been uncomfortable and discommodious to sit in the dark. Whereupon St. Hierome answereth: 'We light no tapers in the broad day, as thou dost vainly slander us; but that, by this comfort, we may temper the darkness of the night; and may watch at this light, lest with thee we sleep in the dark.' Thus doth St. Hierome say for his tapers. Let them answer to him, (as doubtless they shall to God,) that otherwise do use them."

But the Church of Rome maintains an error with respect to this sacrament, as well as to all others which it calls sacraments, which is far more dangerous than these vain additions. These superstitious ceremonies might in time, owing to their very absurdity, be discontinued; but the error of ascribing a *secret efficacy*, a kind of *magic charm* to the ordinance *itself*, has been sanctioned by the Romish Church, and therefore it cannot be repudiated without the loss of its proud assumption of Infallibility. The Council of Trent declares that, "If any one shall say that grace is not conferred by the mere performance of the sacraments (*ex opere operato*) let him be accursed."

Hence are men taught to seek the grace of God in external things, rather than led to look up to the true fountain of every blessing. "In promising a righteousness without faith," says an eminent Reformer, "it drives souls headlong on destruction; secondly, in deriving a cause of righteousness from the sacraments, it

entangles miserable minds, already of their own accord too much inclined to the earth, in a superstitious idea, which makes them acquiesce in the spectacle of a corporeal object rather than in God himself." Only consider the consequences of teaching such a doctrine as this. *Every child* who is baptized is, through the performance of that rite, invested with the inward spiritual grace that is signified by the outward sign, *because he interposes no obstacle to sacramental grace.* He is justified before God, and has only, as he grows up, to attend upon the outward rites of his Church, and he will surely be saved. He may have no real love to God, he may be without a lively faith, he may be without godly sorrow for his sins, but if he only visit the confessional, and perform the penances enjoined, sacramental grace will be communicated to him. Nay, should he even be arrested by the messenger of death, and be found in a state of insensibility, the priest may apply to him the sacrament of *extreme unction*, which, as he cannot interpose any obstacle to its reception, will convey grace to his soul, and prepare him for heaven ! " What have the most profligate to fear," asks a writer of the last century, " if the *Opus Operatum* of the sacraments, i. e., the *bare receiving* them, will procure their pardon ; though they are received *without* faith, charity, or repentance ; nay, *with* the most inveterate habits of all wickedness, with hearts full of adultery, and hands reeking with blood ? What is this but making mere *charms* and *spells* of the *Sacraments* ; or, at best, supposing them to work like *corporeal*, not *spiritual*, medicines : as if the diseases of the soul were to be purged off, like phlegm and choler ; or its wounds to be cured with a plaister ? "

Our Church has been accused of teaching this sacramental justification, at least in the case of infants : but

surely, on examining her formularies and Catechism, no one can find that she maintains such a doctrine. Infants, like adults, are baptized after a profession of faith and repentance. When adults profess before God and the face of the congregation, that they repent, and believe all the articles of the christian faith, our Church administers to them the sign of regeneration, and, in the charitable hope that they have made a sincere profession, she declares them to be regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church. Children likewise, after a similar profession of faith and repentance has been made by their sponsors in their name, are baptized; and, in the charitable hope that they will, when they become of proper age, believe and do the things which were promised, the minister pronounces them regenerate. We cannot tell what the future course either of the adult or the infant may be, but we pray and hope that it may be agreeable to the solemn profession then made. "We speak of infants," says Hooker, "as the rule of piety alloweth to speak and think. They that can take to themselves, in ordinary talk, a charitable kind of liberty to name men of their own sort God's dear children (notwithstanding the large reign of hypocrisy), should not methinks be so strict and rigorous against the Church for presuming as it doth of a Christian innocent. . . . Baptism implieth a Covenant or League between God and man; wherein as God doth bestow presently remission of sins and the Holy Ghost, binding also himself to add (in process of time) what grace soever shall be further necessary for the attainment of everlasting life; so every baptized soul, receiving the same grace at the hands of God, tieth likewise itself for ever to the observation of his Law, no

less than the Jews of circumcision bound themselves to the Law of Moses."

They who are baptized may afterwards unhappily shew, by the whole tenor of their life and conversation, that they are "in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity:" and in this case they have no part or lot in the Christian Covenant. Baptism, instead of benefiting them, will serve only to increase their condemnation. As in the case of circumcision to the wicked Jew, whose circumcision becomes uncircumcision, the nominal christian is as much excluded from the privileges and blessings of the Covenant as if he had never been baptized. He is dead, as to spiritual things, and, being destitute of faith, he cannot be in a state of justification. He may even approach the Lord's Table and partake of the memorials of his cross and passion, but he can receive no grace while a lively faith is wanting. The Roman Church may tell you that all defects will be supplied to the sinner, if he will only confess to his priest and perform the penance enjoined, and that grace will be conferred upon him from the mere performance of the sacraments: but our Church teaches no such thing; nor do we find in God's word that anything short of godly sorrow for sin, a true and hearty repentance, and lively faith, will obtain pardon and acceptance for the sinner.

The services of our Church "all assume the spirituality and sincerity of those who use them. This is the key to the service for confirmation, to the catechism, to the office for the visitation of the sick, and to all the other formularies in the Book of Common Prayer. . . Do you say, we ought not to assume this? I answer, charity requires it—the Scriptures warrant such assumption—for does not the Old Testament, speaking of the

Jews *generally*, call them a holy nation, in consequence of having entered into covenant with God by circumcision, and yet speaking to many of them *individually*, it calls upon them to be circumcised in *heart*, or to become really the servants of God? And does not the New Testament use similar language? St. Paul addresses the Corinthian Church, and other churches *generally*, as saints—as servants of God—in virtue of their profession, the sign and seal of which was baptism—and yet *individually* many were far from being the servants of God, and were therefore called upon to *repent* and *believe*, or, in other words, to become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Our Church then assumes no more than the Scriptures.” That Baptism is the sign and seal, and not the *source* of the new birth, was evidently the opinion of the Reformers. Hooper observes:—“ Thus be the infants examined concerning repentance and faith before they be baptized with water. At the contemplation of which faith God purgeth the soul : then is the exterior sign added, not to purge the heart, but to confirm, manifest, and open unto the world that this child is God’s.”

“ In baptism,” says Cranmer, “ those that come feignedly, and those that come unfeignedly, both be washed with the sacramental water : but both be not washed with the Holy Ghost, and clothed with Christ.” “ The new sacraments of Christ’s institution,” says Jewell, “ are plainer and clearer than the old, as the Gospel is plainer and clearer than the Law, but the things signified are no more contained in the one than in the other.” “ It is a certain and true doctrine,” says Whitgift, “ of all such as possess the Gospel, that the outward signs of the sacraments do not contain in them grace, neither yet that the grace of God is of

necessity tied unto them." So spake the men who had to do either with the framing or the finishing of our Prayer Book: and is it conceivable that so speaking, they could have intended to maintain in that book what so many contend is maintained there, the doctrine of *absolute unconditional regeneration in baptism*? . . . Our Church is guiltless of the perilous tenet, that all receive the grace of regeneration who receive the sacrament of regeneration. . . She maintains that the sacraments are effectual only when "rightly received," and that they are rightly received only when received with repentance and faith;—repentance and faith in exercise, in the case of an adult—in pledge, in prospect, or, at most, in embryo, in the case of a child."

Our Church, then, charitably regards both adults and infants at their baptism, as receiving that holy sacrament rightly, because the former openly profess "repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament:" and because the latter "promise them both (repentance and faith) by their Sureties." And, in consequence, she considers them "as regenerate, as members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." But if they afterwards shew no fruits of that faith which was openly professed by the adult, and promised for, or (as in the case of Private Baptism) *implied* by, the other, their Baptism profiteth nothing. As the unbelieving Jew, though outwardly circumcised, was exhorted to seek that circumcision of the heart and life which could alone profit; so is the baptized person, who is without repentance and faith, urged to seek that renewal of heart and life—that new creation—that new-birth unto righteousness, which is absolutely necessary for salvation.

If the adversaries of the Church of England—whether Romanizers or Dissenters, will calmly and without prejudice, examine the formularies of our Church, they will find no reasonable grounds for charging it with maintaining that “grace is conferred by the mere performance of the sacraments :” and they will see that it gives no countenance whatever to the *opus operatum* doctrine of Judaism and Popery.

“The Jews,” says Leslie, “had got this notion of the *opus operatum*, that the bare performance of the letter of the Law, in their sacrifices, feasts, fasts, and other observances was all that was required of them : whence the voices of all the prophets were against these institutions : they call them iniquity, abomination, and hateful to God : Nay, God denies that He did require them, or even did institute them, that is, as a dead carcase without a soul, and working like charms of the bare *opus operatum* : God did never institute such, nor does require them at our hands. And may we not say, no more under the Gospel, than (under) the Law ? For the Gospel introduced a more pure and spiritual worship ; but the Council of Trent, by naming only the Sacraments of the new Law, applies the *opus operatum* to them also, if not chiefly. What else is the meaning of tying men to the repetition of such a precise number of *Aves* and *Paters* and *Credos*, at such particular times, whether the mind goes along with them or not ? For you will see people in the markets, buying and selling, or discoursing of common business, and dropping their heads all the while, to keep count if they have rightly performed their task of the *opus operatum*.”

This is the natural consequence of making religion to consist chiefly in the performance of outward ceremonies, and of attributing virtue or efficacy to the sacra-

ments themselves, instead of looking upon them as *means*, whereby the faithful christian receives grace, and as *pledges* of God's love and favour. Sacramental justification, or the being accounted righteous before God through the mere act of Baptism, or the partaking of the Eucharist, is "a doctrine," observes an eminent Prelate, "that tends to enervate all religion: and to make the sacraments, that were appointed to be the solemn acts of religion for quickening and exciting our piety, and for conveying grace to us, upon our coming devoutly to them, become means to flatten and deaden us; as if they were of the nature of charms, which if they could be come at, though with ever so slight a preparation, would make up all defects. Since, also, the natural consequence of this doctrine is, to make men rest contented in low imperfect acts, when they can so easily be made up by a sacrament, we have just reason to detest it, as one of the depths of Satan; the tendency of it being to make those ordinances of the Gospel, which were given us as means to raise and heighten our faith and repentance, become engines to encourage sloth and impenitence."

But I must now say a few words on the subject of sin after Baptism, because certain Romanizing teachers have held and propagated very absurd notions on that point. Although their language is totally at variance with the Articles and Homilies of our Church, many of them, deaf to the call of conscience and consistency, still continue to profess themselves her members and ministers! At Baptism, they tell us, "We are washed once for all in his (Christ's) blood. . . . if we again sin there remaineth no more such complete ablution in this life. We must bear the scars of the sins which we have contracted: we must be judged according to our

deeds." "There are but two periods of absolute cleansing, baptism and the day of judgment." "We hold that after baptism there is no plenary pardon of sins in this life to the sinner, however penitent, such as in baptism was vouchsafed to him. . . . If for sins committed after baptism we have not yet received a simple and unconditional absolution, surely penitents from this time up to the day of judgment may be considered in that double state of which the Romanists speak, their persons accepted, but certain sins uncanceled." "Man desires to have, under any circumstances," says Dr. Pusey, "certainty of salvation through Christ; but to those who have fallen, God holds out a light in a dark place; sufficient for them to see their path, but not bright or cheering as they would have it; and so, in different ways, man would forestall the sentence of his Judge; the Romanist by the *sacrament* of penance; a modern class of divines, by the appropriation of the merits and righteousness of our Blessed Redeemer."

It is by such teaching as this, we are told, that Popery must be extinguished! Men who have fallen into sin after baptism, however penitent they may become, are to continue in a miserable state of uncertainty, whether or not their sins are pardoned! That peace, which justification by faith brings to the penitent and believing soul, cannot visit the bosom of the man who has fallen from baptismal purity! And who is there that has not fallen? "For in many things we offend all—Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?"—Who but the proud, self-righteous Pharisee will venture to say that he has not often and grievously sinned after baptism? What then is the multitude of conscience-stricken sinners to do? They

are to wander about, as in a dark place, so long as they live, seeking for peace, but obtaining only a distant glimmering of hope that their sins may possibly be forgiven at the day of judgment! Well may the disciples of such a school be induced so often to flee to Rome, in quest of some opiate to soothe their troubled souls! "Where," it has been asked, "is the minister of Christ, in London, Birmingham, or Manchester, whom such a doctrine, heartily and inwardly entertained, would not drive to madness? He is sent to preach the Gospel. What Gospel? Of all the thousands whom he addresses, he cannot venture to believe that there are ten who, in Dr. Pusey's sense, retain their Baptismal purity. All he can do therefore, is to tell wretched creatures, who spend eighteen hours out of the twenty-four in close factories and bitter toil, corrupting and being corrupted, that if they spend the remaining six in prayer—he need not add fasting—they may possibly be saved. How can we insult God, and torment man with such mockery!"

You have read several of the books written, or edited, by this dangerous and heretical party, and I think your bias towards the Church of Rome is, in no small degree, owing to the principles which your mind has imbibed from the perusal of their writings. But you will not, I trust, deem any of their strange notions worthy of being adopted, when you have brought them to the Law and to the Testimony. To this test bring their dangerous opinion respecting sin after baptism, and, I am persuaded, you will immediately reject it. Look at the free offers of pardon made to the Israelites, though their sins were so many and great, *after* they had been taken into covenant with God by circumcision. Does God say, Because ye have sinned after entering into my

mandment ; who rob the people of all edification from the public prayers by uttering them in a language not generally understood ;—and who prohibit them from reading the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation, under the wicked plea, that more harm than good would arise from the free circulation of God's Word ?

One reason which the learned Bellarmine gives in defence of this Popish practice—the denial of the cup to the laity—will shew you to what wretched shifts the Romish advocates are reduced, in order to support this unscriptural custom. The cardinal observes, that the conjunction *and*, in the words eat *and* drink, is to be understood as, *or* :—‘ Eat *or* drink.’—“ That is to say,” Leslie remarks, “ I may understand all the *ands* in the Creed to be *ors*, and instead of I believe this, *and* this, *and* this, I may say, I believe this, *or* this, *or* this ; so that if I believe one article, it is sufficient though I believe never another. . . This is bantering instead of arguing.” But the other reasons which Popish writers have assigned for this alteration in the primitive mode of administering the Eucharist are equally puerile. I will here transcribe them, that you may read and judge for yourself, whether they are sufficiently weighty to justify the denial of the cup, in the Lord's Supper, to the people.

1. The liquor might be spilled :
2. The danger of carrying it from place to place :
3. In winter it would soon turn to vinegar :
4. In summer it would putrify and breed worms :
5. It would be loathsome for men to drink :
6. In some countries it is difficult to procure it :
7. The lay-people would touch the cup :
8. Some of them have beards, some have palsies :

9. The dignity of the priest and layman would be all one.

The last reason is, doubtless, the weightiest in the eyes of the Church of Rome. Had not the denial of the cup to the laity tended to raise the priests to a kind of demi-gods, the other inconveniences here enumerated, would never have led to a change in a practice that had been universally followed for fourteen hundred years. Beware, however, of despising the other reasons which are given : for what folly to suppose that an *infallible* Church should not have just and solid grounds for disobeying the command of Jesus Christ ! Beware then of setting up your judgment against the *dictum* of this Church, which never did, and never can, maintain a doctrine or practice, repugnant to catholic antiquity ! History, indeed, will tell a different tale ; and the Bible will be found greatly at variance with the teaching of the Church of Rome. What then ? History must be regarded as an old Almanac, and the Bible as a very dangerous book ; and therefore both must be rejected rather than that you should fail in obedience to the Popish Hierarchy. Its language is ‘ Believe whatever I say, and do whatever I command, or be accursed ! ’

But now, my dear Sir, consider the dangerous position of the lay members of the Roman Church with respect to this holy Sacrament. They are told, that without partaking of it (unless prevented by want of opportunity) they cannot be saved. Yet when they meet together to partake of the Lord’s Supper, they are deprived of one essential part of this ordinance, and, consequently, *never do receive this sacrament according to Christ’s institution and command.* It may be said, indeed, that ignorance of the real nature of the Eucharist and of the proper mode of its Institution, is their excuse,

covenant, ye can be no more cleansed from your sins, except, perhaps, at the day of judgment? No: although he reminds them of their wickedness and ingratitude,—although he says,—“Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities;” he adds the gracious words—“I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.” *Isaiah* xliii. 24: xlv. 22.

“Is grace less free and abundant,” says an eloquent writer, “under the Gospel than it was under the Law? Was the dim dispensation richer in forgiveness than is the glorious dispensation of light and truth? It cannot be. Yet where is the surpassing glory of the ministration of life, if the baptized christian stands in a seven-fold worse condition than stood the circumcised Jew?—if the one had ample place for repentance when he had fallen into sin; whilst the other has no room left for repentance, at least has no open door to his father’s house, unless it be the back door of “the baptism of tears?” Or, (shall we add) a terrific access through purgatorial flames lengthened out to the day of judgment, when alone, besides the period of baptism, is there complete absolution from guilt!”

This error is only a revival of the Novatian heresy; for that sect also denied that repentance could be of any avail to those who had sinned after Baptism. These modern Novatians, indeed, do not absolutely deny that forgiveness is possible, but they raise in the mind of the unhappy transgressor so many doubts, and fears, and terrors, that he can hardly indulge any hope. He may fall like Peter, and he may bitterly lament, and heartily grieve for his sins like him; but he must not venture to suppose that Peter’s restoration to the love and favour of God, was intended to give him comfort.

He is to take warning by his fall, but he is not to derive any hope from his rising again.

I need hardly tell you that the Bible gives no countenance to such gloomy and distracting notions. "My little children," says St. John, "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." 1 *John* ii. 1, 2. And the message which the true ministers of Christ will always joyfully proclaim, is,—“That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:” 2 *Cor.* v. 19.—and they will preach to the contrite and believing sinner, that by faith in the atoning blood of Christ, he may indeed *appropriate the righteousness of his Redeemer* to himself—he may “put on the Lord Jesus Christ,” “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Here then, you see, my dear Sir, that to seek peace by “applying the merits and righteousness of the Redeemer,” by the hand of faith to the penitent sinner, is no new doctrine, as Dr. Pusey would insinuate. It was not invented by “a modern class of divines,” but was held from the beginning by a certain sect, called “Christians.” However this doctrine was obscured during the dark ages by the devices of Popery, it was again made known at the time of the Reformation. Our early writers frequently refer to it. “Now if,” says one of these pious and learned men, “when they be once baptized, and grown up in age, they, through either fragility or ignorancy, do again offend and break the law of God, contrary to their profession and vow made at baptism, then have they a holy anchor to fly unto, which is repentance; so that if they truly repent, be sorry for the

faults committed, bewail their sinful living, mortify their carnal affections, slay their worldly lusts, banish their devilish concupiscences, confess their wickedness, fly unto the mercy of God, believe to have forgiveness, and take a new life upon them : God the Father will surely forgive them their sins, be they never so great or many ; yea, and that for the dignity of that one sacrifice which his only-begotten Son offered once for all upon the altar of the cross. So that if repentance and amendment of life come, Christ's sacrifice serveth to put away sins for ever and ever."

Our Church declares in the "Homily of Salvation," that, "they which in act or deed, do sin after their baptism, when they turn again to God unfeignedly, they are likewise washed by this sacrifice from their sins, in such sort, that there remaineth not any spot of sin, that shall be imputed to their damnation." "This then," says bishop Pearson, "is the comfort of the Gospel ; that as it discovereth sin within us, so it prooundeth a remedy unto us. While we are in this life encompassed with the flesh, while the allurements of the world, while the stratagems of Satan, while the infirmities and corruptions of our nature, betray us to the transgression of the Law of God, we are always subject to offend : and so long as we can offend, so long we may apply ourselves unto God by repentance, and be renewed by his grace and pardoned by his mercy ;— This is God's goodness, this is man's happiness. For blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered ; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." I beg to refer you also to the Sixteenth Article of our Church, which plainly condemns the notion entertained by these un-protestant and un-scriptural teachers.

The Church of Rome errs in another way, or apparently so, for, in truth, Dr. Pusey's notions are virtually Popish. He does not call *penance* a sacrament, but he evidently attributes the justification of the sinner, not to faith, but to penances and mortifications. Popery designates *penance* a Sacrament, and applies it as an effectual remedy for the cure of sin. It avoids as much as the learned Professor "the appropriation of the righteousness of Christ," to the sinner by faith; and thus it virtually substitutes external observances for that Fountain which was opened for sin and for uncleanness. Romanists are "so keenly bent on external exercises, that all you can gather from immense volumes is, that repentance is a discipline and austerity, which serves partly to subdue the flesh, partly to chasten and punish sins: of internal renovation of mind, bringing with it true amendment of life, there is a strange silence. No doubt, they talk much of contrition and attrition; torment the soul with many scruples, and involve it in great trouble and anxiety; but when they seem to have deeply wounded the heart, they cure all its bitterness by a slight sprinkling of ceremonies."

By teaching that a repentance which God can accept, is *a sorrow for sin equal to the demerit of sin*, the Church of Rome would drive men to despair: for who can ever hope to offer a full (or indeed any) satisfaction to God for his sins? But she contrives a mode by which man's imperfect repentance may be accepted, and, like all other contrivances of Popery, it is a mode well calculated to exalt her own power, and to retain her members in spiritual bondage. It was necessary, she tells us, that God should institute an easier way by which men might attain to eternal life, and this he has done by the sacrament of *Penance!* So that repentance for sin

resolves itself into this,—confession to a priest and performance of the penance which he enjoins. Thus, as it has been well observed, “they arrogate to their priests the right of dividing what God has every where promised to us entire. While He simply requires repentance and faith, their division or exception is altogether blasphemous. For it is just as if the priest, assuming the office of tribune, were to interfere with God, and try to prevent him from admitting to his favour by his mere liberality any one who had not previously lain prostrate at the tribunicial bench, and there been punished.”

They will, indeed, allow that men are pardoned for their sins by the mercy of God, and yet they most inconsistently maintain, that though they renounce their sins and lead a new life, there is still a satisfaction to be rendered to God for their past transgressions. Tears, fastings, oblations, and other acts of charity, pilgrimages, flagellations, are all so many subsidiary aids to propitiate our offended God, and to compensate him for our faults. The guilt is forgiven, but the penalty must be paid by things of this kind. Christ “bare our sins in his own body on the tree,” indeed, but not the *whole weight of those sins which are committed after baptism*; part of the burden at least, is left to be borne by ourselves,—part of the penalty to be compensated by our own penances and satisfactions. Hence, the Lamb of God does not really take away the sins of the world; original sin he may have washed away, but not sins after baptism!

We cannot find any doctrine of this sort in the Bible, for we are there directed to that suffering Saviour, by “whose stripes (we) are healed,” and by whose blood we are cleansed from all sin; “and we are told that there is redemption in no other.

Like the doctrine of Purgatory, this tends to encourage careless and abandoned transgressors to continue in their sins, since they can at any time make all the satisfaction which their Church requires ; but it will be a grievous and intolerable yoke to the scrupulous, fearful, and anxious penitent. He will always be doubting whether he has given to God all the satisfaction that he demands. The deeper is his sense of the heinousness of sin, the more will he feel how far short he falls of the demands of strict justice. This is a state of mind very acceptable to his priest—not because he can point out to him the sovereign balm for his wounded conscience—but because he can prescribe whatever penances he pleases, and exercise a spiritual despotism over his submissive victim. So needful does the Church of Rome feel this doctrine of penance to be, that she has not scrupled to pervert the words of Scripture from “ Unless ye repent ye shall all likewise perish,” to “ Unless ye *do penance*, ye shall all likewise perish ;” whereas *to repent* means a *change of mind*, not bodily mortifications. Romanists are hence led to believe, that the more they imitate the examples of certain Saints, whose penances and self-inflicted sufferings are minutely recorded for their edification, the more free from sin they will become ; and many pious and ardent minds have thus been induced to strive after an imaginary perfection. You have often wondered at the gross superstitions of the lower classes in Ireland, and at the painful journeys they undertake, and the circuits which they make, on *their bare knees*, at certain reputed holy places ; but you will not be surprised at these practices when you read what is stated of their patron Saint. In the Roman Breviary it is gravely related that Saint Patrick, who once was a slave, and had the care of his master’s cattle, used to

rise before the sun, and, even in the most inclement weather, begin his task of praying one hundred times in the day. The same number of prayers he repeated at night. When he became a bishop, he was accustomed to repeat daily the whole Psalter, a collection of hymns and canticles, and two hundred collects. He knelt down three hundred times a day, and made the sign of the cross eight hundred times daily. During the night he said one hundred psalms, knelt two hundred times, and stood for an hour or two up to his chin in cold water while he repeated fifty psalms;—he then *rested* himself for some hours on a *stone* pavement.

St. Theresa is a particular favourite with female Romanists; and, no doubt, many of them have been led into a course of bodily tortures, in imitation of so exalted a pattern, which have seriously affected their health and reason. The Breviary states that she had “so great an ardour for the mortification of her body, that she used hair-shirts, chains, nettles, scourges, and would sometimes roll herself among thorns, regardless of a diseased constitution.”

Another Saint to which the Breviary invites the attention of all pious and devoted females, is Rose of Lima. In imitation of St. Catharine, she wore continually an iron chain which thrice encircled her waist, a belt set with small needles, and an iron crown, in which sharp points were fixed. Her bed consisted of the rugged trunks of trees, and the chinks were filled up with broken pottery.

The *merits*, acquired by the poor deluded imitators of these Romish Saints, are very useful to the cause of Popery; for they are all cast into that spiritual treasury, of which the Pope is the keeper, and are doled out, in the shape of indulgences, to the credulous people.

It is very important then to magnify penances and voluntary sufferings, as the greater number of persons who undergo them, the greater is the treasure accumulated. No despotic slave-owner ever imposed more heavy burdens on his unhappy victims, in order to increase his wealth, than the Church of Rome induces many of her credulous votaries willingly to undergo, that she may thereby increase her power and influence. She teaches that these voluntary privations and bodily tortures may be carried so far as to destroy life *gradually* :—“ If macerations,” says St. Liguori, “ are inflicted by the advice of a prudent confessor or prelate, although life should be shortened twelve years,” it is lawful. And should a Carthusian have brought himself by his austerities to the very brink of death, “ though it may then probably be lawful for him to eat flesh, if by so doing he may preserve his life, yet even then he may *lawfully and laudably neglect to eat it, though death be the sure consequence.*”

However mistaken this deluded man was as to the efficacy of such austerities, it cannot be denied that he was sincere in his belief that they were highly meritorious. For there is evidence that he practised, to a great degree, the mortifications and bodily tortures which he recommended to others :—“ I know for certainty,” said Father Dominic Corsano, in his examination before the Congregation of Rites, “ that this servant of God constantly scourged himself, unbloodily and bloodily ; and besides the unbloody scourgings enjoined by his rule, he was wont to punish himself every day in the morning before the usual hours of rising, and in the evening, after the signal for repose. On Saturdays he scourged himself until the blood flowed. . . . I know that this servant of God macerated his body also with hair-cloth, with

sharp points in it, and with chains as well on the arms as on the legs, which he carried with him till dinner-time, and these for the most part were so armed with sharp points, that they filled with horror all who ever saw him. I have heard it said also that he had a dress filled with a coat of mail with iron points ; that he had bandages of camels' hair ; and other instruments of penance were casually seen by me, and by others of my companions, notwithstanding his zealous and circumspect secrecy. Of a similar kind was his extreme mortification in sleeping upon two planks covered with a sack, with a little straw in it, so that it appeared a hard stone. I frequently also heard that he slept, during his few hours, with a large stone hung on and tied to his feet. I well remember that he never shaved himself, when he was with us, with a razor ; but only by little and little, he did it with pincers, and he caused his assistant friar to make his clerical crown with the same pincers."

We may easily suppose what kind of macerations a confessor, instructed by such a Saint as Liguori, would recommend to his penitents. And most of them, it may be presumed, are instructed by him, for his works have received the sanction of the Church of Rome, and every Romanist is exhorted to pray to this canonized saint, and to beseech God that he may *be taught by his admonitions and example*. Whatever therefore some Romish priests may do, or advise, as to penances, it is certain that the Church of Rome itself endeavours, by every means, to inculcate the duty and merit of self-inflicted tortures. "There is more misery," says a late member of her communion, "produced by her laws and institutions than I can possibly describe, though I have drunk her cup of bitterness to the dregs. . . . I have been Confessor not a few years, and heard the true state of

mind of the most religious Nuns, and such as were looked upon as living Saints by all the inhabitants of my town. From this intimate knowledge of their state, I do assure you that they are, for the greatest part, so full of doubts about their salvation, as not unfrequently to be driven to madness. In their anxiety to accumulate *merits* . . . they involve themselves in a maze of external practices. Then come the fears of sin in the very things which they undertake under the notion of pleasing God ; and as they believe that their works are to be weighed and valued in strict justice, the sincerity of their hearts cannot help discovering, not only that they are nothing worth, but that sin is often mixed with their performance.—With the view of heaven and hell perpetually before their eyes, and a strong belief that the obtaining the one and avoiding the other depends on the performance of a multitude of self-imposed duties, as complicated and more difficult than those of the ceremonial law of the Jews ; what can be the result but distracting anxiety ? ”

But the wretched state of doubt and perplexity to which this doctrine of Penance reduces multitudes of sincere penitents in the Romish Church, is less to be deplored than the dangerous and fatal error which it inculcates. It drives the sinner from the only fountain of consolation, *the all-sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for sin*, offered by the Lamb of God—to seek healing waters “in cisterns, broken cisterns, which hold no water.” Could those mistaken individuals, who are daily macerating their bodies, and offering a multitude of prayers, in the vain attempt to pacify their consciences, and to obtain the peace which passeth all understanding: could they be persuaded to renounce all dependence on these things, and to look simply to the atoning blood of

Christ as their only fountain of spiritual health, how soon would their burden be removed, their fears dispelled, and their doubts and perplexities be exchanged for the hope which is, as the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast ! “ When mercy is implored,” says Chrysostom, “ interrogation ceases ; when mercy is asked, judgment rages not ; when mercy is sought, there is no room for punishment.” Augustine indeed calls *works of mercy, remedies for obtaining forgiveness of sins*, although he says nothing about *coats of mail with iron points, chains round the waist, and on the arms and legs, and other instruments for torturing the body* ; but lest any one should mistake his words, and suppose that sin could be washed away, except by the blood of the atonement, he says in another place :—“ The flesh of Christ is the true and only sacrifice for sins—not only for those which are all effaced in baptism, but those into which we are afterwards betrayed through infirmity, and because of which the whole Church daily cries, ‘ Forgive us our debts,’ and they are forgiven by that special sacrifice.”

But if Romanists and Romanizers value not the opinions of the Fathers, when they are not in accordance with the modern tenets of the Church of Rome, let them, at least, hearken to the voice of John the Baptist. He does not tell the trembling penitent, who is anxiously saying, “ What must I do to be saved ? ” Go and expiate thy sins by penances ; go and torture thy body ; go and endure sorrow of heart equal to the demerit of sin, and then God will pardon thee ; but he directs him to Christ, as the only expiation : “ Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.” Let them listen to the declaration of St. Peter, who teaches very different doctrines from that of

his pretended successor at Rome : “ Christ also suffered for us. . . . who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness : by whose stripes ye were healed.” 1 *Peter* ii. 24. Let them believe the assurance of St. Paul, that in Christ “ we have redemption by his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” *Col.* i. 14. They will not discover in the holy Scripture any foundation for the notion, that the efficacy of Christ’s passion for the pardon of sins, either before or after baptism, depends on human satisfactions and penances. When the penitent publican confessed his sin, and prayed for pardon, he went home justified, or in a state of forgiveness, without performing any penance. Peter wept bitterly and was forgiven, not that his tears were a satisfaction for his sin : “ We read of his tears,” says Ambrose, “ we read not of satisfaction.” “ Son, be of good cheer : ” Christ said to the paralytic, “ thy sins be forgiven thee : ” *Matt.* ix. 2. but he is not required to perform any penances.

“ But we have our strongest argument,” says a learned Reformer, “ in the injunctions of the Mosaic Law, as to expiating the guilt of sin. The Lord does not there appoint this or that method of satisfying, but requires the *whole compensation* to be made by *sacrifice*, though he at the same time enumerates all the rites of expiation with the greatest care and exactness. How comes it that he does not at all enjoin works *as the means of procuring pardon*, but only requires sacrifices for expiation, unless it were his purpose thus to testify, that this is *the only kind of satisfaction* by which his justice is appeased ? For the sacrifices which the Israelites then offered were not regarded as human works, but were estimated by their antitype, that is, the sole sacrifice of

Christ. The kind of compensation which the Lord receives from us is elegantly and briefly expressed by Hosea: 'Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: here is remission: so will we render the calves of our lips,' (that is, the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving): here is satisfaction."

To the same purpose is the declaration of our Church in her Homilies. She knows of, and acknowledges, no other satisfaction for sin than that which Jesus Christ made on the cross: "For he *alone* did with the sacrifice of his body and blood make satisfaction unto the justice of God for our sins. . . . Therefore they are greatly deceived that preach repentance without Christ, and teach the simple and ignorant that it consisteth only in the works of men. They may indeed speak many things of good works, and of amendment of life and manners; but without Christ they be all vain and unprofitable. They that think that they have done much of themselves towards repentance, are so much more the farther from God, because they do seek those things in their own works and merits *which ought only to be sought in our Saviour Jesus Christ, and in the merits of his death, passion, and blood-shedding.* . . . , Although we do, after we be once come to God, and grafted in his Son Jesus Christ, fall into great sins, (for there is no righteous man upon the earth that sinneth not; and if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;) yet if we rise again by repentance, and with a full purpose of amendment of life, do flee unto the mercy of God, taking sure hold thereupon, through faith in his Son Jesus Christ, there is an assured and infallible hope of pardon and remission of

the same, and that we shall be received again into the favour of our heavenly Father.”

Our Church, you see, honours Christ by ascribing all our salvation to his meritorious cross and passion, and no part of the glory to sinful man : but at the same time, it carefully teaches the sinner that he must come to the Saviour with an humble, lowly, penitent, and believing heart, renouncing all his former sins, and steadfastly purposing to lead a new life, and being in charity with all men, or he cannot be accepted. He is to be as earnest and diligent in doing good works, as if his salvation depended upon them : but he will be so, not from a slavish fear of punishment, not from the hope of obtaining by this means the pardon of his sins ; but from love to Him who hath already made satisfaction for them by bearing them on the cross. He will therefore endeavour to do works that are pleasing to God, not in order to make amends to Him, but that he may testify how much he loves his Blessed Lord who hath forgiven him so much, and purchased for him, at the price of His own blood, a glorious and eternal inheritance.

LETTER X.

MR. NEWMAN'S ERRONEOUS VIEWS OF JUSTIFICATION—
OPINIONS OF EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS—VIEWS OF
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND RESPECTING IT, AGREE-
ABLE TO SCRIPTURE, AND TO CATHOLIC ANTIQUITY.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE no doubt that you are sincerely of opinion that you will never agree with the Romish Church, so long as she maintains her claim to infallibility : but I am by no means certain that your sentiments on this point will not soon undergo a change. Others who have deeply felt, and strongly protested against, the absurdity of this monstrous pretension, have afterwards not only admitted, but zealously defended that and every other error of the Church of Rome. And considering the notion, which unhappily you entertain, respecting the doctrine of man's justification before God, I feel little hesitation in believing, that the scruples which you now have against an implicit submission to St. Peter's pretended successor, may be easily removed. Once admit, with the Church of Rome, that works (either wholly or in part) justify man in the sight of God, and you open a door for the reception of every doctrine and practice

of Popery. It was the defective view which Mr. Newman had of the important doctrine of justification, which probably contributed more than anything else to his acceptance of all Popish errors, and to his ultimate secession from the Church of England.

“Christ,” he declared, in one of his Lectures, “is our righteousness by dwelling in us by the Spirit. He justifies us by entering into us. He continues to justify us by remaining in us.” “Justification is a continual work, it must be the Spirit’s work, not Christ’s.” “Justification is an imparting of righteousness, a work of the Holy Ghost, a spiritual gift or presence in the heart.” This, as I will presently shew you, is the view which the Church of Rome takes of this doctrine; and it is quite repugnant to the doctrine of Justification as propounded by our Church.

Mr. Newman confounds Justification with Sanctification, and supposes (or, at least, he once supposed) that the views of our Church and that of Rome, were identical on this important matter. Hence he laboured hard and skilfully, for a long time, to satisfy himself, and to persuade his disciples, that the teaching of the two Churches was on this point essentially the same. He utterly failed in his attempt. Justification by faith alone he found to be an undoubted tenet of the Church of England; and the denial of this doctrine by the Roman Church prevented, like the gulf which separates the regions of light and darkness, all hope of approximation and ultimate union. For no man who conscientiously holds this doctrine, can be a sincere and consistent member of the Church of Rome; nor can any one who rejects it, be acknowledged as a faithful member of the Church of England. Such was the uncomfortable position of the leader of that Romanizing party, which has

unhappily sprung up within the precincts of our Church. He was ostensibly a member and a minister of this Church, and had subscribed to the truth of this doctrine, and, so long as he remained in the bosom of our Church, was to be considered as honestly and cordially holding this important tenet ; but his views on the subject were in accordance with those of the Church of Rome. Yet there were certain difficulties to be surmounted before he could become a Romanist. Supremacy, Infallibility, Transubstantiation, Denial of the cup to the laity in the Lord's Supper, prayer in an unknown tongue, and other doctrines and practices, which Scripture utterly condemns, and from which common sense revolts, interposed a serious obstacle to his nearer approach to Rome. He had, however, taken the first step in the downward path to that corrupt Church, by rejecting the doctrine of Justification by faith alone ; and his progress, if not rapid and straightforward, was continually in that direction. He proceeded through strange and devious ways, in order to avoid the impediments which he could not overcome, and so filled his eyes with the dust of the dark ages, that he could no longer see how unreasonable and absurd were many things, which the Romeward travellers were obliged to believe ; and thus he was enabled, at last, to emerge from the labyrinth wherein he had been wandering, into the common level to which Popery reduces all her subjects.

No man appeared to be more opposed to the Romish Church, if we may judge from his language respecting her, than Mr. Newman : "Rome," he said, "is heretical now—nay, grant she has thereby forfeited her Orders : yet at least she was not heretical in the primitive ages. If she has apostatized, it was at the time of

the Council of Trent. Then, indeed, it is to be feared the whole Roman Communion bound itself by a perpetual bond and covenant, to the cause of Antichrist. . . Their communion is infected with heresy ; we are bound to flee it as a pestilence. They have established a lie in the place of God's truth, and by their *claim of immutability in doctrine, cannot undo the sin they have committed.* As to the present authoritative teaching of the Church of Rome, to judge by what we see of it in public, I think it goes very far indeed to substitute another Gospel for the true one : instead of setting before the soul the Holy Trinity, and Heaven, and Hell, it does seem to me, as a popular system, to preach the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints, and Purgatory. Or, to use words in which I have only a year ago expressed myself, when contrasting Romanism with the teaching of the ancient Church, 'That a certain change in objective and external religion has come over the Latin, nay, and in a measure, the Greek Church, *we consider to be a plain historical fact* ; a change sufficiently startling to recal to our minds with very unpleasant sensations the awful words, 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.' "

Notwithstanding these, and far more depreciating terms which Mr. Newman has used, when speaking of the Roman Church, he is now brought to her feet as her devoted slave. He is now prepared to swear (or rather, he has already sworn) :—" I acknowledge the Holy Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church, for the Mother and Mistress of all Churches ; and I promise and swear true obedience to the Bishop of Rome, successor to St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and Vicar of Jesus Christ. I likewise undoubtedly receive and profess all other

things delivered, defined and declared, by the sacred canons and general councils, and particularly by the Holy Council of Trent. And I condemn, reject, and anathematize, all things contrary thereto, and all heresies which the Church has condemned, rejected and anathematized."

Judge then, my dear Sir, whether it be so certain as you seem to think, that you will never agree with the Church of Rome while she professes to be infallible; when the teacher, whose writings you so greatly admire, is now an avowed Romanist. I may well be afraid for you, since I find you quoting with approbation Mr. Newman's views of Justification:—views so totally opposite to those of our Church, and so much in accordance with the Popish doctrine. Let us then examine this important point, and endeavour to ascertain whether Mr. Newman's definition of Justification, which is essentially the same that the Church of Rome enunciates, or that of our Church, is more agreeable to the Word of God.

"Justification," says Mr. Newman, "is God's accounting righteous; yes, but it is in the case of the christian something more; it is God's *making* him righteous too. . . . But the multitude of religious professors at this day whom I speak of, do not admit this: they even protest against the notion. They think justification to be something not *inward*, but merely *outward*; that is, they acknowledge themselves, they claim to be in the state of the Jews, and though of course they contend that they are justified, yet they own that their own Justification is not more than an *outward* or *imputative Justification*."

Mr. Newman here confounds two things which the Scriptures keep distinct, namely, Justification and Sanc-

tification. Where, indeed, there is the former there will surely be the latter. When a man is justified, or pardoned and accepted on account of Christ's righteousness, which he lays hold of, and appropriates to himself, by faith, he will also be sanctified—cleansed from the pollution and saved from the dominion of sin. The first is a change of state, from guilt and condemnation to pardon and acceptance with God; the second, that is, sanctification, is a change of our nature, from uncleanness to holiness. You may perhaps think that this is (as some have asserted) a distinction without a difference; and that it can be of no consequence whether we believe that we are justified before God *by a righteousness within us*, or suppose that it is by a righteousness *not our own*, but *imputed to us*. But the difference is as great as between a debtor, who takes his own money out of his pocket and pays his creditor, and a debtor for whom some kind friend discharges his debt. Well, you will say, the effect is the same:—both are out of debt. True. But the impression left upon their minds will be very different. The first will attribute his solvency to himself: the other will feel that he owes it entirely to the kindness of his Benefactor, and will, it may be presumed, be full of humility and gratitude and love. With respect, however, to the debt which all men owe to God, it is so immense that none can ever see it remitted, unless he be humble enough to submit to have it paid by his Great Surety. The sinner who waits until he has a righteousness in himself, by which he may satisfy God's justice, can never be justified, or absolved, for "there is none righteous, no not one." He must continue under condemnation, and perish in his sins. But according to Mr. Newman's (which is also the Popish) notion of Justification, a man is not

pardoned until he has righteousness in himself, or a righteousness of his own : therefore his case is desperate ; for in the sight of God can no man living be justified by anything that he can do. The consequence of such a notion is, that men are led to imagine that they can be saved by their own meritorious works : and this is the foundation on which Popery has raised her superstructure of error and delusion. No doubt the advocates of this unscriptural doctrine will endeavour to evade this conclusion by saying, that it is God that *makes* men righteous, or infuses a righteousness into them by which they may be justified, and therefore that they cannot boast that they are saved by their own works. But this fallacy has been well exposed by the learned and judicious Hooker :—“ They (Romanists) teach as we do, that infants that never did actually offend, have their natures defiled, destitute of justice, averted from God : that in making man righteous, none do efficiently work with God, but God. They teach as we do, that unto justice no man ever attained, but by the merits of Jesus Christ. They teach as we do, that although Christ, as God, be the efficient, as man the meritorious, cause of our justice ; yet in us also there is something required. God is the cause of our natural life ; in him we live : but he quickeneth not the body without the soul in the body. Christ hath merited to make us just : but as a medicine which is made for health, doth not heal by being made, but by being applied ; so, by the merits of Christ there can be no justification, without the application of his merit. Thus far we join hands with the Church of Rome. Wherein then do we disagree ? We disagree about the nature and essence of the medicine whereby Christ cureth our disease ; about the manner of applying it ; about the

number and the power of means, which God requireth in us for the effectual applying thereof to our soul's comfort. . . . The righteousness whereby a christian man is justified, is *a divine, spiritual quality, which quality received into the soul, doth first make it to be one of them who are born of God*; and secondly, endue it with power to bring forth such works as they do that are born of Him. . . . This grace they will have to be applied by *infusion*; to the end that as the body is warm by the heat which is in the body, so the soul might be *righteous by inherent grace*; which grace they make capable of increase; as the body may be more and more warm, so the soul more and more justified, according as grace should be augmented; the augmentation whereof is merited by good works, as good works are made meritorious by it. Wherefore, the first receipt of grace, in their divinity, is the first justification; the increase thereof, the second justification. . . . Whether they speak of the first or second justification, they make the essence of a divine quality to be inherent, *they make it righteousness which is in us*. If it be *in us*, then it is *ours, as our souls are ours, though we have them from God, and can hold them no longer than pleaseth him.*"

"But some, perhaps," says bishop Hall, "may think this a mere strife of words, and not hard to be reconciled: for that which to the Papists is inherent justice, is no other to the Protestants than sanctification. Both sides hold this equally necessary, both call it equally true; but do both require it in the same manner? Do both to the same end? I think not; yea, what can be more contrary than these opinions to each other? The Papists make this inherent righteousness the cause of our justification; the Protestants, the effect thereof. The Protestants require it as the companion or page, the

Papists as the usher, yea rather as the parent of justification. 'But what matters it (say they) so both ascribe this whole work to God? As though it comes not all to one to pay a sum for me, and to give it me to pay for myself.' I know not how these things seem so little dissonant to these men's ears, which the Spirit of God hath made utterly incompatible. To him that worketh, the wages is not imputed of grace, but of debt. If by grace, now not of works, or else grace should be no more grace; for neither is it grace any way, if it be not free every way, saith St. Augustine. But these men say, therefore of grace, because of works. . . . To be imputed, therefore, and to be inherent, differ no less than God and man, Trent and Heaven. Wherefore let our Romanists confess that which both Scriptures and Fathers, and all their modester doctors have both thought and reported to be the common voice of the former Church in all times; and we are agreed. Otherwise, what fellowship hath God with Belial, light with darkness?"

The consequences of holding that justification depends upon a righteousness within us, and, of course, *our own*, are seen in the numerous devices for acquiring merit, which have been invented and practised by the Roman Church. It so confounds and deludes its members, that they are led to seek *in themselves* a remedy for their spiritual maladies, although it can be found only in the fountain that was opened for the cleansing of all sins—the atoning blood of Christ. So that however pious and devout and sincere Romanists may be; yea, though, like Saul, they may live “after the straitest sect of their religion,” and obey submissively all the rules and ordinances of their Church, they can be entitled only to that testimony which the Apostle gave respecting the Jews :

—“I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” *Rom. x. 2, 3.*

This is the natural effect of the instructions which they receive, without doubt or hesitation, from the mouths of their spiritual guides. They are taught that, “If they work more and more, grace doth more increase, and they *are more and more justified*. To such as diminish it by venial sins,” continues Hooker, “it is applied by Holy Water, Ave Marias, Crossings, Papal Salutations, and such like, which serve for separations of grace decayed. To such as have lost it through mortal sin, it is applied by the sacrament (as they term it) of Penance: which sacrament hath force to confer grace anew, yet in such sort, that being so conferred, it hath not altogether so much power as at the first. For it only cleanseth out the stain or guilt of sin committed, and changeth the punishment eternal into a temporal satisfactory punishment here, *if time do serve*; if not, hereafter to be endured, except it be lightened by Masses, Works of charity, Pilgrimages, Fasts, and such like; or else shortened by pardon for term, or by plenary pardon quite removed and taken away. This is the mystery of the man of sin. This mazes the Church of Rome doth cause her followers to tread, when they ask her the way to justification.”

The chief reason which you assign for rejecting the doctrine of justification by faith alone, is, that it will lead to immorality and licentiousness; and, in order to avoid so fatal a result, you think it better to hold Mr. Newman’s and the Popish notion, that man is justified by an inherent, or, in other words, his own righteous-

ness. That is to say, you prefer a doctrine which would render null and void the atonement of the Son of God, to a doctrine which honours and exalts the Saviour, as the sinner's only hope for obtaining pardon and acceptance with God, because wicked or ignorant men may pervert this latter doctrine to purposes of licentiousness and iniquity! That some persons in every age have so abused it, is acknowledged. But such an abuse is no reason for refusing to believe it. The wickedness of men, it is well known, will sometimes cause them to make, what was meant for their comfort and happiness, an occasion of misery and despair. If the doctrine be of God, our duty is to believe it, without any regard to possible consequences. Where evil ensues, we should be careful to ascribe it to its true source, the evil heart; for to attribute a tendency to immorality to any doctrine which has been clearly revealed in the Holy Scriptures, is to cast a shocking imputation on the wisdom and holiness of God. It surely, then, is needful to examine carefully and seriously whether justification *by faith alone*, be agreeable to the mind and will of God, as revealed in his inspired Word. Let me intreat you, my dear Sir, to inquire into this subject with the utmost care and diligence, and with earnest prayer for the enlightening presence of that Teacher who can guide you to the truth.

That all men are by nature in a guilty and lost condition, is clear from numerous passages of Scripture;—“Behold,” says David, “I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. . . . The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.” *Psalm* li. 5: lviii. 3. “What is man,” Eliphaz asks, “that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman that he should

be righteous?" *Job* xv. 14. "All we like sheep," says Isaiah, "have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." *Isaiah* liii. 6. "The heart," Jeremiah declares, "is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" *Jer.* xvii. 9. "The carnal mind," says St. Paul, "is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." *Rom.* viii. 7. "This is the condemnation," says our Blessed Lord, "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." *John* iii. 19. Many other passages might be given from Scripture to prove, that all men are by nature sinners and under God's displeasure. Until that sin, under the guilt and power of which men lie, be removed, God cannot accept them. His justice and holiness require that the penalty which sin of every kind incurs should be paid, and that guilt should be washed away, before men can be admitted to his presence and favour. How then shall man be justified, or stand acquitted before God? By his obedience to the holy Law of God? That obedience must be perfect, or it cannot avail:—"Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." *James* ii. 10. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." *Gal.* iii. 10. The law, then, affords no remedy. It rather shews how utterly impossible it is for man to be just in the sight of God. It shews him his sinfulness and weakness, and leads him to seek for a righteousness in another, which he cannot find in himself; for the more he knows of the law of God the more he feels how far he is from doing all which it requires. "Israel,"

says the Apostle, "which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." *Rom.* ix. 31. It is indeed said that the man who doeth the works of the law, "shall live in them:" but no man ever lived who obeyed the law in every particular, and, therefore, the conclusion at which the Apostle arrives, cannot be denied:—"By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." *Rom.* iii. 20. Do you ask, Of what use then is the Law? It is answered, the Law not only exhibits to our view a perfect standard by which we are to try all our actions, but also convinces us of our guilt and helplessness and need of a Saviour:—"Wherefore," says St. Paul, "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." *Gal.* iii. 24.

Until men come to Christ, they remain in their sins and under the displeasure of God. There can be no reconciliation with our Creator until we stand before Him not as sinners, but as righteous:—"Your iniquities," says Isaiah, "have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." *Isaiah* lix. 2. But these iniquities, we have seen, cannot be washed away, nor the righteousness which God requires in order to the sinner's acceptance with Him, be acquired by the works of the law. For "if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." Wherefore a better remedy was found, and "what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." *Gal.* iii. 21 : *Rom.* viii. 3.

What the law could not do, Christ by his perfect obedience to all the requirements of the law, and by

bearing all our sins in his own body, completely effected. After living a sinless and blameless life, he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification :—" As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." *Rom.* v. 19. Our sins were laid upon him, and his righteousness imputed unto us ; so that he was punished as a transgressor, while we, the real transgressors, were acquitted and treated as righteous. " Thus God," says St. Paul, " was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. . . . For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin : that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." *2 Cor.* v. 19, 21.

Instead, then, of seeking righteousness in himself, or by anything that he can do, man is to lay hold of Christ by faith, and his righteousness will be imputed to him, and the sinner's transgression will be forgiven. It is not said, you will observe, that when the believer is justified, he is *made* righteous, but accounted righteous. The sinner has no righteousness *in* him before, or at the time when he is justified, although he has afterwards. For he who is justified is also gradually sanctified. " But yet," observes a learned prelate, " the acts of justification and sanctification are two distinct things ; for the one denotes the imputation of righteousness to us ; the other denotes the implantation of righteousness in us. And therefore, though they be both the acts of God, yet the one is the act of God towards us ; and the other is the act of God in us."

That it is faith alone which applies this sovereign remedy—the blood of the atonement—to men's spiritual maladies, so that they may stand pure and righteous before God, is frequently declared in Holy Scripture :—

“ To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” *Rom.* iv. 5. “ Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law : for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified : ” *Gal.* ii. 16. “ For by grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast : ” *Eph.* ii. 8, 9. St. Paul, after shewing that both Jew and Gentile are under sin, yea, and all the world guilty before God, and that the law cannot justify them, comes to this decision :—“ Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” *Rom.* iii. 28.

Nothing surely can be plainer than these declarations. Yet how contrary to them is the decision of that Church, which proudly boasts that she cannot err ! This is her decree :—“ If any one say that a sinner is justified by faith only, that he so understand that nothing else is required to attain the grace of justification, and that it is no ways necessary that he should be prepared and disposed by the motion of his own will, let him be accursed ! ”

Hence is an inspired Apostle under an *anathema*, because his doctrine is repugnant to the teaching of this corrupt Church ! Many of the ancient Fathers also, whom Popery seems to regard with far more favour than it does the Apostle, must, on this account, fall under her curse. For Clement of Rome appears to have understood the Apostle’s words, not in the *non-natural* sense, which Romanizing teachers are so fond of, but according to their plain, obvious, and honest meaning :—“ We

also," says he, "being called by the will of God in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, or by our own wisdom, or knowledge, or holiness, or works that we have done in simplicity of heart, but *by faith, by which Almighty God justifieth all from the beginning.*"

Origen's sentiments are equally opposed to the doctrine of the Council of Trent:—"He" (St. Paul) saith, "that the justification of faith only is sufficient: so that if any one do but only believe, he may be justified, though no good work hath been fulfilled by him." And by way of illustration he adduces the case of the penitent thief on the cross:—"This thief was justified by faith, without the works of the law; because about this the Lord did not inquire what he had before done, neither did he stay to see what work he would perform after he had believed; but being justified by his confession only, He, going into paradise, carried him as a companion along with him."

St. Bernard, referring to our Blessed Saviour, thus expresses himself:—"Whosoever, being pricked at the heart for his sins, hungers and thirsts after righteousness, let him believe in *Thee*, who justifies the ungodly; and being justified *by faith only*, he shall have peace with God."

"How," St. Ambrose asks, "can the Jews think to be justified by the works of the law, and yet to be as Abraham? When they see that Abraham was not justified by the works of the law, but by faith only. There is no need therefore of the law, seeing a sinner is justified before God by faith only."

Æcumenius says:—"All that believe in Christ are freely justified, bringing *their faith only* along with them."

"Abraham," says St. Jerome, "believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; and so will

faith alone suffice you also for righteousness . . . But because none is justified by the law, seeing none keeps it, it is therefore said that believers are to be justified by faith only."

St. Chrysostom, referring to the same Patriarch, asks :—" What did he lose by not being under the law? Nothing : *for faith alone* was sufficient for his justification or righteousness."

St. Basil is equally clear on this point :—" This is the perfect and only glorying in God, when one is not lifted up with his own righteousness, but acknowledgeth that he wanteth *the true righteousness*, and that it is *by faith only in Christ* that he can be justified."

And Primasius thus writes on the subject :—" God justifieth the wicked *by faith only*, and not by works which he had not. For if according to his works, he should be punished rather than redeemed."

The Church of Rome then, you see, receives no more countenance from the Christian Fathers than she does from the Holy Scriptures, when she asserts that man is justified by some *inherent righteousness*, and not by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and applied to him *by faith only*. She confidently affirms, that the voice of antiquity proclaims no other doctrines of justification than that which she hath constantly maintained : but with what truth I leave you to judge. If indeed, by antiquity she means the dark ages—the four or five centuries before the Reformation—her assertions may be believed. Her doctrines on this matter, as well as on other points, are indeed agreeable to the teaching of that deplorable period, when the key of knowledge was taken away, and "darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people ;" but they are utterly at

variance with the doctrines which were taught in the earliest and purest age of the Church.

Let us now see what the Church of England states respecting man's justification:—"We are accounted righteous before God," she declares, "only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own good works or deservings. Wherefore that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification."

Now, my dear Sir, prove and try this short and plain definition by that only standard to which every doctrine should be brought—the Word of God; and you will find it in every respect agreeable to that Word. Cavillers may indeed object, as some have objected, that the word *only* or *alone* is not added to faith in Scripture; but it is answered that the expression *by faith only* evidently gives the meaning of Scripture. If justification is not by faith alone, but partly by faith and partly by works, this will surely be manifested in the sacred writings. But you will find, on examination, that works are entirely excluded from the office of justifying men before God. For what can such declarations as the following mean, if they do not mean that men are accounted righteous by *faith only*?—"By him (Jesus Christ) all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." *Acts* xiii. 39. "Being *justified freely* by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation *through faith in his blood*, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in

Jesus :” *Rom.* iii. 24—26. “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” *Rom.* iii. 28.

If justification be *free* and *gratuitous*, how can it be said, in any degree, to be owing to works? “If by grace,” says the Apostle in another place, where he is speaking of the Israelites whom God had chosen, and his argument is equally conclusive on this point—“If by grace, then is it no more of works : otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace : otherwise work is no more work.” *Rom.* xi. 6.

And the same Apostle plainly declares, that every one who would obtain the righteousness of Christ must utterly renounce his own ; for they who “go about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” *Rom.* x. 3. But if men assert that they are justified not *by faith only*, but also by something in themselves, then do they so far endeavour to ‘establish their own righteousness.’ This is very different from the course which St. Paul pursued :—“Yea, doubtless,” he says, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” *Phil.* iii. 8, 9. I will here shortly notice the attempt which is sometimes made by the advocates of Popery to reconcile the doctrine of justification partly by faith and partly by works, with the justification propounded in Scripture by faith alone, or *without the deeds of the law*. ‘We allow,’ say they,

' that man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law, but this means the *ceremonial law*.' This hardly deserves an answer, but it may be better to give a brief reply to it. Can we then suppose that when God says :—“ Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments ; which if a man do he shall live in them,” *Levit.* xviii. 5. he means the ceremonial and not the moral law? What? Might a man be guilty of idolatry, swearing, sabbath-breaking, disobedience to parents, murder, and such like crimes, and yet live and escape the curse of God, if he only carefully observed the ceremonial law? And when St. Paul refers to the law in his epistle to the Galatians :—“ It is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them ;”—can we think that he means the law of ceremonies and not the whole law? No man surely, unless he be blinded by ignorance or prejudice, can doubt that the Apostle means the law in general, when he declares that it cannot justify the sinner. It is therefore certain that moral works have no part in the justification of men, but that we are justified by faith only.

It is of such great importance that you should have right views on this point, that I have transcribed some passages from the Homilies of our Church, which I earnestly advise you carefully to examine. You tell me that you are most anxious to know the truth, and I therefore venture to lay before you (though at the risk of wearying you by repetitions) what our Church states in those valuable writings respecting man's justification.

Read and compare them with the texts of Scripture which have been quoted in the preceding pages, and I feel persuaded that you will find every sentiment in strict accordance with the Word of God.

“ Because all men be sinners and offenders against God, and breakers of his law and commandments, therefore can no man by his own acts, works, and deeds (seem they never so good) be justified and made righteous before God : but every man of necessity is constrained to seek for *another righteousness, or justification, to be received at God's own hands* : that is to say, the forgiveness of his sins and trespasses, in such things as he hath offended. And this justification or righteousness, which we so receive of God's mercy and Christ's merits, embraced by faith, is taken, accepted, and allowed of God, for our perfect and full justification. All the world being wrapped in sin by the breaking of the law, God sent his only Son our Saviour Christ into this world, to fulfil the law for us, and, by shedding of his most precious blood, to make a sacrifice and satisfaction, or (as it may be called) amends to his Father for our sins, to assuage his wrath and indignation conceived against us for the same.

“ Insomuch that infants, being baptized and dying in their infancy, are *by this sacrifice* washed from their sins, brought to God's favour, and made his children, and inheritors of his kingdom of heaven. And they which in act or deed do sin after their *baptism, when they turn again to God unfeignedly, they are likewise washed by this sacrifice from their sins, in such sort, that there remaineth not any spot of sin, that shall be imputed to their damnation.* This is that justification or righteousness which St. Paul speaketh of when he saith, *No man is justified by the works of the law, but freely by faith in Jesus Christ. . . .*

“ The Apostle toucheth specially three things which must go together in our justification. Upon God's part, his great mercy and grace ; upon Christ's part, justice,

that is, the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption by the offering of his body, and shedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the law perfectly and throughly ; and upon our part, *true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but by God's working in us.* So that in our justification is not only God's mercy and grace, but also his justice, which the Apostle calleth the justice of God, and it consisteth in paying our ransom, and fulfilling of the law. And as the grace of God doth not shut out the justice of God in our justification, *but only shutteth out the justice of man,* that is to say, the justice of our works, *as to be merits deserving our justification.* And therefore St. Paul declareth here nothing upon the behalf of man concerning his justification, *but only a true and lively faith,* which nevertheless is the gift of God, and not man's only work without God. . . .

“ Our justification doth come freely by the mere mercy of God, and of so great and free mercy, that whereas all the world was not able of themselves to pay any part towards their ransom. it pleased our heavenly Father of his infinite mercy, without any our desert or deserving, to prepare for us the most precious jewels of Christ's body and blood, whereby our ransom might be fully paid, the law fulfilled, and his justice fully satisfied. So that Christ is now the righteousness of all them that truly do believe in him. . . .

“ Justification is not the office of man, but of God ; for man cannot make himself righteous by his own works, *neither in part, nor in the whole ;* for that were the greatest arrogancy and presumption of man that Antichrist could set up against God ; to affirm that a man might by his own works take away and purge his own sins, and so justify himself. . . .

“ Because faith doth directly send us to Christ for remission of our sins, and that by faith given us of God, we embrace the promise of God’s mercy, and of the remission of our sins (which thing none other of our virtues or works properly doth,) therefore Scripture useth to say, that faith without works doth justify. And forasmuch as it is all one sentence in effect, to say, faith without works, and only faith doth justify us; therefore the old ancient Fathers of the Church, from time to time, have uttered our justification with this speech :—‘ Only faith justifieth us,’ meaning no other things than St. Paul meant, when he said, *Faith without works justifieth us.*”

LETTER XI.

NO REAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE APOSTLES, PAUL AND JAMES, ON JUSTIFICATION—NOT THE DOCTRINE, BUT THE ABUSE OF IT LEADS TO IMMORALITY.

DEAR SIR,

THE objection in your last letter has been repeatedly made, and as repeatedly answered. You think that because St. James says : “ By works a man is justified, and not by faith only,” there is an irreconcilable difference between the doctrines of the Apostles Paul and James, if we are to understand the former as maintaining that *faith only* justifies. Whatever difference may, at first sight, appear in the teaching of these apostles, we may be certain that there can be no real difference, since both those holy men were inspired by the Spirit of truth. There can be no contradictions in God’s word, although some doctrines may seem to be contrary to others, owing to our ignorance of the deep things of God. Some of those mysterious things which are contained in the Holy Scriptures, it would be both fruitless and presumptuous in man to attempt to explain : “ The secret things belong unto the Lord our God : but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this

law." *Deut.* xxix. 29. But the passage which you have quoted from the epistle of St. James, is not one of those secret things of which, as it would be impossible to explain them, it would be wrong to attempt to give an explanation. A little consideration of the subject will, I am persuaded, enable you to see that both the apostles maintain the same doctrine, that is, justification by faith only. Let us then examine what is the object of St. James's argument.

When he wrote his epistle there were some persons who bore the name of Christians, and boasted that they had faith in Christ, while they were leading careless and ungodly lives. St. James wishes to shew under what a delusion such persons were labouring, who called that *faith*, which was only a vain notion, or empty name. That he is not speaking of true faith, is evident from the question: "What doth it profit, my brethren, *though a man say he hath faith*, and have not works? Can faith save him?" *James* ii. 14, 17. Can such a faith as this, which permits a man to continue in wilful and deliberate sin, and by which he boasts that he can attain salvation—can such a faith save him? His meaning is still more apparent when he calls the notion which those empty professors held, *a dead faith*: "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." He also intimates that even devils possessed such a faith as these hypocritical men had, for they believed in the existence of God, and yet they still remained his rebellious and bitter enemies. It is clear then, that St. James does not speak of that faith which justifieth the ungodly—"faith which worketh by love," but of a cold, historical, lifeless belief.

But the apostle asks; "Was not Abraham our Father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac

his son upon the altar?" *James* ii. 21. As Abraham was justified before God many years before this striking event occurred, it is evident that St. James here speaks of the *manifestation* of that righteousness which he had by faith. His ready obedience proved the reality and power of his faith. *Thus by works was his faith made perfect*: "as the tree is in its perfect state, when grown to maturity, and loaded on every branch with abundance of valuable fruit, and the Scripture was fulfilled which declared that 'Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness.' . . . So that it was evident there was a good and important sense, in which 'a man was justified by works and not by faith only;' as his works must be appealed to, *for the justification of his professed faith before men*: and as they will be adduced before the tribunal of God to distinguish true believers from hypocrites: nor will faith justify any man before God, who is not thus justified before the world by his works also."

"In one word, he is not discussing the mode of justification, but requiring that the justification of believers shall be operative. And as Paul contends that men are justified without the aid of works, so James will not allow any to be regarded as justified who are destitute of good works. Due attention to the scope will thus disentangle every doubt; for the error of our opponents lies chiefly in this, that they think James is defining the mode of justification, whereas his only object is to destroy the depraved security of those, who vainly pretended faith as an excuse for their contempt of good works."

"Now concerning the righteousness of sanctification," says Hooker, "we deny it not to be inherent; we grant that unless we work, we have it not; only we dis-

tinguish it as a thing different in nature from the righteousness of justification. We are righteous the one way, by the faith of Abraham; the other way, except we do the works of Abraham, we are not righteous. Of the one St. Paul: 'To him that worketh not, but believeth faith is counted for righteousness.' Of the other St. John: '*Qui facit justitiam justus est*: He is righteous which worketh righteousness.' Of the one, St. Paul doth prove by Abraham's example, that we have it of faith without works, Of the other, St. James by Abraham's example, that by works we have it and not only by faith. St. Paul doth plainly sever these two parts of Christian righteousness one from the other. For in the sixth to the Romans thus he writeth:—'Being freed from sin, and made servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Ye are made free from sin, and made servants unto God:' This is the righteousness of justification: 'Ye have your fruit in holiness;' This is the righteousness of sanctification. By the one we are interested in the right of inheriting; by the other we are brought to the actual possession of eternal bliss, and so the end of both is everlasting life."

"Now if Abraham," says Bishop Beveridge, "who performed so many works by faith, yet was justified by faith, and not by those good works, this (as St. Chrysostom observes) doth much debase the merits of works, and exalt the power of faith. And St. Augustine takes notice how he here brings in Abraham for an example of our justification by faith, to shew that our being justified by faith, was also full of good works; though it was not by those good works, but by faith, that he was justified. And so any man, *though it be not for his good works (which) he doth, that he is justified, yet if he be justified he will do good works.* And in this sense it is

that St. James tells us, *that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only*; and faith without works is dead; that is, though it is by faith we are justified, and *by faith only, yet not by such a faith as hath no works accompanying it*: no, every such faith is a dead faith: so that faith without works (if there be time and opportunity to perform them) is as unable to justify us, as works without faith. And yet it is not from the works that accompany our faith, but from the faith which is accompanied by our works, that we are justified. And therefore St. Paul and St. James do not contradict each other; for the one speaks of the works which go before, the other speaks of the works which follow after justification. . . . As his person is justified by faith only before God, so is his faith justified by works only before men and his own conscience. It is by faith only, and not by works, that a man is accounted righteous in heaven, *but it is by works only, and not by faith, that a man is esteemed righteous upon earth*. So that though a man be justified by his faith which goes before, *we do not know that he is justified but only by his works that follow after.*"

With respect to the assertion, that this doctrine tends to encourage immorality, it has been already observed, that if it be from God (and I hope the preceding arguments will have satisfied you that it is,) it can have no such tendency. Some few persons may ignorantly, and far more may wickedly pervert it, but there is something so monstrous, so revolting to reason and common sense, in men professing to be the servants of a God of holiness, while they are evidently the slaves of the world, the flesh and the devil, that such a fearful delusion can never extensively prevail. The world itself, ready and willing as it is, to excuse the errors, and to palliate the vices of its avowed followers, is very sharp-sighted to

detect, and prompt to condemn the crimes, and even the slightest inconsistency in the conduct, of the professed servants of Christ.

But however any persons may wrest this Scriptural, and therefore "most wholesome doctrine," to sinful purposes, there is nothing more plainly declared in God's word than this: that they *who believe* should also be "careful to maintain good works." The Gospel of our Lord and Saviour teaches us, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world:" *Titus* ii. 12: and we are continually reminded "that Jesus Christ gave himself for us"—not that we might continue the servants of sin, but, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." *Titus* ii. 14.

Our Church, which insists so strongly on this doctrine of justification by faith only, repeatedly calls the attention of her members to the duty and necessity of a holy life and conversation. Her Articles and Liturgy and Homilies clearly point out the inseparable connexion that exists between true faith and good works; so that no one, who attends to her instructions, can possibly fancy himself a believer—a pardoned and accepted child of God—so long as he is destitute of the fruits of faith. She teaches us in the twelfth Article, that though "Good works which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgments; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do *spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith*; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit." And in the Homily, entitled, "Of the salvation of mankind," our Church, while

teaching us that we must utterly renounce *the meritorious dignity of doing well*, at the same time strictly inculcates *a dutiful necessity of doing well*.

“ That faith,” which is requisite for our justification, she declares, “ doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, and fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified; but it shutteth them out from the office of justifying. So that, although they be all present together in him that is justified, yet they justify not altogether: neither doth faith shut out the justice of our good works, *necessarily to be done afterward of duty towards God; (for we are most bounden to serve God, in doing good deeds, commanded by him in his holy Scripture, all the days of our life:)* but it excludeth them so that we may *not do them to this intent, to be made just by doing of them.* . . . Nor when they (the ancient Fathers) say, that we be justified freely, do they mean that *we should or might afterward be idle, and that nothing should be required on our parts afterward*: neither do they mean so to be justified without our good works, that we should do no good works at all. Our office is, not to pass the time of this present life unfruitfully and idly, after that we are baptized or justified, not caring how few good works we do to the glory of God, and profit of our neighbours: much less is our office, after that we be once made Christ’s members, to live contrary to the same: making ourselves members of the devil, walking after his enticements, and after the suggestions of the world and the flesh, whereby we know that we do serve the world and the devil, and not God. For that faith which bringeth forth (without repentance) either evil works, or no good works, is not a right, pure, and lively faith, but a dead, devilish, counterfeit, and feigned faith, as St. Paul and St. James call

it. . . . Whereof (true faith) doth follow a loving heart to obey His commandments. And this true christian faith neither any devil hath, nor yet any man, which in the outward profession of his mouth, and in his outward receiving of the sacraments, in coming to the Church, and in all other outward appearances seemeth to be a christian man, and yet in his living and deeds sheweth the contrary. For how can a man have this true faith, this sure trust and confidence in God, that by the merits of Christ his sins be forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God, and to be partaker of the kingdom of heaven by Christ, when he liveth ungodlily, and denieth Christ in his deeds? . . . These great and merciful benefits of God, if they be well considered, do neither minister unto us occasion to be idle, and to live without doing any good works, neither yet stir us up by any means to do evil things; but contrariwise, if we be not desperate persons, and our hearts harder than stones, they move us to render ourselves unto God wholly, with all our will, hearts, might, and power to serve him in all good deeds, obeying his commandments during our lives, to seek in all things his glory and honour, not our sensual pleasures and vain glory; evermore dreading willingly to offend such a merciful God and loving Redeemer, in word, thought, or deed. And the said benefits of God, deeply considered, move us for his sake also to be ever ready to give ourselves to our neighbours, and, as much as lieth in us, to study with all our endeavours to do good to every man. These be the fruits of the true faith, to do good as much as lieth in us to every man, and above all things, and in all things, to advance the glory of God, of whom only we have our sanctification, justification, salvation, and redemption."

These quotations from the Homilies of our Church will, I hope, convince you, that neither the doctrine of justification by faith only, nor those who truly hold such doctrine, give any encouragement to sin, or slothfulness in our duty towards God and towards man. If love to God will surely lead men to keep his commandments, that which excites the greatest degree of love to Him in our hearts must necessarily tend to holy and active obedience. But the belief that we are *freely* pardoned and accepted by our heavenly Father, not for our own deservings, but solely for the merits of Christ's sacrifice, is certainly better calculated to fill our hearts with unfeigned love, than the belief that we have something in ourselves which deserves God's mercy. Now justification by *inherent righteousness*, as held by the Church of Rome, necessarily tends to exalt the sinner, because he is led to suppose that he has something of *his own* to offer to God for the mercy and favour which he seeks ; but justification by faith only, humbles and abases the sinner, as it leads him to look beyond himself (for he knows that in himself there is nothing to entitle him to God's favour), and to throw himself as a poor, helpless, guilty creature on the free and unmerited grace of his heavenly Father. The one feels that he deserves, in some measure, to be well received by God : the other is deeply sensible that he is not worthy to be called his son, as he is an unprofitable servant, and that it is not for any works of righteousness which he has done that he is accepted, but through God's abundant mercy alone. Which, then, is likely to have the most love to God, and, consequently, to be most anxious and zealous to run in the way of his commandments ? Our Blessed Lord himself answers this question :—“ There was a certain creditor which had two debtors : the one owed

five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged." And then turning to the woman, whose faith had led her to the Saviour to seek pardon and salvation, He said ;—" Her sins which are many are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." *Luke* vii. 41, 43, 47.

" What ingenuity can force this language into agreement with those views of justification which represent it as suspended on our personal obedience, as the result of a work to be accomplished in us by the Holy Ghost ? How clearly do the passages adduced set forth remission of sin as the starting post, not the goal of obedience ; as anterior to, not consequent upon, holiness ; as originating, not consummating the image of God in the soul. Insomuch that his children are represented as serving him, not to be forgiven, but because forgiven ; not to win his favour, but because they walk in the light of his countenance."

How much more available will be the justification sought by faith only, in dependence on nothing but the free grace of God, than a justification demanded, as it were, by some righteousness, or fancied righteousness in ourselves, is also shewn in the following parable :—
 "Two men went up into the Temple to pray : the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the Publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his

eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, *this man went to his house justified rather than the other*: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." *Luke xviii.*
10—14.

LETTER XII.

WORKS BEFORE JUSTIFICATION—NATURAL STATE OF MAN
ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE, THE EARLY FATHERS, AND
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

DEAR SIR,

THE Church of Rome, having rejected and condemned the Scriptural doctrine of justification by faith only, had no other alternative but to maintain, that man could be justified, or, at least, partly justified, by a righteousness of his own. In other words man, though a sinner and under the wrath of God, could still do something which was pleasing to God. A fountain which is polluted can still send forth pure waters. The tree which is radically corrupt may, even before its nature is changed by grafting, produce some good fruit. This is inconsistent language, and it is contrary to common sense and common experience, but it proceeds from the mouth of pretended Infallibility.

While man is in a state of enmity with, and alienation from God, even his best actions (however good in the sight of his fellow-creatures) are evil, and cannot please God. Though highly applauded by men; who look only at the outward appearance, they are offensive to Him who searcheth the heart, and understandeth well

the corrupt source from which they spring. But the Church of Rome declares :—" If any one say, that all the works that are done before justification, however they are done, are truly sins, or deserve the hatred of God, let him be accursed."

Some advocates of Popery endeavour to prove from the case of Cornelius that good and acceptable works may be performed before justification. " He was a devout man and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." And he was regarded with great admiration by the Jews, owing to the excellence of his life and conversation :—" a just man, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews." *Acts* x. 2, 22. Here, say they, was a man not yet justified ; but who will venture to deny that his alms and prayers were acceptable to God? It is answered, that Cornelius, being a man *who feared God and worked righteousness*, was evidently in a state of justification. He possessed that true wisdom which cometh from above, and had been sanctified by the Spirit of God, or he could not have had that godly fear, and that righteousness, which are so pleasing to our heavenly Father. This case, therefore, affords no support to the Popish notion of the merit of works.

Nor does the example of Hezekiah in the least degree help the advocates of the Romish doctrine. He was in a state of justification before God long previous to his sickness, when his prayers and tears were favourably regarded, and his petition for length of days granted. It is stated of him that, at the beginning of his reign, " he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did. He removed the high places, and broke the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen

serpent that Moses had made ; for unto these days the children of Israel did burn incense to it." That this zeal for the suppression of idolatry arose from faith in God is evident from the context :—" He trusted in the Lord God of Israel ; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments which the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him." 2 *Kings* xviii. 5—7. Surely here is the plainest evidence that Hezekiah was in a state of justification : he could not otherwise have *trusted in God*, neither could the inspired writer have given so striking a testimony in his favour.

Other cases from Scripture have been adduced in support of the Popish doctrine of justification, but they will all be found, on examination, to be totally irrelevant.

Man, indeed, is very unwilling to acknowledge, that of himself he can do nothing which is pleasing to God ; and he is still more reluctant to allow that what the world proclaims to be virtues in him, can be regarded only as sins before God, unless he be justified by faith. This is owing to his pride. And pride leads him to set his own wisdom above the wisdom of God. When therefore he finds any statement in the Bible, which opposes this notion of his own sufficiency and ability to do good, he either rejects the testimony of God's word, or endeavours to wrest its meaning in favour of his own fancies. This latter course is the one more generally pursued. For Deism, to which the former alternative sooner or later brings him, is such a cold, cheerless unsatisfactory system, that few persons comparatively are found to profess it ; but a system which permits him to

retain all his proud notions of the dignity of human nature, and at the same time seems to place within his reach happiness and immortality, is in his eyes the perfection of wisdom. This was the lofty fabric which the Pharisaical Jew erected, and by which he fondly supposed that he could ascend to heaven: and it is the same Babel which Popery has constructed out of mortifications, pilgrimages, self-inflicted tortures, masses, works of supererogation, and similar materials, in order to afford a means of escape from the waters of destruction to the haven of rest and peace. It need not then, occasion much surprise, that a system so pleasing and flattering to human nature, should be embraced by multitudes, and that the Gospel, whose humbling doctrines tend to the utter subversion of these airy fabrics, is hated as a stumbling-block, or despised as foolishness.

Let us, however, consult the oracles of unerring truth, those holy Scriptures which were written by men under the guidance of the only infallible Teacher, and see in what light God regards the works of man previous to his justification.

Men, be it observed, how much soever they may differ in their dispositions and tempers—some being liberal, generous, kind, and amiable; others covetous, morose, unfriendly, churlish, are nevertheless all comprehended in the term, wicked, until they are justified before God. What then does the Scripture say respecting the non-justified, or wicked? I speak not merely of those works which all men acknowledge to be bad, but also of others which are good and useful *in themselves*. We read in the book of Proverbs that: “An high look, and a proud heart, and *the plowing of the wicked is sin.*” *Prov.* xxi. 4. “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.” *Prov.* xv. 8. This is the

case even when he is sincere in offering it to God. Cain's offering was hateful, and, consequently, not accepted, although he offered the best things that he had, but the sin which he retained in his heart, rendered his offering abominable to God. That the things done by the wicked, "are truly sins," is also clearly stated in another passage of Scripture: "The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: *how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind.*" *Prov. xxi. 27.* "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have *chosen their own ways*, and their soul delighteth in *their abominations*. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because, when I called, none did answer; when I spake, *they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.*" *Isaiah lxvi. 3, 4.*

"To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt-offerings (God says) *are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.*" *Jer. vi. 20.* "*I hate, I despise your feast-days,*" God declares by the prophet Amos, "and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt-offerings and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them." *Amos v. 21, 22.*

Now as sacrifices were instituted by God himself, and commanded to be offered, until the Lamb of God whom they typified, should by the sacrifice of himself render all other sacrifices unnecessary, these things were good in themselves, yet were they hateful to God because they were offered by wicked persons. With whatever intention therefore the wicked perform what are *in themselves*

good things, things appointed by God himself, he regards them *as sinful works* : “Incense is an abomination to me,” he declares ; “the new moons, and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, *I cannot away with ; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.*” *Isaiah* 1. 13.

Hence we see that actions, however pleasing and laudable in the eyes of men, may be regarded as sins by a holy God. Until we truly believe in Him neither our persons nor our works can be accepted. “For without faith,” says the Apostle, “*it is impossible to please God :*” *Heb.* xi. 6. “Whatsoever is not of faith *is sin.*” *Rom.* xiv. 23. “Unto them,” says the same Apostle, “that are *defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure ; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.*” *Titus* i. 15.

Here then, you see, that the inspired writers clearly declare, “that all the works that are done before justification, howsoever they are done, are truly sins.” But what says the Church of Rome ? It denounces a curse on all who maintain such a doctrine. The Prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles of the New are alike subjected to the anathema of this awfully perverted Church ! Is it then possible for any man, who reads his Bible, and is willing to receive its declarations according to their natural and obvious meaning, to put himself under the teaching and direction of such a guide ?

But as the Romish Church constantly asserts, that her decisions on this, as well as on every other point, have the unanimous consent of the ancient Fathers, let us see what degree of credit may be given to such an assertion.

St. Basil proposes this question, Whether it be possible or a thing well-pleasing and acceptable to God, for a servant of sin (that is, every man before he be justified

by faith) to do any righteousness according to the rule of the saint's piety : he proves that *it is not possible* : " It is clear that it is altogether impossible, and displeasing unto God, and dangerous to him that dares to do it. Wherefore I exhort, as the Lord teacheth, *Let us first make the tree good, and then the fruit good ; and let us first make clean the inside of the cup or platter, and then the outside will be wholly clean.*"

" Let us declare our sentence," says St. Jerome, " against those who, *not believing in Christ*, suppose themselves to be valiant, and wise, and temperate, and just ; that they may know that no one can live without Christ, *without whom all virtue lies in vice.*" He evidently alludes to that death of sin in which all men are found before their justification : they are spiritually dead, and therefore can do nothing that is spiritually good.

St. Augustine declares : " that the man is first to be changed that his works may be changed ; for if a man remain in that state that he is evil, *he cannot have good works.*" And in another place the same writer observes : " *All the life of unbelievers is sin*, and there is nothing good without the chiefest good : for where the knowledge of the eternal and unchangeable truth is wanting, *there is but false virtue even in the best manners.*"

Prosper uses similar language respecting men in an unjustified state : " Though there have been some who by their natural understanding have endeavoured to resist vices, yet *they have barrenly adorned only the life of this time ; but they could not attain to true virtues, and everlasting happiness.* For without the worship of the true God ;" not such as is offered by idolaters and formalists, but that which they offer who ' worship Him in spirit and

in truth,' "*even that which seems to be virtue is sin ; neither can any one please God without God himself.*"

The Council of Trent, we have seen, maintains a very different doctrine, and its decision has received the sanction of Popish Infallibility : for Pius IV. requires the members of the Church of Rome to " embrace and receive all things and every thing, which have been defined and declared in the holy Council of Trent, concerning Original Sin and Justification : " and it is to be feared that this decree, being thus sanctioned, will have far more authority in the eyes of Romanists, than either the opinions of the early Christian Fathers, or the plain declarations of God's holy Word. I will therefore bring forward an authority which even Romanists confess themselves bound to respect and obey : I quote *Infallibility versus Infallibility*—Pope Gregory against Pope Pius. This is the declaration of Gregory : "*If faith be not first begotten in our hearts, all the other things cannot be good though they may seem good.*" Leaving the advocates of Popery to reconcile these two very opposite decisions of men who, they profess to believe, could neither of them err, I proceed to shew you what the Church of England maintains on this question.

In the thirteenth Article it is declared that : " Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say) deserve grace of congruity : yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not that they have the nature of sin."

The following passage from the writings of Hooper, bishop and martyr, may be considered as the opinion of

all our venerable Reformers on this point:—"Every man is called in the Scripture wicked, and the enemy of God, for the privation and lack of faith and love that he oweth unto God. *Et impii vocantur qui non omnino sunt pii*; that is to say, they are called wicked, that in all things honoureth not God, believeth not in God, and observeth not his commandments as they should do: which we cannot do by reason of this natural infirmity or hatred of the flesh (as Paul calleth it) against God. In this sense taketh Paul this word *wicked*, when he saith, that Christ died for the wicked." If then men are wicked before a lively faith enters into their hearts, their very sacrifices and offerings (as hath been already shewn) are hateful to God, and, consequently, there can be no congruity or suitableness in their very best actions, so as to make them meet to receive God's favour.

"As we cannot," says bishop Beveridge, "do any thing which it is just God should reward, and so deserve grace of condignity; so neither can we do any thing which it is fit or meet God should reward, and so deserve grace of congruity. So that God should not do what is unmeet and unfitting to be done, though he never reward any of the works of mere natural men. And the reason is clearly here asserted, 'Because they have all the nature of sin.' And if they have the nature of sin and iniquity certainly they cannot deserve grace of congruity. So that it cannot be meet that God should reward them, nay, it is rather meet he should not reward them, but it is meet and just too that he should punish them; justice requiring sin to be punished as well as virtue to be rewarded: and therefore if thy works be sins, they cannot in justice be rewarded, but punished."

The voice of our Church announces the same truths clearly and distinctly in her^e Homilies :—“ The Holy Ghost, in writing the Holy Scripture, is in nothing more diligent than to pull down man’s vain-glory and pride, which of all vices is most universally grafted in all mankind, even from the first infection of our first father Adam. And therefore we read, in many places of Scripture, many notable lessons against this old rooted vice, to teach us the most commendable virtue of humility, how to keep ourselves, and to remember what we be of ourselves. . . . And thus He setteth us forth, speaking by his faithful Apostle St. Paul ; *All men, Jews and Gentiles, are under sin : there is none righteous, no not one : there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God : they are all gone out of the way, they are all unprofitable.* . . . St. Paul in many places painteth us out in our colours, calling us, *the children of the wrath of God*, when we be born : saying also, that *we cannot think a good thought of ourselves*, much less can we say well, or do well of ourselves. . . . For of ourselves we be crab-trees, that can bring forth no apples. We be of ourselves of such earth, as can bring forth but weeds, nettles, brambles, briers, cockle, and darnel. Our fruits be declared in the fifth chapter to the Galatians. . . . We are all become unclean, but we all are not able to cleanse ourselves, nor to make one another of us clean. We are by nature the children of God’s wrath : but we are not able to make ourselves the children and inheritors of God’s glory. We are sheep that run astray : but we cannot of our own power come again to the sheep-fold, so great is our imperfection and weakness. In ourselves, therefore, may we not glory, which of ourselves, *are nothing but sinful* ; neither may we rejoice in any works that we do, *which*

all be so imperfect and impure, that they are not able to stand before the righteous judgment-seat of God. . . . Again, we have heard how that of ourselves, and by ourselves, we are not able either to think a good thought, or work a good deed, so that we can find in ourselves no hope of salvation, but rather whatsoever maketh unto our destruction."

This doctrine, so clearly enunciated by our Church, so agreeable to the Word of God, and so completely in unison with the opinions of the early Christian Fathers, is, it must be acknowledged, very offensive to the natural man. The self-righteous, the wise according to the wisdom of this world, the great and illustrious, "the rich, and increased with goods," who think they "have need of nothing:"—these, with comparatively few exceptions, pronounce it foolishness. And Popery, in order to gain proselytes and thus to extend its empire, offers to their acceptance doctrines more soothing to their pride, and more agreeable to their vain imaginations. The Romish Church either uses great *reserve* when giving instruction on this subject, or else she so disguises the truth that its features can scarcely be discerned. But as "the world by wisdom knew not God," so will these skilful devices utterly fail to promote amongst men the knowledge of Him, whom truly to know is eternal life. She may, indeed, exhibit Him to their eyes as a Saviour and Redeemer, but not as one who hath made "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world," because she teaches, that he must still be repeatedly sacrificed and offered upon the altar, and that man's ransom is not complete without the addition of human merits. All such acts and inventions will, however, be found, at last worse than useless. God will

“ destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent ; ” and will demonstrate to an assembled world, that the wise have dared to call foolishness what is truly “ The wisdom and the power of God.”

I will trespass no longer on your patience and attention, at present, but will leave you to try and examine the teaching of the two Churches on this important point. That of the Church of England, you will, I trust, be satisfied, is founded on the Word of God, and is proclaimed by the voice of the primitive Church, as an unquestionable truth : that of the Church of Rome will be found to derive its chief support from her own pretended Infallibility. Which has the more substantial and secure foundation to rest upon, let reason and common sense determine.

LETTER XIII.

REASON NEITHER TO BE DEIFIED NOR DEGRADED—
WORKS AFTER JUSTIFICATION.

DEAR SIR,

REFERRING to the conclusion of my last letter, you observe that, if reason is to determine whether man can, or cannot do any thing towards his justification before God, you must adopt the Popish side of the question; as you cannot think that the kindness, benevolence, and other pleasing traits manifested by some persons, who make no profession of religion, can be regarded *as sins in the sight of God*. You did not quite apprehend my meaning in the sentence to which you refer. I did not mean that reason should decide whether God's word contains true doctrine; for admitting the Bible to be God's word we, of course, admit that all which is there written is infallibly true.

The question proposed was this:—Which is more likely to be true, a doctrine propounded by an authority which all christians allow to be infallible, or a doctrine sanctioned by an authority which only a portion of the christian world regards as infallible? On such a question reason may legitimately determine. But this is

not the case in regard to the truths of religion. How much soever they may be beyond our reason, they must be received as undoubtedly true, because they proceed from the fountain of truth. If we are to reject what is above our comprehension, we must deny the incarnation of our Blessed Lord, the Trinity, and other important and essential doctrines. Reason is finite, has certain bounds which it cannot pass, and therefore is utterly incapable of penetrating the unfathomable depths of infinite wisdom. It is duly occupied when it is trying and examining whether a doctrine be agreeable to, or differ from, the inspired writings. But when reason begins to arraign the justice, or the wisdom, or the goodness of God, and ventures to deny such and such scriptural doctrines, it is then transgressing the limits assigned to it. It is attempting to dethrone God, and to set up itself in his seat. This is an awful abuse of that faculty which God has implanted in man for far different purposes.

There are three parties who are guilty of abusing this most valuable gift :—They who refuse to believe any thing which they cannot comprehend, though it be a doctrine founded on the plain declarations of God : They who require implicit belief in their own statements, and forbid men to use their reason even so far as to examine whether such statements agree with Scripture : and they “ who think they cannot admire as they ought the power and authority of the word of God, if in divine things they should attribute any force to man’s reason.” The first exalt reason above God himself : the second would extinguish reason in order to exalt themselves, and to usurp dominion over God’s heritage : the third despise reason as if, however duly and modestly exercised, it could afford no assistance in matters relating

to God. Hence, these latter persons, as Hooker observes, "never use reason so willingly as to disgrace reason;" and they talk "as if the way to be ripe in faith were to be raw in wit and judgment; as if reason were an enemy unto religion, childish simplicity the mother of ghostly and divine wisdom."

The Church of Rome identifies itself with the second party which I have noticed as abusing reason. By denying men the use of their understanding and judgment in matters of religion, she subjects herself to the accusation which the adversaries of the Gospel, in early times, so unjustly brought against Christianity. They asserted that a groundless faith—a belief without any previous inquiry or examination—was all that was requisite to constitute a Christian. This calumny was well answered by Origen:—"We, as much as we can, pre-examine the minds of those who come to us, and make them rehearse to us before we admit them to our communion . . . Celsus—calumniously misrepresents our words, not stating them as they are uttered by St. Paul. . . The Apostle does not say that wisdom is folly with God, but that the wisdom of this world is folly. . . Celsus says, We teach men not to examine, but believe. . . What is more rational than to believe in God! Let your Philosophers boast of their investigations; not less research than theirs, to say the least, will be found among christians concerning their articles of belief."

"The ground of this accusation," says bishop Barrow, "was surely a great mistake, arising from their not distinguishing that belief, whereby we embrace Christianity itself in the gross, from that belief, whereby in consequence of the former we assent to the particular doctrine thereof, especially to such as concern matters

supernatural, or exceeding the reach of our natural understanding to penetrate or comprehend. For as to the first kind of belief, whereby we embrace Christianity itself as true in the gross, I say it is in no wise required on such terms. Our religion doth not obtrude itself upon men in the dark, doth not bid them put out their eyes, or to shut them close, or even to wink; but it rather obliges them to open them wide. It requires not, yea it refuses ordinarily, a sudden and precipitate assent: admitting no man, capable of judging, to the participation thereof, till, after a competent time of instruction, he declares himself to understand it well, and practically to approve it."

If Popery had existed in the time of Celsus, its advocates must have acknowledged the accusation to be true. But this caricature of Christianity had not then developed itself, and therefore the calumny was easily and triumphantly repelled. The Scriptures, which the early christians appealed to, as their only infallible authority, would furnish abundant testimony that Christianity did not discard reason and judgment in spiritual things; but required men not merely to believe, but to prove, to be fully persuaded in their own minds, to judge whether their teachers spoke according to God's word, and to search, and inquire, and meditate, that they might "be ready always to give an answer to every man" respecting their faith and hope. The early christians were very far from receiving that arrogant dogma which the modern Church of Rome so tenaciously holds, and so diligently inculcates:—"Do not inquire, but believe;" for they regarded those who required such blind, implicit faith, as heretics. "The author of a work inserted among those of St. Athanasius," says Dr. Wordsworth, "expressly declares that of all the

heresies which have crept into the Church none is more pernicious than that which says, 'embrace unhesitatingly (*ἀπλῶς*) what we deliver;' and which *calls* a blind assent to dogmas without demonstration, by the sacred name of *Faith*. This is the heresy of the Essayist (Mr. Newman). It is observed by Eusebius, 'that this was the principle of the arch-heretic Apelles;' and Lactantius is very strong in his censures upon it."

If it be your desire (as I hope it is) to employ your reason in the way in which God requires us to use every gift that he bestows upon us—as not abusing it—you will be on your guard against each of the errors to which I have referred. And truly you have need to be so, for with your present views, you are in very great danger of being entangled by one or another of them. For although you acknowledge the Bible to be God's Word, and that the passages quoted in my last letter to prove that actions, (*good in themselves*) performed by men before justification, have *the nature of sin*, seem conclusive; yet you tell me that, as you cannot reconcile such a doctrine to your reason, you are inclined to reject it. What is this but either to prefer your reason to the unerring word of God, or entirely to surrender your understanding to those persons, who put a meaning on the words of Scripture, which is contrary to the plain and obvious sense? The first is the error of Socinus; the other a blind submission to Popish infallibility.

In order to guard against the error of deifying human reason, consider the follies and inconsistencies into which some men, endowed with the most commanding talents, have unhappily fallen. It is related of a celebrated astronomer, that, after having as it were scaled the heavens, counted the number of the stars, measured their

distances and magnitudes, observed the beautiful order which prevails throughout the spacious firmament, with delight and admiration, he retired from the survey of this magnificent portion of the Creator's workmanship, and deliberately asserted :—" There is no God ! " Such a display of the stupendous littleness of an otherwise enlarged and well-cultivated mind, is a fulfilment of the divine prediction :—" Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord ; and what wisdom is in them ? " *Jerem.* viii. 9. " For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." *Isaiah* xxix. 14.

With regard to the power of human reason, unaided by divine illumination, to comprehend spiritual things, an eminent writer observes :—" Men otherwise the most ingenious are blinder than moles. . . . Still seeing, they saw not. Their discernment was not such as to direct them to the truth, far less to enable them to attain it, but resembled that of the bewildered traveller, who sees the flash of lightning glare far and wide for a moment, and then vanish into the darkness of the night, before he can advance a single step. So far is such assistance from enabling him to find the right path. Besides, how many monstrous falsehoods intermingle with those minute particles of truth, scattered up and down in their writings, as if by chance ! In short, not one of them ever made the least approach to that assurance of the divine favour, without which the mind of man must ever remain a mere chaos of confusion. To the great truths,—What God is in himself, and what he is in relation to us, human reason makes not the least approach."

Do not then attribute too much to man's reason. Keep it in its proper place, and it will prove a valuable

auxiliary in the search after true knowledge. Deify it, and it will bring a cloud over the intellectual horizon, and leave you in uncertainty, confusion, and darkness.

The other error, to which you seem still more nearly to approach, is, a blind submission to Popish Infallibility. Such is the consequence of having defective views of the doctrine of justification! In a former letter I ventured to observe, that your objection to the arrogant claim of infallibility, which the Church of Rome asserts, would soon be overcome, if you continued to hold Mr. Newman's opinion respecting this doctrine. How soon has that, which you then supposed to be almost impossible—your assent to this monstrous pretension—become more than probable!

It will be superfluous to bring before you further evidence from Scripture, or from early Christian Fathers, in support of the doctrine of justification by faith only, if you are really determined to believe whatever the Romish Church requires you to believe. You fancy that her views are more accordant with reason than those of our Church, and perhaps flatter yourself that all her other doctrines will be found equally reasonable; but if you advance a few steps further on this dangerous ground, you will soon be required to discard reason altogether in spiritual matters. For although you profess that it is your determination to read and study the Holy Scriptures, yet if the texts (as in the case of those quoted in my last letter) are to be interpreted contrary to their natural meaning; in order to support what you call the more rational views of the Council of Trent, what room will be left for the exercise of your reason? Because the Roman Church ministers to the pride of the human heart—because it allows men to retain their idol, —unsanctified reason,—during some part of the way, they

are so gratified with the indulgence that they are willing to cast down that idol, and to worship, during the remainder of their pilgrimage what has been substituted for it, Popish Infallibility ! Strange inconsistency ! Men who are too proud to receive a doctrine which may be distasteful, because humiliating to their reason, even though it have the sanction of, " Thus saith the Lord," are humble enough to receive with blind submission other doctrines, which are not only above their reason, but utterly repugnant to common sense, merely because they have the sanction of—" Thus saith the Pope ! "

Let me, however, hope that you will re-consider this subject. Examine afresh the evidences laid before you in the preceding letters, in order to prove the correctness of the view which our Church takes of the doctrine of man's justification. Feeling the weakness and imperfection of natural reason in regard to spiritual things, pray, with the Apostle : " That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him : the eyes of your understanding being enlightened," so that you may. " behold wondrous things out of (God's) law." *Ephes. i. 17. Psalm cxix. 18.*

Before I proceed to consider the nature of works done *after justification*, I will quote a short passage from the writings of bishop Burnet. It may help to remove the difficulty which you feel in admitting, with our thirteenth Article, that even the apparent good works of the wicked *have the nature of sin*, and cannot therefore render the doers of them worthy of God's favour :—" A great difference is here to be made between an external action, as it is considered in itself, and the same action, as it was done by such a man. An action is called good

from the morality and nature of the action itself ; so actions of justice and charity are in themselves good, whatsoever the doer of them may be ; but actions are considered by God, with relation to him that does them, in another light : his principles, ends, and motives, with all the other circumstances of the action, come into this account ; for unless all these be good, let the action in its own abstracted nature, be ever so good, it cannot render the doer acceptable or meritorious in the sight of God."

With respect to works done after justification, these being the fruits of faith, are pleasing and acceptable to God. But owing to the remains of sin, which exist even in the justified, their very best works are imperfect. They are, indeed, notwithstanding their imperfection acceptable to God, but it is not for any merit in the doers of them, but only through the worthiness of Jesus Christ. They cannot make any amends to God for those transgressions in thought, word, or deed, into which even righteous men frequently fall : " for there is not," says Solomon, " a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." *Eccles.* vii. 20. And even if all their actions were perfect, this would afford no reason for boasting, or for claiming of God, in return for their good works, a glorious inheritance above. Though our heavenly Father has declared that men shall be rewarded *according* to their works, this reward is owing to his free bounty. They can make no claim upon God, in consequence of their services, however long and faithfully they may have served him ; for all which they can do, yea, and far more than they ever will do, belongs of right to him. " Our souls, bodies, time, parts, gifts—all is God's ; and therefore whatsoever we do, we are bound to do it for him, seeing whatsoever we have, we

have received from him. What, therefore, if I should fast my body into a skeleton, and pray my tongue, and hear my ears, to their very stumps? What though I should water my couch continually with my tears, fasten my knees always to the earth by prayer, and fix my eyes constantly into heaven by meditation? What though I should give every thing I have to my poor distressed neighbours, and spend each moment of my time in the immediate worshipping of my glorious Maker? Would any of this be more than I am bound to do? Should not I still be an unprofitable servant? And if I can do no more than is my duty unto God, how can I *merit* any thing by what I do for him? How can he be indebted unto me for my paying of what I owe him?"

It is then owing to the goodness of God, and not to the worthiness of any thing which we can do, that our works are in any degree agreeable to him. He looks upon the duties which we cheerfully and conscientiously perform, with an indulgent eye; and that we may be encouraged to diligence in performing them, he promises that they shall surely be rewarded. It is on his gracious *promise*, and not on any *merit* in our works, that we may rely for a recompence. And it is in reference to the faithfulness of God in fulfilling his promises, that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, says:—"God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love." *Heb.* vi. 10. Righteousness here "refers rather to the truth of the divine promise than to the equity of paying what is due. In this sense there is a celebrated saying of Augustine, which, as containing a memorable sentiment, that holy man declined not repeatedly to employ, and which I think not unworthy of being constantly remembered:—"Faithful is the Lord

who hath made himself our debtor, *not by receiving any thing from us, but by promising us all things.*"

This notion of human merit, which is so flattering to the heart of man, would not be entertained. were he to remember the standard by which actions will be tried. Multitudes live in utter disregard of God's holy Law. They seem neither to fear God, nor to regard man. The Lord's name is often profaned by their unhallowed lips; and his Sabbaths are openly neglected and despised. The duty towards their fellow-creatures is equally disregarded; for disobedience to parents, insubordination, hatred, malice, revenge, impurity, dishonesty, falsehood, the indulgence of a murmuring and covetous disposition, prevail to an awful extent.

Now if those who endeavour to fulfil their duty towards both God and man, compare themselves with the multitude which run into such excess of wickedness, and then complacently decree to themselves a wreath of merit, because they are not like so many other men,—who does not see their error? They forget that the conduct of their fellow-creatures is not the criterion by which God will judge of their own actions. *This is the standard, to which not only actions, but words, and thoughts, and motives must be brought for trial:—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."* *Matt. xxii. 37—39.*

Few persons, it may be supposed, will venture to say or think that, when weighed in such balances, they will not be found wanting. But allowing, for the sake of argument, that some may be found who have kept all these commandments from their youth, what then? They have merely done that which it was their duty to

do : they have only paid the debt which they owed to God, and cannot claim any reward on this account. And when it is also remembered, that whatever sins men have avoided, or whatever duties they have performed, this has been owing to the restraining and assisting grace of God, who will dare to say that his merits entitle him to an incorruptible crown? The most eminent saints are conscious that it is by grace alone, and not by any thing which they have done or can do, that they are what they are. And hence, when they shall have obtained the reward which God hath graciously promised, they will ascribe no merit to themselves, but will acknowledge that they owe every thing to the worthiness of him who hath redeemed them :—

“The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour and power ; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” *Rev.* .iv. 10, 11. If then, on even the improbable supposition, that some men might perfectly obey all God’s commandments, they would still have no reason to claim a reward, on the ground of merit, how unreasonable and absurd must it be to hold such a doctrine, when we know that the best of men come very far short of perfection! Yet unless you believe with the Romish Church, that the good works of true Christians are also their *worthy merits*, and that they *deserve* eternal life on account of them, you are under that Church’s *anathema*; for it is thus decreed by the Council of Trent :—“If any shall say that the good works of a justified man are in such sense the gifts of God, that they are not also his *worthy merits*; or that he, being justified by his

good works, which are wrought by him through the grace of God and the merits of Jesus Christ, of whom he is a living member, does not really *deserve* increase of grace, eternal life, the enjoyment of that eternal life, if he dies in a state of grace, and even an increase of glory; *let him be accursed!*”

How contrary is this to the teaching of God's Word! How many persons fall under the *anathema* of Rome, whom the Lord hath not cursed, but contrariwise declared to be blessed! “David also describeth,” says St. Paul, “the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.” *Rom.* iv. 6. “How,” asks the man of whom God has testified, that he was *perfect* and *upright*, and *one that feared God*, and *eschewed evil*, “How should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. . . . Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.” *Job* ix. 2, 3: xl. 4: xlii. 6. The teaching of our blessed Lord is very different from the doctrine of the Tridentine Council:—“Doth he thank that servant *because he did the things that were commanded him*? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done *all those things which are commanded you*, say, *We are unprofitable servants*; we have done that which *was our duty to do.*” *Luke* xvii. 9, 10.

These texts are clear enough; but the Church of Rome requires that they should be interpreted, or rather perverted, so as to give a very different meaning; and this wresting of the Scripture is justified on the ground, that such meaning is according to the unanimous consent (as she alleges) of the ancient Fathers. The inspired writings are to bend before the authority of a real or pretended tradition. This course was suggested

at the Council of Trent:—"Some," it is stated, "blamed the word to *Impute*, and would have it abolished"—for what reason, do you think? because it was not found in Scripture? oh no! it *is* a Scriptural word, but "because it was not to be found in the Fathers." This exaltation of the Fathers above the Bible, though a very wicked and presumptuous plan, has been of no little service to the cause of Popery. For, as I have already observed, very few persons, comparatively, know any thing of the Fathers, and hence, every Romanist is made to depend entirely on the assertions of his Church. But when a member of that Church has leisure and ability, and the moral courage to examine these writings, to which such confident appeals have been made, he finds how grossly he has been deceived. Although this deception has frequently been exposed in the preceding letters, I will give you a few more quotations from the Fathers, which certainly yield no support to Popish doctrines.

"If a servant," says Theophylact, "does not work, he deserves stripes: but if he work, it is enough that he avoids stripes, and he ought not on this account to claim reward." "The saints," Augustine observes, "ascribe nothing to their merits: every thing will they ascribe solely to thy mercy, O God. . . . When a man sees that whatever good he has, he has not of himself, but of his God, he sees that every thing in him which is praised, is not of his own merits, but of the divine mercy. . . . Let human merits, which perished by Adam, here be silent, and let the grace of God reign by Jesus Christ." "Why is the Church anxious about merits?" Bernard asks, "God has furnished her with a firmer and surer ground of boasting. God cannot deny himself: he will do what he has promised. Thus

there is no reason for asking, by what merits may we hope for blessings: especially when you hear, 'Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake.' It suffices for merit to know, that merits suffice not."

The parable of the labourers, who were sent at different hours of the day to work in the vineyard, is thus interpreted by Ambrose (or by the ancient writer who composed the work attributed to that early Father):—
 "By means of this comparison, our Lord represented the many various modes of calling as pertaining to grace alone, where those who were introduced into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, and made equal to those who had toiled the whole day, doubtless represent the case of those whom the indulgence of God, to command the excellence of grace, has rewarded in the decline of the day and the conclusion of life; not paying *the price of labour, but shedding the riches of his goodness on those whom he chose without works*: in order that even those who bore the heat of the day, and yet received no more than those who came last, may understand that *they received a gift of grace, not the hire of works.*"

Here, you see, that the doctrine of human merits is opposed by the Fathers as well as by the Bible. It might be sufficient to prove, that it is repugnant to Scripture, but I cite some of the opinions of the early Fathers, in order to shew how ridiculous is the appeal which the Romish Church makes to the *unanimous consent* of Antiquity. The tendency of this doctrine is obviously most injurious. Instead of humbling, it exalts men in their own eyes. And no man is in greater danger of falling into the lowest depths of iniquity, than he who is puffed up with a notion of his own righteousness, "The enemy," says Hooker, "that waiteth for all occasions to work our ruin, hath found it harder to

overthrow an humble sinner, than a proud saint. There is no man's case so dangerous as his whom Satan hath persuaded, that his own righteousness shall present him pure and blameless in the sight of God. If we could say, we were not guilty of any thing at all in our consciences (we know ourselves far from this innocency, we cannot say, we know nothing by ourselves; but if we could), should we therefore plead not guilty before the presence of our Judge, that sees further into our hearts than we ourselves can do? If our hands did never offer violence to our brethren, a bloody thought doth prove us murderers before Him: if we had never opened our mouth to utter any scandalous, offensive, or hurtful word, the cry of our secret cogitations is heard in the ears of God. If we did not commit the sins which daily and hourly, either in deed, word, or thought, we do commit; yet in the good things which we do, how many defects are there intermingled! God, in that which is done, respecteth the mind and intention of the doer. Cut off then all those things wherein we have regarded our own glory, those things which men do to please men, and to satisfy our own liking, those things which we do for any by-respect, not sincerely and purely for the love of God, and a small score will serve for the number of our righteous deeds."

LETTER XIV.

WORKS OF SUPEREROGATION—INVOCATION OF SAINTS—
ASCETICISM THE EFFECT OF SPIRITUAL PRIDE.

DEAR SIR,

WHEN men are induced to believe that they can deserve heaven on account of their good works, there will be no difficulty in persuading them that some individuals can, and do perform more than are really necessary. Hence another dangerous error has arisen in, and been obstinately maintained by, the Romish Church : that is, She teaches that we may do and suffer more in this world than justice demands at our hands. A certain quantity of good works is indeed necessary to bring us to heaven ; but all the works which are done beyond that portion are, as regards ourselves, superfluous. These good works, however, are not lost. They may be thrown into the scale, in order to make up for the deficiencies of the less perfect members of the Church of Rome. But they cannot have this effect without the intervention of the Pope, who holds in his hand the key of this spiritual treasury, which consists of the merits of Christ, together with those of the apostles, martyrs, and other saints ! From this magazine of

accumulated merits the Pope of Rome distributes, from time to time, a certain quantity to his obedient children, on certain conditions. Now what is this but to make the saints co-partners with Jesus Christ, in procuring for sinners that remission from punishment which their sins deserve?

What is this but to detract from the all-sufficiency of the Lamb of God, who was slain to take away the sins of the world? Thus is our Blessed Lord dishonoured by those who profess to be his Vicars on earth, and millions are drawn into a fatal delusion. Pride and self-conceit are encouraged. A man who performs numerous pilgrimages, macerates his body by frequent mortifications and self-imposed sufferings; who repeats prayers after prayers, like the Pharisees of old, and is indefatigable in observing those multiplied ordinances and ceremonies which the Roman Church has imposed on her children, may flatter himself that he has not only won the heavenly prize, but has also contributed something towards the redemption of his fellow-creatures from the punishment due to their sins. Thus he deceives himself. And others, who fondly dream of obtaining some advantage from his superabundant works of righteousness, are the victims of a most dangerous error. He deceives himself: for if God has commanded him to perform all those voluntary works, penances, self-inflicted tortures, and such like things, he does no more than it is his duty to do. But if God has not commanded them, he is so far from rendering any benefit to others, that he is only spending his strength and his labour on things which cannot profit even himself. "We may see this evidently in the Jews," says Bishop Beveridge, "in their over-multiplied fasts, and uncommanded sacrifices, which they might have accounted as

so many works of supererogation, wherein they thought they did God good service ; yet what saith he ? *Who hath required these things at your hands ?* And thus doth he say of all works, besides and above his commands : *Who hath required these at your hands ?* As if he should say, I never commanded these things to you, and therefore will never accept of them from you. And thus are all these works of supererogation not good and accepted, because not commanded works ; and therefore is it impossible that any more good works should be performed by us, than what is commanded, seeing nothing that is not commanded can be a good work."

And other members of the Roman Church are equally deceived. They may receive a promise from the occupier of St. Peter's Chair, that the temporal punishment due to their sins shall be partly remitted, if they will visit certain churches, and say a stated number of *pater-nosters* and *ave-marias* before particular shrines, or images of saints ; and they may anxiously and devoutly fulfil the conditions, and then indulge the hope that fifty or a hundred years of sufferings are struck off from the account which is standing against them, but alas ! how vain is their expectation ! Although the Pope may trust, and lead them to trust, in the wealth cast into his spiritual treasury by the superabundant merits of the saints, and may boast of the "multitude of (his) riches ; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." *Ps.* xlix. 6, 7. "Every man," St. Paul declares, "shall bear his own burden. Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." *Gal.* vi. 5 : *1 Cor.* iii. 8.

The folly of expecting that the merits of the saints

can at all avail the sinner, is also exposed by the ancient Fathers :—“ He that cannot make satisfaction, or propitiate God for his own sins, how,” asks St. Basil, “ can he do it for another ? ”

“ Brethren may die for brethren,” says St. Augustine, “ yet the blood of any martyr is not poured out for the forgiveness and remission of their brethren’s sins as he (Christ) did for us.”

“ From the courage of the faithful,” says Leo, “ examples of patience do arise, not the gifts of righteousness. For the death of them all were single deaths, neither did any of them pay another man’s debts by his end : seeing amongst the children of men there is none but the Lord Jesus Christ only, in whom all are crucified, all dead, all buried, all are raised up at the last day.”

Hilary, when commenting on the parable of the ten virgins, of whom five were wise and five foolish, observes :—“ To the foolish they answered, that they could not give them any oil, lest by chance there might not be enough for all ; to wit, that no one can be helped by another’s works and merits, because it is necessary that every one buy oil for his own lamp.”

Thus you see that the Church of Rome has no support either from Scripture, or from the ‘ unanimous consent of the ancient Fathers,’ to which she so often appeals, for her doctrine of the meritoriousness of the works of saints : you see also the awful and blasphemous consequences to which such teaching has led. The sufficiency of the blood of Christ for the remission of sins, and for satisfying *all* the demands which justice had against the sinner, is thus virtually denied. Finite, weak, and imperfect beings must supply what is defective in the atonement and satisfaction made by the

Son of the Most High God! Such are the gross and fatal errors which the Roman Church gradually leads her members to embrace. And such is also the tendency of that modified Romanism, with which some zealous but deluded men are seeking to contaminate the Church of England. The piety and benevolence, the zeal and activity, the moral excellence which appears in the life and conversation of many of those teachers, would make them valuable instruments for promoting the cause of Christ, were their knowledge of the truth commensurate with their talents and devotedness. But unhappily they resemble rather Saul, who lived "a Pharisee after the most straitest sect" of the Jewish religion, than Paul, who counted all things, which he before gloried in, but "loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus;" in whom he desired to be found, not having his own righteousness, which was of the law, but that which was through the faith of Christ, "the righteousness which is of God by faith." By those mistaken persons, "circumstantials," it has been well observed, "have been exaggerated into essentials, and essentials made light of as though they were circumstantials: duties and observances of a positive and vital nature have been disparaged, whilst others of secondary moment have been made of paramount importance. . . . *Fasting* and voluntary *humility*—they hold in wondrous admiration. Not content with attaching an exorbitant importance to abstinence, they ascribe to it a merit before God which Rome herself would hardly avouch:—"O God," they say in one of their prayers, 'who *through their fasting bestowest pardon on the sinner, and rewards on the righteous*; have compassion on thy suppliants, that we, confessing our guilt, may obtain the pardon of our sins, through Jesus

Christ our Lord, Amen.' 'Grant that, as by our excesses we have wounded the *perfection* of our nature, so by giving up ourselves to the medicine of'—what? the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth from all sin, and which is appropriated and applied by the hand of faith? No, but—'to the *medicine of abstinence*, it may be restored, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Now compare this undue importance attached to fasting, with the view which our Church entertains of that duty. The Church of England does not, any more than the New Testament, set aside the observance of fasting. The due use of it she recommends: the abuse of it to purposes of superstition, formalism, and hypocrisy, she denounces. She acknowledges the duty by appointing certain seasons for fasting and abstinence, but she prescribes neither the manner nor the measure of it. Every-person is left to his own conscientious discretion in these respects. And if her members act agreeably to the prayer which she teaches them to use on the First Sunday in Lent, they will use that fasting which God approves:—'Give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to thy honour and glory.' And in the Homily on Fasting, we are taught that:—'To fast with this persuasion of mind, that our fasting and our good works can make us perfect and just men, and finally bring us to heaven, is a devilish persuasion, and that fast is so far off from pleasing God, that it refuseth his mercy, and is altogether derogatory to the merits of Christ's death, and his precious blood-shedding.' . . . This was the sin of the Pharisee. He 'gloried and trusted so much to his works, that he thought himself sure enough without mercy, and that he should come to heaven by

his fasting and other deeds. . . . It is our part to rend our hearts, and not our garments, as we are advertised by the prophet Joel: that is, our sorrow and mourning must be inward in the heart, and not in outward shew only; yea, it is requisite that first, before all things, we cleanse our hearts from sin, and then direct our fast to such an end as God will allow to be good.'”

Here, you see, that what our Church principally regards are, the state of the heart, and the end for which fasting is practised. Where the heart is right, the end will also be so, and the duty will be performed acceptably; but if the heart be unchanged, the end is sure to be wrong, and then fasting and abstinence, however regularly and rigorously performed, will produce no good effect, but rather be a mockery and abomination before God. Where there is a formal and Pharisical spirit, an attempt will be made to “strike a balance between alternate austerity and self-indulgence.” Mortification will be practised on the principle that, “to-day’s indulgence may be compensated for by to-morrow’s austerities; that the licentiousness of the feast-day may be cancelled by the rigour of the fast-day: such mortification resembles the patchwork cloak of the Pharisee, rather than the seamless robe of the Saviour.”

But even when men have renounced the lawful pleasures and enjoyments of this life, their mortifications are no proof that their minds are truly humbled before God. That idol, *self*, may still exist in the heart; and the retired ascetic may be as much exalted in his own eyes, as the man who is most ambitious of, and who has succeeded in obtaining, the praise and acclamations of the world, “That which is pre-eminently the sin of our ghostly enemy—spiritual wickedness—may flourish and abound in the soul, while the body is torn by flagella-

tions, and macerated by continual self-inflicted tortures. . . . *Spiritual* self-denial is what man hates. Yet some talk as if all self-denial consisted in fasting, in meagre days, in fleshly austerities. But there is a self-denial—how much more painful and arduous than those—how much more nauseous to man's proud spirit,—and that is, the denial of his secret tempers, affections, passions, lusts. . . . There may be a great deal of bodily austerity which is no better than was that of the Jewish Pharisee, than is that of the Hindoo fakeer. It may be nothing else but the opiate for a guilty conscience, or the food of spiritual pride.”

Since so much efficacy is ascribed to the merits of saints, we need not wonder that, where Popery has undisputed power, and where the darkness and ignorance which it loves prevails, so many thousand votaries are found praying and making their offerings before the shrines of departed saints. The scenes which were witnessed in our own country a few centuries ago, at the shrine of Thomas à Becket, are not very dissimilar to what are frequently seen in Popish countries at the present day. “They raised his body once a year; and the day on which this ceremony was performed, which was called the day of his translation, was a general holiday: every fiftieth year there was celebrated a jubilee to his honour, which lasted fifteen days: *plenary indulgences were then granted to all that visited his tomb*; and a hundred thousand pilgrims have been registered at a time in Canterbury. The devotion towards him had quite effaced in that place the adoration of the Deity; nay, even that of the Virgin. *At God's altar, for instance, there were offered in one year, three pounds, two shillings and sixpence; at the Virgin's, sixty three pounds, five shillings and sixpence: at St. THOMAS'S,*

eight hundred and thirty-two pounds, twelve shillings and threepence. But next year the disproportion was still greater: *there was not a penny offered at God's altar; the Virgin's gained only four pounds, one shilling and eightpence; but St. THOMAS had got, for his share, NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FOUR POUNDS, SIX SHILLINGS AND THREE-PENCE."*

Do not suppose, I repeat, that this preference which members of the Roman Church gave to the shrine of a saint, rather than to the altar of God, was confined to the dark ages. It is the same in the present enlightened times. For it matters not how much learning may increase, or how flourishing may be the state of arts and sciences, if the knowledge of Him whom to know is eternal life be obscured. In countries, therefore, where Popery has succeeded in concealing the light of the Gospel, under a load of vain superstitions and cunningly-devised fables, the same fatal delusion prevails. Sinners are drawn away from the only fountain in which their sins could be washed away, and led to ask help of those who were themselves sinners. The blessed Virgin, who owed her blessedness not to her own merits, but to faith in God her Saviour, seems to occupy that pre-eminent place in other kingdoms which Thomas à Becket once held in England. "The shrines dedicated to the Virgin," says a recent traveller in Italy, "are found in almost every corner and turning: she may be called the patron Saint of Rome, for her aid is much more frequently invoked than that of her Blessed Son. In many of the churches we have entered, her altar is adorned with innumerable small pictures or representations of deliverances from danger, supposed to be wrought by the aid of the Virgin; thus she is sometimes called Mary the Helpful, but even this is one of

the least objectionable appellations she receives. The confraternity of the Sacred Rosary are commanded to recite once a week "the Mary Psalter," which contains the following awful perversion of Holy Scripture ; *'In thee, O Lady, have I hoped, let me never be confounded. Receive me into thy favour, incline to me thine ear. Into thine hand, O Lady, I commend my spirit. Bring unto our Lady, O ye sons of God, bring praise and worship unto our Lady. Let Mary arise, and let all her enemies be scattered. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lady of hosts. It is a good thing to give thanks and confess to the Virgin, and sing praises unto our Lady, &c.'*

In other places of this "Mary Psalter" are other expressions which cannot be uttered without blasphemy : —" Blessed are they whose hearts love thee, O Virgin Mary ; their sins shall be mercifully blotted out by thee. . . . Incline thou the countenance of God upon us ; compel him to have mercy upon sinners. . . . The Lord is a God of *vengeance* ; but THOU, O Mother of Mercy, bendest to be *merciful*, . . . O Lady, hear my voice. Let thine ears be attent to the voice of thy praise and glorifying. . . . Rescue me in the evil day ; and, in the day of death, forget not my soul. Carry me into the haven of safety : let my name be enrolled among the just."

The preceding gross and blasphemous prostitutions of Scripture are not taken from the writings of some obscure and illiterate fanatic, but from the works of the eminent and learned Cardinal Bonaventura. And did his Church ever repudiate his blasphemy ? By no means. It raised him to the honour and dignity of a Saint, and gave its *infallible* sanction to his writings ; for Pope Sixtus declares, in the diploma of his canonization, that He so wrote on divine subjects, that the

Holy Spirit seems to have spoken in him." "The decretal letters, A.D. 1588," says Mr. Tyler, "pronounced him to be an acknowledged doctor of Holy Church, directing his authority to be cited and employed in all places of education, and in all ecclesiastical discussions and studies. In these documents Bonaventura is called the Seraphic Doctor; and I repeat my doubt whether it is possible for any human authority to give a more full, entire, and unreserved sanction to the works of any human being, than the Church of Rome has given to the writings of Bonaventura."

This perverted worship, this vain trust in the saints, this invasion of Christ's office of sole Mediator between God and man, this derogation from the honour and glory of God and his Blessed Son—all derive their origin from the supposed merits of the saints. Well, therefore, might our veritable Reformers, who, being "mighty in the Scriptures," knew the insufficiency of men even to think a good thought, so constantly and firmly protest against the fond dream of meritorious works in the sight of a pure and righteous God. "Can we think a good thought of ourselves?" says bishop Coverdale, "Is it not God which worketh in us both the will and the deed? When God rewardeth any good work, doth he not crown his own gifts in us? Stop ye your mouth then, and acknowledge yourself to be in God's danger, and in his debt. Why boast ye of your merits, against the doctrine of God's word? Why grant ye not with St. Luke, whom ye allege yourself, that 'when ye have done all such things as are commanded you, ye are an unprofitable servant?' and with St. Paul, that 'the pains taken in this life are not worthy of the glory for to come?' Do ye not say yourself also these words: 'We must think and surely believe, that all cometh of

Christ's liberality, which freely did call us and love us, before we loved him?' What practice then of any worldly prince can prove this truth to be false? Your own words and sentences destroy your doctrine of merits. Follow St. Augustine's counsel then, and 'boast not of men's merits; but let the grace of God which reigneth through Jesus Christ, have all the pre-eminence.' "

"There was difference," says bishop Latimer, "betwixt her (the Virgin Mary) and Christ; and I will give as little to her as I can (doing her no wrong), rather than Christ, her Son and Saviour shall lack any parcel of his glory: and I am sure that our lady will not be displeased with me for so doing; for our lady sought his glory here upon earth; she would not defraud him now in heaven. But some are so superstitiously religious, or so religiously superstitious, so preposterously devout towards our lady, as though there could not be too much given her. Such are zeals without knowledge and judgment, to our lady's displeasure. No doubt our lady was, through the goodness of God, a good and a gracious creature, a devout handmaid of the Lord, endued with singular gifts and graces from above, which, through the help of God, she used to God's pleasure, *according to her duty*; so giving us ensample to do likewise; so that all the goodness that she had, she had it not of herself, but of God, the author of all goodness. . . . To prove Christ her Saviour, to make Christ a *whole Saviour* of all that be or shall be saved, I reasoned after this manner: that either she was a sinner, or no sinner; there is no mean. If she were a sinner, then she was redeemed or delivered from sin by Christ, as other sinners be: if she were no sinner, then she was

preserved from sin by Christ, so that Christ saved her, and was her necessary Saviour whether she sinned or no."

This error respecting the superabundant merits of the saints contaminates almost every prayer which is offered by the Romish Church, and makes the offering an insult to Him, whose merits are the only ground of our acceptance with God. For in most of them either no reference whatever is made to the merits of Christ, or the merits of the saint, named in the prayer, occupy the most prominent place.

In the following passages from the Roman Breviary, the errors of Popery, respecting the saints, may be traced from the beginning. The memory and the example of the saints were first celebrated and commended at certain seasons: then the saints themselves were apostrophized, or addressed as though they could hear the speakers, (and it may also be observed that the apostrophizing of the Cross led progressively to the invocation of it :) next followed supplications to God that he would allow his saints to pray for the petitioners: then the request is made, that the welfare of the petitioners, the pardon of their sins, their meetness for a better country may be aided, and their final salvation be secured, *by the merits of the saints*. A step further brings us to a direct invocation of the saints themselves to intercede for sinners: and at length they are implored to grant the prayers of their suppliants, and to loose them from their sins, in precisely the same terms which we use when we pray to God himself. You will see how gradual was the declension from pure and scriptural worship to that adoration and invocation of saints, which are due to God alone. The first prayer is beautiful and unexceptionable:—"Merciful Lord, we beseech thee to cast thy bright beams of light upon thy Church, that it being

enlightened by the doctrine of the Apostle and Evangelist St. John, may so walk in the light of thy truth, that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life, through Jesus our Lord. Amen."

"Whom have ye seen, ye shepherds? Say ye, tell ye, who hath appeared on the earth? Say ye, what saw ye? Announce to us the nativity of Christ. . . . Bend thy bows, thou lofty tree (the Cross) worthy wast thou alone to bear the victim of the world. . . . We beseech thee, Almighty God, that he whose feast we are about to celebrate *may implore thy aid for us*. . . . That *he may be for us a perpetual intercessor*. . . . Let the intercession of the blessed Anthony the Abbot commend us, that what we cannot effect by our own merits, we may obtain *by his patronage*; through the Lord. . . . Mercifully grant that we who are pressed down by the weight of our sins, may by his (St. Gregory's) prayers with Thee, be raised up. . . . Grant, we beseech Thee, that by his (Nicolas') merits and prayers we may be set free from the fires of hell, through the Lord. . . . We beseech Thee, O Lord, that we may be *succoured by the merits* of the husband of thy most holy mother, as that what we cannot obtain by our own power, may be granted to us *by his intercession*. . . . Mercifully hear us, and grant that *by the merits of both* (Peter and Paul) we may obtain *the glory of eternity*. . . . O Blessed Ambrose, thou lover of the divine law, *deprecate* for us (or *intercede for us* with) the Son of God. . . . By the office of thy prayer, *wash our guilt*; drive away the contagion of evil: removing the weariness of life. The bands of thy (Stephen's) hallowed body are already loosed: loose thou us from the bands of the world, by the love of the Son of God (or by the gift of God Most High). . . . O Peter, blessed shepherd, *of thy*

mercy receive the prayers of us who supplicate, and loose by thy word the bands of our sins, thou to whom is given the power of opening heaven to the earth, and of shutting it when open."

From the Roman Breviary—on St. John's Day.

"With the prayers of our hearts we implore,
Hear the voices of your supplicants.
Ye who shut the temples of heaven,
And loose its bars by a word,
Command ye us, who are guilty
To be released from our sins, we pray.
Ye whose commands forthwith
Sickness and health feel,
Heal our languid minds,
Increase us in virtues, &c."

From Hymns addressed to Joseph, on March 19th.

"Thee, Joseph, let the companies of heaven celebrate ; thee let all the choirs of christian people resound : who, bright in merits, wast joined in chaste covepant with the renowned Virgin. . . . O Trinity, most High, spare us who pray ; grant us to reach heaven *by the merits of Joseph*, that at length we may perpetually offer to thee a grateful song. O Joseph, the glory of those in heaven, and the sure hope of our life, and the safeguard of the world, *benignly accept the praises which we joyfully sing to thee*. . . . Perpetual praise to the most High Trinity, who granting to thee honours on high, give to us, *by thy merits*, the joys of a blessed life. . . . He whom we, the faithful, *worship* with joy, whose exalted triumphs we celebrate, Joseph on this day *obtained by merits the joys of eternal life*. . . . Him, therefore, reigning *let us all importune*, that he *would be present with us*, and that he obtaining pardon of our transgressions, *would assign to us the rewards of peace on high*."

You here see what fatal errors, in doctrine and practice, the vain notion that any works of man can atone for sin, and purchase heaven, has produced. The atonement of Jesus Christ seems to be forgotten ; or, if remembered, appears to be regarded only as an insufficient satisfaction, unless the merits of the saints be added to it. The doctrine of justification by faith alone, truly received, and stedfastly held, is an effectual barrier against the progress of such errors : for you will invariably find that in proportion as men recede from this doctrine, in that proportion they magnify the efficacy of human merits, and derogate from the perfect atonement made, *once for all*, by the Lamb of God. They are thus gradually preparing to embrace all the anti-scriptural dogmas of the Romish Church. Read the following extracts from a work, prepared by the present leader of the Romanizing party, for the use of his disciples ; and if you know any persons who take delight in, or think themselves edified by, reading such publications, mark their future course : you may rely upon it they will ere long be members of the Roman Church.

“ The most precious of all treasures which thou canst now lay up consists in good works and acts of penitence ; since that is *the precious coin which enables us to gain acquittance of our debts to God's justice, to satisfy for our sins, to obtain His grace and His love, to free us from hell, and to purchase Heaven. . . . What atonement, what amends, what compensation makest thou to the righteous judgment of God ? Nevertheless it is absolutely needful that thou make some, either in this world or in the next. It is necessary thou shouldst make some thyself with thine own hands. . . . We consent with willing heart at this holy season, to impose on ourselves moreover voluntary sufferings, to appease Thy*

Justice. . . . that so these fasts . . . so needful to us for the redeeming the sins of which we have been guilty, and obtaining more surely Thy Divine Mercy, may make us pleasing both in body and soul to the eyes of Thy Adorable Majesty, &c. . . . Pour Thy Blessings also upon our works ; that so we, expiating the sins of which we are guilty, by the sharp and voluntary penitence wherewith Thou dost Thyself inspire us, &c. . . . And truly, justice, obedience, strength, humility, and sacrifice are found in her (the virtue of patience,) because she is a real satisfaction for sins. . . . O my God ! purify Thyself the victim, by the fire of Thy Love, that as it may be more well-pleasing unto Thee, and that uniting my sacrifice to That which Thou dost this day offer upon the Cross, it may be more worthy of being presented to Thee. . . . Grant us grace to repair it (the dignity of our condition) again by our fasts, by our mortifications, and by our repentance, which we unite to Thy sufferings, that they may be found worthy, &c."

Such being the estimation in which Dr. Pusey holds the good works and voluntary sufferings of men, it is natural that he should highly extol, and hold up to the admiration of his readers, the example of certain ascetics who, by their austerities, accumulated a large stock of that *precious coin* by which (he tells us) we may buy admission to heaven and freedom from hell. Those of his readers who are anxious to descend into the vale of (what the Bible teaches us, is Pharisaical pride, but which Dr. Pusey calls) humility, are furnished with ample instructions in various works which the learned Professor has adapted for their use. And if they aim at a very high degree of sanctity, they have only to follow the example of certain English Saints, whose lives they may read and meditate upon, in a series of

volumes that have been published for their edification. I will transcribe a few passages from the Life of St. Edmund of Canterbury, from which you may learn how *this precious coin* for opening heaven and shutting hell is to be obtained.

“ He seemed hardly to allow himself the repose of entire sleep. For though he had in his chamber a bed furnished in the usual manner, yet he did not sleep in it, but lay on a bench at the foot of it, or else on the ground. . . . He rose at midnight to matins. . . . He never returned to his couch, even such as it was, after he had once risen, but spent the time which remained till daylight in prayer, weeping and groaning before the altar of the blessed Virgin, in the same Church, and then betook himself to the schools with the rest. In short, he could never be said to sleep; but if nature was sometimes overcome during his long vigils, he would lean his head against the wall, and obtain a few moments of repose as he sat or knelt. . . . Being continually in prayer, he adopted laborious postures, and those of three degrees. First, he knelt, or rather was *continually rising, and falling on his knees, as it were knocking at the gate of heaven.* This always with the bare knee on the ground, so that *one of them was ever wounded and bleeding, while the other was covered with a protuberance of hard callous flesh.* When he had no longer the strength to rise, he continued on his knees, but prostrating his whole body at intervals, on the ground. And lastly, when too much exhausted to continue this motion, he was *fain to content himself with bowing his head repeatedly.*”

“ Is this,” Mr. Crosthwaite exclaims, “ Is this Christianity? Is one to believe that the Father of Mercies delights in these barbarous self-inflictions? . . . Would

his knockings, and prostrations, and bowings, his one knee bleeding and the other callous with continual blows—his wretched body and mind exhausted and crazed from want of rest, would such miserable inventions of a fanatical Pharisaism, goaded perhaps to madness by an accusing conscience, advance him in the eyes of the God of Love? How can such torments avail (however Dr. Pusey may labour to persuade his deluded followers to the contrary) to expiate guilt and wash away sins? It is not out of humility these tortures are inflicted. They are not an expression of sorrow and contrition. They are a price paid down for a certain benefit and reward:—for fame, and power, and influence, amongst the deluded people who are deceived into reverencing those who practise them. . . . This is the terrible price the ascetic pays for popularity, and admiration, and power. And worse than all,—with this protracted suicide he expects (and Dr. Pusey teaches him to expect it) to be able to satisfy the Divine displeasure—to make an atonement to the Divine justice,—to wash away his sins—to purchase heaven, and save himself from hell. Is this Christianity? Is it catholicity? Does it bear the remotest resemblance to either the one or the other?”

It is a relief to turn from such specimens of fanaticism and delusion, to the calm, sober, scriptural examples of our venerable Reformers. How different their teaching, as well as their lives and conversation, from that which Dr. Pusey would fain persuade us is the perfection of wisdom and sanctity! Compare his language, when inculcating the meritoriousness of works, with the following passages from the writings of the excellent Bishop Latimer:—“*Reward.* This word soundeth as though we should merit somewhat by our

own works: for reward and merit are correspondent, one followeth the other; when I have merited, then I ought to have my reward. But we shall not think so: for ye must understand, that all our works are imperfect; we cannot do them so perfectly as the law requireth, because of our flesh, which ever letteth us. Wherefore is the kingdom of God then called a reward? Because it is merited by Christ: for as touching our salvation and eternal life, it must be merited, but not by our own works, but only by the merits of our Saviour Christ. . . . The faithful be ever hungry, they ever think they be not well; they be sore behind the hand: and so do not the hypocrites, for they have *opera supererogationis*; they have so much that they are able to sell unto other men too, and bring them to heaven. . . . The merit-mongers, which esteem their own works so much, that they think heaven scant sufficient to recompense their good deeds; namely, for putting themselves to pain with saying our Lady's Psalter, and gadding on pilgrimage, and such like trifles. These are the murmurers; for they think themselves holier than all the world, and therefore worthy to receive a greater reward than other men. But such men are much deceived. . . . For man's salvation cannot be gotten by any work; because the Scripture saith, *Vita æterna donum Dei*; 'Life everlasting is the *gift* of God.' True it is, that God requireth good works of us, and commandeth us to avoid all wickedness. But for all that we may not do our good works to the end to get heaven withal; but rather to shew ourselves thankful for that which Christ hath done for us, who with his passion hath opened heaven unto all believers. . . . As Christ did them (good works) they merit; for he did them perfectly, as they ought to be done; but as we do them

they condemn ; and yet the lack is not in the law, but in us. The law for itself is holy and good, but we are not able to keep it : and therefore we must seek our righteousness, not in the law, but in Christ, which hath fulfilled that same, and given us freely his fulfilling."

" A strange and a strong delusion it is," says Hooker, " wherewith the Man of Sin hath bewitched the world ; a forcible spirit of error it must needs be, which hath brought men to such a senseless and unreasonable persuasion as this is ; not only that men clothed with mortality and sin, as we ourselves are, can do God so much service as shall be able to make a full and perfect satisfaction before the tribunal seat of God for their own sins, yea, a great deal more than is sufficient for themselves ; but also that a man at the hands of a Bishop or a Pope, for such or such a price, may buy the overplus of other men's merits, purchase the fruits of other men's labours, and build his soul by another man's faith. Is not this man drowned in the gall of bitterness ? Is his heart right in the sight of God ? Can he have any part or fellowship with Peter, who thinketh so vilely of building the precious Temple of the Holy Ghost ? "

Into such a fatal delusion no humble, sincere, well-instructed member of the Church of England will be in danger of falling, if he only take heed to and ever hold fast the doctrines which she propounds, and understands them—not in a non-natural sense—but according to common sense—according to that meaning for which they evidently have the warrant of Holy Scripture. I will now conclude this letter with that Article of our Church, which so explicitly condemns the dangerous teaching of the Roman Church respecting men's works.

Compare it with the sacred Oracles of truth, and you will find this Article in every point most scriptural.

“ Voluntary works, besides, over and above God’s commandments, which they call works, of Supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety: for by them men do declare, that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake, than of bounden duty is required: whereas Christ saith plainly, When ye have done all that are commanded to you, say, We are unprofitable servants.”

LETTER XV.

PURGATORY—PRAYING FOR, AND COMMEMORATION OF
THE DEAD—THE PURGATORY TO WHICH GOD'S WORD
DIRECTS THE SINNER.

DEAR SIR,

As the letters which I have written to you during the last month, contain "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little"—upon the subject of human merits, I was afraid they might weary you ; but I am glad to find that your long silence is not to be construed into a wish for no further correspondence. You tell me that you have perused several times my four or five preceding letters, and have earnestly sought direction from Him who alone can infallibly guide you into the right way,—even the Spirit of truth ; and I am therefore encouraged to proceed in the examination of the *new* tenets of the Roman Church, in the hope that you will, by comparing them with the doctrines of our Church, be not only almost, but altogether persuaded of the extreme folly and danger of forsaking a scriptural for an obviously anti-scriptural Church. It would, indeed, grieve me to see one, who has long had the opportunity of partaking of the best provisions in abundance at home, wandering into a far country that he may

obtain such food as may please a sickly appetite, but can afford no substantial nourishment. With reference to your contemplated secession, I would say, in the words of good bishop Hall :—“ When lewd and debauched persons drop away from us, we lament their loss, not our own ; but when men of worth leave us, it is not their loss more than ours ; with so much more indignation must we need think of those cheaters (for so I construe St. Paul’s κλεῖται) that would fain win you from us with mere tricks of mis-suggestion : the attempt whereof hath given occasion to these warm lines, which my true zeal for your safety hath drawn from me.”

I rejoice that you admit that the authority of the Word of God is superior to that of either Pope or Councils, and that the opinions of the Fathers ought to be tried by that only infallible standard. So long as you maintain this, I shall have no fear of your becoming a Romanist. Had Mr. Newman maintained the paramount authority of Holy Scripture, and tried every doctrine submitted to him, by that divine standard, he would not have renounced our pure and apostolical Church. But he set up tradition above the inspired writings, and having thus made void the law of God by leaning on the inventions of men, he naturally sunk under a “ strong delusion,” and was permitted “ to believe a lie.” “ When the sense of Scripture,” says he, “ as interpreted by reason, is contrary to the sense given to it by Catholic antiquity ”—by which antiquity he means, as I have before hinted, *the dark ages*—“ we ought to side with the latter.” Similar language is used by the organ of the Romanizing party :—“ The words he reads,’ observes the British Critic, ‘ are heavenly, but the sense he fixes upon them is the result of the mere exercise of his natural powers of mind. He

wants the dogma, the *Church's traditional divinely inspired sense of the Bible, to make it really a revelation to him.*' Monstrous recklessness and hardihood of error! This writer would actually fling us back upon utter scepticism, if we will not bend our neck to the yoke of ecclesiastical despotism. . . . This is quite to sink the Bible in the estimation of the recipient: for by placing the Church and tradition between him and the book, it makes them and not it the standard of faith to him. . . . Nor is it a libel against the devout Romanist, to say, nor say we it in bitterness, but in sorrow, that with him the authority of his Church, i. e. the teaching of his priest (for practically the priest is the Church to the great mass of Rome's children) is quite paramount to the authority of the word of God. With him the question is not, What saith the Scripture? but, what saith the Church? What say the clergy? . . . But more than this, it puts a shameful indignity on the divine Word to represent it as so enigmatical and unintelligible; as though it were a *mystification* and not a *revelation* of the truth of God. The Gospel is given to make men wise unto salvation. It is sent, as it was preached, to the poor. . . . The common people heard Christ and his apostles gladly, and understood him—cannot people now understand what is written? Could not Paul and Peter, and John, &c. express themselves intelligibly? Well may a man stop and tremble before he dares impute indistinctness to the teaching of the Spirit of truth."

Keep firmly then to this principle, that the Bible is paramount to every other authority—the Bible, not merely in the hand, or on the lips, but the Bible in such wise heard, read, marked, and inwardly digested, that by patience and comfort of that holy word, you may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of ever-

lasting life, and you will be safe. "Give due reverence to ecclesiastical antiquity—to primitive creeds and confessions of faith—to the authorised ministrations of the stewards of God's mysteries—to the order and the decisions of our faithful Church: yet let not any of these lead you from, but lead you to, that Word, 'which liveth and abideth for ever:'" and you will not be likely to follow Mr. Newman's unhappy course. It is only when men begin to set the authority of the Church above God's authority, and to hear the voice of the Church, speaking rather through the traditions and commandments of men than through the Bible, that they are in danger of becoming the slaves of Rome. To that Word, then, I proceed to bring some other doctrines which the Romanists are required to believe. These may all, or nearly all, be traced to the error which the Roman Church maintains respecting man's justification before God.

Purgatory. In order that you may fully understand the meaning of this word, I will state the definition of it in the words of one of the most learned and eminent Popish writers:—"Purgatory is a certain place, in which, as in a prison, the souls are purged after this life, which were not fully purged in this life; to wit, that so they may be able to enter into heaven, where no unclean thing enters in."

The Council of Trent has decreed:—"That there is a purgatory, and that the souls detained there are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the sacrifices of the acceptable altar. . . . If any one say, that after the grace of justification received, the fault is so pardoned to every penitent sinner, and the guilt of eternal punishment is so blotted out, that there remains no guilt of temporal punishment to be

done away in this world, or that which is to come in purgatory, before the passage can be opened into heaven, let him be accursed." "I constantly hold," it is declared in the Creed of Pius IV., "that there is a purgatory; and that the souls detained there are assisted by the prayers of the faithful."

From these decrees and definitions we learn, that men, even after their sins are pardoned, will be subjected to torments for a time proportionate to their crimes, before they can be admitted into heaven. The penalty of eternal punishment is remitted, but the guilt contracted by sin must be purged away either by punishment in this world, or horrible torments, for a certain period, beyond the grave. This doctrine being devoutly believed, it is not surprising that men are willing to do and to suffer much, in order to escape the temporal punishment which awaits them. Hence, after they have confessed to their spiritual directors, and received absolution, they then perform certain works of mortification, charity, &c. which, they are told, will satisfy God, and diminish, if not altogether prevent, the punishment due to their guilt. The priest cannot, however, tell his penitents whether they have performed enough to cancel the debt which stands against them, and therefore, they must go to their graves uncertain, whether they may not have to endure the terrible fires of Purgatory for many hundred years. But in order to afford them some consolation under this uncertainty, they are taught that their souls, while in Purgatory, may be assisted by the prayers of the faithful, and especially by "the sacrifices of the acceptable altar." This, it must be allowed, was one of the most profitable doctrines which Popery has invented. Multitudes, when under the fear of death and the torments of Purgatory, have gladly bequeathed

their estates, to purchase prayers and masses for their deliverance from torment. And forcible appeals can be made to the hearts of the survivors, in behalf of their suffering^s relatives, that they may cause prayers and masses to be offered for this charitable purpose.

Some writers have thought this fiction of Purgatory so very absurd that it hardly deserves a serious refutation. But when it is considered what a long train of evils it carries along with it, and how firmly it is believed by millions of our fellow-creatures, it surely deserves some notice. Indeed, as a learned writer has observed;—"When the expiation of sins is sought elsewhere than in the blood of Christ, and satisfaction is transferred to others, silence were most perilous. We are bound, therefore, to raise our voice to its highest pitch, and cry aloud that Purgatory is a deadly device of Satan; that it makes void the cross of Christ; that it offers intolerable insult to the divine mercy; that it undermines and overthrows our faith. For what is this Purgatory but the satisfaction for sin paid after death by the souls of the dead? Hence when this idea of satisfaction is refuted, purgatory itself is forthwith completely overturned. But if it is perfectly clear . . . that the blood of Christ is the only satisfaction, expiation, and cleansing for the sins of believers, what remains but to hold, that purgatory is mere blasphemy, horrid blasphemy against Christ?"

Let us, however, inquire whether God's Word affords any support or not to the teaching of the Church of Rome on this point. Rome says that souls in Purgatory may be assisted by the prayers of the faithful and by masses: the Bible says respecting the dead:—"Their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now

perished ; *neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.*" Eccles. ix. 6.

There are only two places for the reception of the souls of men after death, as far as we can discover from the language of Scripture : but Popery has invented (or rather, borrowed from the heathen Greeks and Romans) a third place, which it calls Purgatory. "Wide is the gate," says our Blessed Lord, "and broad is the way, that leadeth *to destruction*, and many there be which go in thereat ; Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth *unto life*, and few there be that find it." *Matt.* vii. 13, 14. As there are only two classes of sinners—penitent and believing, and impenitent and unbelieving—so we find that only two places for their reception after death are mentioned by inspired writers, and by Him who will pronounce upon all men the irrevocable sentence. Believers will be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, and will join the assembly of blessed spirits, and unbelievers will be cast into outer darkness. This will take place immediately after death. "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." *Luke* xxiii. 43. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them." *Rev.* xiv. 13.

It may be objected, that in the two classes into which the whole world is divided, some will be much better than others, and some far more heinous transgressors than others ; and that surely God will make a difference both in rewards and punishments. To this it is answered, that there is no need to invent another place of torment, in order to render to every man according to his deeds. They who have lived most righteously will be abun-

dantly satisfied with the possession of heaven, and will be so far from envying others, who had been less devoted servants of their God, the enjoyment of their inheritance, that they will be always praising Him for the undeserved mercy extended to themselves. Those who will then shine as stars of the first magnitude and glory, will ever feel that it was entirely owing to the grace of God that they were enabled to glorify Him on earth, and that to the same grace is owing their exaltation in heaven. And others, who may possess a smaller portion of happiness and glory, will also be abundantly satisfied ; for each will receive as much as he is capable of enjoying.

The gold and silver, by which are signified the children of God, or true believers, will be purified while they are on earth, and will have no need of the fires of Purgatory to render them fit for admission into the heavenly Temple. There will be no spot of pollution found on the garments of believers ; for they wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb ; and they are, therefore, at the moment of their departure from this world, meet for a blessed inheritance. For as St. John declares :—“ The blood of Jesus Christ his Son *cleanseth us from all sin*. . . . If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to *cleanse us from all unrighteousness*.” 1 John i. 7, 9. To say that the soul, which hath come by faith to Jesus Christ, the Fountain opened “ for sin and for all uncleanness,” must afterwards be further cleansed by the fires of Purgatory, is to deny the sufficiency of Christ’s atoning blood : and to maintain that such a soul may be delivered from a state of torment, and carried into Abraham’s bosom by means of the prayers and masses, and good works of others, is to account the Sacrifice of

the Lamb of God an imperfect work : but it is declared in Scripture :—“ *By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*” *Heb. x. 14.* “ He that heareth my word,” says our divine Lord, “ and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation : *but is passed from death unto life.*” *John v. 24.* And therefore the Apostle saith :—“ I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ.” *Phil. i. 23.* “ So that St. Paul reckoned verily upon it,” observes bishop Beveridge, “ that so soon as ever he was dead he should be with Christ, no sooner *absent from the body than present with the Lord.* Whereas this Romish doctrine about purgatory bids him not to be so hasty, for he might depart and yet not be with Christ ; he might pass from death and yet not to life : he might and must be absent from the body a good while before he be present with the Lord : he might go from earth yet not to heaven, but to purgatory, a place St. Paul never dreamed of. So that this doctrine directly contradicts the Scripture. The Scriptures say, *we shall pass from death to life* ; this doctrine saith we shall not pass from death to life, but to purgatory : the Scripture, that when we are *absent from the body* we are *present with the Lord* : but this doctrine, when we are absent from the body we are not present with the Lord : the Scripture, that *when we depart we shall be with Christ* ; this doctrine, that when we depart we shall be in purgatory : the Scripture, that we must go directly from earth to heaven ; but this doctrine, that we must go about by purgatory, first going down from life to death, then from death to purgatory, and from purgatory to heaven.”

This Popish notion is, you will perceive, as contrary

to the Bible as is the doctrine of justification partly by works, on which it depends ; and yet Romish writers endeavour to enlist some passages from God's word on the side of this blasphemous doctrine—I call it blasphemous, because it directly tends to destroy the efficacy of Christ's atonement, by mingling the imperfect works of sinful men with the finished work of the Saviour. They fancy that there is a reference to purgatory in the declaration of Christ ; that the sin against the Holy Ghost will not be forgiven either in this world, or in that which is to come. Here, say they, is an intimation that other sins will be forgiven *hereafter*. Now it is evident that our Lord here speaks of the *guilt* of sin ; but the Romanists acknowledge that they, who go into purgatory, have already had the guilt of their sins remitted ; this passage therefore affords no support to this vain notion. Besides, the words “ shall not be forgiven either in this world or in that which is to come,” mean only that such a sin will *never* be forgiven, as you will plainly see by comparing them with the parallel passage in Mark iii.—“ hath *never* forgiveness.”

Another passage is brought forward in support of this fiction from the fifth of St. Matthew. The Saviour is exhorting his hearers to seek peace and reconciliation with an adversary, lest they should be cast into prison and there remain until they had paid the uttermost farthing of the penalty, which the judge would impose upon them. It is here assumed that the judge signifies God, the adversary the devil, and the prison purgatory ! To such strained and fanciful interpretations are they driven, in order to support this unscriptural doctrine. Common sense revolts from these perversions of God's holy word. But the Apostle Paul is also cited to give his testimony in favour of this very lucrative

dogma :—“The fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss ; but he himself shall be saved ; yet so as by fire.” 1 *Cor.* iii. 14, 15. Whose works will be tried by fire? *Every man’s.* Then the greatest saints on earth, including the Apostles themselves, would have to go into purgatory. Does the Romish Church believe that such eminent saints would have to stay in that place of torment, until their defilements were purged away? Surely not : for then what would become of the doctrine of supererogation? How can any saints, however exalted, add any thing to the treasury of merits of which the Pope holds the key, if they have not merits sufficient to save themselves from purgatory?

The Apostle here uses metaphorical language, and compares works, doctrines and devices of men, to wood, hay, and stubble which cannot bear to be tried by fire ; but pure doctrines and their fruits resemble gold and silver, which will endure the severest ordeal. The former will perish *in the great day of the Lord*, when all the works of men shall be tried *as by fire*, by the Spirit of God ; but the latter will then appear still more glorious. “This,” says an eminent Commentator, “it will not be difficult to understand, if we consider of what kind of persons he speaks. For he designates them builders of the Church, who, retaining the proper foundation, build different materials upon it : that is, who, not abandoning the principal and necessary articles of faith, err in minor and less perilous matters, mingling their own fictions with the word of God. Such, I say, must suffer the loss of their work by the destruction of their fictions. They themselves, however, are saved, yet so as by fire ; that is, not that their ignorance and delusions are approved by the Lord, but they are puri-

fied from them by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. All those, accordingly, who have tainted the golden purity of the divine word with the pollution of purgatory, must necessarily suffer the loss of their work."

As then Scripture will not supply any foundation, on which this fanciful edifice of purgatory may stand, the Church of Rome must have recourse to some other authority; and therefore she appeals to antiquity. Here, indeed, she will find support, for there is no doubt that in ancient times a belief in purgatory was entertained. Writers, whose works are held in very great estimation by the learned world, frequently allude to purgatory. But, unfortunately, these writers were heathens. The poet Homer, who flourished eight or nine hundred years before the birth of Christ, speaks of a purgatory, in which the souls of men are tormented for a time, and thus purified and fitted for a happier place. Plato, who lived about four hundred years before the Christian era, tells us, that souls after death are carried into the lake Acherusia, where they are made to suffer the penalties due to their crimes, until they are fully cleansed. Virgil also, in the sixth book of his celebrated poem, describes very circumstantially the punishments inflicted on the souls in purgatory. So that it is evident the Roman Church has borrowed this fiction from heathenism. Compare the following translation of a passage from the *Æneid*, with the definitions and descriptions of purgatory, with which Popish writers have supplied us:—

“ Nor death itself can wholly wash their stains :
 But long-contracted filth e'er in the soul remains.
 The relics of inveterate vice they wear ;
 And spots of sin obscene in every face appear.
 For this are various penances enjoined ;

And some are hung to bleach upon the wind,
 Some plunged in waters, others purged in fires,
 Till all the dregs are drained, and all the rust expires.
 All have their manes, and those manes bear :
 The few, so cleansed, to these abodes repair,
 And breathe, in ample fields, the soft Elysian air."

Such is the purgatory of heathenism : now let us see what the eminent and learned Bellarmine tells us about the purgatory of Romanism. He is narrating some curious particulars respecting an individual, who died and was afterwards restored to life, as was alleged. The man stated that he had been in purgatory ; and he thus discloses some of the secrets of that prison-house :—
 " One whose aspect was as of light, and his garment glittering, conducted me to a valley of great length and width, but of immeasurable depth ; one side of which was dreadful beyond expression for its burning heat, and the other so horrible for its no less intolerable cold. Both were filled with souls of men, which seemed to be tossed, as by the fury of a tempest from one side to the other ; for, being quite unable to endure the heat on the right hand, the miserable wretches kept throwing themselves to the opposite side into the equal torment of cold, and thence back again into the raging flames. This, thought I to myself, must be hell : but my guide answered to my thought, that it was not so. This valley, says he, is the place of torment for the souls of those, who, after delaying to confess and expiate their sins, have at length, *in articulo mortis*, had recourse to penance, and so have died ; these *at the day of judgment* will be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, by reason of their confession and penance, late as it was : but, meanwhile, *many of them may be assisted and liberated*

before that day, by the prayers, alms, and fastings of the living ; particularly by the sacrifice of the mass."

This account of purgatory related by a man, who had been probably in a dream or a trance, was considered so edifying by the learned Cardinal, that he has transcribed it into his works, for the benefit of all succeeding generations of Romanists. Such, he would have them believe; is the place to which most of the members of his Church will be consigned until the day of judgment, unless their relatives and friends help them out sooner by purchasing prayers, and *especially masses*, on their behalf !

The ancient Christian Fathers teach much more scriptural and consoling doctrine respecting the state of those, who have died in the faith of Christ. They do not send them to a place of torments, equal in intensity to hell itself, for even the shortest period ; but believing the declaration of God's word, *that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin*, they teach that the souls of believers would be admitted, immediately after death, to the joys of their Lord :—" After the labours and strivings of this present life," says Origen, " we hope to be in the highest heavens ;" and he makes no reference to any intermediate state of suffering. " As for those who truly follow virtue," says Chrysostome, " after they are changed from this life they are truly delivered from their fightings, and freed from their bonds. For death, to such as live honestly, is a change from worse to better, from this transitory to an immortal and eternal life that hath no end."

Athanasius says :—" To the righteous it is not death but only a change, for they are changed from this world to an eternal rest. And as a man would come out of

prison, so do the saints go from this troublesome life, to the good things prepared for them."

Gennadius tells us :—"That after the ascension of the Lord to heaven, the souls of all the saints are with Christ, and going out of the body go to Christ, expecting the resurrection of their body."

It is manifest that these writers never dreamed of such a place as purgatory; and that if they ever heard of it from the heathen, they regarded it only as the offspring of a vain superstition. Those Fathers who afterwards alluded to it, did so with doubt and hesitation; nor was it introduced into the Church of Rome until the beginning of the seventh century. Even then it was not made an article of faith. "That this doctrine was not known in the primitive Church," says Archbishop Tillotson, "nor can be proved from Scripture, we have the free acknowledgment of as learned and eminent men as any of that Church; which is to acknowledge that it is a superstructure upon the Christian religion. And though in one sense it be indeed a building of *gold* and *silver* upon the foundation of Christianity, considering the vast revenues which this doctrine (and that of indulgences, which depends upon it) brings into that Church; yet I doubt not, but in the apostle's sense, it will be found to be hay and stubble. But how groundless so ever it be, it is too gainful a doctrine to be easily parted withal."

But it has been observed that if purgatory was not mentioned by early Christian writers, it was at least implied in the practice of offering prayers for the dead, which custom was very general in the third century. To this it may be answered, On what Scriptural foundation did this custom rest? Do the examples of the holy men, of whom we read in the Bible, afford any

countenance to this practice? They paid due respect to the remains of their departed relatives and friends, they had a certain time for mourning over the loss they had sustained,—but we read nothing about prayers for them. Those Christians, therefore, who, it is alleged, in the third century prayed for the dead, had no authority from God's word for the practice. However ancient then the custom may be, this is no reason why we should follow it, or believe it to be correct, when it has no sanction from the inspired writings. That it arose from a feeling of mistaken piety is very probable. It would afford some degree of consolation to the bereaved relatives, to suppose, that their prayers would be of benefit to the dead; and it might seem cruel to withhold such a tribute of affection from them. "Received custom too, was a kind of torch, by which the minds of many were inflamed. We know that among all the Gentiles, and in all ages, certain rites were paid to the dead, and that every year lustrations were performed for their *manes*. . . . Thus that Christians might not seem worse than heathens, they felt ashamed of paying no office to the dead, as if they had been utterly annihilated. Hence their ill-advised assiduity; because they thought they would expose themselves to great disgrace, if they were slow in providing funeral feasts and oblations. What was thus introduced by perverse rivalry, ever and anon received new additions, until the highest holiness of the Papacy consisted in giving assistance to the suffering dead. But far better and more solid comfort is furnished by Scripture, when it declares:—"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;" and adds the reason, "for they rest from their labours." We ought not to indulge our love so far as to set up a perverse mode of prayer in the Church. Surely every

person possessed of the least prudence easily perceives, that whatever we meet with on this subject in ancient writers, was *in deference to public custom* and the ignorance of the vulgar. I admit they were themselves also carried away into error, the usual effect of rash credulity being to destroy the judgment. Meanwhile the passages themselves shew, that when they recommended prayer for the dead, it was with hesitation. Augustine relates in his Confessions, that his mother, Monica, earnestly entreated to be remembered when the solemn rites at the altar were performed; doubtless an old woman's wish, which her son did not bring to the test of Scripture, but from natural affection wished others to approve. The book which he has composed expressly on this subject, and which he has entitled, 'Of care for the Dead,' is enveloped in so many doubts, that it should be sufficient to cool those who are devoted to it."

But had Augustine, or any other pious writer, been ever so confident that it is right to pray for the dead, we ought not to allow our respect for such eminent names to make us blind to their errors. We ought to try their opinions by the Word of God. If we receive any doctrine merely on the authority of this or that ancient Christian Father, although, on examination, it be found repugnant to God's revealed will, then we place man above God—we permit the traditions and commandments of men to render void the holy Scriptures. "Now, since the whole law and Gospel do not contain one syllable which countenances the right of praying for the dead, it is a profanation of prayer to go one step farther than God enjoins. But, lest our opponents boast of sharing their error with the ancient Church, I say, that there is a wide difference between the two. The latter made a *commemoration* of the

dead, that they might not seem to have cast off all concern for them; but they, at the same time acknowledged that *they were doubtful as to their state*; assuredly they made no such assertion concerning purgatory, as implied that they did not hold it to be uncertain. The former insist, that this dream of purgatory shall be received without question as an article of faith. The latter sparingly, and in a perfunctory manner only, commended their dead to the Lord, in the communion of the holy Supper. The former are constantly urging the case of the dead, and by their importunate preaching of it, make out that it is to be preferred to all the offices of charity. But it would not be difficult for us to produce some passages from ancient writers, which clearly overturn all those prayers for the dead which were then in use. Such is the passage of Augustine, in which he shews that the resurrection of the flesh and eternal glory are expected by all, but that rest which follows death is received by every one who is worthy of it when he dies. Accordingly, he declares that *all the righteous, not less than the Apostles, Prophets and Martyrs, immediately after death enjoy blessed rest.*"

What a gloomy view must this doctrine of purgatory lead a conscientious Romanist to take of approaching death! He knows and feels that he has done many things offensive to God, and though he is penitent, and has received absolution at the mouth of his priest, yet there is the *temporal punishment* still to be endured in purgatory. He knows not how long may be its duration—perhaps for hundreds, or thousands of years! To him death must indeed appear the king of terrors. His religion does not enable him to deprive the last enemy of his sting, nor to regard him rather as a friend, who shall usher him into the presence of his God and

Saviour. No; he recoils from his approach, because he is taught to believe, that death opens to him the gate of purgatory, and that his soul must there abide in unutterable anguish for an uncertain period. Such is the Gospel which Popery annunciates to her too-confiding children! It is a Gospel which completely opposes that blessed Gospel which the Evangelists have written, and the Apostles and their faithful successors have proclaimed, and will continue to proclaim, for the consolation and joy of every believer. Well, therefore, may our Church declare that purgatory "is a fond thing, vainly invented and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture."

"For the Scripture doth acknowledge," says our Church in one of her Homilies, "but two places after this life: the one proper to the elect and blessed of God, the other to the reprobate and damned souls; as may be well gathered by the parable of Lazarus and the rich man: which place St. Augustine expounding, saith in this wise;—'That which Abraham speaketh unto the rich man in Luke's Gospel, namely, that the just cannot go into those places where the wicked are tormented; what other thing doth it signify, but only this, that the just, by reason of God's judgment, which may not be revoked, can shew no deed of mercy in helping them which after this life are cast into prison, until they pay the uttermost farthing?' These words, as they confound the opinion of helping the dead by prayer, so they do clean confute and take away the vain error of purgatory, which is grounded upon this saying of the Gospel, *Thou shalt not depart thence, until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.* Now doth St. Augustine say, that those men which are cast into prison after this life, on that condition, *may in no wise be holpen*, though we would help them never so much. And why?

Because the sentence of God is unchangeable, and cannot be revoked again. Therefore let us not deceive ourselves, thinking that either we may help other, or other may help us by their good and charitable prayers in time to come. For, as the Preacher saith, *When the tree falleth, whether it be toward the south or toward the north, in what place soever the tree falleth there it lieth.* Eccles. xi. Meaning thereby, that every mortal man dieth either in the state of salvation or damnation, according as the words of the Evangelist John do also plainly import, saying, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life: but he that believeth not on the Son shall never see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him.* John iii. Where is then the third place, which they call purgatory? Or where shall our prayers help and profit the dead? . . . Let these and such other places be sufficient to take away the gross error of purgatory out of our heads; neither let us dream any more, that the souls of the dead are any thing at all holpen by our prayers; but, *as the Scripture teacheth us*, let us think that the soul of man, passing out of the body, goeth straightways either to heaven, or else to hell, whereof the one needeth no prayer, and the other is without redemption. *The only purgatory wherein we must trust to be saved, is the death and blood of Christ, which if we apprehend with a true and stedfast faith, it purgeth and cleanseth us from all our sins*, even as well as if he were now hanging upon the cross. ‘The blood of Christ,’ saith St. John, ‘hath cleansed us from all sins.’ ‘The blood of Christ,’ saith St. Paul, ‘hath purged our consciences from dead works to serve the living God.’ Also in another place he saith, ‘We be sanctified and made holy by the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ done once for all.’ Yea, he

addeth more, saying, 'With the one oblation of his precious body and precious blood, he hath made perfect for ever and ever, all them that are sanctified.' This, then, is that purgatory, wherein all christian men must put their whole trust and confidence, nothing doubting, but if they truly repent them of their sins, and die in perfect faith, that then they shall forthwith pass from death to life. If this kind of purgatory will not serve them, let them never hope to be relieved by other men's prayers, though they should continue therein unto the world's end. He that cannot be saved by faith in Christ's blood, how shall he look to be delivered by man's intercessions? Hath God more respect to man on earth, than he hath to Christ in heaven?"

Thus while Popery casts her victims into a sea of uncertainty and terrors, our Church leads her children to Immanuel; and tells them to apply his precious blood by faith to their souls, that they may be delivered both from the guilt and the future punishment of their sins. While the Roman Church gives the miserable consolation to the dying and penitent sinner, that he may, perhaps, after some years of horrible suffering, or, at the farthest, on the day of judgment, be received into heaven: the Church of England, in accordance with the teaching of holy Scripture, instructs the departing believer to look with hope and confidence to a speedy reception into those "heavenly habitations, where the souls of them that sleep in Jesus enjoy perpetual rest and felicity." The minister prays for the dying christian, that he may be washed "in the blood of that immaculate Lamb, that was slain to take away the sins of the world; that whatsoever defilements it may have contracted in the midst of this miserable and naughty world, through the lusts of the flesh, or the wiles of

Satan, being purged and done away, it may be presented pure and without spot "before God." While the Church of Rome terrifies the survivors by representing, that the souls of their beloved relatives are enduring unutterable miseries, and urges them to contribute liberally of their substance, to procure prayers and masses for the relief and ultimate deliverance of the tormented souls; the Church of England tells the mourners, on the authority of God's Word, that they have no need to sorrow, as those who have no hope, for the departed believer. She repeats to them the consoling and animating truth that "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," for "they rest from their labours." She calls upon the weeping friends to thank God—"with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh are in joy and felicity,"—that he hath been pleased to deliver the departed brother or sister, "out of the miseries of this sinful world." And she teaches them what to ask of God, in order that they may "die the death of the righteous," and that their "last end may be like his:" she directs them meekly to beseech God to "raise them from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness," that when they shall depart this life they may rest in Him, as they hope their departed relative doth.

The Church of England, you see, lays no burdens upon her children, but invites them to take to themselves the yoke of Christ, as a relief from the burden, with which sin, the world, and Satan would oppress them, that thus they may find rest to their souls.

But the Church of Rome brings a heavy chain, every link of which is a grievous burden to the labouring soul, and sternly commands her children to be bound

with it, and to carry it with them to the grave; yea, and beyond the grave. For although the word of inspiration teaches that "There the wicked cease from troubling: and there the weary be at rest:"—*Job* iii. 8. Popery dashes from the lips of the dying penitent the cup of consolation which the Spirit, who dictated the Word, presents to him, and fills his mind with dark anticipations of the torments of purgatory.

This unscriptural doctrine rather encourages than represses the wickedness of men. Could it even be proved to have some effect in restraining men from sin, the Romish Church would still be inexcusable in teaching, what is clearly repugnant to the doctrine of Christ's full and perfect atonement. But it has a far different tendency. Connected as it is with the vain notion of pardons and indulgences, it affords great encouragement to the vicious and irreligious to continue in their evil ways. What matters it that they may have to suffer for a while in purgatory? all will be well at last: let us, therefore, eat, drink, and be merry. We can now enjoy the pleasures of sin, and we can purchase a remission of some of the pains of purgatory, by performing certain penances, and making a few sacrifices before we die. It is therefore a very agreeable and acceptable fiction to that class of mankind who would serve both God and mammon—who would follow sinful pleasures and yet enjoy heaven. As bishop Taylor observes:—"The doctrine of purgatory gives countenance to a sort of Christians who live half to God and half to the world; and for them this doctrine hath found out a way that they may go to hell and to heaven too. The doctrine that the priest's absolution can turn a trifling repentance into a perfect and a good, and that suddenly too, and at any time, even on our death-bed, or the minute before

our death, is a dangerous heap of falsehoods, and gives license to wicked people, and teaches men to reconcile a wicked debauched life with the hopes of heaven. And then for penances and temporal satisfaction, which might seem to be as a plank after the shipwreck of the duty of repentance to keep men in awe, and to preserve them from sinking in an ocean of impiety, it comes to just nothing by your doctrine: for there are so many easy ways of indulgences and getting pardons, so many confraternities, stations, privileged altars, little offices, Agnus Deis, amulets, hallowed devices, swords, roses, hats, churchyards, and the fountain of these annexed indulgences, the Pope himself, and his power of granting what, and when, and to whom he list; that he is a very unfortunate man that needs to smart with penances; and after all, he may choose not to suffer any at all, for he may pay for them in purgatory if he please, and he may come out of purgatory upon reasonable terms, in case he should think it fit to go thither; so that *all the whole duty of repentance seems to be destroyed with devices of men that seek power and gain, and find error and folly; insomuch, that if I had a mind to live an evil life, and yet hope for heaven at last, I would be of your religion above any in the world.*"

But it is time to conclude. May what has been written be a means, under the divine blessing, of opening your eyes to the real nature of Popery, by whose attractions and allurements you have been drawn so far from the simplicity of the Gospel; and may you be led to reject with abhorrence that yoke, which the Roman Church would gladly put upon your neck—a yoke "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear!"

Acts xv. 10.

LETTER XVI.

AURICULAR CONFESSION NOT OBSERVED IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH—WHAT IS THE CONFESSION APPROVED BY SCRIPTURE, AND PRACTISED IN EARLY TIMES.

DEAR SIR,

You express great astonishment at the views which the Church of Rome and Romish writers entertain of purgatory. Had I not given quotations both from the decrees of the Council of Trent, and also from eminent and learned advocates of Popery, you could hardly have helped supposing, that I must have been mistaken as to the real nature of this Popish doctrine. And even now, you think it almost impossible, you tell me, that men who are in possession of reason and judgment, and especially men of learning and splendid talents, can believe what the Romish Church teaches respecting purgatory. You again forget, that a belief in the infallibility of the Church of Rome involves an utter prostration of the understanding in matters of religion. A sincere, consistent, devoted Romanist will not allow himself to think it even possible, that his Church may teach what is untrue. Only bear this in mind, and you will no longer be surprised that Romanists believe devoutly not only “cunningly-devised fables” of an-

cient times, but also the most absurd and glaring superstitions of a more recent period. The same effect is produced on "men of great learning and splendid talents" as on the ignorant multitude. A spirit of delusion levels all distinctions. The wisdom and the learning of those who lean on their own understanding, and are wise in their own conceit, are utterly confounded; and they have "played such fantastic tricks," and said and written so many gross absurdities, that the common sense of even "the wayfaring man" has been shocked and disgusted. This may have been permitted in order to check that "excessive admiration of human intellect and human knowledge" which, as the present learned bishop of Lincoln observes, is a "feature in the character of the present age, which, perhaps, exposes it more justly to the charge of idolatry than even its admiration of wealth."

The *Carbonaria Fides*, or the faith which a poor collier is stated to have entertained, is that which the Romish Church inculcates on all her members without distinction:—"I believe what the Church believes, and the Church believes what I believe." You may *now* think this very absurd; but if you continue to frequent Popish chapels, and to allow your senses to be captivated by the exquisite music and the splendid exhibitions which it is the pride and the policy of Rome to provide for her votaries, your eyes will soon, it is to be feared, see the matter in a very different light. And you may shortly occupy the same position, in which Mr. Newman and several of his deluded admirers are found—a position so well described by bishop Jeremy Taylor, in his "Letter to one seduced to the Church of Rome." "It is now," says he, "become a part of your religion to be ignorant, to walk in blindness, to believe the man

that hears your confessions, to hear none but him, not to hear God speak but by him, and so you are liable to be abused by him, as he pleases, without remedy. You are gone from us, where you were taught to worship only God through Jesus Christ, and now you are taught to worship saints and angels, with a worship at least dangerous, and in some things proper to God; for your Church worships the Virgin Mary with burning incense and candles to her, and you give her presents, which by the consent of all nations used to be esteemed a worship peculiar to God, and it was the same thing which was condemned for heresy in the Collyridians, who offered a cake to the Virgin Mary; a candle and a cake make no difference in the worship; and your joining God and the saints in your worship and devotions, is like the device of them that fought for king and parliament,—the latter destroys the former.”

The more you examine the doctrines and practices of the Roman Church, the more evidence will you find, that she seeks to debase while she soothes and flatters her children, and that her great aim is, to exalt herself above even the Saviour. To this object tends her imposition of auricular confession on all her members. Like the fiction of purgatory, this is a heavy and grievous yoke on the sincere and conscientious, but a mere trifle to the habitual and wilful sinner; and its tendency is rather to increase than to diminish the number of transgressions. As to the sincere and conscientious members of the Romish Church, how often must their minds be full of doubts and fears respecting the confession which they have made to their spiritual Director! They may have forgotten some of their sins, and they must be unconscious of a far greater number, for “who can understand his errors?” But they are commanded

by their Church to confess *all their sins* to a priest, as soon as they shall have reached the years of discretion, once a year at least. They are told that if they have not taken a firm resolution to confess, and carried it into effect when an opportunity offered, the door of paradise cannot be opened to them. In obedience to this command, the pious and scrupulous Romanist begins to enumerate his transgressions. He is filled with terror as they pass in review before the eyes of his mind. Their number continues to increase as he takes a retrospect of the past. When he thinks that he has penetrated to the lowest recesses of his heart and noted all his sins, a lower and still a lower depth appears; and he despairingly exclaims, How can I confess all my sins individually, when they are more in number than the hairs of my head? To such a wounded spirit the Gospel would apply the balm of consolation: but Popery has no such balm to offer. The opiates with which it endeavours to lull the troubled conscience, are transitory and delusive. Of her priests, that may be said which the prophet uttered respecting the priests of old:—“They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, Peace; when there is no peace.” *Jerem. vi. 14.* There is no solid peace to the unhappy penitent of the confessional; for he feels that he may have omitted very many of his sins, and therefore he is self-condemned, and can obtain no true consolation.

Nor does auricular confession tend to restrain men from sin. They whose consciences are less scrupulous will be satisfied to confess a few of their transgressions, —perhaps all which they can remember—and then they apply the delusive unction of priestly absolution to their souls, and comfort themselves with the thought that all

is well. As to the shame which is felt on making confession of sins to a priest, this may, in a few cases, make the penitent more cautious and circumspect. But experience shews that it has generally a contrary effect. "For we may everywhere see," says a learned writer, "that there is nothing which gives men greater confidence and license in sinning, than the idea, that after making confession to priests, *they can wipe their lips and say, I have not done it.* And not only do they during the whole year become bolder in sin, but, secure against confession for the remainder of it, they never sigh after God, never examine themselves, but continue heaping sins upon sins, until, as they suppose, they get rid of them all at once. And when they have got rid of them, they think they are disburdened of their load, and imagine they have deprived God of the right of judging, by giving it to the priest; have made God forgetful, by making the priest conscious."

But whatever may be the evils arising from the practice of auricular confession, I grant that the Roman Church is not accountable for them, if it can be proved that confession to a priest is a scriptural doctrine. We are told, indeed, that this practice has been observed in the Catholic Church from the beginning, and that it was instituted by Divine command: and the Romish Church anathematizes all who shall dare to deny that this was the case. These curses, of which she is so liberal, may and will prevent her members from even thinking of denying the truth of her statements, but others, who have not yet consented to give up the right of trying and examining what doctrines agree with God's Word, may be permitted to inquire on what foundations her assertions rest. That I may not be suspected of a desire to misrepresent the language of

the Church of Rome, I will give her own words:—"If any one shall deny either that sacramental confession was instituted by Divine command, or that it is necessary to salvation; or shall say, that the practice of secretly confessing to the priest alone, as it has ever been observed from the beginning by the Catholic Church, and is still observed, is foreign to the institution and command of Christ, let him be accursed."

Now in spite of this decree, and this denunciation, I must venture to deny that auricular, or sacramental confession, was observed from the beginning in the Catholic Church. For several hundred years after the apostolic age there existed no such practice of secretly confessing to the priest alone, as the Roman Church now enforces. In the primitive Church there was a *public* confession made by penitents before the assembled people, as a proof of the humility and repentance of the offenders. To this discipline some early christian writers urge penitents to submit themselves, rather than brood in secret over their sins until the burden becomes intolerable. For instance, Tertullian, in order to encourage some notorious but now penitent transgressor to come forward and confess his sin before the congregation, tells him that he will not meet with severe judges, but with sympathising brethren:—"Amongst thy brethren and fellow-servants, which are partakers with thee of one and the same nature, fear, joy, grief, sufferings (for of one common Lord and Father we have all received one spirit), why shouldst thou not think with thyself, that they are but thine own self? Wherefore dost thou avoid them, as likely to insult over thee, whom thou knowest subject to the same traps? At that which grieveth any one part, the whole body cannot rejoice, it must needs be that the whole will labour

and strive to help that wherewith a part of itself is molested.”

What need would there have been to encourage these offenders to come forward and make a public confession, if it had been the practice to confess secretly in the ear of a priest? If auricular, or sacramental confession was observed then, as it is now, in the Roman Church, the relief which the burdened conscience desired would obviously have been sought in this private manner. But Tertullian does not even allude to such a practice.

Dr. Wharton, in his letter to the Roman Catholics of Worcester, observes:—“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 Theodora, Archbishop of Canterbury, who died in 690, which Archbishop Usher says he transcribed, in Sir Robert Catton’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 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.’ ”

Another early writer observes, in one of his Homilies : “ If faults haply be not great and grievous (for example, if a man have offended in word, or in desire, worthy of reproof, if in the wantonness of his eye, or the vanity of his heart), the stains of words and thoughts are by daily prayer to be cleansed, and by private compunction to be scoured out : but if any man, examining inwardly his own conscience, have committed some high and capital offence . . . they need such remedies as are not only *sharp*, but *solemn*, *open* and *public*.” Here we might have expected that the transgressor in word, or desire, or in his heart, would have been advised to tell his faults in the ear of the priest ; but it is deemed sufficient if he prays daily to God with a contrite spirit. Now if auricular confession had then been invented, and enforced as it is at present, how are we to account for it that Salvianus does not even mention it ? If it were “ from the beginning,” deemed necessary to salvation to make this secret confession to a priest, how strange that this writer should teach so very contrary a doctrine !

Hooker, after a diligent examination of the writings of the early Fathers, concludes that no such thing as sacramental confession was ever practised in the primitive Church :—“ We everywhere,” he says, “ find the use of confession, especially public, allowed of and commanded by the Fathers ; but that extreme and rigorous necessity of auricular and private confession, which is

at this day so mightily upheld by the Church of Rome, we find not. First, it was not then the faith and doctrine of God's Church, as of the Papacy at this present. Secondly, that the only remedy for sin after baptism is sacramental penitency. Thirdly, that confession in secret is an essential part thereof. Fourthly, that God himself cannot now forgive sin without the priest. That, because forgiveness at the hands of the priest must arise from confession in the offenders, therefore to confess unto him is a matter of such necessity, as being not either indeed, or, at the least, in desire performed, excludeth utterly from all pardon, and must consequently in Scripture be commanded wheresoever any promise of forgiveness is made. No, no; these opinions have youth in their countenance, antiquity knew them not; it never thought nor dreamed of them."

If history is to be believed,—nay, if the records of the Roman Church itself are worthy of any credit—the practice of auricular confession was not enforced until the time of Innocent III. So that twelve hundred years passed away from the death of Christ before the necessity of this private confession was authoritatively promulgated. Private confession was, indeed, sometimes made to the priests by individuals under their charge, from an early period; but this was quite voluntary. It was not considered as a practice commanded by Christ himself, but was introduced as a matter of discipline. We learn from ecclesiastical historians that it was carefully observed in the churches of the West, and particularly at Rome, but they do not mention it as an universal custom. Yet had it rested on divine authority, it would of course have been observed in all christian churches. The office of Confessor was not conferred on the priesthood generally, but one was chosen by the bishop for

this purpose. “ He it was (the same who at present in each of the Cathedral churches has the name of Penitentiary) who had cognizance of offences which were more heinous, and required to be rebuked for the sake of example. He (Sozomen) afterwards adds, that the same custom existed at Constantinople,—until a certain matron, while pretending to confess, was discovered to have used it as a cloak to cover her intercourse with a deacon. * In consequence of that crime, Nectarius, the bishop of that church—a man famous for learning and sanctity—abolished the custom of confessing. . . . If auricular confession was a divine law, how could Nectarius have dared to abolish or remodel it? Nectarius, a holy man of God, approved by the suffrage of all antiquity, will they charge with heresy and schism? With the same vote they will condemn the church of Constantinople, in which Sozomen affirms that the custom of confessing was not only disguised for a time, but even in his own memory abolished. Nay, let them charge with defection, not only Constantinople, but all the Eastern churches, which (if they say true) disregarded an inviolable law enjoined on all christians.”

The language which Chrysostom uses is daring and presumptuous in the highest degree, if, as the Council of Trent asserts, sacramental confession was instituted by divine command, and is necessary to salvation. For that eminent Father says:—“ If you blush to tell another what sins you have committed, tell them daily in your soul. I say not, tell them to your fellow-servant, who may upbraid you, but tell them to God who cures them. . . . Let the examination of your faults be made in your own thought: let the judgment be without a witness: let God alone see you confessing. . . . I do

not force you to disclose your sins to men ; review and lay open your conscience before God. Shew your wounds to the Lord, the best of physicians, and seek medicine from him. . . . Certainly tell it not to man lest he upbraid you. Nor must you confess it to your fellow-servant, who may make it public ; but shew your wounds to the Lord, who takes care of you, who is kind, and can cure you."

See now, what little credit is due to the assertion so confidently made by the Council of Trent, that "the practice of secretly confessing to the priest alone has ever been observed from the beginning by the Catholic Church." When confession was made to a spiritual guide, it was entirely a voluntary act, and not required as a thing necessary to salvation. It was not until about six hundred years ago, that the Church of Rome contrived to fasten this additional link to the heavy chain by which it retains its captives in bondage.

It, however, matters little that the Fathers give no countenance to this popish doctrine, if only it can be proved from holy Scripture ; "to the Law and to the testimony" then let us apply, in order to learn whether auricular confession was instituted by divine command.

Some Popish writers have discovered, as they suppose, a sanction for this practice in the ministry of John the Baptist. He received the people to confession before he baptized them. But what has that to do with sacramental confession ? The confession then made was previous to baptism, auricular confession is enforced on all who have been baptized. What the Romanists call the sacrament of penance was not then known. This case, therefore, will afford them no support.

Nor are they more successful in referring to a passage in the Acts of the Apostles:—"And many that

believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds." *Acts* xix. 18. It appears that some who had professed the name of Christ but had neglected to follow his commands and precepts, were terrified by the punishment which had been inflicted on several daring sinners, and they came to the Apostle and acknowledged their own wickedness. This example, however commendable, however proper to be followed under similar circumstances, cannot surely be adduced as a proof, that Christ hath commanded all men, without exception, to tell his sins privately in the ear of a priest on pain of everlasting condemnation.

Another text, which is generally quoted in favour of this practice, is from the Epistle of St. James :—" Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." *James* v. 16.

But who would ever think of finding sacramental confession in this passage? It is addressed to Christians generally. The Apostle does not say, Confess to the priests, but *one to another*.

. What else is this but an exhortation to christians, to unburthen their minds to each other, and to receive mutual advice, sympathy, and consolation? Knowing their own infirmities and the temptations to which they are subject, they will, on hearing the acknowledgments of each other, be touched with a fellow-feeling, and be led to pray for others as well as for themselves.

But, in order to prove that this practice is of divine institution, other writers refer to the case of the leper whom the Lord had healed :—" See thou say nothing to any man ;" our Blessed Saviour said to him, " but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." *Mark* i. 44. Why was he to

go to the priest, it is asked, but in order to confess his sins? I would ask, in return, Could any man, who is not wilfully blind, fail to see the object for which the leper was to go to the priests, especially when the reason is plainly given, namely, that he might "offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them?" The priests would thus become acquainted with the miraculous cure, and would be supplied with a testimony that Jesus was indeed Messiah.

It shews to what difficulties Romanists are reduced, when they have recourse to such far-fetched and absurd inferences. They may just as reasonably assert, that when a patient, discharged from the hospital, comes to his parochial minister and desires to return thanks to God in the public congregation for the cure vouchsafed to him, it is that he may confess his sins secretly to his spiritual pastor. "Do they not see," it is asked in one of our Homilies, "that the leper was cleansed from his leprosy, before he was by Christ sent unto the priest, for to shew himself unto him? By the same reason we must be cleansed from our spiritual leprosy; I mean, our sins must be forgiven us, before that we come to confession. What need we then to tell forth our sins into the ear of the priest, sith that they be already taken away?"

Instead then of listening to those who thus pervert Scripture and endeavour to stamp upon the counterfeit coin, which the Church of Rome circulates, a divine image and superscription, let us examine what mode of confession was used by the penitent children of God in former ages.

"I acknowledged my sin *unto* THEE," says David, "and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, *I will confess my transgressions unto the* LORD; and THOU for-

gavest the iniquity of my sin." *Psalm xxxii. 5.* When Daniel made confession of his sins, it was not in the ear of a priest, but to Him "to whom belong mercies and forgivenesses." "I prayed," he says, "unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments." *Dan. ix. 4, 5.*

The Bible is full of similar instances; but no command, nor shadow of a command, can be found for making confession secretly in the ear of a priest. The Apostle John tells us that—"If we confess our sins," not to a priest, but to the divine Physician who alone can cure our spiritual maladies, and wash away the guilt of sin, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." *1 John i. 9.*

Private confession, or the acknowledgment of any wrong which we may have done to our neighbour, is also enjoined by our divine Lawgiver; but this is nothing like the confession which the Romish Church compels all her members to make to the priest, at least once a year. Christ tells us that, if our brother hath aught against us, we must seek to be reconciled to him, before we venture to offer anything to our God. We ought to acknowledge our fault to our offended brother, and to endeavour to remove from his mind every painful impression, and then we may offer unto God our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. This is manifestly a very different thing from that auricular confession to a priest, which the Council of Trent so daringly asserts to be an institution of Christ, and necessary to salvation.

“Auricular confession,” says the venerable bishop Coverdale, “I suppose was first ordained for this purpose; that the simple, unlearned people should go to the priests to seek counsel, if they had any grievous thing in their mind, either concerning any doubt in the believe (the things necessary to be believed,) or concerning sin which vexeth a man’s conscience; to the intent that the priests, as they that be learned and have experience in the Scripture, might strength (strengthen) such as beweak in faith, warn the unruly and misnurtured, comfort such as be sorry and penitent for their sins; summa, as true physicians, to give due medicines for every sickness. Which ordinance, if it were right kept, and as I now have said, I suppose no man could reprove it. But now, forasmuch as they command that every person shall once in the year confess all his sins to his own priest, not only such as he hath committed in deed, but also whatsoever hath come into his thought, yea, and to declare the state, place, time, and circumstance of the persons; considering likewise that they proclaim the same out (as a bounden duty) as a commandment of God, under pain of eternal damnation; I may say that it is no wholesome confession of sins, but rather a shameful tormenting of men’s consciences. Neither can I believe either, but that it was brought in by the special craft and subtilty of the devil, to tangle poor men with a new snare, and utterly to bring them from the wholesome and necessary confession of sins.”

The Church of Rome is well aware that if the course which is pursued in the confessional were generally known, few persons would be induced to submit to this degrading practice; and hence, she uses every precaution to keep from the eyes of the public the book, which the priests have to study in order to qualify them to act

as confessors. The following rule is strictly enforced by the Popish Hierarchy of Ireland—"If a priest happen to be taken ill, it is the duty of the rural dean to visit him; and if there is any apprehension of his death, he is ordered to get this book, even before the man is dead, and bring it home with him." And so great is the anxiety of the ruling powers of the Roman Church in Ireland to keep these statutes secret, that a copy of them, having unwittingly been put into a catalogue for sale at an auction, was actually bought, by one of their agents, for upwards of seven pounds, though the bookseller's price did not exceed half-a-crown! Now why is all this mystery? Should a church, which professes to teach infallible truth, feel afraid lest its monitions to its priests be made public? Has truth any thing to fear from exposure to all the world? No, surely. But Rome knows that her teaching cannot bear the light. Her name is MYSTERY, and *she loves darkness rather than light because her deeds are evil.*

How different is the course which the Church of England pursues! Here is nothing sought to be concealed. Her Articles, her Homilies, her Liturgy, her Statutes, as well as the Bible, to which she refers as her warrant for every thing that she teaches, are all in a language which the people can understand, and no one is forbidden to examine them. Why this difference? The reason is obvious. Our Church really teaches what the Roman Church only pretends to teach, divine truth, without reserve, concealment, or disguise; while the latter, as if conscious that the secrets of her prison-house would shock the laity, and, perhaps, drive them from her communion, seeks to involve every thing in mystery.

LETTER XVII.

DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND RESPECTING
CONFESSION—DANGEROUS TENDENCY OF AURICULAR
CONFESSION.

DEAR SIR,

WHEN any Church imposes on its members its own inventions, under the pretence that they are absolutely commanded by God himself, it is not only putting a chain on men's consciences, but also arrogating to itself a divine prerogative. This the Roman Church has done by making that compulsory which was once voluntary, and by calling a regulation of its own devising, an ordinance instituted by the Lord himself.

Now consider how differently the Church of England acts towards her members. She does not represent any thing as necessary to salvation, which is not plainly declared to be so by the holy Scriptures. She tells the sinner where he is to go for pardon and absolution, and urges him to confess his sins unto God. Her ministers are to declare to the people that God "pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." The congregation is exhorted not to dissemble nor cloke their sins and wickedness, "before the face of Almighty God our heavenly

Father; but to confess them with an humble, lowly, penitent and obedient heart." Our Church teaches the same doctrine in her Homilies:—"If we will with a sorrowful and contrite heart make an unfeigned confession of (our sins) unto God, he will freely and frankly forgive them, and so put all our wickedness out of remembrance before the sight of his Majesty, that they shall no more be thought upon. . . . Without this confession, sin is not forgiven. This is then the chiefest and most principal confession that in the Scriptures and Word of God, we are bidden to make, and without the which we shall never obtain pardon and forgiveness of our sins. . . . And whereas the adversaries go about to wrest this place, (*Confess your faults one to another*) for to maintain their auricular confession withal, they are greatly deceived themselves, and do shamefully deceive others; for if this text ought to be understood of auricular confession, then the priests are as much bound to confess themselves unto the lay people, as the lay-people are bound to confess themselves to them. . . . It is most evident and plain, that this auricular confession has not his (its) warrant of God's Word, else it had not been lawful for Nectarius, bishop of Constantinople, upon a just occasion to have put it down. For when any thing *ordained of God is by the lewdness of men abused, the abuse ought to be taken away, and the thing itself suffered to remain.* Moreover these are St. Augustine's words:—"What have I to do with men, that they should hear my confession, as though they were able to heal my diseases?" Being therefore not led with the conscience thereof, let us with fear and trembling, and with a true, contrite heart, use *that kind of confession that God doth command in his Word*; and then doubtless, as he is faith-

ful and righteous, he will forgive us our sins, and make us clean from all wickedness. . . . If any do find themselves troubled in conscience, they may repair to their learned curate or pastor, or to some other godly learned man, and shew the trouble and doubt of their conscience to them, that they may receive at their hand the comfortable salve of God's Word : *but it is against the true Christian liberty, that any man should be bound to the numbering of his sins, as it hath been used heretofore in the time of blindness and ignorance.*"

We find the venerable bishop and Martyr, Latimer, speaking to the same effect, in one of his sermons :—
 "As touching confession I tell you, that they that can be content with the general absolution which every minister of God's Word giveth in his sermons, when he pronounceth that all that be sorry for their sins, and believe in Christ, seek help and remedy by him, and afterward intend to amend their lives, and avoid sin and wickedness, all these that be so minded shall have remission of their sins : now, I say, they that can be content with this general absolution, it is well : but they that are not satisfied with it, may go to some learned godly minister, which is able to *instruct and comfort them with the Word of God*, to minister that same unto them to their contentation and quieting of their consciences. As for satisfaction, or absolution for our sins, there is none but in Christ : we cannot make amends for our sins but only by believing in him which suffered for us. For he hath made the mends for all our sins by his painful passion and blood-shedding. And herein standeth our absolution or remission of our sins, namely, when we believe in him, and look to be saved through his death ; none other satisfaction we are able to make."

"As for private confession," says bishop Jewell,

“abuses and errors apart, we condemn it not, but leave it at liberty.”

This is agreeable to the doctrine of the Church of England. Penitent sinners are taught to confess their sins to God, and to look to him alone for pardon, not in consequence of any thing which they have done or can do, but entirely through the merits and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, which are made available to them by a lively faith in Him. But if their consciences are troubled with doubts and fears respecting their state, they are invited to come to some discreet and learned minister of God's word, and to open their grief; that *by the ministry of God's holy word they may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of their consciences, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.*

This, you will perceive, is very different from the auricular confession of the Church of Rome. It is free, while the other is compulsory. It is for the purpose of affording comfort and counsel to the troubled and perplexed soul, while auricular confession is regarded as a work, without which there can be no forgiveness of sins. And this, as I have before observed, is to rob Christ of his honour, and God of his prerogative. “Wherefore,” says bishop Coverdale, “considering this tree was not planted by the Father of heaven, but by the children of the devil, to search out craftily the privities of men's hearts, methinks it should be plucked up by the roots, and men brought again to the right and wholesome confession of their sins.”

Auricular confession is such an instrument of ecclesiastical tyranny, and has led to so many dreadful consequences, that the preceding language can hardly be deemed unjustifiable. And I feel persuaded that if the

members of the Roman Church had full liberty to read the Bible, and to consider whether such a doctrine is or is not in accordance with God's word, few indeed would ever again submit their consciences to so grievous a yoke. It has already been stated, that it is calculated neither to administer substantial comfort to the truly pious and conscientious, nor to restrain formal, careless, or grossly wicked persons from their evil practices. This statement is supported by the testimony of an unexceptionable witness—a priest who was for many years in extensive practice, as a Confessor at Seville, in Spain.” “One of the greatest evils of confession,” he says, “is, that it has changed the genuine *repentance* preached in the Gospel, that conversion and change of life which is the only true external sign of the remission of sins through Christ—into a ceremony which silences remorse at the slight expence of a doubtful, temporary sorrow for past offences. As the day of confession approaches (which for the greatest part is hardly once a year) the Romanist grows restless and gloomy. He mistakes the shame of a disgusting disclosure for sincere repentance of his sinful actions. He, at length, goes through the disagreeable task, and feels relieved. The old score is now cancelled, and he may run into spiritual debt with a lighter heart. This I know from my own experience, both as confessor and as penitent. In the same characters, and from the same experience, (though I have to thank God, that through a natural sense of honour, there is not the least subject of remorse upon my conscience connected with the manner in which I exercised my priestly authority) I can assure you, that the practice of confession is exceedingly injurious to the purity of mind enjoined in the Scriptures. ‘Filthy communication’ is inseparable from the confession: the priest, in

the discharge of the duty imposed on him by his Church, is bound to listen to the most abominable description of all manner of sins. He must inquire into every circumstance of the most profligate course of life. Men and women, the young and the old, the married and the single, are bound to describe to the confessor the most secret actions and thoughts, which are either sinful in themselves, or may be so from accidental circumstances. Consider the danger to which the priests themselves are exposed—a danger so imminent, that the Popes have, on two occasions, been obliged to issue the most severe laws against Confessors, who openly attempt the seduction of their female penitents.”

I will also transcribe a passage from a pamphlet written by one who was formerly a Popish priest, in order to shew you some of the workings of this horrible system. “During the last three years I discharged the duty of a Romish clergyman, my heart often shuddered at the idea of entering the confessional. The thoughts of the many crimes I had to hear, the growing doubt upon my mind that confession was an erroneous doctrine, that it tended more to harden than reclaim the heart, and that through it I should be rendered instrumental in ministering destruction to your souls, were awful considerations to me in the hours of my reflection. The recitals of *the murdrcous acts* I had often heard through this iniquitous tribunal, have cost me many a restless night, and are still fixed with horror upon my memory. But, my friends, the most awful consideration is this,—that through the confessional I had been *frequently apprised of intended assassinations and most diabolical conspiracies*, and still from the *ungodly injunctions of secrecy*, in the Romish creed, lest, as Peter Dens says, *the confessional should become odious, I dared*

not give the slightest intimation to the marked-out victims of slaughter. But though my heart now trembles at the recollection of the murderous acts, still duty obliges me to proceed, and give one instance of the cases alluded to.

“ The case of a person who was barbarously murdered, and with whose intended assassination I became acquainted at confession. One of the five conspirators (all of whom were sworn to commit the horrid deed) broached to me the bloody conspiracy in the confessional. I implored him to desist from his intention of becoming an accomplice to so diabolical a design. But alas! all advice was useless; no dissuasion could prevail, his determination was fixed, and his only reason for having disclosed the awful machination to his confessor, seemed to have originated from a hope, *that his wicked design would be hallowed by his previous acknowledgment to his priest.* Finding all my remonstrances unavailing, I then recurred to stratagem. I earnestly besought of him to mention the circumstance to me out of the confessional, in order that I might apprise the intended victim of his danger, or caution the conspirators against the committal of so inhuman a deed. But here ingenuity itself failed in arresting the career of his Satanic obstinacy. The conspirator’s illegal oath, and his apprehension of himself becoming the victim of brutal assassination, should he be known as the revealer of the conspiracy, rendered him inflexible to my entreaties; and awful to relate—yes, awful, and the hand that now pens it shudders at the record it makes—a *poor inoffensive man*, the victim of *slaughter*, *died a most cruel death, by the hands of ruthless assassins.* Oh, my dear Protestant countrymen, you will now naturally ask, whether am I, or the perpetrators of the bloody deed, most to be censured—

I who knew the murderers and the murdered, previous to the act—I who had met the intended victim in the public streets but a short time antecedent to his death? But, my friends, the prejudices of my early life in favour of the doctrine of auricular confession, and *the influence of subsequent education*, instilling into my mind the inviolability of that iniquitous tribunal, must plead before my God and the public, as my only apologies for the concealment of the diabolical conspiracy. And now, you Romish priests, I ask you, could the Lord Jesus institute a doctrine so monstrous in its practice, and so subversive of the principles of humanity? A doctrine that beholds the dagger pointed at the human heart, but hushes the warning voice, that would apprise the devoted victim of his danger?

“Oh, my Roman Catholic countrymen, why not awaken from your lethargic slumbers—why not arise from the mystic spells that bind you, and cast off that unnatural yoke, which would dare to unite your God in an unholy alliance with such monkish blasphemy? Should any unacquainted with Romanism, question the veracity of these statements, let him consult history, and he will find many similar facts. Did not the Romish priest, the Rev. Mr. Garnet, the provincial of the Jesuits, justify his concealment of the gunpowder plot, on the pretext of its being revealed to him at the confessional? Did not Father D'Aubigne, the French Jesuit, put forward a similar plea of justification for concealment, when the assassin Ravallac (that stabbed Henry IV.), in 1610, acknowledged to him in the confessional, his plan of regicidal murder? But why need I refer to such circumstances, *as every priest who has acted in the capacity of a confessor, must admit the fact*

of similar cases frequently coming before him in the confessional."

This is so horrible a statement, that you will perhaps be inclined to ask some Romish priest whether it be possible that Popery can thus allow of assassination;—for he who knows that a crime is to be committed, and is acquainted with the names of the parties, is an accessory before the fact, and surely guilty in the sight of God and man, however the Church of Rome may palliate the matter. Should you ask this question of your friend, the priest at M——, it is very probable that he will not give you a direct reply; or he may even deny that Mr. Nolan's statement can possibly be true. He may do this, although he may himself have had a similar case at the confessional; because, according to the tortuous policy of the Romish Church, he may tell a falsehood if it be for the good of his Church. Mr. Newman, before he publicly joined the Romish communion, seems to have made considerable progress in this kind of *morality*, for he expresses his approbation of the following sentence:—"He both thinks and speaks the truth; *except* when consideration is necessary, and *then*, as a physician for the good of his patient, he will be false, or utter a falsehood, as the sophists say." This quite accords with the teaching of Maynooth:—"If a priest is questioned by a magistrate as to matters which he has learned by confession alone, *he ought to reply that he is ignorant of them*: nay, he ought to swear to it, which he may do *without danger of falsehood*." It is added, on the authority of Estius, that in doing so he *neither lies nor equivocates*, since he frames a true reply to *the intention* of the person interrogating him: because the magistrate asks him what he knows *in his character as a man*, not to what he knows *as God*."

This being the case, you must not feel too sure of receiving an honest, straight-forward, unequivocating answer to a question of this nature from a Romish priest. But whatever your Popish friend may tell you, or whatever may be his own private opinion, I can refer you to an authority which the Roman Church has rendered binding, by fixing upon it its seal of *infallibility*. Alphonsus Liguori, whose writings, after a careful examination of many years, were declared by *the sacred congregation* to contain *not one word worthy of censure*, says:—"That no one can use the knowledge acquired in the confessional, unless it be morally certain (or at least certainly most probable) that from such a use no disclosure of the confession, *or injury to the penitent* can happen." And the reason he gives is, *lest the confessional should be rendered odious*. Hence you see, that this poor victim could not be saved, nor even warned of his danger, by the priest who knew that he was marked out for assassination, because his oath to his Church forbade him to do any thing which might possibly injure the murderer who had confessed his pre-meditated crime; perhaps it would be more correct to say, lest, by making the confessional odious, men should refuse to attend it, and, by such refusal weaken and ultimately destroy Rome's spiritual tyranny. This also accounts for Garnet's concealment of the Gunpowder plot. Not merely an individual or two, but *a whole nation must perish*, rather than this instrument of spiritual despotism should be injured. "This seal," says the canonized Liguori, "is an obligation of divine right most strict, in every case, EVEN WHERE THE SAFETY OF A WHOLE NATION WOULD BE AT STAKE, to observe silence."

The tendency of the confessional to pollute the mind and to render it insensible to shame, has been frequently

acknowledged. You are not aware of the questions which the confessor is instructed and authorized to put to his penitents, whether male or female. Many of them are of such a nature that I cannot pollute this letter by transcribing them. "The examination on the commandments," &c. which is found in a popular and widely circulated work, entitled, "The Garden of the soul," will afford you some idea of the kind of questions which not only male, but female penitents may be called upon to answer at the confessional. No wonder that it has been necessary, from time to time, to enact severe laws against confessors who abused their trust, when both their own minds and the minds of their penitents have been corrupted by the disgusting details, into which they are required to enter. No wonder that members of the Romish Church lament the enormous evils attendant upon this falsely-called "divine institution of sacramental confession," in the following words:—"It must be considered how great is the burden and danger of those who undertake so formidable an office, since experience proves that this remedy, so salutary to the fallen, is sometimes so perverted by the ignorance and negligence of confessors, that this fountain of grace (!) is turned into an occasion of perdition. We fear that there is no time in which the melancholy saying of St. Thomas, of Villanova, is not fulfilled in some confessors, 'that they send themselves and sinners down careless into hell.'"

"When we go a little deeper into the system," observes one who has well examined into *this mystery of iniquity*; "when we take the very book that these statutes set up, and *compel* those priests to study, to *examine* the consciences of these penitents; when we take also the very ritual of these priests, and see how, with

the very book that they carry about, every man in his pocket, for the purpose of administering the sacraments, they are not only *empowered but commanded to exercise a tyranny*, for which language has no name, over the heart and feelings and conscience of any female that is doomed to pass the ordeal of their tribunal; the man that can see and know these things, and would not prefer death to subjection to them, is not worthy to be called a husband or a father; he betrays the beings whom he ought to die to protect. But the truth is, the Roman Catholics are totally ignorant of the facts; they can scarcely bear even to hear of, much less to investigate boldly and manfully, the system to which they are enslaved. . . . The crimes of the confessional brought forward in these statutes, are the least of the evils attendant on it. The priest who is not liable to these penalties, is as bad as the man who is; for he uses the confessional *as Rome intends it*; not as a scene of licentiousness, but as *an instrument of tyranny the most cruel and intolerable that ever enslaved the human mind*. The object is, to bring the female mind into utter and abject slavery to the confessor, and the more pure and delicate that mind may be, the more is it bowed down by the despotism of the confessional. Inured from infancy to an examination, progressively and gradually suited to the age and circumstances—having thoughts and ideas suggested to the mind, in publications which seem devout and holy, and under this semblance conceal a system of cruel tyranny, which the priest is well trained how to exercise, and who, the further he is removed from licentiousness, is the more master of himself and of his weapons—the young and innocent female is prepared in his hands, for the inquisitorial investigation that awaits her as a wife; it is then that the real

despotism of the confessionnal is brought into full operation on her heart and feelings. It is the policy of Rome to make her the mother of children, who shall be enslaved to Papal tyranny from the womb, and to effect this purpose, she must first, however unconsciously, be enslaved herself. . . . Let Roman Catholic gentlemen in every city and town in England and Ireland, call upon their bishops and priests to translate, in their presence, those pages of Dens to which we refer, comparing them at the same time, with the common books put into the hands of females, to prepare them for the confessionnal; and the editor believes that every man who hears them, will declare that wife, or daughter, or even female servant, in his house, shall never bow her knee at the foot of papal tyranny again."

You are not yet a husband and a father, and therefore you may not quite enter into the feelings of the eloquent writer who wrote the preceding passage; but I appeal to you as a brother. You have a sister, an amiable, a pious, a most virtuous character. Every thing which might tend to contaminate her mind, has been carefully kept from her view. No licentious novels were ever allowed by your excellent and judicious parents, to be placed in their library or drawing-room. In the education of their children they appeared to be strictly following the admonition of the Apostle:—"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." *Phil.* iv. 8.

That daughter, thus carefully educated under the eyes of your lamented parents, is now entrusted to your guardianship. And I am sure that you would not,

knowingly, do any thing to undermine those principles of purity and virtue, which have been inculcated on her mind. But suppose she were to fall a victim to the attractions and temptations of the Romish Church, and be induced to embrace a religion which offers so much that is pleasing to the outward senses. Think to what contamination you will have been the instrument of exposing her! The confessional, it has been already observed, "is exceedingly injurious to purity of mind." One, who had been for a long period a confessor, acknowledges, that 'filthy communication is inseparable from the confessional.' You will yourself readily acknowledge this when you have read the book to which I have already referred, and which is put into the hands of Roman Catholic females, in order to be carefully read and studied, previous to the day of confession. Think, my dear Sir, what might be the consequence of sending even a virtuous female, after this preparation, to such an ordeal. Even when the priest happens to be a pious and sincere guide, what a shock it must give to a truly delicate mind, to be subjected to this instrument of spiritual tyranny! But if unhappily the Confessor be, what Popish writers confess and lament many a one has been, a designing sensualist, consider the precipice into which the unfortunate penitent is in danger of falling.

Follow, in imagination, your beloved sister to the confessional. See her kneeling at the feet of,—perhaps a virtuous and honourable, but it may be—a licentious and unprincipled confessor. Hear him addressing her, according to the directions of the canonized Liguori:—"Sister, be of good cheer, fear nothing, confess thy sins without fear, disclose every thing with confidence, *be ashamed of nothing*: it matters not if you have not ex-

plored the secrets of your conscience,—*it suffices if you answer my interrogations.* Give God thanks who hath invited you to such penitence. Now let your life be changed; rejoice, for God will certainly pardon all your sins, however grievous, if you have a good will, and therefore he hath invited thee that he should spare thee; therefore tell every thing with a cheerful mind, *conceal nothing through unwillingness.*”

See the trembling and confused penitent, her face crimsoned at the hearing of questions which had never before entered the ear, nor polluted the imagination of virgin purity; and hear the confessor interrogating her, as Liguori teaches, “*concerning the habit of sinning—the occasion, the time—the place—the persons with whom—the combination of circumstances.*”

The first step, however, is the great difficulty. The blush of modesty and wounded delicacy at length recedes from the cheek of the penitent. She is told that her confessor must be regarded as “God in the confessional,” and therefore she must not be ashamed of communicating to him her most secret thoughts, as well as actions. By degrees therefore she learns to talk with her confessor without hesitation and unblushingly, on subjects which it is a shame even to think of. From that moment she is the slave of a spiritual despot—a man bound by the unnatural law of celibacy, whether he possesses the gift or not, a man who has been preparing himself for his office by studying treatises on the most obscene and filthy subjects. Liguori, who has left a treatise for the instruction of priests on matters connected with the confessional, thus apologises for one portion of it:—“It grieves me concerning this matter, which contains as much filthiness, as by its very name will disturb pure minds, to give a longer dissertation;

but oh, that the subject were not so frequent as it is in confessions, that it would not behove the confessor altogether to be fully, but only briefly instructed;—besides, let the chaste reader pardon me if I speak largely, and enter into details which exhibit more unseemly ugliness.”

It is bad enough even when the spiritual director happens to be a prudent, virtuous, and conscientious man: but when the confessor’s cloak is thrown over an infidel and licentious priest, what baneful consequences may result from the conversations which are carried on in the confessional! Of the evils which have arisen, and which, of course, may again arise from this practice of auricular confession, some idea may be formed if you read the work of Liguori to which I have adverted. Speaking of such confessors as are not sufficiently reserved and guarded towards their female penitents, he adopts the language of an old writer:—“In a short time such persons come to this, that they no longer act towards each other as angels, as they commenced, but as those who are clothed in flesh; they interchange looks, and their minds are affected by soft expressions, which still seem to proceed from the first devotion; hence the one begins to long for the presence of the other, and thus (he concludes) the spiritual devotion is converted into carnal.’ And indeed, oh how many priests, who before were innocent, on account of similar attractions, which began in the spirit, have lost both God and their soul!” And in another place he exclaims:—“Oh how many confessors have lost their own souls and those of their penitents, on account of some negligence in this respect!”

Read the passages which I have marked in the accompanying little work, and you will see what subjects may *probably* be discussed between your wife and her

confessor. For although you are not yet a husband, yet, I understand, no long time will elapse before you enter into the holy state of matrimony. Mark well the nature of the questions which the confessor is authorised to put to married women, but which, for obvious reasons, he dares not put to the husbands. Hence you will see the wary policy of the Church of Rome. She practises her arts on the weaker sex without hesitation, and at once places on them her despotic yoke; but men must be treated differently. They must be gradually broken in, and held with a very slack rein until, by proper management (flattery, terrors, and indulgences, by turns) they can be brought to act as her submissive slaves. Read over carefully the passages I have marked in the Extracts from Liguori's Theology; and if the disgusting subjects there treated of, *in order to prepare confessors for their office*, cause you to throw the book into the fire, still remember, that *Rome has authorised and-sanctioned that work*. And if you can then call her, as some Romanizing dreamers (or, perhaps, disguised Jesuits) among ourselves, have called her,—“Our Holy Mother,” instead of designating her by her proper title:—“BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”—I shall indeed fear, that God has left you to yourself to fall into “a strong delusion that (you) should believe a lie,” and that you will soon be numbered with those who “depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”

This unscriptural practice of auricular confession would surely be sufficient, of itself, to keep from the arms of the Romish Syren, any persons of sober judgment, were they only to consider it in all its bearings. But it is not merely this single link which you must

bear, if you become a Romanist, but, I repeat and earnestly beseech you to remember, the whole chain of doctrines and commandments which the Romish Church forged during the dark ages, and firmly rivetted on the necks of her members, at the Council of Trent. May this consideration lead you to answer your Popish friend in the words of Chillingworth, when he again tells you, that there is no salvation out of the Romish Church : —“ 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 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 would prove damnable. Abiding in your church’s communion is so far from securing me or any man from damnable error, that if I should abide in it, I am certain that I could not be saved ; for abide in it I cannot, without professing to believe its *entire* doctrine true ; profess this I cannot, but 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 ERROR AND FALSEHOOD, IS CERTAINLY A CAPITAL SIN, AND OF GREAT AFFINITY WITH THE SIN WHICH SHALL NEVER BE FORGIVEN.”

LETTER XVIII.

THE TEACHING OF THE CANONIZED LIGUORI—IN WHAT
CASES EQUIVOCATION, FALSEHOOD, AND PERJURY ARE
DEEMED LAWFUL—MORTAL AND VENIAL SINS.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR eyes have been so long dazzled by the splendour and magnificence of the Papal edifice, that when you are admitted into the interior, it is some time before you can see things in their true colours. I am glad, however, to find that the further you penetrate into its obscure and intricate recesses, the less disposed you are to admire what meets your view. You have for a long period beheld Popery through a delusive medium ; now, your eyes seem to be opened, and, as if completely overpowered by the sight of her many abominations, you sink down on the steps of her altar—not to offer idolatrous worship, or to profess submission to the Papal chair—but, like Hannibal, to swear eternal enmity to Rome. This is your wisest course, if you desire to maintain true and undivided allegiance to Jesus Christ. None can safely make peace with Rome, while she renders void the law of God by her traditions and commandments. None can wear her iron yoke and the light and easy yoke of Christ at the same time. Egypt

and Canaan must be united: debasing slavery and perfect freedom must embrace each other: darkness and light must reign together, before Popery and the Gospel of Christ can be reconciled.

The answer which your Popish correspondent at M——, returned to your question is precisely such as might be expected. He tells you that he does not regard either Dens or Liguori as any authority. In making this declaration he is only pursuing the course recommended by the Romish Church—a course of prevarication and falsehood for the good of the Church. By referring to the Creed of Pius IV., and the Decrees of the Council of Trent, you will find that a Papist is bound to believe, without doubt or hesitation, whatever doctrines the Romish Church teaches, and to practise whatever she enjoins, and to receive whatever instructions she has sanctioned by her *infallible* decision. Now it has been repeatedly demonstrated, that Dens' Theology is a book which Rome sanctions and authorises. For consider what Dens' Theology really is. It contains not merely the sentiments of the individual whose name it bears, *but the opinions of the most eminent and learned Romanists, the essence of the canons of various Councils, and of the Bulls and Decretals of successive Popes.* The greatest portion of that work, therefore,—aye, and the most disgusting and revolting portion—cannot be rejected, without at the same time, denying the infallibility of the Church of Rome.

Liguori's works, having been sanctioned and adopted by the proper ecclesiastical authorities, they are now a part and parcel of Popery. It matters not if your correspondent, together with all the Popish priests and bishops in England and Ireland, profess to repudiate the sentiments and doctrines of Liguori, so long as his

opinions are sanctioned by the Romish Church. They may even solemnly declare, that they neither coincide with such opinions, nor will follow such instructions as Liguori's works contain; but their declaration would only prove their own inconsistency, or something worse.

Liguori was canonized at Rome in the year 1839. "On this occasion," it is stated in the Roman Catholic Calendar, "perhaps, there was a greater attendance than was ever previously witnessed. Together with his Holiness, Gregory XVI, the principal actor, there were forty Cardinals, 130 Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops, all the Generals, Superiors, and members of religious orders in Rome, about 17,000 clergymen, from various countries, several Kings and Queens of various states, an innumerable number of Princes, Dukes, Earls, and about 250,000 of various other classes, independently of the inhabitants of Rome and its environs."

After the ceremonies which are usually observed on these occasions, it was announced that the Pope had determined to elevate to the honour of saints, the blessed Alfonso Maria Liguori, and four others, because his Holiness *knew that the desired canonization was pleasing to God*. "Upon this, the Cardinals and rest of the assembly standing up, and the Pope wearing his mitre, seated upon his throne, in virtue of that power which the nations obey—which opens and shuts heaven,—at which hell trembles, and against which the gates of hell cannot prevail, he pronounced from his chair, as Doctor and Head of the universal Church, the great sentence in the following words:—'To the honour of the Holy and undivided Trinity, for the exaltation of the Catholic Faith, and for the increase of the Christian

religion, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, and *by our own authority*, mature deliberation having been employed, and the divine assistance having been repeatedly implored, and by the counsel of our venerable brothers, the Cardinals, Patriarchs, and Archbishops of the holy Roman Church, now in this city, we decree and define the holy N. N. to be Saints, and we add them to the catalogue of the Saints; appointing that their memory shall be honoured with pious devotion by the universal Church, on certain days of the year (here the days were specified) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.' ”

Now, can it for a moment be supposed that the Romish Church would have conferred, what it considers, the highest honour on the memory of Liguori, if it had not fully approved of his writings? If any one suppose so, he is greatly mistaken. Liguori's works, amongst which his Moral Theology holds a distinguished place, had in fact been strictly examined several times previous to his canonization; for “on the 18th of May, 1803, Pope Pius VII., confirmed the decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, which declared that all the writings of St. Alphonsus, whether printed or inedited, had been most rigorously examined, according to the discipline of the Apostolic See, and that not one word had been found ‘*censura dignum*’ (worthy of censure), and made known that the moral system of St. Alphonso had been more than twenty times rigorously discussed with the rules of the decree of Pope Urban VIII., and the documents of Benedict XIV., that in all these examinations undertaken with a view to the canonization of St. Alphonsus, and in the definite judgment of the Sacred Congregation, all agreed ‘*voce concordī, una-*

nimi consensu, una voce, unanimiter, (with concordant voice, unanimous consent, one voice, unanimously)."

Here then, you see, that the doctrines of Liguori are unequivocally sanctioned by the Church of Rome ; and your Popish friend is bound, so long as he continues a priest of that Church, to be guided by his opinions. He addresses to God, on each recurring 2nd of August, the following prayer :—" O God, who by the blessed Alphonsus, thy Confessor and Pontiff, inflamed with the love of souls, hast enriched thy church with a new offspring, we implore that, *taught by his admonitions*, and strengthened by his example, we may be able to come to thee through the Lord." Can your friend repeat this prayer, and yet neglect and despise the instructions and admonitions of the *Saint* ? If he can, what ought you to think of his conduct ?

Be assured, my dear Sir, that as an honourable and straight-forward character you are no match for a wily priest. You do not meet on equal ground. You speak your mind candidly, and so plainly that you cannot well be misunderstood : a Romish priest, on the contrary, is taught to be continually on his guard, carefully to construct every expression he utters so that it may not injure his Church, and, where necessary, to use such equivocal language that, although you may suppose that you understand him, he will soon convince you that he meant very differently. Not that he considers falsehood justifiable—at least, not in all cases and circumstances. Oh no ! "It is not lawful to lie, or to feign what is not ;" says Liguori ; "but *it is lawful to dissemble what is*, or to *cover the truth with words*, or other *ambiguous and doubtful signs*, for a just cause, and when there is not a necessity of confessing." Observe how this canonized Teacher instructs the members of

the Roman Church how to deceive their fellow-creatures. So long as it is for "a just cause," that is, in order to support the power of their Church, it is lawful. In other words Romanists are taught that they may do, and ought to do, evil that good may come.

"Double-speaking, says the *Saint*, by whose admonitions your friend prays that he may be taught, "can be used in a threefold manner:—1. When a word has a double sense, for example, *volo* signifies to *wish* and to *fly*. 2. When an expression has a double principal meaning, as, *this is Peter's book*, can signify either that Peter is the *owner* or the *author* of the book. 3. When words have a double sense, one more common, the other less common, or one literal and the other spiritual, as are these words which Christ spake of the Baptist, 'he is Elias,' and the Baptist said, 'I am not Elias.' . . . Thus also he who is interrogated concerning any thing which it is *expedient to conceal*, can answer, *dico non*, that is, I say the word *non*. Card. n. 5. 2. doubts concerning this; but, in the absence of better counsel, *undeservedly* it appears, since the word *dico* is the same as *profero*. These things being established, it is a certain and a common opinion amongst all (Romish) divines, that *for a just cause it is lawful to use equivocation in the propounded modes, and to confirm it with an oath.*" What is this *just cause* for which equivocation or deception may *lawfully* be used, according to the opinion of Liguori, whose works contain not *one word deserving of censure*, as Popish infallibility has decreed? "A just cause," says the *Saint*, "is any honest end in order to preserve good things for the spirit, or useful things for the body."

Your friend, the priest at M——, doubtless believes, that he ought to dissipate, by every possible

means, what he considers your prejudices against the Church of Rome. Hence *equivocation* is justifiable when he is answering your questions relative to the confessional, &c. The exaltation of his Church is a *just cause*, in his eyes, and he will be ready—not, of course, to tell a direct falsehood—for Popery is too politic to allow evil to be done in a plain, straightforward manner—but to dissemble, equivocate, and to “cover the truth with words,” if he can by such means promote this *sacred* cause. You may not quite understand how he can do this, but the priest, guided by the instructions of Liguori, can easily overcome every difficulty. Suppose, for instance, you ask him plainly, whether he has ever heard a man confess to him a crime which he fully intended to commit—a crime similar to that of which Mr. Nolan speaks—and he were to answer, I never heard any man confess that he was about to do such a thing; you would naturally conclude that such a confession had never been made to him. And yet he might have been repeatedly made acquainted with similar premeditated crimes. How then does he escape the guilt of having uttered a deliberate falsehood? His Church teaches him how to do this. She tells him to follow the instructions of St. Liguori; she leads him to believe that he must be right, if he attends to the lessons and admonitions of a canonized saint; and one of Liguori’s lessons is:—“That a confessor can affirm, EVEN WITH AN OATH, that he does not know a sin heard in confession, *by understanding, as man, not as the minister of Christ*, as St. Thomas 2. 2. 9. 70. art. ad Lug. disp. 22. (who however, n. 75.) explains in another manner that word, *that he does not know it through a knowledge which is useful for answering*. . . . Hence Carden. diss. 19. n. 39. *in fine* et 67.

ac. Fel. Pot. de jur. 1734, says, that when any one is bound to conceal the infamy of another, he may *lawfully* say, *I do not know it* : that is to say, I have not a knowledge which is useful for answering, or, I do not know it so as to make it known. And if any one rashly should ask from a confessor whether he may have heard such a sin in confession, he can rightly answer, *I have not heard it*, that is to say, *as man*, or so as to manifest it."

Thus, you see, the Church of Rome teaches that even *perjury* is justifiable, under certain circumstances ! How subversive is this doctrine, of all confidence between man and man ! Instead of that open and candid intercourse which prevails amongst men of honesty and integrity, there would succeed caution and suspicion, and dissimulation, and hypocrisy ! Language is to be used for the purpose of concealing, not of manifesting our thoughts and intentions. "Lying lips," says Solomon, "are abomination to the Lord : but they that deal truly are his delight." *Prov.* xii. 22. Popery, on the contrary, applauds and delights in, "lying lips," when they are exercised in defending and promoting its own exaltation. The gate of heaven is to be strictly closed against every man, who "loveth and maketh a lie." *Rev.* xxii. 15 ; but the Romish Church instructs her members to pray that they may be taught by the admonitions of a *saint*, who asserts, that they may lie, and ought to lie, if telling the truth "would be attended with great disadvantage."

I will give a few more specimens of the kind of *morality*, with which this highly esteemed *Saint* is permitted, through his writings, to imbue the minds of Roman Catholics. "A poor man, absconding with goods for his support, *can answer the judge that he has*

nothing. . . . It is lawful to conceal the truth, when there is a cause, viz. when any one seeks money from thee, *you can answer*, ‘Oh, that I had it, or, I would delight to have it, &c.’ . . . It is asked, 2. Whether an adulteress can deny adultery to her husband, understanding that she may reveal it to him? She is able to assert *equivocally* that she did not break *the bond of matrimony*, which truly remains; and *if sacramentally she confessed adultery*, she can answer, ‘I am innocent of this crime,’ *because by confession it was taken away*. So (teaches) Card. diss. 19. n. 54., who however here remarks, that she cannot affirm it with an oath, because in *asserting* any thing, the probability of a deed suffices; but in *swearing*, *certainty* is required. To this it is replied (by Liguori, whose works the Romish Church authoritatively declares contain *not one word deserving of censure*,) that in swearing, moral certainty suffices,—which *moral certainty of the remission of sin can indeed be had, when any, morally well-disposed, receives the sacrament of penance*.”

“A woman then,” Mr. Blakeney observes, “who commits adultery, when accused of the crime, may equivocate by saying, that she did not break the bond of matrimony, which continues even still; but if she thinks that such equivocation may be detected, then having repaired to the confessional, told the crime in all its details to her confessor, and secured the priest’s benediction and absolution, on the promise of penance to be performed, she may unblushingly come forth to the world, and say, ‘*I am innocent*.’ Yea, confirm it with an oath—Rome assuring her that the sin was remitted and taken away by confession, absolution, and penance!”

Well may we lament the delusion which prevents our

Roman Catholic fellow-subjects from seeing the fatal errors which are maintained by their Church. But still more deeply must we mourn over those, who, once members of our Scriptural and Apostolical Church, have wandered so far from the truth as to embrace such a religion as Popery : a religion which tends to subvert the foundations of morality, to destroy the peace of families, to debase subjects, and to ruin kingdoms. The zeal and self-devotion of many of its emissaries would be commendable, were they exerted in a holier cause. But their energies are directed, not to the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, but to the exaltation of "the man of sin." They are engaged in an attempt—many of them, perhaps, as unwittingly as Saul the persecutor—to bring all men into subjection to the powers of darkness, although the instruments employed may bear the character, and use the language of, "angels of light." And when we consider the nature of the doctrines and practices into which their proselytes are initiated, we may well apply to them the words of our Blessed Lord:—"Woe unto you, ye blind guides! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him tenfold more the child of hell than yourselves!"

This may seem strong language, but it is not stronger than the occasion warrants : for Popery is Phariseeism in a still more dangerous form. Consider the baneful principles of Dens and Liguori, of Delahogue, Bailly, Thomas Aquinas, Maldonatus, &c., principles carefully inculcated upon the priests at Maynooth and other seminaries, and through them, upon the members of the Romish Church in general, and then say, if there is not a cause for denouncing so demoralizing and destructive a system ! When the infamous and abominable doings

of Popery, in past ages, are related in the ears of the present generation, it is very common to hear such things excused, or at least palliated, on the plea of the darkness and ignorance of those times. "We persist in maintaining," says a late eminent writer, "that the adherents of Popery are materially changed, in contradiction of their express disavowal: and while they make a boast of the infallibility of their creed, and the unalterable nature of their religion, we persist in the belief of its having experienced, we know not what melioration and improvement. In most instances when men are deceived, it is the effect of art and contrivance on the part of those who delude them: in this the deception originates with ourselves, and instead of bearing *false* witness against our neighbour, such is the excess of our candour, that we refuse to credit the unfavourable testimony which he bears of himself. There is in the mean time nothing reciprocal in this strange proceeding: we pipe to them, but they will not dance. Our concessions, instead of mollifying, seem to have no other effect upon them than to elate their pride and augment their arrogance."

While Rome asks, or rather, demands not only toleration but encouragement and support, at the hands of Protestants; she employs all her influence to injure those who are thus cherishing her in their bosom. One who held an important office at Rome, warns us of the return we are to expect for our concessions and liberality: "It is well," he says, "that you should tolerate Roman Catholics even as you tolerate Jews, and even idolatry. But mark the difference: the Papists alone are they who seek in return to injure you—Rome urges them to it, nay, makes it a matter of obligation—of conscience, to do so. Rome is, therefore, to you an enemy who

makes war within your very house: and while she claims all privileges and all indulgences in your house, she will not allow you any in her own. She will not allow you within her walls, nor within any dominions where she rules, even a church wherein to pray in the simple purity of your worship; while she comes and rears in your cities, churches and altars, where, to your peril, acts of idolatry are committed, and the doctrines of Jesus Christ and his apostles are preached against."

May it not be feared, that the much vaunted liberality and candour of the present day are only a mask to conceal indifference, or even hostility, to revealed truth? When men are really anxious to know and to embrace the truth, they will not be ready to palliate manifest error. Charity, indeed, requires them to be kind, to forbear, to believe and to hope the best; but not to be blind to the dangerous mistakes and delusions, under which their fellow-creatures are labouring. Still less does it require them to keep men from seeking after the truth, by representing their errors as of no consequence. This is not to gain but to destroy our brethren for whom Christ died. As members of a Scriptural Church we profess to believe, that Popery is a corrupt, idolatrous, anti-scriptural system. What then can sensible and intelligent Romanists themselves think, when they hear men, who profess to believe all this of the Romish Church, and even take an oath to this effect, representing that the dispute between Protestants and Romanists turns only on a few obscure and unintelligible points of doctrine? What can they say to the laudatory and flattering terms in which such persons often speak of the Church of Rome? They are disgusted with such inconsistency. They can scarcely repress the contempt which they feel for men who are so utterly unprincipled.

The following is the reply which a Romanist makes to a Romanizing writer, who seems to have but one small objection to the Romish Church, and that is, her claim of universal Supremacy :—“ What meaning,” he asks, “ have all your expressions of sympathy and longing for unity? *how false, nay, how faithless, the courtesy which gives the name of Catholic to the enemy of God and his Church!* The Church of Christ is she who contends for her Lord, not sets up herself against Him,—‘ what concord hath Christ with Belial?’ If this be so, that, and that only is the Church of Christ which protests against Rome and all her abominations.”

This false liberality not only prevents men from labouring to discern truth from error, but makes them even unwilling to look, when the beauty of the former, and the deformity of the latter, are plainly set before them. They have eyes, but they see not. Were they not willing, nay, desirous to remain blind, it is impossible that the exposures which are made, from time to time, of the real nature of Popery, could fail to convince them, that it is the most dangerous system of delusion, impiety, cruelty, and immorality, that was ever invented.

Consider what evils have arisen from that absurd and anti-scriptural distinction which the Church of Rome makes between, what it calls, *mortal* and *venial* sins. God’s word makes no such distinction. All sin, it declares, is of the devil, and is deserving of death. But the Romish Church, setting aside the Bible as if it had no authority, daringly asserts that some sins are *venial*—are too light and trifling to be worthy of notice. “ But every transgression of the law,” as an eminent Reformer observes, “ lays us under the curse, and therefore even the slightest desires cannot be exempted from the fatal sentence. ‘ In weighing our sins,’ says Augus-

tine, 'let us not use a deceitful balance, weighing at our own discretion what we will, and how we will, calling this heavy, and that light: but let us use the divine balance of the Holy Scriptures, as taken from the treasury of the Lord, and by it weigh every offence, nay, not weigh, but rather recognize what has been already weighed by the Lord.' And what saith the Scripture? Certainly when Paul says, 'the wages of sin is death,' he shews that he knew nothing of this vile distinction. As we are but too prone to hypocrisy, there was very little occasion for this sop to soothe our torpid consciences. I wish they would consider what our Saviour meant when he said; — 'Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.' *Matt. v. 19.* Are they not of this number when they presume to extenuate the transgression of the Law, as if it were unworthy of death? The proper course had been to consider not simply what is commanded, but who it is that commands, because *every least* transgression of his Law derogates from his authority. Do they count it a small matter to insult the Majesty of God in any one respect? . . . What these men acknowledge to be sin, because they are unable to deny it, they contend is not mortal. Having already indulged this madness too long, let them learn to repent: or, if they persist in their infatuation, taking no further notice of them, let the children of God remember, *that all sin is mortal, because it is rebellion against the will of God, and necessarily provokes his anger: and because it is a violation of the Law, against every violation of which, without exception, the judgment of God has been pronounced.*"

By making distinctions which are quite repugnant to

the word of God, the Church of Rome has frequently led her blind votaries to commit the grossest transgressions : and by setting her own commandments above the Law of God, she has taught men to regard sins as light and trifling which He views with abhorrence, and to consider things that are lawful and allowed by God himself, as the most heinous transgressions. This charge against the Romish Church I will fully prove, in my next Letter, by quotations from documents of unquestionable authority with all sincere and consistent Romanists.

LETTER XIX.

DEMORALIZING PRINCIPLES SANCTIONED BY THE ROMAN CHURCH—THE VERY DIFFERENT PRINCIPLES INCULCATED BY THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

DEAR SIR,

I now proceed to lay before you the grounds for the accusation which has often been brought against the Church of Rome, namely, that she discountenances and condemns what God allows, and sanctions and encourages practices which the Bible utterly condemns. It is no answer to say, that many of the Romanists, with whom you and I are personally acquainted, condemn not only by their lips but by their lives, the demoralizing doctrines to which I refer. This only proves that they have had the grace to choose the good and to refuse the evil which their Church inculcates. In such persons the principles of Christianity have happily triumphed over the principles of Popery.

But to our proofs of the anti-scriptural and demoralizing nature of some of the doctrines which are sanctioned and taught by the Church of Rome:—God declares by his holy Apostle, Paul, that “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” *Heb. xiii. 4.*

And the same Apostle tells Timothy that "seducing spirits" would arise in the latter times and teach, among other false doctrines, the prohibition of marriage — "forbidding to marry." 1 *Tim.* iv. 1—3. But the Romish Church thinks that marriage is not honourable in *all*, and therefore not only forbids her clergy to marry, but denounces a curse against those who affirm that they may contract marriage. And so important does she regard this unnatural law of celibacy, that fornication and adultery are regarded by her as trivial sins in comparison of the breach of this law. "If ye credit me not," says an old writer, in one of his treatises on the errors of Popery, "read the Decree of Alexander the third of that name. There he affirmeth, that as for adultery and such other faults, which he accompteth, by express word, *crimina leviora!* 'trifling offences,' the Bishop may dispense with. And yet some good fellows will say that we preach liberty. We, or the Papists? Judge ye. Pelagius, the Pope, (as we read in a certain decretal of his; and when I speak of Decrees and Decretals, think that I speak of no other matter than that which *the Papists have in as sovereign a price as the Bible;*) gives a worthy censure in the like case. A man that had been married would needs, after the decease of his wife, become a priest; and sued for his orders. The prelates fell of examining the matter, whether he were *Bigamus* or no: that is to say, whether his wife was not a maid when he married her, or whether he himself had married a second wife. For if either of these had been found in him, he had been unmeet to enter into orders. But he was found to be an adulterer; who, after his wife's death, had a child by another woman. Now what saith the holy Father? 'Inasmuch as he is not found to be *Bigamus*, but yet proved incontinent, we

hope well of him : let him have his orders. As for his lechery, we bear with him, in respect of the weakness of this our age.' See the religion of Popery. If it had been his hap to have married a widow, or a second time to have entered into the holy state of matrimony, this man should have had no orders : now that he is become a whoremaster, he hath them. Here comes in place the famous judgment of him that makes the gloze, not in mockery, but in good earnest : *Ecce casus, ubi plus valet luxuria quam castitas* :—' Behold a case, where incontinence hath a more privilege than chastity.' Thus, I suppose, ye see how the Devil doth advance his works ; and by the ministry of the papists, set up himself in place of God."

From this infallible decision of the Head of the Romish Church, we learn that the commandment of that Church to every priest,—“Thou shalt not marry,”—is considered as of far greater consequence than the Divine command,—“Thou shalt not commit adultery.” If it be objected that this decision occurred many centuries ago, and that no such doctrine would be tolerated by Romanists in the present enlightened age, I answer, time makes no alteration in the decision of a Church which calls itself infallible, unchanged, and unchangeable. The present Pope, liberal as he is represented to be, must hold the law of priestly celibacy to be of higher importance than the seventh commandment in the Decalogue, or else he denies the infallibility of his predecessor's decision. But he is not likely to do this. In his late encyclical Letter to all Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops and Bishops, he speaks as if he were horrified at any attempt to repeal the law of celibacy, as it prevails in the Romish Church :—“To this point,” says he, “tends that infamous conspiracy against *the sacred*

celibacy of the clergy, which, oh shame! has been encouraged even by some ecclesiastics, who, miserably forgetful of their proper dignity, have suffered themselves to be overcome and drawn aside by the seductions and the blandishments of illicit pleasure."

"I know," says one who had been a Popish priest for many years, "that the Pope and his counsellors are perfectly indifferent about moral evils which arise from the laws which keep up the appearance of infallibility in their Church. Rather than alter her law of celibacy, Rome has allowed her clergy to be for many ages exposed to the most fatal temptations; and for the most part to be involved in the guilt of many a secret, and many an open sin, which might be avoided by the repeal of that law."

The following *weighty* reasons were given at the Council of Trent, by one of the Cardinals, against the abolition of the law of celibacy:—"Of the marriage of priests this inconvenience will follow, that having house, wife, and children, *they will not depend on the Pope, but on their Prince*; and their love to their children will make them yield to any prejudice of the Church. They will seek also to make the benefices hereditary; and so in a short space, *the authority of the Apostolic See will be confined within Rome. Before single life was instituted, the See of Rome received NO PROFIT from other nations and cities, and, by it, is made patron of many benefices, of which marriage would quickly deprive her.*" About two years afterwards the subject was again brought forward in the Council, and the advocates for repealing the law of celibacy repeated "the famous saying of Pope Pius the Second . . . that priests were by the Occidental Church forbid to marry for good reason, but there was stronger reason to restore mar-

riage to them again." But neither their arguments, nor "the famous saying" of an *infallible* Pontiff, could move the Council to grant this privilege. All the evils which this unnatural law had produced were but as dust, when weighed against the power and influence which that law gave to the See of Rome. "The Legates were blamed for suffering this Article to be disputed; as being dangerous; because it is plain that married priests will turn their affections and love to their wives and children, *and by consequence to their house and country, so that the strict dependence which the clergy hath on the Apostolic See would cease, and to grant marriage to priests would destroy the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, and make the Pope to be bishop of Rome only.*" Thus it is evident that Rome will not scruple to use any means, however unnatural, anti-scriptural, and despotic, which may promote her own aggrandizement. St. Paul assigned a very different reason why he recommended celibacy—*recommended*, observe, not enforced as a law of the Church—namely, because "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord," 1 *Cor.* vii. 32; but Rome does not merely advise, but command, her priests to remain unmarried, that they may be dependent on her, bring more profit to her coffers; and increase her influence and authority.

Since then fornication and adultery are numbered amongst the "*crimina leviora*," lighter offences, and the marriage of priests is placed amongst the more heinous sins, (for this latter sin is against one of the commandments of the Romish Church), it is easy to imagine what fearful consequences ensue from this anti-scriptural law of celibacy. Now suppose a Romish priest were determined secretly to marry, and yet wished

to retain his office and to remain in communion with his Church, what advice would a confessor of St. Liguori's training offer him? This marriage, under such circumstances, would be a most heinous sin, and therefore the director would try to make him commit a lighter sin rather than so aggravated a one as marriage. Fornication, or even adultery, as it has just been shewn, is, in the estimation of an *infallible* Pontiff, a lighter offence; the confessor's course would therefore be to advise, or induce him to commit either of these in preference to the other. For thus he is instructed by St. Liguori:—"It is lawful to induce a man, determined to commit a greater evil, to perpetrate a less evil."

Although very strict laws have been enacted by the Romish Church against confessors who seduce their penitents, they are easily evaded. For a wicked priest has only to manage so that his victim shall solicit him to commit the sin, and then he will be safe:—"It is enquired," says Liguori, "whether a confessor ought to be denounced, who consents to a woman soliciting him, in consequence of a fear caused by her that she would accuse him unless he consent. Hurtad denies that he should be denounced, because ecclesiastical law does not oblige when a great fear intervenes. However, this reason is weak, because such a fear is not considered grievous, for judges do not readily give credence to every accusing woman, as Salm. n. 59, and Escob. say: *but more justly it can be said, that this confessor is not to be denounced, because in truth he did not solicit but was solicited.*"

Nor has the degraded female, who may consent to occupy the place of the soliciting party, need to fear exposure and punishment. Ample means are supplied to screen both the guilty parties by that Church which

may indeed be said to “ call evil good and good evil—to put darkness for light and light for darkness.” For this canonized *Saint*, by whose “ admonitions ” each Romish priest prays that he may be guided, observes in another place :—“ It is asked, xi. Whether a penitent is to be denounced, who solicits a priest in confession. Some *few* answer in the affirmative, *but more commonly and more truly*, Bonac. Dian. Pal. &c. *deny it*. The reason is, because penal laws are not to be extended from case to case, neither does the same reason which applies for the denunciation of a confessor apply to that of a penitent, on account of the many obvious advantages, and especially lest a suspicion should arise that the seal was broken, if the confessor denounce the penitent.”

Thus, as the compiler and translator of Extracts from Liguori’s Moral Theology, remarks ;—“ The priest who commits sin with the penitent who solicits him is not to be denounced. The penitent is then at the complete mercy of the confessor ; he can take care to place his victim in the position of the soliciting party, and thus evade all danger : the confessor’s mind must necessarily be deteriorated and demoralized, by the filthiness and immorality which are constantly poured into it. Regarded as God in the Confessional he sways his penitents as he will ; they speak on the most disgusting subjects—they become familiarized with each other—the wicked priest has only to place his penitent, by a little management, in the position of the soliciting party ; no one can witness the fact : he retains her in his grasp so long as he pleases, and if at length any qualms of conscience arise, (which is most unlikely in those who breathe such a polluted atmosphere) the penitent may seek another confessor, from whom she receives absolution, and by

whom she cannot be compelled to denounce the former confessor, because it appears that she herself solicited him. The guilty paramour likewise reveals his sins to his own confessor, and his crime cannot be revealed, for that would be a breach of the seal—*nay, his guilt is taken away by confession, absolution, and penance!* Thus Rome demoralizes the mind, and gives full opportunity for the practice of immorality with impunity.”

Here observe the reason why neither parties are to be exposed—“lest a suspicion that the seal of confession was broken should arise:”—lest this most powerful instrument of enslaving the minds, bodies, and souls of men, should be weakened, and injury be thereby inflicted on the Church of Rome! To preserve that spiritual despotism in all its splendour and greatness, the law of celibacy must be maintained, notwithstanding the innumerable perils to which the souls of both confessors and penitents are exposed in consequence of it; and crimes, of a very heinous nature, must be suffered to pass unpunished, lest the confessional should be despised and neglected. Such is Popery! It will sacrifice virtue, honour, justice, and truth, in order that it may secure its own exaltation and pre-eminence!

It is allowed that professed members of other churches have been guilty of crimes as heinous as those of which some Romanists have been accused; but can it be said that any other church sanctions and encourages, directly or indirectly, such crimes? If a member of the Church of England be guilty of equivocation, lying, perjury, dishonesty, fornication, adultery, or any other sin, he has acted, and he well knows it, in direct opposition to the instructions of his Church. He cannot lay the flattering unction to his soul that these are, any of them, *little or venial* sins. He cannot, after

confession and absolution, hold up his head and unblushingly assert: "I am innocent." Nor can he plead any dispensing power which changes vice into virtue; nor adduce any "lawful cause" for setting aside God's commandments. But when a Romanist equivocates, he can shield himself beneath the authority of what he is taught to consider an *infallible* Church, and is not conscious of having sinned against God. What matters it to him that God hates "a lying tongue," and "a false witness?" His Church tells him by one of her canonized Saints that, "when there is a just cause of necessity or *utility*, any one can use double speaking in an oath, although of his own accord he comes forward to swear."

Again. If a Romanist happen to be a servant, or labourer, and should fancy that his master does not remunerate him sufficiently for his labour, what is he to do? God commands him, as well as all other servants, to continue "in singleness of heart, fearing God. . . not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things"—and that "he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done." Saint Liguori, however, teaches him a different lesson; for he tells him that if he be not adequately paid for his services, he may steal from his master's property enough to remunerate himself:—"The Salmanticenses. . . say that a servant can, *according to his own judgment*, compensate himself for his labour, if he, without doubt, judge that he was deserving of a larger stipend. Which indeed appears *sufficiently probable to me*, and to other more modern learned men, if the servants or any other hired person be prudent, and capable of forming a correct judgment, and be certain concerning the justice

of the compensation, all danger of mistake being removed." There are few servants, I imagine, who will not consider themselves "prudent, and capable of forming a correct judgment;" but, it is to be hoped, there are many who will indignantly reject this license to be dishonest to their employers, and will not allow the teaching of this corrupt church (through the writings of her canonized saints) to lead them to break the divine command:—"Thou shalt not steal."

Let me now give you an illustration of the baneful effects of such principles as Liguori inculcates, and the Church of Rome sanctions. About thirty years ago a Popish priest, named Riembauer, was condemned to perpetual imprisonment for murder. He had been long esteemed in his parish, as an humble, pious, and zealous minister; but he had been living in the most licentious manner for many years. When on his trial for the murder of one of the victims, whom he had seduced, he attempted to fix the crime upon a young woman; and, not succeeding in this, he accused her mother of committing the atrocious deed. Here also he failed. The evidence was too strong against himself to be set aside, although by his skill and sophistry he contrived to protract the inquiry through a period of nearly six years. During the trial he often called God to witness his innocence, and declared that he was a martyr, whom Satan and the enemies of religion, were persecuting, in order to disgrace the Church. He appealed to the people, and asked if they could think it possible that a priest could commit murder and yet exercise his sacred functions, when he must know that, on account of so heinous a crime, he was excommunicate, and unable without mortal sin to administer the sacraments?

Owing to some legal objections he was not executed, although no doubt whatever was entertained of his guilt. He was therefore imprisoned for life. After some time, when worn out in body and mind, he made a full confession. From this it appeared, that the woman whom he had seduced and then deserted, frequently applied to him by letters for a provision for herself and child. "She threatened," he said, "to denounce me to my ecclesiastical superiors, if I did not provide for the child, and receive her into my house. I explained to her my pecuniary embarrassments, and the impossibility of my receiving her; but she would listen to no excuses, and could be convinced by no arguments. My honour, my position, my powers of being useful, all I valued in the world, was at stake. I often reflected on the principle laid down by my old tutor, Father Benedict Sattler, in his *Ethica Christiana*, a principle which he often explained to his young clerical pupils;—'That it is lawful to deprive another of life if that be the only means of preserving one's own honour and reputation.' My case appeared to me to fall within this principle. I thought, if the wicked woman shall pursue me to Lauterbach, and do what she threatens, my honour is lost. I shall be disgraced throughout the diocese, the Consistory will remove me, and my property will perish for want of my superintendance. Father Sattler's principle became, therefore, my *dictamen practicum*."

Thus the lessons which this wretched man received, in order to prepare him for the office of a priest in the Church of Rome, led him by degrees to become a foul murderer. He became an adept in the abominable casuistry with which his youthful mind had been too well imbued. The *Ethica Christiana* of Father Sattler

was his oracle ; and hence he was led to believe that any crime was lawful, which could save the dignity of the priesthood from disgrace. Licentiousness he regarded as only a venial sin,—one of those *crimina leviora*, lighter offences, as Pope Alexander III. calls them,—which may easily be overlooked. He avoided the still more atrocious sin of marriage ; he maintained the infallibility and supremacy of the Pope ; he paid canonical obedience to his superiors ; he carefully observed (outwardly at least) the traditions and commandments of his Church, and taught his parishioners to do so ; and though he might neglect “ the weightier matters of the Law ” of God, what were all his sins of omission and commission, when compared with his unswerving fidelity to the interests of his Church ? His conscience was perfectly at ease on these points. “ My failings,” he says in his confession, “ so far as they were failings, were the incidents of my position. They were the failings of celibacy. They never disturbed my conscience ; *for I could defend them, both by reasoning, and by examples taken from ecclesiastical history ; and I think I deserve credit for having so managed my conduct as to give no public offence.*”

Thus Rieimbauer lived year after year outwardly decorous, zealous in the discharge of his priestly functions, and duly observant of the rites and ceremonies of his Church ; and he was, in consequence, highly respected by his parishioners, who, with the exception of the victims whom he debauched, were utterly ignorant what “ deceivableness of unrighteousness,” he was daily practising. But at length the measure of his iniquities was full, and his sin found him out. He hoped by committing the horrible crime of murder to save his reputation, but Divine Providence would not

allow the wicked deed to be concealed. The artful seducer and cruel murderer stands before the tribunal of his country, and his crime is fully proved against him.

But observe, my dear Sir, the influence which such lessons as those of Sattler, Dens, Liguori, &c. left upon this wretched criminal's mind, even after he had been brought to confess his atrocious guilt. Not only does he still maintain that his licentious and profligate habits were merely "lighter crimes," or, as he himself calls them "failings," so long as they were unknown to the public, and, consequently, brought no disgrace on his profession; *but he even denies that the murder, of which he was convicted, was a crime!* And by what means was he led to consider that assassination was justifiable? By the arguments of his tutor; by the perusal and study of such writings as are used in Romish schools and colleges in Germany, Italy, Ireland, and other Popish countries. Read the following statement, extracted from his account of the manner in which he perpetrated his horrid crime, and see how the delusions of Popery tend to harden the heart, and to infatuate the understanding. "I immediately saw that this wound was mortal. She remained standing for an instant or two, and I said, 'Anna, I beg forgiveness from God and from you. Pray to God to forgive your sins, and *I will give you absolution.*' And I gave her absolution, this being a *casus necessitudinis*. She was now beginning to fall, and I supported her, and laid her gently on the floor. *I knelt by her side, and gave her spiritual consolation, until her breath was flown.* Two days after, I buried her; and as the hands had stiffened in an attitude of entreaty, they rose above the grave, and I was forced to remove them. (The hands were found taken

off in the skeleton) I have nothing more to relate about this melancholy event, except that *I have frequently applied masses to her soul*, and that her death has always been a source of grief to me, *though the motives which led me to effect it were praiseworthy*. These motives, my only motives, were to save the credit of my honourable profession, and to prevent the many evils and crimes which a scandalous exposure must have occasioned. Had I not stood so high with my people, I would have submitted to that exposure; but if the faults of a priest, revered as I was, had been revealed, many men would have thought that my example justified their sins; others would have lost confidence in their clergy; and some perhaps might have thought religion a fable. THE END WAS GOOD; HER DEATH WAS THE ONLY MEANS. THEREFORE I CANNOT BELIEVE IT WAS A CRIME."

I do not bring forward this dreadful case in order to shew that Romanists are worse than others—are sinners beyond all others that dwell in the land. To do so would be both uncharitable and unjust. There are many most pious, excellent, and devout Christians, I doubt not, in that communion, who endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things, and of whom we may charitably hope, that they will be saved, notwithstanding the "wood, hay, and stubble"—the errors and superstitions which they are taught to heap together upon the true foundation. But I call your attention to it as a striking illustration of the demoralizing, conscience-searing, and soul-destroying tendency of Popery. The Popish system is clearly chargeable with the heinous crimes which this miserable priest committed. All his sins,—his hypocrisy, his sensuality, his cruelty, and blood-guiltiness—are to be traced to those

abominable principles, which the Roman Church permits Seminary tutors to inculcate on the minds of candidates for the priesthood. And if the priests, whose lips should dispense sound and wholesome instruction to their flocks, are imbued with these anti-scriptural and immoral principles, what can be expected from the mass of the people, who are under their spiritual guidance?

Members of the Church of England—even clergymen—may have been guilty of similar atrocious crimes, but could they appeal, in justification of their evil deeds, to the principles inculcated upon their minds, under the sanction of their Church? No. They could adduce nothing from her Canons, Articles, Homilies, or Formularies, which affords the least countenance to their sins. They might ascribe their fall to the reading of immoral and licentious books, or to the reasonings of sceptics and infidels; but they could not allege that their Church had encouraged them to pursue so pernicious a course: they could not state that they had only made the doctrine, inculcated by accredited tutors, their *dictamen practicum*—their rule of conduct—had only carried out certain principles collected from books which the Church of England not only sanctioned, but required them to study in their youth, and to make constant reference to in mature years. The studies to which our Church directs her members, and especially her clergy, to apply themselves, are of a very different nature from those which the Roman Church recommends. “Consider,” says our Church to her candidates for Orders, “how studious ye ought to be *in reading and learning the Scriptures, and in framing the manners both of yourselves, and of them that specially pertain unto you, according to the rule of the same Scriptures: and for this self-*

same cause, how ye ought to forsake and set aside (as much as you may) all worldly cares and studies."

But what is the language of the Roman Church to her students and priests? She puts into their hands the works of such writers as Dens, Sattler, Liguori, &c. and tells them to study *them*, in order to be prepared for the Confessional. Their minds must be occupied, and their imaginations polluted, by the study and contemplation of unrighteous, unholy, and impure thoughts and actions. That treatise of Liguori which they are recommended and enjoined to read, (as it contains not "one word worthy of censure" in the opinion of the Roman Church,) abounds in such disgusting and obscene details, that its author feels it necessary to give this caution to those who consult it:—"I beseech the students, who prepare themselves for the office of hearing confessions, that they may not read this treatise concerning the sixth (*seventh*) command, and the other unless on the eve of confessions, and let them read them for that purpose alone, putting away completely all curiosity, and at the same time let them more frequently elevate the mind to God, and commend themselves to the immaculate Virgin, lest while they desire to gain souls for God, they themselves lose their own souls." But the *Saint* does not seem to think any caution needful in reading those parts of his Moral Theology, in which he teaches—*that it is lawful to induce another to commit a less evil that he may be impeded from a greater*;—*that it is lawful to afford an opportunity of committing adultery or theft*;—*that it is lawful prudently to conceal the truth under some dissimulation*;—*that a witness, not properly interrogated, can swear that he does not know a crime, which in reality he does know, by understanding that he does not know it so as to give*

evidence concerning it;—that a poor man absconding with goods for his support, can answer the judge that he has nothing :—that a servant, by order of his master, can say, his master is not here, that is to say, not in this door or window; or, he is not here so as that he may be seen;—that an oath, taken with the intention of swearing but not with the intention of binding, is NULL AND VOID :—that an oath to marry a certain woman, is not binding if the man enter into a religious order, because in the promise of matrimony there is this tacit condition, ‘unless I enter a religious order;’—that oaths, let them be ever so valid, can be relaxed by the Church, for a just cause, such as, for example is, THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH :—that sons are bound to accuse parents, and parents their sons, if they are guilty of heresy.

Think, my dear Sir, what would be the state of society, if these infamous principles were generally to prevail! Yet is Rome putting forth all her strength, and many nominal Protestants are, either knowingly or unwittingly, assisting her to bring the people of this empire under the influence of such principles. Think, I again say, what would be the consequence! All confidence would be destroyed;—free and unreserved communication between friends and relatives would cease :—every one would fear lest he might give occasion for a charge of heresy to be preferred against him : even parents might expect to find enemies in their children, and children might tremble lest their parents should denounce them. What has formerly existed might and would again exist, should Popery ever obtain the ascendancy in these realms.

This last statement, which I have quoted from the Moral Theology of Liguori, that a parent is bound to accuse an heretical child, or a child an heretical parent,

is so horrible and unnatural, that you will hardly believe that Rome can sanction such an abominable doctrine. But read what a late priest of that corrupt Church states on this point :—“ Now I must add one word as to the effects of the Pope’s contrivance to make spies of the nearest relations, against those who might not believe every tittle of the Roman Catholic religion. I have told you that my parents were good and kind. My mother was a lady whom all the poor of the neighbourhood loved for her goodness and charity ; and indeed I often saw her denying herself even the common comforts of life, that she might have the more to give away. I was her favourite child, being the eldest ; and it is impossible for a mother to love with more ardent affection than that she shewed to me. Well, as I could not entirely conceal my own mind in regard to Popery, she began to suspect, that I was not a true Roman Catholic in my heart. Now, she knew that the Pope had made it her duty to turn informer, even against her own child, in such cases ; and dreading that the day might come, when some words should drop from me against the Roman Catholic religion, which it would be her duty to carry to the judges, she used to avoid my company, and shut herself up to weep for me. I could not, at first, make out why my dear mother shunned my company ; and was cut to the heart by her apparent unkindness. I might to this day have believed that I had lost her affection, but that an intimate friend of hers put me in possession of the state of her mind.”

Under such a system as Popery, our country would become a moral wilderness. Darkness would overspread the land and gross darkness the people. And the description of the state of Judea, after the inhabitants generally had rejected the word of the Lord, and

resolved to walk "in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart," when they "hardened their neck," and did "worse than their fathers," would be too applicable to the condition of this extensive empire: "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. . . . Truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth. . . . They have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name. . . . The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord: and what wisdom is in them? . . . They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the Lord. . . . And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord. . . . Their tongue is an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.

. . . . And the Lord saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. . . . For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. . . . My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains. For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered."

LETTER XX.

ANTI-SOCIAL AND DESTRUCTIVE DOCTRINES TAUGHT BY
THE CHURCH OF ROME.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR Popish friends—both lay and clerical—have repudiated in such strong language the principles noticed in my last two letters, that it would be a want of charity to doubt their sincerity. Let it then be admitted that they truly abhor such principles, and would by no means countenance those disgraceful practices which are sanctioned by the Romish Church,—this will not assist the cause which they have undertaken to defend. Although thousands of Romanists, it is to be hoped, may be found who hate every kind of deception and are most upright and honourable in their conduct, it is needful to remember that they are so in spite of the pernicious teaching of their Church. They exhibit in their own lives and conversation a higher standard of virtue than the Church, whose members they profess to be, holds up to them. This is highly honourable to themselves, or rather, it is to the honour and praise of God who has enabled them, notwithstanding the many evil influences by which they are surrounded, to preserve their integrity :

but what a disgrace does it reflect upon their Church, that even their virtues, which excite our love and admiration, would have been sullied, and, perhaps entirely destroyed, if they had paid much attention to her authorised teaching !

Let us consider, for instance, the first point on which your correspondents were perfectly agreed, namely, the unlawfulness of equivocation and mental reservation. They assert, and I am willing to believe that they are sincere, that every kind of deception is utterly contrary to their feelings, and would be rejected by them with abhorrence. Your friend, the priest at M——, declares most solemnly, that he could not be a Catholic if he either taught, or practised equivocation and falsehood. Granting then that he is perfectly honest in this declaration, I have only to observe that he is more conscientious and scrupulous than the Church to which he belongs. This is undoubtedly honourable to him, but at the same time it proves that he is very inconsistent. For he professes to be, nay, he even prays that he may be guided by certain instructions, which, however, he refuses, from conscientious motives, to follow. He prays, at least once every year, that he may be guided by the admonitions and example of *Saint Liguori*; and this Saint teaches the lawfulness of equivocation. Let us suppose a case :—A gentleman is about to hire a servant who attends the chapel of your friend. He writes to the priest to inquire into the man's character, and begs to know if he be sober, steady, and honest. Now, we will suppose that the priest has learnt at the Confessional, that the servant is a drunken, licentious, and dishonest character; what answer can he return to the inquirer? The plain, obvious, and honest course would be, to say that 'he will not suit you.' But if your

friend were to give such an answer to the inquirer, he would be acting contrary to the instructions which have been published, under the sanction of the Roman Church, for the guidance of confessors. "No one," it is declared, in Liguori's Moral Theology, "can use the knowledge acquired in the confessional, unless it be morally certain (or, at least, certainly most probable) that from such a use no disclosure of the confession, or injury to the penitent, can happen." In the supposed case, then, the confessor might lawfully (according to Popish notions of lawfulness) say, 'I do not know that the servant in question is either a drunkard, or licentious, or dishonest.' And should the inquirer, from a natural wish to learn the real character of the servant, entreat the priest to answer without equivocation, whether he knows the man to be a bad character or not;—"Even in that case, he can answer with an oath, that he does not know it." The reasons by which this Romish *Saint* endeavours to satisfy the conscience of the priest, who may deem it expedient to utter a falsehood, and even to confirm it with an oath, have been before stated.

Now, it matters not how uprightly your correspondent at M——, would act in such a case. He might possibly tell the inquirer that, as a priest, he was precluded from giving any answer to the question put to him; or, he might say, that he did not think that the servant would suit the gentleman, without stating why he so thought. But the Roman Church would not approve of such a course, lest a suspicion might be excited that the secrets of the Confessional had been divulged. The servant might lose a good place, if the priest were to answer in this way, and rather than the *penitent* should suffer any injury, his confessor may lawfully use equivocation. The priest would, in this

case, be considered to have a just and sufficient cause for employing deception; for "a just cause," says Liguori, "is any honest *end*, in order to preserve good things for the spirit, or *useful things for the body*."

Your friend then, you see, might as a Roman Catholic practise equivocation and falsehood, and even swear that it was true, although it is certain that a Catholic (in the proper sense of the word) that is, a faithful member of Christ's Universal Church, would recoil from even the thought of committing so detestable a sin. The assertions, therefore, of your correspondents, or of any other individuals of the Romish communion, that they utterly abhor and renounce such principles and practices, are no answer whatever to the accusations which are preferred against their *Church*. They are not the Church of Rome. If they could prove that Rome has ever retracted her sanction of the various works, which contain these abominable principles, that would be something in favour of their cause. But this is impossible. The books which teach the lawfulness of equivocation, falsehood, and perjury, were compiled by eminent and learned men of the Romish Church, and she has sanctioned the doctrines that are found in those books by her infallible authority. Hence, your friends at M——, and all other Romanists, who abhor and repudiate such vile principles and practices, are so far *Protestants*. But how they can reconcile it to their consciences to remain in a Church, which teaches what they profess to abominate, it is for themselves to explain. They are either very inconsistent, or else so utterly blind, that they cannot see those abominations which pervade the accredited writings of their Church. Their condition, then, must surely be most perilous; and it would be well if they could be prevailed upon

seriously to consider, how such inconsistency, or willing ignorance of the real principles of their Church, will be regarded by a God of truth and holiness.

You are aware how difficult it is, in Ireland, to convict a Romanist of any crime that may be laid to his charge, if only Romanists are brought forward to give evidence. Perjury is notoriously practised, in that unhappy country, by multitudes, without the least compunction, either because they are taught to designate it by some other more innocent name, or because they are led to believe that it is lawful under certain circumstances. This is one of the natural fruits of that detestable casuistry which is taught, at Maynooth, from the works of Thomas Aquinas, Bailly, Dens, Delahogue, &c. Suppose, for instance, that three or four Romanists had seen one of their Protestant countrymen deliberately murdered, and were called upon to give evidence in a court of justice. They may be duly sworn to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth;" and yet, if they think that the murder of a Protestant, is not a crime but rather a praise-worthy act, they may swear, *that they do not know that the accused are guilty of the crime which was actually perpetrated before their eyes.* "The accused, or a witness not properly interrogated," says Liguori, "can swear that he does not know a crime, which in reality he does know, *by understanding that he does not know the crime, concerning which legitimately he can be inquired of, or that he does not know it so as to give evidence concerning it.* The same is true if a witness on another ground is not bound to depose; for instance, *if the crime appears to himself to be free from blame,* as Salm. d. c. 2. n. 259. et Elbel. n. 145."

Now, the question is, Are such witnesses as the

Irish peasantry likely to think the murder of a Protestant a crime "free from blame?" If their priests are taught so—if the pastors from whom the people seek instruction are led to consider murder and perjury lawful—we may naturally conclude that such also will be the opinions of the flock which they superintend. But the priests are taught to pray to God, that they may be guided by "the admonitions" of St. Liguori, whose words I have just quoted: and candidates for the priesthood are taught from the Standard Works, used at Maynooth, the following doctrines:—"Who hath not known the Calvinists and Lutherans? Who does not see that they are heretics who have revived almost every ancient heresy?—truly there never was a heretic, there never can be a heretic, if they are not heretics. . . . They who deny that heretics are to be put to death, ought much rather to deny that thieves, much rather that murderers, ought to be put to death."

"Formerly, heretics were very rarely punished with death. . . . But in the latter years it every where prevailed that obstinate heretics were to be punished with death, nay, and to be burned alive by fire, which kind of punishment signally began in these twelfth and thirteenth centuries." "Impenitent heretics are to be burnt with fire; in which case their mouth and tongue should be bound up lest they scandalize the weak with their blasphemies; as Farinacius well observes in the fore-cited place, having quoted many authorities and examples."

"If you throw them (heretics) into prison, or send them into exile, they corrupt their neighbours by their language, and those who are at a distance by their books, therefore, *the only remedy is, to send them speedily to their proper place. . . . It is an act of kindness to ob-*

stinate heretics to take them out of this life: for the longer they live, the more errors they invent, and the more men do they pervert, and the greater damnation do they acquire unto themselves. . . . *If, indeed, it can be done, they are undoubtedly to be extirpated.* But if they cannot, either because they are not sufficiently known, and there is danger lest the innocent should suffer for the guilty, or if they are stronger than we are, and there is danger, if we attack them in war, that more of us would fall than of them, then we are to keep quiet."

Will not the inculcation of such doctrines as these, on the minds of Romish priests in Ireland and their flocks, sufficiently account for the perjuries, the robberies, the deeds of violence and blood, which disgrace the annals of that unhappy country? In our own land, indeed, we have to lament the frequent occurrence of great and atrocious crimes, but the mass of the people do not sympathise with the perpetrators of them. Their crimes excite a general feeling of horror. But in Ireland, even the assassin may in open day coolly destroy his victim, and may pass through the midst of numbers of his countrymen, without any effort being made to arrest him. Too frequently is the robber, or the murderer, applauded, and the guilty parties concealed by the deluded peasantry, so that they cannot be brought to justice. It is unjust to say, that this state of things is owing to the excitability of the Irish character, and that they are naturally worse than other men; for no people evince more noble, generous, humane, forgiving and forbearing dispositions than the Irish, when they are under the teaching and influence of the Gospel. It is Popery which, in a great measure, renders them what they are. The following extract from a speech of a member of Parliament, shews what

is the present condition of that country, as well as one principal cause of all its miseries :—“ What is really the system now prevalent in Ireland? Denounce a man one day, and shoot him the next! In one case a man was denounced from the altar on a Sunday,—he was shot the same evening : in another, a man was denounced from the altar on Sunday, and shot upon the following evening. Those were not imaginary cases : would to God they were! What was the evidence on a trial in the county of Tipperary held not long since? It was the case of a poor man named Callaghan. The following questions were put to the priest :—Q. ‘ Did you denounce the murdered man from the altar?’—A. ‘ I did.’ Q. ‘ When did you denounce him?’ A. ‘ On Sunday at Mass.’ Q. ‘ When was he murdered?’ A. ‘ At five o’clock the same evening.’ What was the case with Major Mahon, a kind and considerate landlord, and an amiable private gentleman in every respect? Was he shot because he was a bad landlord? Not at all—he was an exceedingly good man. He was denounced upon Sunday from the altar by the priest, and on the following day, whilst returning from his charitable office in Roscommon, he was shot dead.”

The priest, who had been accused of denouncing the late Major Mahon, publicly denied that the Major was denounced in any chapel in that neighbourhood, on the Sunday preceding the murder. Hence some persons have been led to imagine, that the accusation was altogether false and calumnious ; but what is the fact? It was not on a *Sunday*, but on a *Monday*, a saint’s-day, when the priest’s chapel was well attended, that he instigated the assassins, by his dastardly and wicked denunciation, to commit the horrid crime.

This dreadful practice of denouncing from the altar has excited so much horror in the mind of an excellent Roman Catholic nobleman, that he has remonstrated with one of the Irish Popish bishops on the subject. His Lordship is not, of course, aware of the persecuting tenets which the Romish priesthood imbibe from the Standard works that are studied in their Seminaries, or he would feel no surprise at, however much he might abhor, these denunciations. They are the natural results of the Popish system. His Lordship might just as well urge the labourers in a vineyard, where the seeds of the deadly night-shade had been abundantly sown by order of the owner, to prevent the fruits of the destructive plant from coming to maturity. The labourers could not follow his Lordship's advice, consistently with their allegiance to their foreign Master, under whose sanction the poisonous seeds were sown; for they must suppose that he desires the plants to grow, and to bring forth their peculiar fruits to perfection.

Another Roman Catholic nobleman has also written a letter, in which he expresses his surprise and indignation at these denunciations from the altar, and his anxious wish that the priestly delinquents should be visited with some ecclesiastical censure. But how a man can be justly punished, by his ecclesiastical superiors, for only carrying into effect those principles which he has imbibed from the teaching of an *infallible* church, it is difficult to understand. The denouncer of Major Mahon had, of course, been taught that his church has a right to punish heretics, *as the leader of an army has a right to punish severely the deserter—that Christ does not forbid heretics to be taken away and put to death—that they are not guilty of murder who slay the excommunicated—that it is an act of kindness to obstinate heretics to take*

them out of this life—that it is not cruelty but piety to punish crimes for God—that heretics are justly punished with death. . . . because in Deut. xvii. 12, it is decreed, that if any one will act proudly, and will not obey the commands of the priest, let him be put to death.

Though the Irish priest, in question, therefore, may be censured as being impolitic, and carried away by an indiscreet zeal, yet how can his church consistently punish him for denouncing any heretic, when he has been taught by herself to believe, that it is a *pious act*, and even *kindness to themselves*, to destroy heretics? His church may censure him, because his unseasonable zeal may injure her cause in the minds not only of Protestants, but also of those Romanists who fancy that persecuting tenets are no longer held by their church; but she would be acting like the Spartan parent, who blamed and punished his child, not for the theft which he had committed, but for his want of dexterity in committing it. The pious and amiable nobleman, alluded to, calls this denunciation from the altar an *unchristian act*—“a flagrant and dangerous violation of charity and decorum.” Every member of the Church of England will cordially agree with his Lordship in thus designating it, because such an act is totally opposed to those mild and scriptural principles which our church inculcates. But how the noble Lord can use such terms towards the guilty priest, and yet feel reverence, and affection, and yield unhesitating allegiance to that church, which teaches and upholds the *principles* which led to this *unchristian act*—*this flagrant violation of charity and decorum*, is an impenetrable mystery.

Members of the Church of England, who are taught from their childhood to abhor every kind of deceit, falsehood, and dissimulation, can scarcely credit the state-

ments which are made, from time to time, of the actual working of these Popish principles. They attribute that recklessness in committing perjury and other sins, which is so frequently manifested by the lower class of Romanists, to the wickedness of the individuals, and consider that the Roman Church should not on this account be blamed. But on that Church surely rests a large share of the guilt and responsibility of these enormities. The fault is to be attributed to the principles, inculcated by her, on the minds of these ignorant and degraded beings. Had they been instructed in the doctrines of the Bible, and trained up in the practice of its pure morality, their minds would have revolted from such teaching as that which proceeds from Maynooth. But to them Holy Scripture is a sealed Book. They are not permitted to read for themselves such passages as the following :—“ Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. . . . He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. . . . I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love. The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped. . . . The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish.”

How much soever the Romish Hierarchy of Ireland may declaim against those heinous crimes, which are so frequently perpetrated in that miserable country, their labours are, and must be, vain, so long as the principles sanctioned by the Church of Rome are so industriously

inculcated in their Seminaries and Confessionals. The crimes and abominations that pervade Ireland, are the natural and necessary fruits of the pernicious seed which has been scattered throughout the land. And that seed is unhappily so agreeable to the soil in which it is sown, (for "the heart," says the Prophet, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked : who can know it ?" *Jer.* xvii. 9,) that it soon takes root, spreads, flourishes, and brings forth abundant fruits of corruption.

I have observed, that Protestants can hardly believe the statements which are frequently made as to the cool, deliberate way, in which the most solemn oaths are broken. The following short conversation shews a state of moral obliquity, into which it can scarcely be supposed that any man, who professes the religion of a God of truth, could possibly fall :—"How could you go and break your oath the way you did ?" said a man to a witness whom he knew to have sworn to a whole tissue of lies in a court of justice—"No, but keep my oath you mean," replies the witness. "Keep your oath !" rejoins his friend ; "how can that be, when you know as well as I do that all you swore was false ?" "Ay, but," returns the other, "*I swore this morning, before I went out, that I would not tell a word of truth to-day.*" This witness, guilty as he was of perjury, in the plain and obvious meaning of the word, no doubt considered that he was acting *lawfully*, and that he was a good Romanist, whatever construction heretics and the *over-scrupulous* of his own communion, might put upon his conduct. And certainly he did no more than what his Church sanctions, since she has declared that her canonized *Saint, Liguori*, has not one word, in his writings, that is worthy of censure. But the Saint teaches, that "when there is a just cause of necessity

or utility, *any one can use double speaking in an oath, although of his own accord he comes forward to swear.*" The witness might also excuse himself by saying, *that he had no intention of binding himself to speak the truth,* when he was sworn in the court of justice, and therefore that *his oath was not a true oath.* This kind of morality sounds strangely in the ears of Protestants, but it is so agreeable to the notions of the Roman Church, that she has exalted to the honour of sainthood the man, who teaches how perjury may be committed with an easy conscience. When an oath is taken without the mind of binding one's self, it is not a true oath—"both because," says Liguori, "it wants the necessary condition to the nature of a promissory oath, *such as is the intention of binding one's self*: and because an oath follows the nature of the promise which it confirms. . . . But a promise made without such a mind is not, indeed, proposed; therefore the promise being evanescent, the oath is also such, and is considered as made without the mind of swearing, which certainly, as we have seen, is null and void. But if no oath exists, there is no obligation of fulfilling that oath."

It was in this way that the unscrupulous heathen excused their perjuries. There were, says Archbishop Sancroft, "a lip-oath and a heart-oath: you may find it in Euripides:—

I with my tongue can swear
And with my heart forbear.

Jurata lingua est, mente juravi nihil."

Do not suppose that these principles are acted upon only in countries where Popery has unlimited sway. They are at work wherever an emissary of the Roman Church is to be found. They are not, indeed, openly professed in Protestant countries, but, on the contrary,

are often seemingly repudiated by those who hold them. Yet they are secretly and to an alarming extent in operation. You recollect the feeling of indignation which was excited, no long time ago, by the duplicity alleged to have been practised, in order to inveigle a young man into the toils of Popery. It was stated that a Popish bishop, to whom the youthful victim had been introduced by his treacherous tutor, had granted, or offered, a dispensation to the young man, in virtue of which he might outwardly profess the Protestant faith, while he was secretly conforming to the Romish Church. The scandal which this report occasioned led some Romanist to call upon the Popish bishop, through the medium of a public Journal, to contradict what he supposed must be a calumny. I will transcribe the Romish bishop's reply. You will find that it is capable of a variety of meanings, and very different from the answer which an honest, guileless, truth-loving individual might be expected to write. But this may be owing rather to the system, under which this Popish divine had been educated, than to any intention of using equivocation : —“ Sir,—For the satisfaction of your correspondent, ‘ Catholic,’ whose letter appeared in the *Times* of Wednesday last, I hereby contradict the ‘ malicious report ’ to which he refers—that I countenanced an individual professing one religion, and being at the same kind of another, for the sake of deception.—I am, Sir, yours.” I do not give the name of the writer, for it is not against individuals, but against the system of Popery that I write. The report of the attempt to deceive may have been false, and the Romish bishop may have acted with perfect integrity in the matter : but if he had really done what he was accused of doing, he would have had the countenance and sanction of *Saint Liguori*, and,

consequently, of the Roman Church, which has given her *infallible* testimony to the soundness and orthodoxy of the Saint's writings. Before I quote some passages from his Moral Theology, in support of my statement, I will transcribe an extract from a letter, written by a clergyman, with whom the young pervert to Popery had studied, previous to his entrance into the University of Cambridge. You can compare it with the letter of the Popish bishop, and draw your own conclusions:—"On his secession occurring, I wrote at once to his mother, imagining her cognizant of what had happened. To my surprise, I found that she had been kept in total ignorance of the matter; and to my horror, I then heard *from himself* of the *Dispensation* which has been mentioned. I characterized it in the terms now familiar to your readers, as having been employed by 'A Father,' in his correspondence with the *Times*: and let it be observed, it is this description of the Dispensation, not the fact of its having been proffered, which Dr. ——— repudiates in the *Times* of Tuesday. I stated, and state again, that this fact forms the worst feature, which has hitherto been shewn of the present proceedings of Romanists."

Whatever part the Popish bishop may have taken in this affair, which has, doubtless, overwhelmed with distress the family of the perverted youth, the indignation of the public should be rather directed against that Church which sanctions, and teaches her emissaries to practise such "deceivableness of unrighteousness," than against her deluded agents. Our warfare should be with Rome, not with Romanists. On the latter we should look more in sorrow than in anger, and be earnest in prayer, that God would bring them from spiritual bondage into the glorious liberty of the service

of Christ. But with the former we should make no terms—no covenant—no peace. Let us rather assail her in her citadel, explore her dungeons, and bring to light her secret, long-cherished and tenaciously-grasped abominations; and then we may hope for the gradual decline, if not the speedy destruction, of this anti-christian power.

I have already proved from the writings of the canonized Liguori, that the Roman Church teaches that equivocation and deception may be lawfully practised, in certain cases; and therefore you will not be surprised to find that to *dissemble* or *conceal* the faith, which men really entertain, is also deemed lawful. It would be wrong, of course, to deny the faith, or to profess a false religion, but it is quite excusable, under certain circumstances, and in order to promote some useful object, to *seem* to profess what a man does not really believe! Perhaps I had better repeat the Saint's words:—“Although it is not lawful to lie, or to feign what is not, however *it is lawful to dissemble what is, or to cover the truth with words, or other ambiguous and doubtful signs, for a just cause, and when there is not a necessity of confessing.*” Here then, you see, that the misguided youth, in question, might have held all Romish doctrines, and have secretly professed spiritual obedience to the See of Rome, and yet, with the full sanction of the “*Holy Mother,*” might have outwardly professed the religion which he had forsaken. Had his parents even asked him whether he had not become a Romanist, he would have been fully justified, according to the Popish code of morals, *in answering obscurely.* For by this, or any similar kind of *tergiversation*, the Saint observes, “he does not appear to deny the faith, but is unwilling to betray it.” And if the young pervert could have so far

overcome his *prejudices* against the employment of deception for the benefit of Popery, he might have remained a concealed papist, with the entire sanction of the Roman Church, for years in the house of his father, and might have used every effort to make proselytes of the other members of the family. "When you are not asked concerning the faith," says Liguori, "not only is it lawful, but often more conducive to the glory of God, and the utility of your neighbour to cover faith than to confess it; for example, *if, concealed among heretics you may accomplish a greater amount of good,—* or, if from the confession of the faith more of evil would follow. . . . In Germany, to hear the sermons of heretics—to attend at a funeral—to *act as a sponsor for a child in baptism*—are not esteemed professing signs of the faith, or of communion with the religious offices of heretics. . . . Whence, other things apart, viz. scandal, peril, prohibition, &c. if they be done for a good cause, they are lawful."

We have heard and read of tutors who have betrayed their trust, and, instead of inculcating the sound scriptural principles of the religion which they outwardly professed, have insidiously undermined and unsettled the faith of their pupils, and led them ultimately to embrace Popery. Now, let us suppose that such a Romanizing tutor and his pupil were travelling in a country, where the Inquisition was established. Perhaps the scenes, to which the new pervert is introduced, fill him with amazement and horror at the folly, superstition, and wickedness of the Papal system; and he begins to repent of his rashness in forsaking a religion, which is a free and reasonable service, for so degrading and enslaving a superstition as the religion of Rome. His *friend* and adviser observes his wretchedness, and

inquires into the cause. The pupil is silent—he dreads to communicate the thoughts which pass through his mind—he knows the perils that surround those who desire to be freed from the Papal yoke, and he wishes to reach a land of civil and religious liberty, before he avows his change of opinions. But his tutor, by earnest solicitations, accompanied by the warmest professions of friendship, at length prevails upon him to tell his secret thoughts, but not until he had solemnly promised not to betray him. The tutor then tries every argument in order to retain his pupil in, what he considers, the true faith: but finding all his reasons and persuasions useless, he denounces the unhappy youth to the Inquisition. He sees him removed to those dungeons, where tortures and a lingering death await the relapsed heretic. ‘What!’ you exclaim, ‘denounce him, after having given a solemn promise not to betray him?’ Yes: although he may have taken an oath to that effect, *he is justified*, according to the Romish Church, in breaking it for a just cause, *such as for example is, the good of the Church*. It may be lawfully broken, says the man whom that Church has canonized, “if it cannot be observed without common loss, *such as would be the oath of not denouncing, not accusing, &c.*” But should the tutor have any scruples about the matter—should a feeling of compassion lead him to hope, that his oath, or his solemn promise, might be deemed a sufficient plea for allowing his victim to escape, and he were to apply to a priest for direction, he would then find that his promise, and *even his oath, were null and void*. Hence he would be bound to denounce his unhappy pupil, because *heresy* is a crime against the common good;—“You do not sin against justice or charity,” says the Saint, “if you accuse *without pre-*

vious warning, in two cases ; when the crime is injurious to the public, as conspiracy, the sin of treason, and especially *heresy*.”

LETTER XXI.

IGNORANCE OF ROMANISTS AS TO THE REAL TENETS OF
THEIR CHURCH—THE POPIISH MODE OF CONVINCING
HERETICS.

DEAR SIR,

FROM the statements made in my last letter you would see that the detestable doctrine, that no faith is to be kept with heretics, (as all Protestants are called) is clearly sanctioned by the Church of Rome. Individual Romanists may deny this, but what avails their denial, in opposition to the authority of a canonized saint, whose writings have received the unqualified approval of their *infallible* Church? Archbishop Usher tells us of a certain Romanist who excused the Gunpowder-plot, on the plea, that “*both seeds and root of an evil herb must be destroyed*,” and also derided the King for his simplicity in imposing on Papists the oath of allegiance:—‘But see what simplicity here is in so great craft! When he had placed all his security in that oath, he thought he had framed such a manner of oath, with so many circumstances, which no man could any way dissolve with a safe conscience. But he could not see, that if the Pope dissolve the oath, all its knots, whether of being faithful to the King, or of admitting

no dispensation, are accordingly dissolved. Yea, I will say a thing more surprising. You know, I believe, that an unjust oath, if it be evidently known to be such, or openly declared such, obligeth no man. *That the King's oath is unjust, is sufficiently declared by the Pastor of the Church himself. You see now that the obligation of it is vanished into smoke, and that the bond which so many wise men thought was made by iron, is become less than straw."*

The defenders of the Roman Church tell us that such principles are obsolete (which, however, is a strange argument in the mouths of those who maintain that their Church is, and ever has been, infallible, unchanged and unchangeable;) but the same doctrines are still inculcated on the students at Maynooth, and, of course, through them on all the Romanists whom they are appointed to instruct. They are taught from certain Standard works, used at that Seminary,—that *the obligation of an oath is taken away, if it hindereth a greater good, or if the thing sworn becomes impossible or unlawful on account of the prohibition of any superior*—that there is a power in the church of *dispensing with vows and oaths for just causes, such as, the honour of God, the utility of the church, any notable difficulty supervening of carrying it (the oath) into execution, any doubt of the validity of an oath, and any sort of case which may generally be reduced to piety, spiritual utility, or necessity*—that oaths manifestly *lawful and useful* may be dispensed with by the Pope, *if something better occurs to be done for the common utility*—that those are not to be called oaths *but rather perjuries*, which are taken contrary to *ecclesiastical utility*, and the institutions of the Fathers—*that in every promissory oath, however absolutely made, certain tacit conditions are*

understood, such as, saving the right and authority of my superior, saving the honour of the Apostolic See—that vassals and servants and others *are freed from any private obligation due to a heretic, and from keeping faith with him.*

A true, consistent, devoted member of the Roman Church cannot, therefore, be bound by any oath administered to him, unless it should be agreeable to the Pope; and even when his Holiness has not objected to it, yet in case it should *hinder a greater good*, it is not binding. There is no need to apply to the Pope to know whether an oath may be kept or not; the priest will determine this matter for every layman who may consult him. “The oaths of these men,” says a talented writer, “are always taken under a secret reservation, as they confess, viz., ‘*salvo jure superioris*,’ that is, ‘saving the right of my superior,’ in other words, saving the rights of priests, bishops, and Popes. The layman is taught to mean, if my master the Priest allows it; the Priest reserves the right of his master the Bishop; and the Bishop, of his master the Pope, who is ‘the centre of Catholic unity;’ or, as in this exercise of his centripetal power, the centre of Papal perjury, and, indeed, of all papal crime,—he is emphatically and literally “*the Man of Sin.*” This is clear from all their books, Bailly, Dens, and all their standards of Moral Theology; and whenever we get practically any facts on the point, we discover the working of the system.”

No one who reads with common attention the works of the most eminent and esteemed Romish Theologians, can fail to observe that this right of dispensing with oaths is claimed by the Church of Rome; and the page of history contains abundant evidence that she has often

exercised this blasphemous power. Peter Collet, author of several large works on Moral Theology, (which are studied at Maynooth) allows that the Roman Church “sometimes permits things which, simply considered, have an indecorous air; but it is only under circumstances which destroy that quality, and which in some sort alter their nature, and convert what is really odious into something useful and even necessary. . . . At page 11, after appealing to a decree of the Council of Trent, Session twenty-five, chapter eighteen, of Reformation, he proposes the question:—Can the Church dispense with promises made to God, or those which have been confirmed by oath? He allows, that there is a difficulty in the answer, but attempts it; firstly, by saying, that owing to a change of circumstances, promises may become, either dangerous, or very difficult to accomplish; secondly, that a body so wisely constituted as the Church, ought (*doit*) to receive every thing necessary for the guidance of its members. The guides of the flock, therefore, ought to have received (*ont dû recevoir*.) and by consequence *have* received, from the Son of God, all the necessary powers, (*et par consequent ont reçu de lui, &c.*) This proof, he proceeds, is as short as it is decisive. Nothing more is necessary than the following argument:—Jesus Christ *ought* to do such or such a thing for his Church; *therefore he has infallibly done it. . . . Jesu Christ a dû faire telle ou telle chose pour son Eglise; donc il l’a faite infailliblement.*”

This *argument* will, indeed, like Alexander’s sword, cut asunder every knotty point, and settle all disputes. Christ has told us to read the Scriptures, and has declared that one great cause of error is, *the want of knowing the Scriptures*; but the Church of Rome thinks that more harm than good will arise from the free

perusal of God's Word, and therefore Jesus Christ *ought* to have left power to the Church to prohibit the reading of that word, and, consequently, he *has* done it. Oaths are made to God, and none but God can remove the obligation by which a man binds himself, when he solemnly swears that he will do 'such or such a thing;' but the good of the Roman Church requires that the oath should not be kept; therefore Jesus Christ ought to have given the Church power to dispense with oaths, and, consequently, he has committed unto her this power!

But, as I have before observed, the Roman Church uses a prudent reserve in the communication of her most obnoxious tenets. In Protestant countries they are not openly avowed; and even in private, the priests are careful not to alarm and disgust the more intelligent portion of their flock, by disclosing too much. It is only the unhesitating, thorough-going Romanists to whom these doctrines are unreservedly communicated. Hence there have been, and, doubtless, are at present, many members of the Church of Rome, who, being entirely ignorant of much that their Church sanctions, could not, and cannot believe that she claims this power of dispensing with the most solemn obligations. Their honourable minds would recoil from the practice of falsehood and perjury, however those sins were attempted to be concealed, under the softer names of *mental reservation, equivocation, and lawful dissimulation*. "It is worth while to recal," says the writer just quoted, "how that sacred obligation was regarded, at no very distinct period, by Romanists, in whom their religion had not extinguished natural conscience and honour. In the second of what are called the *Blue Books*, of the date 1791, the "Catholic Committee,"

who were desirous of confirming by oath what the general body had professed in a formal "Protestation," addressed a Letter to Three of the Four Vicars Apostolic, who condemned the oath; and in page 23, they write thus:—"This protestation was converted into the form of an oath. Shall we refuse to swear when called upon by our country, what we most solemnly protested under our hand-writing? The violation of an oath may accumulate the guilt of perjury on prevarication; but veracity is equally sacred, whether a protestation be made upon honour, or upon oath. *Tantus in te sit veri amor, ut quicquid dixeris, id juratum putes*, was the exhortation of a Father of the Church, and he must be destitute of Christian sincerity, who thinks he is not equally bound to tell the truth without disguise, when called upon to make a solemn asseveration, as if he had an oath officially tendered. To recede therefore from any part of the Protestation would be a flagrant violation of veracity; a criminal prevarication; a mortal wound to the integrity of (Roman) Catholics, and consequently an everlasting confirmation of the prejudice of Protestants, that our religion permits us to use duplicity and equivocation. Is it into this dishonour we are exhorted, nay required by your Lordships to plunge?"

It is clear that these honourable-minded men knew not the principles of their Church,—principles in which their bishops and priests had been carefully trained;—for had they known them, they were too honest and upright to have called the accusation, that their Church permits its members "to use duplicity and equivocation," a mere Protestant prejudice. They had not read Dens or Liguori, and other accredited writers of their Church. Had they undertaken the trouble to examine such

authors, they would have found ample evidence, that duplicity and equivocation, and even perjury, (in the plain and common-sense meaning of the term) are really sanctioned by the Church of Rome, in what it calls, a *just cause*. Is there no duplicity or equivocation in a person who swears to do such or such a thing, and yet all the time *intends* not to do it? And does not the Church of Rome sanction perjury, when she teaches that a man, in such a case, is not bound to observe his oath? These pernicious doctrines are maintained in the works of the most esteemed doctors of the Roman Church, and as their books are made the standards, to which Seminary priests may refer for direction, we may justly consider Rome as speaking through them. But Antoine, Sylvius, Roncaglia, St. Bonaventura, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Liguori, inculcate the doctrine, that a man is *bound only according to his own intention*, and that his oath is nothing if he took it only with his lips; therefore the Roman Church, which has never condemned such principles, but, on the contrary, raised to her highest dignities those who maintained them, surely does permit her members to use “duplicity, equivocation, and falsehood.” It appears, however, that even some of her priests have been found ignorant of the demoralizing doctrines which she teaches through the writings to which I have referred. For it is stated that the Rev. Joseph Berington, in alluding to the “Protestation,” just noticed, observes:—“I am informed that *many* priests, with the Vicars Walmesley and Douglas at their head, have recently withdrawn their names from the *Protestation*, (the original of which is deposited in the British Museum,) and that the deed is recorded in an authentic instrument, termed a *Counter-Protestation*.—Are we, therefore, sure that there may not exist a

counter-oath ? When our enemies, as I thought them, used to proclaim, that *no form of words could bind us*, I indignantly repelled the charge. In future, I, and others, must be silent, hang our heads, and blush."

It is certainly astonishing that a Romish priest should have known so little of the real doctrines and practices of his own Church, as to suppose, that she would sanction such a plain, honest, and straightforward document as the 'Protestation.' But he lived in a Protestant country, and enjoyed a far greater degree of religious liberty, in consequence of Protestant institutions, than he could possibly have had, if Popery had been predominant. The chain which bound him to Rome was hardly felt, and hence he forgot the thralldom to which he was doomed, and ventured to think and to reason with the same freedom as a Protestant. But he was reminded by his superiors, the Popish bishops, that this was a liberty to which he was not entitled. The iron entered into his soul : he felt and blushed for his degraded condition, but, unhappily, he had not the moral courage to rend his bonds asunder, and to join a communion, where he would have found the "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

The laity who signed the Protestation, and who, doubtless, would have bound themselves by a solemn oath to act according to their declaration, were equally unaware of their guilt and presumption in venturing to think for themselves. The yoke, which Rome had placed upon them, had been as little galling as possible to the necks of these her more educated, intelligent and influential members, so that they flattered themselves that they were free. They now discovered their mistake. The liberty which they sought is at variance with the policy of Rome. She may, and does allow, when it

seems expedient, a semblance of religious freedom, but the reins of power are still firmly grasped. Though she may consent to have her claims kept for a while in abeyance, she does not abate one jot or tittle of them. She requires, and wherever she has the power, she enforces, unconditional submission and unhesitating obedience to all her commands. Her laity may, indeed, be permitted to talk and reason on moral and religious subjects, within certain limits; but the moment they exceed those limits, so as to endanger, what Rome regards as the highest of all considerations, her claim of Universal Supremacy and Infallibility, she puts a stop to their progress. Her bishops and priests, and vassals of every description, are commanded to employ their power and influence to check further examination and discussion, and to keep the laity in mental and spiritual bondage. The Popish laity, be it remembered, are not regarded as the Church, but the vassals of the Church (according to the views of the Romish Hierarchy, and of certain Romanizing teachers), and therefore they have nothing to do in matters of religion, except to do as they are bid. The bishop of St. Mark replied, during the debates in the Council of Trent, "that the *laity* could not be termed the Church, since according to the *Canons*, they had *only to obey the commands laid upon them*; that one reason why the Council was called was, to decide that laymen ought to receive the faith which the Church dictated, without disputing or reasoning; and that, consequently, the clause should be inserted, to convince them that they were not the Church, and *had nothing to do but to hear and submit.*"

Bear this in mind, my dear Sir, whenever you hear Romanists—whether priests or laymen—repudiate any doctrines or principles which their Church has been ac-

cused of holding and teaching. Though as individuals, they may dislike such doctrines, they are bound to receive them so long as they remain Papists. You were much surprised, and also gratified, on hearing the plain, honest, and manly avowal of a zealous Popish nobleman, that although he looked forward to the extinction of the Protestant religion, and to the final triumph of his own Church, he expected this happy event to be accomplished not by persecution, which never could be justified, but "*by the force of reason and argument.*" It was creditable to the noble individual thus openly to avow such a sentiment; but as it is not the doctrine of his Church, that persecution is unjustifiable, his declaration affords no proof whatever that Popery is changed. He has no right, as a member of the Roman Church, to think otherwise than as he is taught by his spiritual director; and that director must teach him that persecution of Protestants is not only justifiable, but a duty, whenever it can safely be carried into effect. Expediency, indeed, may cause his confessor to use *reserve* on such a subject, and his noble penitent may be allowed to retain his opinions, and publicly to avow them, for a time; but if his Church should ever gain the ascendancy, he would find that something more than reason and argument would be used for the conversion of Protestants: and if he should then dare to call persecution unjustifiable, or to protest against Rome's usual method of extinguishing, what she calls heresies, he would be constrained either to retract his protestation, or to suffer as a heretic. Rome triumphant, would not scruple to shed even "all the blood of all the Howards," were it to be found tainted with heresy. For he could not then, as he may now, withdraw from her communion with impunity. No scruples of conscience—no convictions

of his understanding—no persuasion, however firm, that he was acting in accordance with God's wor — would be allowed as any plea for thinking differently from the Romish Church. By baptism, he is deemed her slave, and as such, must implicitly submit to all her decisions. "All who have been baptized," says Cornélius a Lapide, whose Commentaries are amongst the standard works on Divinity at Maynooth, "remain by their first profession united, bound, and subject to the Church; whence they are bound by the fasts, feasts, and other laws of the Church; and they are in the Church (when they hold any opinions contrary to the Roman Church) *as slaves are in a family, and imprisoned criminals in a city.*"

Protestants desire nothing more than to have the points on which they differ from the Church of Rome, freely and candidly discussed, and brought to that test, by which all doctrines as well as actions must be proved, —the infallible word of God. But this plain and straightforward course the Roman Church will not pursue. All her members must receive "without disputing or reasoning," whatever she teaches. Protestants, on the contrary, are allowed and commanded to *prove all things*; to *try the spirits, or teachers*; to examine and judge whether the instructions, given by their ministers, are, or are not, agreeable to the written word. The former must yield a blind, entire, and implicit credence to all which their Church propounds: the latter are appealed to, as persons who have reason and understanding, to search the Scriptures and to see whether or not the truths which *their* Church teaches are found therein. The Church of Rome, then, cannot triumph "by the force of reason and argument," but by the utter prostration of men's understanding. She relies chiefly on

such arguments as are to be found in the Acts and Monuments of John Foxe. I will transcribe two or three specimens of her mode of reasoning:—"Then said the bishop (Gardiner) 'Art thou come, thou villain? How darest thou look me in the face for shame? Knowest thou not who I am?' 'Yes,' quoth Dr. Taylor, 'I know who you are. Ye are Dr. Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, and Lord Chancellor; and yet but a mortal man, I trow. But if I should be afraid of your lordly looks, why fear you not God, the Lord of us all? How dare ye for shame look any Christian man in the face, seeing ye have forsaken the truth, denied our Saviour Christ and his word, and *done contrary to your own oath and writing?*' The bishop answered, 'Tush, tush, that was Herod's oath; unlawful; and therefore worthy to be broken: I have done well in breaking it: and, I thank God, I am come home again to our mother, the Catholic Church of Rome; and so I would thou shouldst do.' Dr. Taylor answered:—"Should I forsake the Church of Christ, which is founded upon the true foundation of the apostles and prophets, to approve those lies, errors, superstitions, and idolatries, that the popes and their company at this day so blasphemously do approve? Nay, God forbid. Let the pope and his, return to our Saviour Christ and his word, and thrust out of the Church such abominable idolatries as he maintaineth, and then will Christian men turn unto him. You wrote truly against him, and *were sworn* against him.' 'I tell thee,' quoth the bishop of Winchester, 'it was Herod's oath, unlawful; and therefore ought to be broken, and not kept; *and our holy father the pope hath discharged me of it.*' Then said Dr. Taylor, 'But you shall not be so discharged before Christ, who doubtless will require

it at your hand, as a lawful oath made to our liege and sovereign lord the king, from whose obedience no man can assoil (absolve) you, neither the pope nor any of his.' Dr. Taylor answered:—' Nay, I blaspheme not the blessed sacrament which Christ instituted, but I reverence it as a true Christian man ought to do. This sacrifice did our Saviour Christ offer in his own person himself once for all, neither can any priest any more offer him, nor we need any more propitiatory sacrifice: and therefore I say with Chrysostom, and all the doctors, 'Our sacrifice is only memorative, in the remembrance of Christ's death and passion; a sacrifice of thanksgiving;' and therefore the fathers called it eucharistia: 'and other sacrifice hath the Church of God none.' 'It is true,' quoth the bishop, 'the sacrament is called eucharistia,' 'a thanksgiving,' because we there give thanks for our redemption; and it is also a sacrifice propitiatory for the quick and the dead, *which thou shalt confess ere thou and I have done.*' Then called the bishop his men, and said, 'Have this fellow hence, and carry him to the King's Bench, and charge the keeper he be straitly kept.' "

Laurence Saunders was brought before Gardiner, on the usual charge of heresy. The Lord Chancellor commenced his address to the prisoner somewhat mildly, and urged him to return to the Catholic Church:—"Give us forthwith," said he in conclusion, "a direct answer." *Saunders*:—"My Lord, and my Lords all, may it please your honours *to give me leave to answer with deliberation.*" *Lord Chancellor*:—"Leave off your painting and pride of speech: for such is the fashion of you all, to please yourselves in your glorious words. *Answer yea or nay.*"

Saunders:—"My Lord, it is no time for me now to

paint : and as for pride, there is no great cause why it should be in me. . . . Notwithstanding it standeth me in hand to answer to your demand circumspectly. . . . And I tell you truth, I love both life and liberty, if I could enjoy them without the hurt of my conscience." *Lord Chancellor* :—"Conscience! You have none at all, but pride and arrogance, dividing yourselves by singularity from the Church. . . . Will you be obstinate, and refuse liberty." *Saunders* :—"My Lord, I may not buy liberty at such a price : but I beseech your honours to be means to the Queen's Majesty for such a pardon for us, that we may live, and keep our consciences unclogged, and we shall live as most obedient subjects. Otherwise, I must say for myself, that by God's grace I will abide the most extremity that man may do against me, rather than to do against my conscience." *Lord Chancellor* :—"Ah, sirrah! you will live as you list. The Donatists did desire to live in singularity, but indeed they were not meet to live on earth. *No more be you, and that shall you understand within these seven days; and therefore away with him.*"

"He bade me," said the martyr Rogers, "tell him what I would do : whether I would enter into the one church with the whole realm as it is now, or not?" "No," said I, "I will first see it proved by the Scriptures. Let me have pen, ink, and books, &c, and I shall take upon me plainly to set out the matter, so that the contrary shall be proved to be true ; *and let any man that will confer with me by writing.*" *L. Chanc.* :—"Nay, that shall not be permitted thee. Thou shalt never have so much proffered thee as thou hast now, if thou refuse it, and wilt not now condescend and agree to the catholic church. Here are two things, mercy and justice :

if thou refuse the Queen's mercy now, then shall thou have justice ministered unto thee."

It is vain to say, that these cruel and tyrannical proceedings were owing to the temper and spirit of *those times*; for are not the *principles* which led to so much tyranny and cruelty still maintained by the Roman Church? Are not the students at Maynooth and other seminaries *now* instructed in those principles? Until Rome has publicly and unequivocally repudiated those persecuting tenets which are found in the Bulls of her Popes, and the decrees of her Councils, it is not to be supposed that she will be content to make proselytes by the slow process of reasoning and argument. "If the Papists," says an old writer, "can but get into the saddle, either by deceiving the rulers, or commanders, or by bringing foreign force against us, they will give us leave to dispute, and write, and preach against them; and laugh at us who are standing talking only, while they are working: and when the sword is in their hand, they will soon answer all our arguments with a faggot, a hatchet, or halter. Smithfield confuted the Protestants, whom both the Universities could not confute. Their Inquisition is a school where they dispute more advantageously than in academies."

Horrible as are the accounts of the butcheries which have been, at various times, perpetrated by Papists on their unoffending fellow-creatures, there might be the same excuse offered for the brutal and ignorant murderers as was made for the Jews, when they crucified the Saviour:—*They knew not what they did*; but the Roman Church, which countenanced and applauded those dreadful massacres, cannot be thus excused. She must have known that she was acting in direct opposition to the spirit of the Gospel, and to the command of Him, who

came to bring peace upon earth and good will amongst men. It is not just to cast the entire odium of those atrocious deeds on the agents who committed them. They were but the blind and devoted slaves of the Popish Hierarchy. Great indeed was the guilt of the actual perpetrators of such bloody deeds, but an infinitely greater share of guilt rested on the rulers of the Church, who taught them that, in murdering their fellow-creatures, they were doing God service. Let the priests and bishops of that Church, then, with the Pope at their head, solemnly and publicly repudiate the persecuting tenets which are found in the Bulls and Decrees of their predecessors, and then we may believe that the Church of Rome seeks to triumph only "by the force of reasoning and argument." The declarations of individual members of that Church, however exalted, learned, or estimable they may be, cannot, I repeat, be accepted as any proof that Popery is changed, so long as her Hierarchy sanctions the teaching of Thomas Aquinas, Dens, Liguori, and others of a like stamp. Dr. Murray, and other intelligent Romanists, may tell us that "those doctrines are now little more than the record of by-gone intolerance"—that they do not entertain them—and that they honestly take the oath, when they swear that "they abjure, condemn, and detest, as unchristian and impious, the principle that it is lawful to murder, destroy or in any wise injure any person whatsoever, for or under the pretence of being a heretic;" but the question is, Has their Church ever authoritatively declared, that those persecuting tenets, which she once maintained, are no longer held or taught by her? Dr. Murray is, it may be, a loyal subject, and takes the oath of allegiance sincerely; but if such a Bull were to be issued from the Vatican against our gracious

Queen, as St. Pius V. fulminated against Queen Elizabeth, what would then become of his loyalty? Let St. Thomas Aquinas answer:—"Thomas Aquinas," says a Roman Catholic writer, "that glorious saint and clerke, whose only sentence weigheth more than all the Protestant wits and words in the world, saith thus:—*Postquam Princeps est denunciatus*—after a Prince is once denounced to be an apostate, all his inferiors and subjects are assoyled of their oath made unto him, and of their obedience due unto him.' This case, therefore, is plainly resolved upon by the greatest of all the school doctors." And what is the declaration of the Canon Law, which all men are commanded to obey, and which every Romish bishop and priest swears that he *receives without doubt*? It declares:—*That the Pontifical authority absolves from the oath of allegiance—that the Holy Church releases soldiers from the obligation of their oaths:—you are not bound, it says, by your oath of allegiance to your Prince; but you may resist freely even your Prince himself in defence of the rights and honours of the Church, and even of your own private advantage—the Kingly power is subject to the Pontifical, and is bound to obey it—that they are not homicides who take up arms against the excommunicated out of zeal for mother-Church.* And what says Dens, whose work was printed in Dublin in 1832, and dedicated to Dr. Daniel Murray, as being undertaken with his approbation—a work that was unanimously declared, at a meeting of the Irish Popish Prelates in 1808, to be the best book on the subject that could be republished—what is the doctrine contained in a work so strongly recommended by the Popish Hierarchy of Ireland? I have stated, in a former letter, what is taught by the authority of the Roman Church on the subject of heretics; but it may be well to give another quotation

or two:—"Are heretics justly punished with *death*? St. Thomas answers, 2. 2. quæst. 11, art. 3, in "Corp." *Yes: because forgers of money or other disturbers of the state are justly punished with death; therefore, also, heretics who are forgers of the faith, and, as experience testifies grievously disturb the state. This is confirmed, because God in the Old Testament ordered the false prophets to be slain. The same is proved from the condemnation of the 14th article of John Huss, in the council of Constance.*"

The students at Maynooth are also thus instructed from Dr. Delahogue's treatise on the Church:—"The Church retains her jurisdiction over all apostates, heretics, and schismatics, *although they may not belong to her body*; as a military general has a right to decree more severe punishments against a soldier, *who may have been struck off the roll.*" The Council of Trent uses similar language:—"Heretics and schismatics are excluded from her, because they have departed from the Church: for they do not belong to the Church any more than deserters belong to an army, from which they have deserted. It is not, however, to be denied, that they are still in the power of the Church, as those who may be *summoned to trial, punished, and condemned with an anathema.*"

You have already been told what those heretics may expect, who are anathematized by Rome. You cannot doubt that, were she able, she would subject Protestants to the same punishments *now* which, history informs us, were formerly inflicted by her. You may read, in her own Annals, that the Emperor, Henry IV., who was guilty of that worst of all heresies—the refusal of implicit obedience to the Pope—was deposed by Gregory VII; and his subjects absolved from their allegiance—

that Frederic II. was excommunicated and deposed by Gregory IX. and Innocent IV.—that Henry VIII. was excommunicated by Paul III., and his subjects commanded to rebel against him—that our great and heroic Queen Elizabeth was deposed, and her subjects absolved from their oaths of allegiance by Pius V.—that Paul V. in the year 1640, declared all Protestant princes and subjects to be accursed as heretics, and that some years after, Clement X. fulminated a Bull to the same effect. You will find that these *spiritual* censures affected temporal and civil rights. The excommunicated were subjected to pains and penalties, and even to the loss of life, whenever the Roman Church had power to do more than threaten. Nor have we the smallest reason to doubt that she would again persecute heretics even unto death, were the iron sceptre once more in her grasp. For she has sanctioned by her *infallible* Decree those works of Liguori, in which he affirms—that heretics (i. e. Protestants) are the very worst of malefactors—that although, in certain cases, *rebellion, forgery, homicide, and thefts by assassins, and highway robbers*, need not to be denounced, the person, who is guilty of *heresy*, must not be allowed to escape. The rebel, or the robbers, or the assassin may, under some circumstances, be allowed to avoid punishment; but the *heretic* is so atrocious a criminal, that a father is bound to denounce his child; and the child, the father; the wife, her husband; and the husband, his wife, if they should know them to be guilty of this unpardonable crime!

These tenets, it ought to be remembered, *have never been renounced by the Roman Church*, however they may have been disavowed and abhorred by certain individuals of that communion. If, as Dr. Murray tells us, “those desolating opinions and doctrines are now little more

than the record of by-gone intolerance," why does not his Church openly proclaim this change in her views? The truth is, she has not changed—she cannot change. Her advocates may clothe her with the garment of peace and meekness and forbearance, but they cannot alter her spirit, which still breathes threatenings and slaughter against all who oppose her will. She cannot renounce her doctrines—she cannot even modify them, without compromising her claim of *Infallibility*: she cannot relinquish this absurd tenet without undermining her pretended *Supremacy*, and shaking the whole fabric of Popery. But she gives no sign that she is disposed to renounce any one of her tenets. On the contrary, she daily proclaims that she is unchangeable; and she takes care that her priests shall be instructed out of those books, which most strongly maintain the obnoxious doctrines before stated: and in order that her lay members may not lose sight of what she calls her rights, she has embodied those principles in her public service books. Pius V. and Hildebrand are both canonized saints, and a double festival has been instituted to the honour of each of these men, in the month of May. The following is the prayer which the Church of Rome commands her members to offer on the 5th of May:—

“ O God, who for crushing the enemies of thy Church, and for the reparation of divine worship, didst deign to choose blessed Pius as Pope, grant that we may be defended by his protection, and may so follow thy commands, that we may vanquish the treachery of all our enemies, and rejoice with thee in everlasting peace, through our Lord.” And in one of the lessons appointed to be read on this day, Pius is highly extolled for having “ long discharged the office of *Inquisitor* with inflexible fortitude, and displayed invincible courage in

asserting the rights of the Apostolic See." And on May 25th. "blessed Gregory" is equally praised for having "stood like a fearless wrestler against the impious attempts of Henry, the Emperor, and deprived him of the communion of the faithful and of his crown, and released all his subjects from their allegiance."

"Such are the doctrines," says Dr. Wordsworth, "which the Church of Rome *now* preaches on her religious festivals in the Church of France! With her the acts of Pius and of Gregory are as fresh as if they were done yesterday; and is it too much to say, that by eulogizing them in her Liturgy she shews her desire that they may be repeated?"

LETTER XXII.

EFFECTS OF PROTESTANTISM AND POPERY RESPECTIVELY
—ANSWERS TO CERTAIN POPISH OBJECTIONS—THE
CHURCHES OF ENGLAND AND ROME CONTRASTED.

DEAR SIR,

ALTHOUGH it is very true, as your Popish friend has stated, that Protestants as well as Romanists have been guilty of persecution, yet there is this wide difference between the parties. When the former persecuted, they were acting in direct opposition to that Rule of faith and practice by which they have always professed to be guided. It was only when they forgot their *principles*, and allowed a fiery zeal to triumph over their judgment, that they became persecutors. Romanists, on the contrary, were acting in strict accordance with the teaching of that Church which they believed to be *infallible*, when they persecuted heretics, or Protestants. In carrying out the principles which Popery inculcated, they necessarily became the persecutors and destroyers of Protestants. This distinction is too often forgotten. A Popish senator could exultingly refer to the solitary case of a Servetus, burnt at the stake for his religious opinions; but he seemed to be quite ignorant that that cruel and unjustifiable deed was to be attributed, rather

to the persecuting spirit which Popery had for so many centuries fostered, and of which some portion still lingered in the breasts of the Reformers, than to the principles which they had embraced. He forgot also to state, that where Protestantism had destroyed its units, Popery had murdered its thousands; and that while a fanatical zeal had urged some mistaken Protestants, forgetful of that Gospel which they professed, to destroy a few unhappy victims, hundreds of thousands of Protestants had perished by fire, and the sword, and the rack, and the slow-consuming tortures of the Inquisition, with the deliberate sanction and the exulting approbation of *the Church of Rome*.

Consider the effects which Popish and Protestant principles respectively had on the characters and actions of two successive Queens, Mary and Elizabeth. It is common for Romish writers, and by no means uncommon for some who call themselves members of the Church of England, to represent the former Queen as naturally amiable, benevolent, and humane; while the portraiture of Queen Elizabeth is delineated in the darkest colours. She is described as a stern, cruel, relentless tyrant. Now, supposing that each of the Queens is justly described by these writers, what does it prove? It shews that Popery is calculated to deteriorate the best disposition, and that the religion of the Bible—the religion of Protestants—tends to soften and improve the heart that is naturally perverse, and cruel, and unforgiving. Queen Mary, her advocates maintain, was kind, amiable, and benevolent. If then she became the very reverse, to what can it be attributed but to the influence of the Popish religion? Her cruelty and ingratitude are indelibly recorded on the page of history. Consider her treatment of Cranmer. Henry

the Eighth was at one period so displeased with his eldest daughter, that " he did seclude her from the title of princess ; yea, and seemed so eagerly incensed against her, that he was fully purposed to proceed further with her, (as it is reported), *had not the intercession of Thomas Cranmer*, the archbishop, reconciled the king again to favour and pardon his own daughter." The feeling of gratitude was stifled in the heart of this *naturally amiable* princess by her religion ; for, on coming to the throne, she resolved that Cranmer should die. Worn out with a long imprisonment, and greatly debilitated both in body and mind, the unhappy prelate had consented to acknowledge the Pope's Supremacy. But even this was not sufficient to satisfy the princess, whose life he had most probably been the means of preserving. " Mary the Queen," the historian writes, " having now gotten a time to revenge her old grief, received his recantation very gladly ; but of her purpose to put him to death she would nothing relent. But taking secret counsel how to despatch Cranmer out of the way, (who as yet knew nothing of her secret hate, and looked for nothing less than death,) appointed Dr. Cole, and secretly gave him in commandment, that against the 21st of March, he should prepare a funeral sermon for Cranmer's burning, and so instructing him orderly and diligently of her will and pleasure in that behalf, sendeth him away." Baneful, indeed, must be the effect of the Popish religion when it could excite, instead of gratitude, a feeling of implacable hatred in the bosom of an *amiable* and virtuous princess !

If, on the other hand, Queen Elizabeth was really of so unamiable and sanguinary a disposition, as certain Romanists and Romanizers have laboured to prove, we need not be surprised that a few victims perished, during

her reign, at the stake, or in prison, for their religion. It appears that two Anabaptists were condemned to death for their heretical opinions, and, notwithstanding the earnest intercession of Foxe to the Queen on their behalf, the sentence by burning was executed. It is thought, indeed, that Queen Elizabeth was induced rather by political than by religious motives to sanction this cruel and disgraceful deed : but whatever might be her motive, the murder of these poor Anabaptists was contrary to the spirit of the religion which she professed. But if the Queen was naturally so cruel as hath been represented, why were there so few victims executed during her long reign? The answer is obvious. The Protestant religion had some influence on her conduct, and prevented the recurrence of such melancholy spectacles, as the burnings of heretics, during the rest of her reign.

Queen Mary, on the contrary, was instigated by the persecuting tenets which she had imbibed, to immolate hundreds of victims on the altar of bigotry and intolerance, during her short and miserable reign. If she really were amiable and benevolent, her religion transformed her into a monster of cruelty : and if Queen Elizabeth had a cruel disposition, her religion was the means of changing her iron rod into a golden sceptre. Whatever infirmities and blemishes might be detected in her personal character, it cannot be denied that she was a great, patriotic, and, in comparison of her sister, most tolerant sovereign. With the exception of those unhappy Anabaptists, who were executed at the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign, it does not appear that any other individuals were put to death on religious grounds. The Romish priests who were executed, suffered *as traitors to their Sovereign*. They were regarded as the

Pope's subjects ; they had sworn to obey him, and therefore they felt bound to do all in their power to dethrone and destroy the Queen. The Bull of Pius V. was their *law* ; and that Bull, entitled :—" The condemnation and excommunication of Elizabeth Queen of England and her Adherents, with an addition of other punishments," contains the following arrogant and treasonable passage :—" We do, out of the fulness of our Apostolic power, declare the aforesaid Elizabeth, being a heretic, and a favourer of heretics, and her adherents in the matters aforesaid, to have incurred the sentence of anathema, and to be cut off from the unity of the body of Christ. And, moreover, we do declare her to be deprived of her pretended title to the kingdom aforesaid, and of all dominion, dignity, and privilege whatsoever. And also the nobility, subjects, and people of the said kingdom, and all others who have in any manner sworn to her, to be for ever absolved from any such oath, and all kind of duty, fidelity, and obedience ; as we do by authority of these presents absolve them, and do deprive the same Elizabeth of her pretended title to the kingdom, and all other things abovesaid. And we do command and interdict all and every noblemen, subjects, people, and others aforesaid, that they presume not to obey her, or her monitions, mandates, and laws ; and those who shall do the contrary, we do involve in the same sentence of anathema."

It is, indeed, to be lamented that such severities were practised on those misguided men who, feeling it their duty to enter this kingdom notwithstanding the laws in force against them, subjected themselves to punishment whenever they were discovered. But it ought to be remembered that every priest was pledged to do all that the Pope commanded, as far as he was able, and, conse-

quently, could be regarded only as a traitor who was endeavouring to excite the people to rebel against, and to destroy their sovereign. For the first ten years of Elizabeth's reign, the Romanists were loyal and peaceable subjects. But their allegiance continued only during the Pope's pleasure. When Pius V. issued his Bull of excommunication against the Queen, the Romanists withdrew from the churches, which they had till that time frequented, without any apparent scruple of conscience; and they waited their opportunity to carry into effect all the commands of their sovereign at Rome. Popish emissaries were actively at work among the people, and the Queen was kept in a state of anxiety and alarm by the plots which were formed against her. It was then that her advisers deemed it necessary to enact some severe laws against Jesuits and Seminary priests, who came into her dominions to "infect any of her loyal subjects with their treasonable and damnable persuasions and practices." It was in self-defence that this course was pursued. Not only her own life, but the lives of her Protestant subjects would have been endangered, if the exertions of the Papists had been successful; and civil and religious liberty must have been utterly extinguished. Instead of accusing the Queen of cruelty for enacting, and, in some few cases, carrying into execution those laws, the accusation would far more justly apply to the Pope, who instigated his zealous but infatuated tools to rush into certain destruction, by entering a kingdom where such laws were in force.

"We must remember," says Sir James Mackintosh, "that when enacting these laws, Elizabeth was threatened with deposition, and her country in danger of invasion, and all measures taken by her against (Roman) Catholics were considered as measures of war. France was the

only place where (Roman) Catholic clergy could be educated. There were also colleges in Spain: the students of which, being expelled from England's Universities, partook of all the inveterate bigotry of Spain against England. In this state of things, these places became schools for missionaries to propagate doctrines subversive to the government of Elizabeth. They had the audacity to fix that Bull of the Pope's (Pius V.) upon the gates of St. Paul's, and also on the bishop of London's palace, exhorting the English (Roman) Catholics to rebellion and the assassination of Elizabeth. She therefore considered these proceedings as indications of a (Roman) Catholic conspiracy, and in consequence the (Roman) Catholics were forbid the country. Her measures at first were moderate, and perfectly justifiable; and it was not till after the detection of many conspiracies that the (Roman) Catholics ceased to have any toleration, and that those sanguinary and severe laws, so much animadverted on by historians, were passed. These were, however, enacted, not on account of their religion, but because she considered the (Roman) Catholics, and their clergy in particular, as emissaries of rebellion." And the same eminent writer gives the following short but comprehensive testimony to the character of Elizabeth, to which every unbiassed reader of history will cordially subscribe:—"In reviewing the various and imminent dangers of Elizabeth's reign, it must be confessed, that few princes have ascended the throne, who have acquired more glory, and committed so few acts of oppression or injustice, as Elizabeth, in a long reign of forty-five years."

Persons who are ignorant of the real principles of the Church of England, seem to think that, because persecution was formerly sanctioned, and unhappily practised

to a certain extent, by our Church, we have no right to cast a stone at the Church of Rome : but they forget an important distinction between the two Churches. The Church and State of England have long since disavowed the right to persecute men on account of their religion. The Church of Rome, on the contrary, still maintains all her persecuting tenets : she has not rescinded a single *decree, canon or bull*, which, when she had the power to carry it into effect, produced such desolating consequences in all countries where Protestants were found. And with respect to the temporal power which the Popes of Rome formerly exercised over all kingdoms, where their spiritual authority was acknowledged, we do not find that even this arrogant claim has been withdrawn. It is still kept, like a sword in the scabbard, until the Roman Pontiff is able effectually to wield it. Individual Romanists may swear—and that without any equivocation or reserve—that they believe the Pope neither has, nor ought to have any temporal power within this realm ; but such individuals, however eminent, honourable, and conscientious, cannot be considered as the authoritative voice of the Roman Church. Has that voice ever been heard to declare, that the Church of Rome renounces all temporal power and jurisdiction in other realms ? Assuredly not. The Pope still requires every Romish bishop, to whatever country he belongs, to swear, that he will “ be faithful and obedient to his Lord, the Pope, and his successors ; to assist them in maintaining the Roman Papacy and the royalties of St. Peter against all men ; to preserve, defend, augment, and promote its rights, honours, and privileges ; to persecute and impugn with all his might, heretics, and schismatics, and rebels against his said Lord.” By imposing this oath, the Popes declare that they even

now maintain the arrogant claim, which is unequivocally asserted in the Bull, *in Cæna Domini*, that they are *sovereign monarchs of the world*. "And this (title)" says Leslie, "is no more than is given to them at their coronation, as you have it in the *Roman Pontifical*, where the *triple crown* is put upon the *Pope's* head with these words:—*Receive this diadem adorned with three crowns; and know yourself to be father of princes and kings; governor of the world: and vicar upon earth of our Saviour Jesus Christ*. And must not this *governor of the world* have power to *dethrone* all petty *kings* and *princes* that are under him? Else how can he govern the *world*? And the *Popes* think that this their *sovereign* power of *deposing princes* is fully recognized to them in the foresaid *Canon* of the *Council of Lateran*. AND NO POPE HAS EVER YET BEEN BROUGHT TO DISOWN THIS POWER."

This ceremonial was observed at the crowning of the present Pope, Pius IX. His spiritual power was signified by the mitre which was put upon his head, and the *temporal* Supremacy, by the triple crown which he afterwards assumed, while he was addressed as *Father of Princes and Kings*, and *Ruler of the world*. "And shall we now be told," Dr. Wordsworth asks, "that the Roman Pontiff does not claim universal temporal power? Shall we be called upon to credit, that he will not *assert* this claim whenever he is *able* to do so: and that those who are bound to him by oath, who behold in him the *Vicar of Christ*, and believe him to be infallible, and to have power to forgive sins, and to cancel oaths, will not aid him in his encroachments on the *temporal* power of *Princes*, and in his aims at universal dominion? It may be true that the *Popes* are not now in a condition to enforce these claims for themselves, but it is clear that *by*

allying themselves with a democratic and levelling power, they may give a semblance of piety to its aggressions against all constituted authority. They may then make revolution more formidable by lending it the name of Religion."

Nor has the Roman Church, whatever individual Romanists may have done, ever repudiated the pernicious doctrines contained in the books which are used in her seminaries and colleges. She has, on the contrary, given her *infallible* sanction to those doctrines; and it is most disingenuous to attempt to evade the accusation, by saying, that these are merely the opinions of individuals; or that the Jesuits, whose writings are generally so very objectionable, are not properly a part of the Roman Church. Individual opinions, when they have been deliberately sanctioned by Papal *Infallibility*, must from that moment be identified with Popery. And as to the assertion that Jesuitism is not a part of the Romish system, nothing can be more erroneous. "It is," says an able writer, "absolutely part and parcel of Popery—an essential part, the very quintessence of it. Protestants therefore should not make themselves a party in the policy meant to impose upon them. In the *Church of England Quarterly Review*, No. VIII. pp. 386 &c. is an article entitled, 'Jesuitism and Romanism absolutely identified,' where the occasional repudiation is explained and effectually scouted."

"At the head of the Popish 'army,'" says a French Popish priest, "are the Jesuits, the most cunning and daring body, the true personification of Popery, *from which it is a capital error to distinguish them*; a body, the true grenadiers of the Pope, twenty times banished by the wisdom of governments, and which always finds some way to creep in again; a body composed of knights

errant, who wander from city to city, from village to village, to spread everywhere superstition and ignorance, through their discourses, medals, relics, chaplets, crosses, in which they make an immense trade."

Yet in spite of the plainest testimony that the doctrines and practices of the Jesuits are essentially Popish, in consequence of the *infallible* sanction which the Church of Rome has given, and continues to give to them, we are to be told that Rome is not responsible for such principles and the fruits arising from them! What although a most estimable nobleman believes that Popery is a very different system from what it used to be, and has publicly declared:—"It is almost ridiculous to compare the opinions and the obedience of the Jesuits with the members of other orders," can this declaration alter the *infallible* decision of the Pope in favour of the writing and opinions of the Jesuits? Has this eminent member of the Romish communion any authority to say, that the persecuting, anti-social, demoralizing, and destructive doctrines found in the standard works which are used at Maynooth and other popish institutions, are no longer the principles of his Church? There may be a little free-agency allowed to other Romanists which is denied to the Jesuits, who must give a blind, implicit, and *corpse-like* obedience (*perinde ac si cadaver essent*) to their superiors; but, in all other respects, the principles of that dangerous order are inculcated, with more or less reserve, on the members of the Roman Church generally.

I will now proceed to answer the questions which have been put to you by your Popish friends, although they have been repeatedly answered. But this matters not with the advocates of the Roman Church. It is ever the policy of those, who are more anxious for the pre-

dominance of party than for the triumph of truth, to put as many questions as possible to their opponents, and, however conclusive may be the reply, still to wrangle and dispute. This plan, as our Romish antagonists are well aware, is much easier than to defend the doctrines and practices of their Church by an appeal to reason, Scripture, and Catholic antiquity. Common-place, as many of these questions are, I will, at your request, give a short answer to each of them.

Where was your Church before Luther? Answer:—“Wherever Christianity was; in some places more pure, in others more corrupted: but especially in these Western parts of Christendom, overgrown for several ages with manifold errors and corruptions, which the *Reformation* hath happily cut off, and cast away. So that though our *Reformation* was as late as *Luther*, our *religion* is as ancient as Christianity itself.”

“This is the main difference between us and the Papists. We are for no religion which is not as old as the days of the Apostles; but they are for the novelties, and additions of Popes and Councils. Their own Polidore Virgil, calling us a sect, gives you a just description of us:—*Having once got leave to speak, that sect which is called Evangelical, did marvellously increase in a short time; because they affirm that no law is to be received, which belongs to salvation, but what is given by Christ or the Apostles.* Mark what they themselves confess of our religion; and yet these very men have the face to charge us with novelty: as if Christ and his Apostles were not of sufficient antiquity for them.”

*How do you know that the Bible is the word of God, except by the authority of the Catholic Church? Answer:—*The Church of God, in all ages, has been the keeper and witness of the authenticity and genuineness of the

Holy Scriptures. To the Jews, Paul tells us, “were committed the oracles of God.” They transmitted the sacred deposit to their descendants; and when their Church and nation were destroyed, the Christian Church became the guardian of both Testaments, and handed them down to us. The *Catholic Church* we acknowledge to have faithfully discharged the trust committed to her, and, on her testimony we receive the Bible, as a genuine and faithful copy of those writings which God inspired holy men to write for our comfort and edification. But it is most absurd for a mere *branch* of the Catholic Church, such as Rome is, to maintain, that we cannot know the Scriptures to be God’s word, except on *her* testimony and authority. We derive this knowledge from a far higher and purer source. And we shew that we believe it to be God’s word, by making it our only standard for the trial of all doctrines and practices. Romanists, on the contrary, dishonour that holy word, by refusing to read and study it, and by consenting to receive for doctrines the commandments and traditions of men, rather than the inspired Scriptures. “The papists arrogating to their pope authority to allow or refuse any book of holy Scripture, and affirming that no Scripture hath authority but as it is approved by their Church, do bring all books of the holy Scripture into doubting and uncertainty, with such as will depend upon their pope and popish Church’s authority, which they affirm to be above the holy Scriptures.”

What express word of God do the Catholics contradict?
Answer :—*Catholics* do not contradict any part of God’s word: but *Roman Catholics*, owing to the erroneous teaching of their Church, receive many things which are plainly repugnant to the word of God:—such as, The worship of saints, Prayers for the dead, Worship in

an unknown tongue, Worship of images and relics, Infallibility and Supremacy of their Church, Transubstantiation, Auricular confession, Five more Sacraments than Christ instituted, The Lord's Supper in a mutilated form, Purgatory, Indulgences, &c.

How do you prove that you have a truly called ministry that is to be heard and listened to by the people ?

Answer :—The ministers of the Church of England are “ chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard.” Previous to their Ordination they are strictly examined as to their fitness “ to exercise their ministry duly, to the honour of God, and the edifying of his Church.” They solemnly engage to instruct the people committed to their charge—not from the traditions and commandments of men, but—from holy Scripture, “ and to teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which (they) shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture.” They are then ordained to their sacred office by the bishop, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, as was the practice in the Apostolic age. That such ministers ought to be “ heard and listened to by the people,” while they truly and faithfully preach the doctrine of Christ, is evident from the declaration of our Saviour to his disciples :—“ He that heareth you heareth me ; and he that despiseth you despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.”

By what warrant did you separate from the Catholic Church ?

Answer :—We never separated from the Catholic Church, but we refused to be in subjection to, and to retain the false and unscriptural doctrines and practices

of the *Roman Church*. The Church of England is a fruitful branch of the one holy Catholic Church, of which Rome, so long as she retains her corruptions and errors, can be regarded as only a barren, if not an absolutely lifeless branch.

Do you not see that God does not bless the labours of your ministers, but people are as bad as they were before?

*Answer:—*It is no proof that God does not bless the labours of ministers, because multitudes refuse to follow their instructions. If but a few hear and obey the Gospel, it is evident that the divine blessing has attended the preaching of it; for without such blessing not the most zealous and eloquent minister could convert a single soul. It was, indeed, to be expected, that when the pure word of God was fully preached, instead of the legends and fables of Popery, that the people would become more enlightened, virtuous, and pious; but the proposer of this question insinuates that *they are as bad as before*. Is this really the case? Yes, say certain unscrupulous advocates of the Roman Church, under the benign influence of *our* religion the poor and necessitous were abundantly provided for, and, in consequence, cases of immorality and crime were far less numerous than at present. Such statements have been boldly made, but what do we learn from history? During the reign of Henry VIII., “the prisoners in the kingdom for debts and crimes, are asserted in an act of Parliament, to be sixty thousand persons and above; which is scarcely credible. Harrison asserts that seventy-two thousand criminals were executed during this reign for theft and robbery, which would amount nearly to two thousand a year. He adds, that in the latter end of Elizabeth’s reign, there were not punished capitally four hundred in a year: it appears that in all England, there

are not at present (A.D. 1759) fifty executed for those crimes. If these facts be just, there has been a great improvement in morals since the reign of Henry VIII. . . . The Convents formerly were a support to the poor; but at the same time tended to encourage idleness and beggary."

And do Protestant countries, in the present day, exhibit as dark a picture of vice and crime as those kingdoms, where the Church of Rome exercises almost unbounded influence? Will any one venture to assert that Ireland, where five sevenths of the population are immersed in the darkness and superstition of Popery, can be compared, as to morality and religion, with England or Scotland? "When we direct our attention to Ireland, we find, in the Report of Parliamentary Commissioners and Committees, and in its every-day history, a black catalogue of outrages, burglaries, immorality, infanticide, and murders, which inspires us with dismay." France, with all its boasted pre-eminence in civilization and intelligence, exhibits a melancholy picture, in which superstition and infidelity, a slavish submission to the ordinances of Popery, and a reckless contempt of the laws of God, are strangely blended. In Spain there is little on which the eye of the Christian can look with pleasure. The atrocities committed by her people during the civil war, and her puerile and inhuman national diversions, in a time of peace, alike testify that genuine Christianity has very little influence over that degraded country. The pernicious effects of Popery in Spanish America, are thus described by Mr. Thomas Glasgow Dunlop:—"I have no hesitation in saying, that the religion of China, Birmah, Turkey, or Persia, is infinitely superior to that which at present prevails in Spanish America. Such a degrading superstition is one

main cause of the ignorance, immorality, and indolence, which pervade so large a portion of the population." The consequence is precisely the same which Popery, when fully carried out, every where produces—*infidelity*. "The exertions of the priests," says Mr. Dunlop, "have only served to limit general knowledge: while all the young people, above the labouring classes, have in spite of them imbibed infidel opinions, and make no scruple in calling the christian revelation a ridiculous fable, and the priests comedians and cheats, They speak of them in a much more disrespectful manner, than any Protestant would think of doing, while at the same time they comply with the unmeaning Popish ceremonies, and kneel and cross themselves before the figures of their saints. . . . Morality is at the lowest ebb among all classes, especially the whites and creoles: indeed, I could never find that among them any disgrace ever attached to any sort of crime, except petty larceny. Murder, perjury, forgery, and swindling of all sorts, are considered as quite venial. The priests are for the most part, blind leaders of the blind: and the better educated merely consider themselves as actors, whose business it is to extort money, by acting the part which will please the people. Forms and religious parade are carefully kept up, but no one thinks of inculcating private morality, or even decency." This is the statement of an unprejudiced observer. Mr. Dunlop's views were, what are commonly called liberal; and he gives his testimony with reluctance against either Popish teaching, or democratic governments.

As to Italy, where we might expect to behold a well-instructed, virtuous, and holy people, as being under the immediate direction and influence of the *infallible* head of the Roman Church, how deplorable is the ac-

count given of its moral and religious condition by every intelligent traveller !

“ The present state of Popery,” says a recent visitor to that interesting country, “ is one upon which it is painful to dwell. We have found the city, wherein it reigns and exalts itself, sitting in darkness and in what may almost be called the shadow of moral death. When we first entered Italy, I was inclined to consider that much of what I had heard against Roman Catholicism, originated in a spirit of intolerance and bigotry ; but oh, my dear Father, how far has any description fallen short of the truth ! I am now convinced that much of the indifference and apathy, evinced by professing christians, towards the progress made by Popery, originates in an inadequate conception of its evils.”

It cannot be denied that the Church of Rome was once a most pure, excellent, flourishing and mother Church, and must continue such, unless she has fallen into apostacy, heresy, or schism,—where are your proofs that she has thus fallen ?

*Answer :—*Rome, it is allowed, was once a pure and flourishing Church, but not the Mother Church. If any particular church were entitled to that name it must be the Church of Jerusalem. It is not necessary to prove that Rome is either apostate, heretical, or schismatical, in order to justify ourselves for refusing to be subject to her. “ Would you not laugh,” says an old writer, “ even at the Church of *Jerusalem*, which was truly the Mother Church of the world, if they should thus reason, *We are not fallen away ; therefore we must rule over all the world, and no man is a christian who does not obey us ?*”

Heresy is an adhesion to some private and singular opinion, or error in faith, contrary to the general approved

doctrine of the Church;—was Rome ever condemned of this? By what Council? Which of the Fathers writ against her?

*Answer :—*The Church of Rome holds many doctrines that are quite contrary to “the faith once delivered to the saints,” as you will have seen in the preceding letters. As to the question, *What Council condemned her?* “I pray you tell us what General Councils ever condemned one half of the heresies mentioned by Epiphanius, Augustine, or Philastrius? Was there ever a greater rabble of heresies than before ever a General Council was born? But your head has been condemned by Councils. . . . Know you not that two or three General Councils condemned Pope Honorius as a Monothelite? Know you not that the second General Council of Ephesus condemned and excommunicated your Pope? Need I tell you what the Council of Constance did? Or for what John XXII., alias XXIII., and John XIII., and other Popes were deposed by Councils?”

By the Council of Constantinople Image-worship was utterly condemned. The claim of Universal Supremacy, which the Popes still absurdly assert, is absolutely repugnant to the decrees of various General Councils, viz., Nice, (A. D. 325 :) Constantinople (A. D. 381 :) Ephesus (A. D. 438 :) Chalcedon (A. D. 451.)

On referring to the preceding pages you will find, that the early Christian Fathers were totally opposed to many of the doctrines which are now so tenaciously held by the modern Church of Rome.

Schism is a departure or division from the unity of the Church, whereby the bond and communion held with some former Church, is broken and dissolved,—What proofs have you that Rome divided herself by schism from any

other body of faithful christians, or broke communion, or went forth from the society of any elder church? Whose company did she leave? From what body did she go forth? Where was the true Church which she forsook?

Answer :—“ To question whether Papists be schismatics, is to question whether Ethiopians are black. Do you not at this day divide from all the christian world, save yourselves? Do you not unchurch most of the christians upon earth? You ask, *What Church you left? And when was it? And whose company?* Senseless questions! By a Church, if you mean the Universal Church, there is but one; and therefore one Universal Church cannot forsake another: but when part of it forsakes the other part, and arrogates the title of the whole to itself, do you doubt whether this be schism? You have set up a Church in the Church: an Universal Church in the Universal Church: a new form destructive to the old. . . . And as you have devised a new Catholic Church, so you hereby cast off and disown all the christians of the world, who are not of your party.” You are guilty of schism, and you utterly preclude all hope of healing the schism, because you will listen to no terms, and renounce none of your errors. All men must be subject to your usurped authority, and receive all your heresies, or continue separate from you. Judge then who is the *cause* of the schism—who perpetuates the schism—who is subject to the woe denounced on him by whom the offence cometh!

Do you turn from the Church of Jesus Christ, and embrace a Church established by law?

*Answer :—*What can the establishment of a Church have to do with its character? If its doctrines be scriptural, its government agreeable to primitive and Apos-

toloc institution, its practice not repugnant to God's Word, and if it firmly hold and constantly teach "the faith once delivered to the saints," can the mere circumstance that a King and Parliament have established it as the National Church, render it no longer a branch of Christ's Universal Church."

This last question, which your Popish friends have put to you, seems to have been borrowed of those active but, doubtless, unconscious allies of Popery, *the Voluntaries*. They also talk as if the Church of England were full of all abominations, notwithstanding the purity of its doctrines, and its scriptural Liturgy, because it is The Established Church. How different a view did the late eminent Dr. Chalmers take of the Church of England! Both Tractarians and Voluntaries may learn from his words, in what the real excellence of our Church consists:—"The purity of her doctrines—her deeds of high prowess and championship in the battles of the faith—the noble contributions which have been rendered by her scholars and her sons to that christian literature, which is at once the glory and the defence of Protestantism—the ready-made apparatus of her churches and parishes—the unbroken hold which, as an Establishment, she still retains on the mass of society—and her unforfeited possessory right to be reckoned and deferred to as an Establishment still—when these, the true elements of her legitimacy and her power, come to be better understood: in that proportion will she be recognized as the great standard and rallying-point for all those, who would unite their efforts and their sacrifices in that mighty cause, the object of which is to send throughout our families, in more plentiful supply, those waters of life which can alone avail for the healing of the nations." And with respect to the Union of Church

and State, which excites so much hostility in a certain class of Dissenters, the learned Doctor observes:—
“ The Government after having done what was theologically right in rejecting Popery, would still be theologically right in transferring the endowment of the National Church to any one of these denominations. And if theologically right in fixing upon some one, then, on another ground—that is, for the sake of the territorial principle, with all its mighty benefits to the population, it would be fiscally or economically right in keeping by that one. We see no way of escaping from this conclusion, but by unchristianizing the Church of England: or the bigots without the Establishment becoming as outrageous in their way, as are those bigots within the Establishment who would unchristianize the Dissenters. Enough for Government that it has taken a Scriptural Church into its service; and vindication enough for its not taking more, that its work can be better done by one such servant than by several. To the remonstrance of the excluded sects, Why, when we differ so little, do you not take us in? it may well be replied, Why, when you differ so little, do you keep yourselves out? Truly, it is not for government to make the adjustment here; nor is there another way of bringing the adjustment about, but by means of a larger intelligence and a larger charity both in the Church and among the sectaries themselves.”

It is not improbable that these zealous but surely most inconsistent enemies of our Church—the agitating and political section of the Dissenters—are the dupes and tools of a power which was in operation during the reign of Charles I., and long afterwards. Baxter tells us that the power, to which I allude, had sent into this country numerous emissaries, “ who,” says he, “ as

they have thus caused our wars, and miseries, and scandals, so they have continued *to multiply sects among us of all sorts*; so that there is scarcely a sect but is a spawn of the Jesuits and Friars; and scarcely an honest party *but they creep in among them to work their ends*. . . . The persecuted Nonconformists of the Protestant party, though they were most adverse to the Papists, yet had some of the Popish brood at last crept in among them, not only to spy out their minds and ways, *but to head the party, and sow among them the seeds of further discontent and error, and to make them a nursery for various sects!* If you ask me for my proof of this, I shall at this time give you . . . the words of the Jesuit's letter, recited by Mr. PRIN, *Introd.* p. 90 :—' I cannot choose but laugh to see how some of our own coat have re-encountered (*re-invested or clothed*) themselves: you would scarce know them if you saw them; and it is admirable how in speech and gesture they act the Puritans; the Cambridge scholars, to their woful experience, shall see that we can act the Puritans a little better than they have done the Jesuits: they have abused our sacred patron St. Ignatius in jest, but we will make them smart for it in earnest. I hope you will excuse my merry digression, for I confess to you I am at this time transported with joy, to see how happily all instruments and means, as well great as lesser, co-operate to our purposes.' . . . And it is a thing notorious, that they have crept in among the *Anabaptists*, and fomented that sect. . . . If you ask now what the Papists get by all this, I answer, you see in the instance but of this one sect, and the products of it :—1. By this means our Councils, Armies, Churches have been divided, or much broken. 2. By this trick they have engaged the minds and tongues of many

(and their hands if they had power) against the Ministry, *which is the great enemy that stands in their way.* 3. They have thus weakened us by the loss of our former adherents. 4. They have found a nursery or seminary for their own opinions, which one half of the Anabaptists too greedily receive. 5. By this they have prepared them for more and worse. 8. By this they have cast a reproach upon our profession, as if we had no unity, or consistence, but were vertiginous for want of the Roman pillar to rest upon. 9. By this they have loosened and disaffected the common people, to see so many minds and ways, and hear so much contending, and have loosed them from their former steadfastness, and made them ready for a new impression. 10. Yea, by this means they have the opportunity of proclaiming their own pretended unity, and hereby have drawn many to their Church of late."

You might almost imagine that this was written by some author of the present day; but the work; from which the preceding extracts are taken, was originally published in 1659. The writer, however, teaches us a lesson which may be useful: he shews us the agency which was at work, and which produced so many dreadful evils in this country two hundred years ago. Such a statement may induce us to pay more attention, than our liberality and false charity would incline us to do, to the declaration of the Church of Rome—*that her principles are the same now which they formerly were.*

Keep those principles in mind, and require your Romish friends to adduce proofs from the Word of God that they "have the warrant of Scripture," before you allow them to go a step in any other direction. "It is not so easy," they say, "to prove as to wrangle against proofs:" and this is true enough with respect to the

points on which we differ from the Church of Rome. It is not only not easy, but it is utterly impossible for them to prove the truth of their doctrines by that standard, which all Protestants regard as unerring—Holy Scripture. Knowing then their tactics, do not let their questions, or their wrangling, divert you from your appeal to the Bible. Be firm in requiring, not from tradition, but from God's Word, a warrant for every doctrine and practice which they tell you is of divine authority, and necessary to salvation. Do not be drawn aside by the authority, or rather, the opinions of the Fathers. Eminent and pious as these Fathers were, they were only fallible men. As witnesses of facts they are most valuable; but their opinions possess no more authority than the opinions of pious and learned men of the present day. When they maintain any doctrines which are plainly repugnant to Scripture it is our duty to reject them. But quotations adduced by Romanists from the Fathers are seldom to be depended upon as genuine. For many writings, which have been attributed to them, are forgeries. This has been satisfactorily proved by the learned Dr. James. "There are," says he, "one hundred and eighty seven divers treatises, which are shrewdly suspected, if not plainly convicted of forgery by the Papists themselves. I follow herein the judgment of their best learned writers, most esteemed in their times; such as Bellarmine and Baronius, cardinals: Passevine and Gretser, Jesuits: Sixtus Senensis, of the order of the Preachers: Angelus Roccha, an Eremitic; Pamelius, a monk, and sundry others." Although these treatises have been proved to be counterfeits, "yet they have been heretofore, and are still, urged to the people by the priests and Jesuits, for sound proofs, ancient books, and most divine treatises; when they were indeed

written by some ignorant friar, or unlearned monk or other, without either shame or honesty." Yet it is to these confessedly spurious writings that Popish authors frequently refer in order to prove, that certain unscriptural doctrines and practices were received by the early Church. Thus we find Dr. Wiseman citing a passage from a work *falsely* attributed to Origen:—"I will fall down on my knees, and not presuming, on account of my sins, to present my prayer to God, I will invoke all the saints to my assistance. O ye saints of heaven, I beseech you with a sorrow full of sighs and tears; fall at the feet of the Lord of mercies for me, a miserable sinner." "When we find," says the Rev. J. E. Tyler, "such passages as these, which have been so long ago and so repeatedly pronounced to be utterly spurious, yet cited in evidence at the present time, and represented as conveying the genuine testimony of Origen, we shall be pardoned for repeating the sentiments expressed, so many years ago, by the learned bishop of Avranches, with regard to the very work here cited, 'It is wonderful that, WITHOUT ANY MARK OF THEIR BEING FORGERIES, they should be sometimes cited in evidence by some theologians.'"

On what a foundation of sand, then, are those peculiar doctrines which constitute Popery built, when they can no where be discovered but in writings, which learned Romanists themselves have acknowledged to be forgeries! Such is the consequence of leaving that firm basis on which our holy religion rests—Holy Scripture—and trusting to the uncertain, and ever-changing quagmire of tradition. Adhere then firmly, I repeat, to that which our Church acknowledges as the only standard by which doctrines are to be tried, and you will not be likely to be moved by the fallacies of Romanists

or Romanizers. Bring every doctrine or practice which, they maintain, has the sanction of Catholic antiquity "to the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," and, consequently, it should be rejected without hesitation. To make Scripture and tradition the joint rule of faith, is to join together what God has separated by a broad and plain boundary. It is an attempt to unite light and darkness; to mingle unerring truth with the weak, unfounded, and crude opinions of fallible men. By this means the pure fountain itself becomes gradually deserted; and men vainly suppose that they are drinking wholesome waters when, in reality, they are quenching their thirst at the turbid stream of tradition.

I have now stated the principal matters, in which the churches of England and Rome differ from each other. This difference is owing to the very opposite Rule of Faith which each respectively has adopted. Our Church will admit no doctrine, and sanction no practice, which have not the warrant of, or may be repugnant to, the holy Scriptures; and, consequently, she is a true witness and teacher of "the faith which was once delivered to the saints."

The Church of Rome, on the contrary, adds the uncertain and ever-varying Rule of tradition to the Bible, and thus renders it of none effect: and, hence, she has heaped together so many "doctrines and commandments of men," upon the true foundation, that "the faith once delivered to the saints" is almost entirely concealed from the eyes of her children.

The Church of England acknowledges that, as the particular churches of "Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred," so errors may arise, and have arisen, in other branches of the Catholic Church; and she

guards against the admission of error, or the continuance of it in her own communion, if ever admitted, by the declaration, that "it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another."

The Church of Rome claims infallibility;—will not allow that she ever has erred, or can err, and, consequently, excludes every hope which charity would willingly entertain, that she may at length repudiate her unscriptural doctrines, and reform her superstitious and ungodly practices, and maintain pure and undefiled the "faith once delivered to the saints." This presumptuous claim of infallibility perpetuates her sin, leaves no place for repentance, and must ultimately cause her destruction.

The Church of England seeks to instruct and edify her members, so that they may, by the grace of God, adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour by their life and conversation. She desires to have children, not slaves; and is far more anxious to exalt her Saviour, than her hierarchy. Hence she desires that every minister, "be his name or degree whatsoever, be diligent in his vocation, feeding the flock of God which dependeth upon him, caring for it, 'not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;' not as though he would tyrannize over God's heritage, but as a pattern unto the flock, wisely guiding them." And with respect to her members, she is anxious that they should "yield themselves frameable to the truth, not like rough stone or flint, refusing to be smoothed and squared for the building:" and that "the Magistrate do carefully and diligently survey the whole order of the work, providing by Statutes and Laws, and bodily

punishments, if need require, that all things might be done according to the rule which cannot deceive; even as Moses provided that all things might be done according to the pattern which he saw in the Mount." It is her wish and object that every congregation belonging to her should be such as to call forth the declaration:—"Behold a people that are wise, a people that walk in the Statutes and Ordinances of their God, a people full of knowledge and understanding, a people that have skill in building themselves."

The Church of Rome, on the contrary, seeks her own exaltation. She puts herself in the place of the Saviour; and causes her people to forget the ONE MEDIATOR, in the multitude of saints and angels, whom she hath unscripturally declared to be our advocates and intercessors in heaven. Her sole object seems to be, "to build and manage a Papacy upon earth, without any care in the world of building the people in "the faith once delivered to the saints." God's people have inquired at her mouth, 'What shall we do to have eternal life? Wherein shall we build and edify ourselves?' And they have departed home from their Prophets, and from their Priests, laden with doctrines which are precepts of men; they have been taught to tire out themselves with bodily exercise; those things are enjoined them, which God did never require at their hands, and the things he doth require are kept from them: their eyes are fed with pictures, and their ears are filled with melody, but their souls do wither, and starve, and pine away: they cry for bread, and behold, stones are offered them; they ask for fish, and see, they have scorpions in their hands."

Have we not reason, then, to bless God for the labours of our venerable Reformers, and for the establishment

in this country of a Church, which approaches, as near as circumstances will admit, to the model left us by the apostles of our Blessed Lord? Such a Church must be a safe guide, because she allows no doctrines to be taught, which cannot be proved by holy Scripture. She is, and ever has been since the Reformation, a faithful witness and teacher of "the truth as it is in Jesus." She furnishes her members with a form of sound words—"with a Liturgy of unrivalled excellence," and which, as a late talented non-conformist minister acknowledged, "holds the very first rank of uninspired compositions." She directs that all her children shall be instructed, so soon as they shall be able to learn, in all things which a christian ought to know and believe; and she provides them with a short but comprehensive summary of faith and duty, in her admirable catechism. Their attention is continually directed by her to the oracles of divine truth, from which she daily conveys to them "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little;" so that, if they take heed how they hear, they can hardly fail to know the way to eternal life.

The more I examine into the nature and constitution of our National Church, the more I am satisfied that it is one of the greatest blessings which God has ever bestowed upon our country; and that, in proportion as we value and follow its teaching, we shall be a prosperous and happy people. It is our birth-right, since we are born in a land where it is established; and, surely, "we have great reason to admire and adore that gracious Providence, which amidst so many confusions, disorders, and corruptions, that prevail too much in most places round about, hath placed our lot in so happy a soil, and provided for us so goodly a heritage, and safe retreat in the bosom of that Church, whose charity is as

eminent as its faith, and its order is as signal as its purity; whose arms are always open to receive its returning enemies with the most tender compassions, as well as to cherish its faithful friends with the most wholesome and indulgent provisions; where nothing is wanting to ensure our safety, and encourage our proficiency in every thing that is good and excellent: which, upon former trial of both the opposite extremes, the whole kingdom hath seen necessary to flee back into, to repair the confusions and devastations they had wrought; and in its most dangerous convulsions here hath found the readiest cure, and under whose name her very enemies desire to shelter themselves; which, finally, engages us to express our gratitude for so peculiar privileges, by ready and impartial obedience to the holy doctrine we are taught, and a fruitful improvement of all those happy advantages which we enjoy therein. That our lives may be answerable to our profession, and our pious, virtuous, peaceable, and charitable conversation may be in some proportion as defensible, and remarkable, as the principles we proceed upon, or the benefits we lay claim to. This would most effectually silence the captious cavils of our enemies on every side, and more powerfully invite them to our communion, than all other the most demonstrative arguments, when their senses would bear witness that God is in us of a truth."

Let us then highly value, and firmly cling to, this precious jewel of the glorious Reformation. Let us pray that our beloved Church, whose "foundations are on the holy hills," may be as a "city that is at unity in itself." Let us regard it with the same affection which David felt towards Jerusalem, and let us not only use his language with our lips, but cherish in our hearts the grateful feelings which constrained him to say:—

“ Walk about Zion, and go round about her ; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces ; that ye may tell it to the generation following. . . . Pray for the peace of Jerusalem ; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.” (Psalm xlviii. 12, 13 : cxxii. 6—9.

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- tributed to Ignatius, has long been questioned; and the text of such epistles as are deemed genuine has been perverted by so many Popish interpolations, that no dependence can be placed upon it. The most correct copies are those which have been edited by the Rev. J. Cureton, of the British Museum, from MSS. procured at the monastery of Nitria, in Egypt, which had escaped the dishonest practices of the Romanists.
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- 133 — 27 "Dr. Cosin's Opinion, when Dean of Peterborough and in exile, for communicating rather with Geneva than with Rome." *See* The Case as it is, by William Goode, M.A. p. 16
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- 145 — 12 Cypr. de extrem. unct.
- 145 — 23 Op. Chrysost. Ed. Ben. Par. 1724. *in fin.* Tom.
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