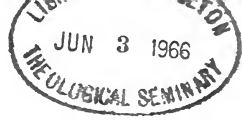




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Munro, Alexander.
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CALVINISM

IN ITS

RELATIONS

TO

SCRIPTURE AND REASON,

OR

AN EXAMINATION INTO THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF CALVINISTIC
PRINCIPLES, AS THEY ARE LAID DOWN IN THE
PRESBYTERIAN STANDARDS.

BY THE

REV. ALEXANDER MUNRO,

PROFESSOR IN THE SCOTCH COLLEGE, VALLADOLID.

GLASGOW:

HUGH MARGEY, 14 GREAT CLYDE STREET.

1856.

P R E F A C E.

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SINCE the Reformation, Europe has been deluged with treatises against "Popery." Protestant writers have come to consider that the sole function of the Catholic, in religious controversy, is defence; while, for themselves, they claim an exclusive and inalienable right of attack. To this may be attributed that security in which Protestants seem to live, as if their religion needed no apology and dreaded no assault. Their ideas have, by their long immunity, been inverted, and they have come to consider the defensive language of the Catholic an aggression. Statements of their doctrines are, indeed, to be met with; but formal attempts to establish, as theological theses, the peculiar tenets of Protestantism, are rarely, if at all, to be found. An "Exposure of Popery," or a "Refutation of Romanism," has been held sufficient proof that Protestantism is the true and unquestionable reproduction of primitive Christianity.

Yet it is difficult to conceive how a Protestant can rest satisfied without a thorough examination into the grounds and doctrines of his religion. His fundamental principle is, that every man is bound to search, examine, and judge for himself. This examination he can neglect only by the

abandonment of his Protestantism or a culpable deficiency in his creed. He sacrifices consistency, and retains entire the Confession of Faith. The Protestant is, from his infancy, taught to believe that a certain system of doctrine is the religion of Christ. The theory indeed says—Take up the Bible; read, meditate, compare, and judge, and the Spirit of God will teach you all saving truths; but the practice makes him receive from his parents or teachers the Catechism agreed upon by the divines of their Church, and learn from it what are the doctrines which he will be permitted to believe to have been revealed by the Holy Ghost in the word. He takes the book, he listens to his teachers, and grows up in the religion of his parents. When able, he reads the Bible, finds there only the Presbyterianism of the Church of Scotland or Free Kirk, as the case may be, and wonders at the strange blindness of the Episcopalians, Unitarians, Baptists, Mormons, &c., who have found in the sacred volume the doctrines of *their* catechisms and teachers. As he has heard so much about the duty and privilege of examination—been told so frequently that *his* religion is the result and support of private judgment, he really believes that he *has* examined and judged. But he has in truth been *taught*. He has been ever proclaiming liberty, although the grounds of his reasonings and his conclusions themselves are only the teachings of authority.

However unwarranted and inconsistent the confidence of Protestants and their uniformly offensive attitude may be, it has not been without a marked influence upon Catholics and their literature. Our writings have taken the form of apology, or deprecation, or explanation. We have ventured only to hint that Protestantism was false. So closely have we been occupied in rebutting calumnies, clearing up misconceptions, or stating and defending our doctrines, that Catholics would be scarcely less surprised than Protestants at

the novelty, if one of themselves were to assume the offensive, and call on Protestants to give a reason for the hope that is in them, or warn them that their defences are crumbling around them, and the ground quaking beneath their feet. The consequence has been, that the Catholic finds his library deficient. While he can readily procure books of instruction and defensive controversy, he finds himself without assistance should he wish to convince of error those who so confidently assail his faith. It is principally to supply, to some small extent, this deficiency that the present work has been written.

Some acquaintance with the religious systems of those by whom he is surrounded, with whom he must daily come in contact, cannot but prove of advantage to the Catholic, not only by pointing out to him the weakness of their principles, and the objections to which they are liable, but also by confirming him more and more in his devotion to his cherished faith. For, when he sees that the labours of the most learned and subtle men, when directed to the formation of a religion, result only in folly and contradiction, his own ancient Church seems to grow, if possible, stronger and more venerable by the contrast, and he clings to her as the special manifestation of God's wisdom, the depository of his graces, the preserver and guarantee to men of his word—"the pillar and the ground of truth."

Protestants, also, who wish to be consistent, will by no means regret to have their principles and opinions thrown into the crucible. The truth must come forth from trial more resplendent than ever, while error cannot be too soon exploded. They say that, as St. John directs us to "try the spirits," so men are bound to try their doctrines, "whether they be of God." But, to undertake a trial that shall really be such, and not a mere pretext to justify a foregone conclusion, it is as necessary to learn, and weigh, and *solve* the

objections to the doctrine, as to know the reasons in its favour. A faith professing to be grounded upon the examination of the intrinsic and extrinsic credibility of dogmas, yet refusing to weigh whatever can be urged against them, must be pronounced a deception. To the sincere Protestant, therefore, whose principles necessarily engage him in a constant search after truth, every discussion that serves to extend the circle of his ideas, although by shaking his confidence in admitted dogmas, or inducing him to question the soundness of previous opinions, will, if conducted in the spirit of Christian charity, be welcomed as throwing a friendly light upon his solitary path. It is, then, in the hope of benefiting both Protestants and Catholics that this volume is offered to the public.

Its object may now be briefly explained. We propose to test the strength and consistency of the system of Protestantism most generally professed in Scotland. To leave no room for cavil as to our statements of its doctrine, they shall, in every case, be made exclusively in the words of its own authorized and received Confessions of Faith. To discuss, however, even in a cursory manner, the entire contents of those Confessions, in as far as they are at variance with the teaching of the Catholic Church, would require, on the part of the writer, leisure and opportunities which few Catholics could command; while, on that of the reader, it would suppose a favour for folios which, it is more than probable, has long since disappeared. Our attention will, therefore, be confined to a few points. But they shall be the most momentous of the controversy, and such as will carry with them, in their decision, all the remaining differences. First in order is the doctrine on the sacred Scriptures—their nature, authority, and use. As the Scriptures are considered by Protestants to be the sole source of our knowledge of revealed truth, this is

rightly the first, as it is in reality the most important article of all. Protestantism must stand or fall by its doctrine on this one point. Secondly, we shall consider the doctrine of the Westminster Confession on God, in his relations to man, both justified and in the state of sin. Thirdly, its doctrine on Man, what he is by nature, and what he becomes by grace. We have not made it a special object to follow up the principles of Protestantism to their ulterior results; but enough will appear, in the course of the following pages, to show that the tendency of the ideas introduced by the Reformation is towards revolution and anarchy in the state, to endless divisions in religion, and finally, to infidelity. It must not, however, be inferred from this, that we maintain Protestants to be impugnors of revealed religion, or even likely to become such. In this respect, we thank Heaven for the inconsistency of the great body of Protestants! What we maintain is, that the rigorous logical development of their principles, as laid down in their published standards, is through an inevitable course of doubt, to infidelity and scepticism.

INTRODUCTION.

THE religious system of the Westminster Confession differs materially from that of any one of the first reformed bodies. It is not, however, a new or independent system; but has been borrowed partly from Luther and Melancthon, partly from Calvin, Beza, and Zwinglius. Our Scottish Reformers, destitute of originality, or boldness, or leisure, did not, like so many of their continental contemporaries, strike out a new path for themselves. They were content to receive, in fragments as it came, now a hint from Wittenberg, and anon another from Geneva or Zurich. Lutheranism had the privilege of being first received. A nobleman named Patrick Hamilton, having, by some channel now unknown, imbibed the ideas already prevalent in Germany, left Scotland about the year 1526, and attached himself to Luther and his colleagues in Wittenberg. On his return to Scotland he preached the new religion, as far as it had been till that time developed, and succeeded, to some extent, in drawing attention to his novelties. They seem to have been agitated principally in the University of St. Andrews, where the admirers of Hamilton failed not to use the influence, which by their position as teachers of Catholicity they possessed, to propagate them by stealth, and

to pervert from their religion the youth intrusted to their care.¹

Although Hamilton is reckoned among the martyrs of the Scottish Reformation, no sect of the present day would acknowledge him as a member, unless he were prepared to subscribe a much more extensive Confession of Faith than the Reformation had in his day discovered. His abilities and acquirements, notwithstanding Knox's testimony to his "singular erudition and godly knowledge," were not of a high order, nor were his ideas of the new doctrines, in all cases, very well defined. Yet, in his confused and pedantic treatise on the "Law," the germs of several doctrines now embodied in the Westminster Confession are to be found. He maintained that man is justified by faith alone; that the man who has faith cannot fall into sin;² that God requires man to keep all the commandments, although their observance be impossible.³ This, however, is of little consequence to the righteous, for they are to be saved without any regard to their works; and it is of still less to the reprobate, as they are assured that sin will not be the cause of any man's condemnation.⁴

From the disciples whom Hamilton had left in the Uni-

¹ "Gavin Logie, rector of St. Leonard's College, was successful in instilling them (the new doctrines) into the minds of the students. . . . Under the connivance of John Winram, the sub-prior, they also secretly spread among the novitiates (sic) of the abbey."—*M'Crie's Life of Knox*, vol. i. p. 30.

² "All that is done in faith pleaseth God. . . . Thou wilt then say that theft, murder, adultery, and all vices please God. No, verily; for they cannot be done in faith."—*Hamilton's Treatise on the Law*; apud *Knox's History of the Reformation*, p. 68.

³ "The law biddeth us do that which is impossible for us; for it bids us keep all the commandments of God; and yet it is not in our power to keep any of them; ergo, it biddeth us do that which is impossible for us."—*Id. ibid.*

⁴ "No works make us unrighteous; for, if any works make us unrighteous then the contrary works would make us righteous; but it is proved that no works can make us righteous; ergo, no work either saveth us or condemneth us."—*Id. ibid.*

versity of St. Andrews, John Knox received the first glimpses of the reformed doctrines. He afterwards exercised an unbounded influence over the minds of his co-religionists, in both civil and religious matters, and stamped upon the Scottish Reformation the rugged features of his own stern character. During his different sojourns in Geneva, he studied the various systems of the Swiss Reformers; and the effect of his studies is evident in the preponderance which the opinions of Calvin obtained in Scotland over those of Luther since the year 1559—the date of Knox's final return to his native land. In the year 1560, he was appointed, along with several others of the ministers, to draw up a statement of doctrine which should be the standard of the Kirk of Scotland. The result of their labours, under the title of "the Confession of Faith, as professed and believed by the Protestants within the realm of Scotland," was ratified and adopted both by the Parliament and General Assembly. This document seems to have held its place as the standard of orthodoxy to the Presbyterian body, until the adoption of the more extended and better defined work of the Westminster divines. The discrepancies between the two Confessions are no less remarkable than important. Thus, when we consider the influence of Knox, whose extreme opinions and intemperance of language are well known, it becomes difficult to account either for the temperate doctrine on election, expressed in the most guarded language, which we find in Article viii. of the first Confession, or for its subsequent removal in favour of the fearful doctrine of Calvin in its unmitigated severity.

After the publication of Knox's Confession of Faith, the first document we meet with, illustrative of the progress of the reformed opinions in Scotland, is the "National Covenant." This Covenant, so peculiarly characteristic of Scotch Presbyterianism, was, between the years 1580 and 1640, six several

times ratified, both by the General Assembly and Parliament, and ordered to be received and subscribed "by all ranks of people in the land." As a doctrinal record, the National Covenant is of a negative character. It enumerates the doctrines and practices which are to be rejected; and its anathemas and repudiations of "Popery" in all its branches are of the most energetic description. In its political bearing it is sufficiently positive, and explains, beyond the possibility of misconception, the Presbyterian theory on the questions of religious liberty, and the "right of private judgment." The National Covenant gives a list of the persecuting statutes which had been framed by the Scottish Parliament against the persons and property of Catholics, and binds the subscribers to put those statutes into rigorous execution.

Until the year 1643, no additional formulary of belief seems to have been called for in Scotland. But, from the commencement of the seventeenth century, the necessity of a closer union between the Presbyterians of Scotland and England had been becoming more and more evident to the respective leaders of the parties in both kingdoms. They had a common object in view, which both long pursued with indomitable perseverance. They wished first to resist and restrain a government which sought to regulate the form of their worship; and afterwards, stimulated to bolder projects by a consciousness of increasing strength, they pursued with equal ardour and success, designs which were finally fatal to the life of the king and subversive of the monarchy. To bring about such a union as would secure a triumph, the English Parliament, entirely ruled by Presbyterian influence, summoned, in June, 1643, an assembly of divines to meet at Westminster. They were instructed to draw up such a statement of doctrine as might express their own opinions, and, at the same time, by its approximation to the old Scotch Con-

ession, be accepted by their northern brethren. Meanwhile the Scottish Assembly gave a commission to a number of its ministers to repair to Westminster, "to propose, consult, treat, and conclude with that Assembly, or any commissioners deputed by them, *or any committees or commissioners deputed by the houses of Parliament*, in all matters which may further the union of this island in one form of kirk government, one Confession of Faith, one Catechism, one Directory for the worship of God according to the instructions which they have received from the Assembly, or shall receive from time to time hereafter from the commissioners of the Assembly deputed to that effect."¹ The Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms then drawn up, were accepted by the Kirk of Scotland, and since then have been the authorized summary of her doctrines. They may be considered the correct exponents of the entire body of Scotch Presbyterians. They have been adopted, with some explanations on the subject of the civil magistrate, by the Free Kirk; and the catechisms in use among all the Protestants of this country who adhere to the Presbyterian form of church government, are those drawn up by the Westminster divines, and are simply a digest of the Confession of Faith.

¹ Act of General Assembly of Kirk of Scotland, August 19, 1643.

CALVINISM

IN ITS

RELATIONS TO SCRIPTURE AND REASON.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCRIPTURES.

HAD it been possible for man to discover, unaided, his relations to God, the end of his being, and the means by which it was to be attained, this knowledge would have been possessed, in its fulness, by the sages of antiquity. But all of them groped in darkness. The sparks which, from time to time, break into sight during the long night of pagan horrors, seem rather to indicate the smouldering embers of a primitive tradition, than the natural and independent powers of the human mind. Christianity is essentially a revelation. Its truths are supernatural; and therefore mere natural reason could no more attain to their knowledge than man could change his own nature. Christianity declares to us the designs of God in the creation of man. It tells us for what we were made, and how we shall attain the end of our being. It even raises the veil to some extent, and vouchsafes us a glimpse within the temple of the Divinity—it speaks of the nature, and attributes, and will of God. But God's will, designs, and nature can be known only to himself. The doctrines of Christianity could therefore have been made known to man only by a revelation from God.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, assuming, with all Protestantism, that certain books of Scripture contain the complete and sole record of the Divine revelation, naturally

devotes its opening chapter to the subject of "The Holy Scriptures." The object of the chapter is to establish the inspiration, the canon, and the object of the Scriptures. We shall examine in succession its doctrine upon each of these questions; and first of—

SECTION I.—THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

Here we maintain that the doctrine of the Westminster Confession renders *belief* in the inspiration of Scripture impossible to the great majority of men; and the *proof* of it impossible to all.

I. We begin with the second member. There are two articles devoted to the Inspiration of Scripture. The first is as follows:—"The authority of the holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof, and therefore it is to be received because it is the word of God."¹ The involved and doubling language of this article, does not evidence clear and strong convictions on the part of its authors. It is rather the language of men anxious to provide the means of escape from anticipated difficulties, than of theologians giving a scientific expression to their belief. The article will bear a double interpretation. It may refer to belief of the fact, *that the Scripture is the word of God*—pointing out the ground of belief in the inspiration of Scripture; or to *belief in the word of God already proved to be such*—declaring the formal ground on which inspired writings are authoritative. Taken in the first sense, the passage would mean, that we are to believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, *because they are the word of God*; and it would be more reprehensible for its solemn trifling with a sacred subject, than for its silly tautology. In the second acceptance, it tells us that the word of God, when proved to be such, is to be believed because its author is truth itself. This interpretation brings, indeed, the article into harmony with reason; but if such were the meaning of the Westminster divines, upon what authority do they charge any

¹ *Confession of Faith*, chap. i. 4.

man or church with pretending to give authority to the word of God? If, instead of trusting to their own prejudices, they had studied the doctrines of other churches in their proper formularies, they would scarcely have ventured to throw out so pointless an insinuation.

There is, however, one church, and only one, which professes to bear testimony to the fact that the Scriptures are the word of God. She claims to be more ancient than themselves—to have seen their writers, nay, to have held them in her embrace—to have seen those sacred treasures written, and to have received them from the hands of the penmen—to have watched over them with a jealous love, and preserved them through innumerable dangers at the cost of the blood of her most venerated children. The Catholic Church claims this; and more, she makes good her claim. But the Westminster divines say she may err, and has erred—has even erred on this very subject of the Scripture. It is not, therefore, on her testimony that they can create or justify belief in the inspiration of the sacred volume. What, then, is the nature of the testimony to which they refer their adherents for this all-important evidence? Article V. furnishes the answer to this inquiry:—"We may be moved," it says, "and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverend esteem of the holy Scripture, and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole; the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation; the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts."¹ It will be seen that the Church's testimony is here rejected as insufficient, and the "heavenliness of the matter," &c., are substituted as proofs which "abundantly evidence" the inspiration of Scripture. But we maintain that, whether singly or collectively taken, those reasons are

¹ *Confession of Faith*, chap. v.

insufficient; and that, if Protestants will reject the Church, they cannot possibly have the Scripture; for—

1. Whatever force those various reasons possess, is derived from the ideas of heavenly matters, inspired style, and special excellencies of inspired composition, which man is supposed to possess antecedently to his examination of the proofs for Scripture inspiration. It is assumed that the Protestant, when he takes up the Bible to verify its claims to be the word of God, has within himself a criterion which enables him to decide whether a doctrine be truly a revelation from God or not—which tells him when the consistency of a writing proves inspiration, and when it simply indicates truth—which shows him when the style indicates a composition to have been written at the dictation of the Holy Spirit, and when merely a command of language or a lofty intellect. This supposed faculty can not only discover the proof of inspiration in the widely-differing styles of the Scripture writers, but even enables its possessor to say which of all the means which the power and wisdom of God might have employed to save the human race, is that actually adopted, and to pronounce the book in which that means is spoken of to be inspired. The Confession of Faith does not inform us whence fallen man has obtained those standard ideas, nor how they come to possess such authority. Are they innate in our nature; have they been acquired by the efforts of unassisted reason; or have they been made known to our race by a supernatural revelation? One or other of these ways it must be; for, besides revelation and our natural faculties, there is no other source of ideas. If they were derived from revelation, then, since Protestants acknowledge no revelation but that which has been made known by the Bible, they are the teachings of the Bible itself; and the reasoning of the Westminster Confession amounts to this, that what a man now finds in the Bible corresponds with what he was taught from it in former years. From his earliest childhood, the Protestant has been receiving certain principles and ideas of virtue, holiness, and truth. These, he is told, are the dictates of the Spirit of God, and a portion of his word. The impressions deepen by repetition, until those ideas become a

part of the man's moral being. He forgets that they were acquired at all, and simply assumes them as his universal standard. When he enters upon his examination of the proofs for Scripture inspiration, he brings with him, as the criterion of holiness, the very ideas and principles he had already acquired from the Scriptures. This is evidently a fallacious process, and yields but a sophism in proof of the inspiration.* If it be said that the ideas in question are derived from natural reason, then, since natural reason has not within itself either an antitype or counterpart of heavenly matters, it can afford no reliable criterion of their authenticity. Of all men, Presbyterians can with least consistency exalt the powers of nature. Their doctrine of original sin represents all the powers of nature by which man might reach the knowledge of the supernatural as utterly destroyed. Naturally, then, Protestants have no standard—no grounds of comparison; unless, indeed, in spite of the Confession of Faith, consciousness, and Scripture, they make human nature perfect, holy, and infallible. In either case, therefore, they fail, by their ideas of heavenly matters, style, &c., to prove the inspiration of Scripture.

2. Farther, inspiration, by its very nature, is mysterious and secret. You see the writer; but his appearance differs not from that of another man. You follow the movements of his pen, as it fixes, in imperishable characters, the dictates of his mind. But that the Spirit of God is meanwhile illuminating his understanding and guiding his hand, is a fact that can be known directly only to the favoured individual. He alone, then, in the first instance, is a competent witness to the fact of his inspiration. But his testimony, *by itself*, extends only to the fact of his own consciousness, that is, to the subjective truth of his inspiration. To prove its objective truth, that is, to make evident to others the fact that the inspiration

* It is worthy of notice, that Protestants, who are so clear-sighted in discovering imaginary circles in the reasoning of Catholics, should not have perceived here a real circle in their own. If they do not choose the second horn of the above dilemma, then they prove the heavenliness of the matter by the Bible, and the Bible by the heavenliness of the matter.

is true, or, in other words, that the influence of which he is conscious is truly the inspiration of God, and not a delusion, proof of another order is necessary; for the fact is supernatural. God alone can give certainty as to the operations of his own Spirit. He may do so immediately by a special revelation to every man, or immediately by miracles and the testimony of witnesses whose veracity he guarantees. The Catholic Church is the witness to the miracles of the sacred writers, and their claims to inspiration; and God has pledged his own veracity for the truth of her testimony. But the Protestant does not admit a witness; for he denies some of those books to whose inspiration she bears testimony, nor does he admit any other external authority on earth in matters of faith. Nor does he claim to have received a special revelation from the Holy Spirit in favour of this fact. But, when the testimony of the Catholic Church has been rejected, as well as all claim to private revelation, the proof for the miracles and claims to inspiration on the part of the sacred writers is thrown upon the ordinary evidence for an external event—the testimony of merely human witnesses. But no individual, nobody exists on earth, save the Catholic Church, who even pretends to have existed in the days of the sacred writers, and heard their claims to inspiration. Besides her, then, there is no other witness possible. When, therefore, we consider that the facts which take place beyond ourselves and beyond our personal observation, can be made credible to us only by the testimony of others; that the inspiration of the sacred writers is such a fact; and that the testimony of the Catholic Church, *the only witness possible*, is formally rejected by the Westminster Confession, we must conclude that Presbyterianism renders the proof of the inspiration of Scripture impossible to all.

3. Subversive as Protestant reasoning is of the very foundations of Christianity, where shall Protestants find refuge from the inevitable consequences of their principles? To what subterfuges will they fly? Will private judgment or private interpretation enable them to maintain a hold upon revelation? Let us see. To the formation of a judgment, the comparison of at least two ideas is essential. Can you, by any comparison

you may institute, conclude the inspiration of the Bible? With what, then, will you compare the sacred volume; with uninspired books? But a comparison of dissimilar things authorizes only a negative judgment—points only to the conclusion, that the thing compared differs from that with which it is compared, but gives no ground for positive conclusions as to its nature. Will you compare one book of the Bible with another? But which book do you make the standard of comparison, with what was it compared, or by what proofs had you previously established its inspiration? The Bible with any other inspired book? But there is no other. It is unique. It is alone of its kind among the works of God. Thus, then, you are and will be for ever destitute of any means even of instituting a comparison—the very foundation of a judgment.

4. The proof, that the first principles of Presbyterianism destroy the credibility of Scripture, amounting, as it does, to demonstration, is certainly calculated to excite surprise in the minds of men accustomed to the sayings and doings of Presbyterians in relation to the Bible. Their surprise must be still greater when they see this same Presbyterianism admitting the insufficiency of the proofs itself had substituted for the Church, and making itself responsible for the awful impiety that the inspiration of Scripture is incapable of proof. Let Presbyterians mark and ponder well the concluding words of the above article—"Yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit." The framers of the Presbyterian religion must, indeed, have been reduced to grievous straits, when they gave to the world an article thus indicative of doubt or imbecility of judgment. They deny, in the outset, that the Church is infallible, and set aside her testimony to the inspiration of Scripture, as insufficient to produce the certainty required for this truth; they then carefully enumerate the motives of credibility which are to produce that conviction which, they say, the Church's authority is insufficient to justify; and wind up by establishing the incompetence of the proofs they have just substi-

tuted in her stead. For they say, that “the full persuasion of their authority is” [not the proofs they indicated, and with the grossest inconsistency declared to be abundant evidence, but] “the inward work of the Holy Spirit.” Now, anything short of *certainty* cannot be a full *persuasion*. Wherever there is not certainty, there is doubt. Whatever is doubtful, has not been proved. But all the motives of credibility which address themselves to reason, are pronounced by the Westminster Confession insufficient to produce certainty; for full belief, it asserts, can only be from the immediate work of God’s Spirit. Thus, therefore, *proof* is acknowledged to be impossible, and the means of conviction are removed from the domain of reason and testimony to that of a particular revelation in favour of each individual. The consequences of this acknowledgment would certainly be fatal to Christianity, if Presbyterianism were the revelation of God. For the Confession of Faith makes the Bible the sole record of revealed truth—the only source *whence* man can draw his knowledge of the dogmas of Christianity. Now, if the inspiration of the record cannot be proved, the truth and divinity of its contents cannot be proved; for the authority of Scripture is derived from its inspiration—“it is to be received and obeyed *because it is the word of God.*” By the teaching, then, of the Westminster Confession, proof capable of producing certainty (full persuasion) is impossible for one and all of its dogmas. This portentous conclusion, which no reasoning nor ingenuity can invalidate or evade, shows a system differing in all its characteristics from the religion of Jesus Christ. Our Saviour convinces men of the divinity of his mission by the external proof of miracles. His immediate disciples, by his command, preached the gospel, and appealed for the truth of their teaching, and the divine authority of their commission to teach mankind till the end of time, to the resurrection, ascension, and miracles of their Master, as well as to the wonders which they themselves wrought, as to proofs which should leave the infidel without excuse. Their successors appealed to the same evidence. And justly; for a miracle once wrought is an everlasting testimony to the truth, as it is the sanction of God, the eternal truth. Their entire

conduct, then, supposes that Christianity can be proved to reason, and that its rejection is a sin against reason; hence, that unbelief is sin, and the unbeliever inexcusable. For all teaching supposes that the doctrines taught can be made acceptable to reason, either by direct proof, or by the demonstration of the teacher's authority. A teacher who cannot establish his own authority as a sufficient ground for admitting the truth of his teaching, nor give direct proof that his doctrines are true, is an impostor. In the religious world he is an enemy to revelation, for his teaching serves only to confound the evidences of truth. The Westminster doctrine, that the inspiration of Scripture, and, as a consequence of this, the dogmas of Christianity, cannot be evidenced to reason so as to produce certainty, but that grace is necessary to supply the deficiency of proof, renders infidelity excusable; for no man can be blamed for his unbelief, where belief is impossible. The religion which holds such principles may be acceptable in this age, bent as it is upon unbridled licence, and rather eager for pretexts to colour the rejection of every restraint of faith, morality, and law, than anxious to find solid ground on which to rest belief, but, certainly, it is in direct and striking contrast with the religion of Christ.

II. There is, however, a hypothesis on which *belief* in the inspiration of Scripture is defended by those who deny that it can be *proved*. The Spirit of God may, by direct revelation or illumination, give to the individual the certainty required. It is, indeed, as we have seen, adopted by the Westminster divines. Yet, that this is the appointed means of persuasion, can be maintained by Scotch Presbyterians only at the sacrifice of every claim to consistency, and in utter disregard of the fatal consequences. Undoubtedly, God, who can "do all that he pleases and as he pleases," whose will is the measure of his power, can produce such conviction. But the question is not, what *can* God do; but what, in his providence, *has he done*—what has he appointed as the ordinary means by which man is to arrive at belief in his truth? Before, however, exposing the inconveniences and inconsistency of the Westminster hypothesis, with the essential characteristics of Pres-

byterianism, we shall give a short but conclusive argument in support of the second member of our proposition, that the Westminster Confession renders belief in the inspiration of Scripture impossible to the great majority of men.

The illumination or inspiration said to be necessary to produce persuasion in the inspiration of Scripture, must be a free gift on the part of God; for if it were *due* to man, the whole human race would have certain belief in the divinity of the sacred books, because the justice of God could not refuse to any man what was his due. But a free gift of God is grace. Belief, therefore, in the inspiration of Scripture, is impossible, according to the Confession of Faith, without a special grace. The grace, moreover, which enables a man to believe this truth, is denominated "saving faith."¹ An essential quality of this grace is said to be inamissibility—he who has once received it, can never lose it, but must persevere to the end, and be saved.² Therefore, those only who shall be saved can believe in the doctrine in question. But the Confession of Faith has decided that none shall or can be saved but the elect alone, since for them only, it says, has Christ died, and they alone, therefore, can receive grace.³ We conclude, then, from the formal teaching of the Westminster Confession, that, as faith is the exclusive gift of the elect, belief in the inspiration of the Scripture is impossible for all, save the elect.

Grace, moreover, is by the same authority made irresistible. Man has it not in his power either to refuse or reject it.⁴

¹ Chap. xiv. "Of Saving Faith." "By this faith a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word."

² "This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and many ways assailed, but gets the victory."—*Confession of Faith*, chap. xiv. 3. Also, "They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved."—*Id.* chap. xvii. 1.

³ "Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only."—*Id.* chap. iii. 6.

⁴ "All those whom God hath predestined unto life, and those only he is pleased, in his accepted time, effectually to call . . . to *grace* and salvation . . . by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace."—*Confession of Faith*, chap. x. 1.

For God's decree to confer grace is declared to be absolute, and made without regard to the will, dispositions, or acts of the recipient.¹ Since, then, the conferring of grace is in no way conditional on the will or correspondence of man, if it were possible for man to refuse it, it would be possible for him to change the immutable purpose of God. He cannot, therefore, refuse grace, nor can he reject it once it has been received, for perseverance in grace "depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election."² Thus, in the highest affair which can demand the attention of man—his belief in revelation—he is reduced to the state of a mere unresisting, unreasoning, irresponsible agent. Such is the idea given by Presbyterianism of the Christian's dignity. It is true, the Westminster divines saw the consequences of their doctrine, and, willing to evade their force, inserted the words, "yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace." But this important attempt to deprecate an inevitable consequence, serves only to aggravate their difficulties *and their guilt*; for this language shows that they saw the depth of the abyss towards which they were leading their simple followers, and that the means they proposed for escape were a mere deception. They say that man, in admitting the grace which God had, without regard to his will, "immediately determined him" to receive, is yet free; and their proof of his freedom is, that he receives the grace "willingly." Man is thus told: You cannot, indeed, resist grace, but you must not imagine that you are compelled to admit it; on the contrary, you are quite free to resist it, and because you are "made" to admit it willingly, your freedom is demonstrated. Your willingness itself had been unchangeably decreed, and can as little be resisted by you as the grace it welcomes; but, however, it too is evidently free, since you cannot be willing and unwilling at the same

¹ "Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and *immutable purpose*, and the secret council and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto."—*Confession of Faith*, chap. iii. 5.

² *Id.* chap. xvii. 2.

time. It is impossible that men who had studied the first elements of philosophy, could have been ignorant of the essential difference there is between freedom and willingness. The latter, they must be aware, is not a proof of freedom. For freedom or liberty is opposed to necessity or dependence, while willingness is opposed to neither the one nor the other. Thus, man has not freedom in his pursuit of happiness. A law of his nature necessitates him to a constant search. Yet he seeks it willingly. He is not free in experiencing sensations of pleasure or pain ; yet any of them he may experience willingly. In heaven, the blessed are not free in abstaining from sin, but they most willingly abstain from it. The Confession of Faith will admit that the devils and wicked spirits are not free to do good ; will it deny that they abstain from it willingly ? will it give them credit for righteous thoughts or pious acts of the will in their place of torment, when it denies the possibility of a good thought finding admission into the minds of the reprobate on earth ? We trust that Presbyterians will learn to distinguish between things so very different in their nature as freedom and willingness, and to perceive that the presence of the one neither proves nor requires the presence of the other. By the system, therefore, of the Westminster Confession, it is impossible for all but the elect to believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures, and *they* can believe that dogma of the Christian faith *only by ceasing to be free agents*. But as the power to resist and reject grace is a fact of which all men have innate consciousness, such as they have of their own existence, the same certainty which all men have of their existence, they have of the falsity of that system.

The hypothesis we are examining is not, however, more directly in contradiction with reason, than with the constitution of Presbyterianism. The essence of Presbyterianism, in as far as it is distinguished from the other offshoots of Lutheranism, Calvinism, &c., consists in its form of church government. To this, an outward ministry of presbyters and elders is necessary, whose duty is to teach and administer the sacraments. Now, such a ministry is incompatible with the theory of individual illumination, and therefore inadmissible save by

the annihilation of Presbyterianism. An outward ministry either cannot exist at all, or can exist only as an imposture without an outward sanction. Whoever claims to be an "ambassador of Christ," must have credentials to show to those among whom he is sent. The Presbyterian ministry professes to draw its sanction from the Word of God, as such. It produces the books of Scripture as its only credentials, resting upon them alone, its right even to existence. If, then, it cannot prove the divine authority of its credentials, it must abandon all claim to an outward sanction. It would be in the condition of an unknown negotiator, who presents, as his credentials, letters whose authority he ingeniously confesses himself unable to establish. But the theory of individual illumination supposes, and the Confession of Faith asserts, as we have seen, the impossibility of producing an outward sanction for the word of God, and, consequently, the impossibility of finding a sanction for an outward ministry. Presbyterianism, however, essentially requiring, as it does, an outward ministry, is necessitated, as a condition of its existence, to reject this theory of individual illumination, to which its very essence is in direct antagonism. By abandoning it, however, Presbyterians fall into a difficulty not less disastrous. They remain not only without *proof* for the inspiration of Scripture, but even without any possibility of *belief* in that primary dogma. This affords us the key to the causes of many of those amazing contradictions with which the pages of the Westminster Confession are filled. The compilers of the book, not daring, on the one hand, to deny the reasonableness of Christianity, nor, on the other, to admit the infallibility of the Church, were compelled to seek a sanction for the Bible which should render them independent of the Church's testimony. Their undertaking was arduous. It was to give to the world a theory, by which the fundamental principles of Protestantism might be held without unsettling the basis of the Christian revelation. We have seen the result of their labours. It amounts to a proof, by its authors themselves pronounced insufficient, which has, as its complement, an evidence which renders Presbyterianism an imposture. The Quakers, and still more, the

Transcendentalists of America, have been more consistent in this matter of individual illumination. The former have retained neither ministry nor sacraments; the latter have neither ministry, sacraments, law, nor symbol. Every man has within himself the Spirit, who is at once his minister, law-giver, and teacher.

Is there, then, no ground, absolutely none, upon which Protestants can establish the first requisite to the formation of their religious system—the divine authority of the Bible? Must they, of necessity, abandon the fundamental principles of the Reformation ere they can admit this divine truth? We have already shown that they cannot, by external proof or testimony, apart from the authority of the Church, have certainty that the Bible is inspired. The internal proof to which they resort, we have seen to be untenable by Presbyterians. There remains, then, but one other shift to which they have, or as Protestants can have, recourse. Can they not adduce the authority of the Bible itself? May they not collect those texts which speak of the excellences, the uses, the inspiration of Scripture? Does not David say, “the law of the Lord is perfect?” Has not St. Paul written to Timothy, that the Scriptures “are able to make thee wise unto salvation?” Does he not also say, “all Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God?”¹ Will not these and other texts which might be

¹ The Protestant translators have falsified this text, in order to get at any rate one passage to sound to their purpose. Their unwarranted insertion of the verb (*is*) can, however, avail them nothing, for of the two meanings which the passage, in its corrupted state, will bear, the one is false, the other a vain tautology. The words of St. Paul are, Πασα γραφη θεοπνευστος, και οφελιμος προς διδασκαλιαν, προς ελεγχον, κ.τ.λ. The word γραφη (translated *Scripture*) bears two meanings with the sacred writers—the one general, the other particular, or, more properly, conventional. In its general acceptation, it signifies a *writing, a passage of a book*; when used in its restricted sense, it means a passage or book of inspired writing. If the Protestant interpret the word here in its general import, he makes St. Paul say that all writing is inspired—an interpretation as extravagant as false. If he take the particular meaning, he arrives at the important conclusion that “all inspired Scripture is inspired Scripture.” The first Scottish Reformers, who did not see the sceptical drift of their principles, and little imagined that they, who made the Bible everything, were receiving the evidence for the Bible, needed not yet to descend to this wretched tampering with the text. In the First Book of Discipline, we find the verse translated with a fidelity which modern Protestantism cannot afford to imitate; “with the apostle,

adduced, establish the inspiration of the Bible? Alas, for the desolation in the midst of which the Protestant must wander, without chart or compass! Even the word of God itself *for him* can prove nothing; for his difficulty is precisely to learn if there be any word of God upon earth, and if so, where and what it is. Unwilling to divert ourselves from the strict line of our argument, we shall here notice, only in passing, that the texts referred to *suppose* the existence of inspired writings, but they neither claim inspiration for themselves, nor assert it of any individual book. The claim to inspiration is put forward on behalf of the Bible, by the Catholic Church on the one side, resting on her divine commission, and on the sure promises of perpetual exemption from error made her by the eternal truth; on the other, by the individual Protestant, resting, as a last resource, on the peculiar meaning he attaches to certain passages in some few of the books whose inspiration he asserts. We do not stop to contest his interpretation. We attack the very form of his argument. It is altogether illogical. When you adduce those texts, in what sense do you use them? As having divine authority, that is, as inspired? But the inspiration of those very verses, as part of the book in question, is the point you are called on to prove. To bring forward, *as inspired authority*, verses whose inspiration you are attempting, and your opponents say, vainly attempting to prove, is an instance of fruitless sophistry, on which even the very general practice of Protestants fails to confer legitimacy. You cannot select, at pleasure, a few verses of the book, and, *supposing them to be inspired*, from their supposed inspiration, conclude the divine authority of the whole. The weakest member of an argument measures its strength. Here it is a supposition. Your belief, then, in the inspiration of Scripture, formed by this process, is only a supposition. Do you look upon the verses as merely human writings? But you admit that no

we affirm that all Scripture inspired of God is profitable."—*Knox's History*, p. 506. If the word *θεοειρηστος* were rendered literally (God inspired), the bad faith of the present Protestant translation becomes still more evident. That writings inspired of God are profitable, is indeed a truth, but it is a truth which cannot bridge over for the Protestant the gulf of infidelity.

merely human authority is capable of establishing this supernatural fact; and that, in divine matters, the texts of Scripture have authority only as they are inspired. It is, then, the first step in your argument that is wrong; or rather, you have no ground even to make the first step towards the formation of an argument. You have no data. An argument without a premiss containing the desired conclusion is an absurdity. Now you are in search of this premiss. The conclusion you seek is, that the book is of divine authority. Your premiss must, therefore, have itself divine authority. But you start with your reason and private judgment alone, for neither of which do you claim inspiration. You can never, therefore, reach the height of an inspired authority. You may climb as high as the human faculties, aided by all human learning, can go, but you find that, after all your efforts, your labour has been in vain. Your entire process was wrong. Sisyphus-like, you must toil upwards again at your hopeless task from the bottom.

. . . . αλλ' ὅτε μελλοι
 Λαθρον ὑπερβαλεσιν, τοτ' αποστρεψασκε κραταιίς,
 Αυτις επειτα πεδιονδε κυλινδετο λαῶας αναϊδης.

Thus does your whole system dissolve, at the touch of logic, like “the baseless fabric of a vision.” The frequent use made by Protestants of this fallacy of proving the same by the same, alone induces us to notice it. Their never-ending panegyrics of reason, their exaggerated ideas of its duties and privileges, and their pretensions to its cultivation and development, are inconsistent in the extreme, with the use even their most renowned champions have made of that faculty. Who could have expected to find them again detected in the use of so transparent a fallacy as the circulating syllogism—proving the book by the verses, and the verses by the book? Why do you believe the Bible to be inspired? Because these verses prove it. What proves the verses? They are in the Bible, which is inspired.

Protestants, who have an ominous dread of coming in contact with their first principles, are never wearied of repeating that, at least against Catholics, they can assume the Bible to be the

word of God. Catholics, they say, already know that the Scriptures are inspired, and do not require to have this truth proved, and ought not to call upon the Protestant for its proof. But we reply, you might very justly eschew, in this manner, the inconvenient proof, and escape from a closer view of your principles, if the Catholic were demanding from you proof to justify *his* belief. But the objection made to you is, that you cannot justify *your own*—that you can point out no rational ground of belief to those who do not yet admit the Scriptures, and first of all *to yourselves*. Our belief cannot be of the slightest service to you, so long as you deny the grounds upon which it rests. We know and confess that the Scriptures are the inspired word of God, because the Catholic Church teaches so. Is this, in your opinion, sufficient authority? If it be, then you must admit her to be the very “pillar and ground of truth.” If it be not, then again recurs the question, what can you substitute in her stead? We ask you not to prove the Bible *to us*. We need no proof from you, nor could we, as reasonable men, accept of such as you can offer. You call on us, however, to abandon the Catholic Church, telling us that she has erred, and to seek the true religion in the Bible. But if we leave our Church, tell us how we can have the Bible. Shall we take it upon the testimony of the Church you would have us reject? But, if the testimony of the Church is sufficient to establish the Scriptures, which you say contain all the doctrines of revelation, is her testimony to those doctrines themselves inadmissible? Is a greater authority required for the parts than suffices for the whole? If the Church’s testimony cannot be received upon the doctrines of revelation one by one, how can you accept, upon her evidence, the entire collection of those doctrines? Before, then, you can expect we shall abandon the Church, you must show how we shall be able, without her, to believe in the Bible. Tell us, then, how you have formed your own opinion that the Bible is the word of God, since you have risen up against her authority. How do you tranquillize your conscience? For it is manifest to us, with all the clearness of evidence, that your principles drive you inevitably to infidelity; that by them you cannot justify even belief in

the word of God, while divine faith is rendered simply impossible.

SECTION II.—THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE.

Hitherto we have been treating the subject of inspired writing generally. We have confined ourselves to the questions, whether, by the principles of the Westminster Confession, it can be proved that there are such writings? and whether, in any case, the inspiration of any writings can be consistently believed by Presbyterians? The title of this section brings the subject before us in another point of view, not less important than the former, nor less fatal to Presbyterianism. Let us suppose that Protestants could overcome the difficulties which meet them in the previous question—that, in fact, they had proved inspired writings to exist. The knowledge that there is a written revelation of God's will, is but the first preliminary step of the Protestant's progress towards the formation of his religion. As one of his first principles is, that the written word is to be the only source whence doctrine can be drawn, the only authority upon which faith can be grounded, he must learn what writings contain the revelation, so as to be certain that he neither excludes an inspired, nor adopts an uninspired book. The authentic collection of inspired books is called the Canon of Scripture. The inspiration of a book constitutes its right to a place in the canon; but it is the recognition and declaration, by competent authority, of its inspiration, that actually gives it the place to which its nature had entitled it. The written word has its internal sanction from the veracity of God, who cannot deceive, nor be deceived. Its external sanction is the authority upon which it is made known to be, and thus becomes to man, the word of God. It is self-evident that an inspired writing can be no ground for faith—is in fact not the word of God—to the man who does not believe, or does not know its inspiration. It is, therefore, also evident that the proof afforded even by an inspired writing cannot be stronger *to the individual*, than the evidences which he has for its inspiration.

The Westminster divines, after asserting that it had pleased

God "to commit his revelation wholly unto writing," proceed to name the books which they consider to be canonical. The rapidity with which they pass over this portion of the chapter on Scripture, is so great as to excite surprise and disappointment in those who have given but a cursory glance at the question of the canon. The canon of Scripture they summarily dispose of in two short sentences. The first is as follows: "Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these [here follows the list of books as found in the Bibles authorised by the English government], all which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life. The books commonly called Apocrypha not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings." The meagreness of this article, which carefully evades all those questions which have occurred and must daily occur among Protestants upon this, to them, all-important subject, renders it necessary for us to enter upon somewhat extended explanations, and to seek from other sources the Presbyterian opinions upon the canon of Scripture, which we had the right to expect, but have failed to find in any authoritative formulary of the Presbyterian bodies. Those explanations will not, we trust, be destitute of interest for many; and they will serve to throw light upon the probable causes of that unwonted brevity to which we have referred.

When our blessed Redeemer had engaged in the work of his public ministry, he appealed to his miracles in proof of his divine commission. "For the works themselves which I do, give testimony of me that the Father hath sent me." Disease the most loathsome and inveterate, fled at his word. The blind, the lame, the dumb, the maimed, the deaf, returned from him in the perfect possession of their organs and faculties. The rage of the tempest was stilled at his rebuke. The earth with its productions, the sea with its inhabitants, the grave itself gave testimony, before an astonished world, to the infallible truth of his teaching. The immediate object of this over-

whelming testimony is not only known by reasoning from the nature of the facts, it was proclaimed on Mount Tabor by the lips of the Eternal Father, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, *hear ye him.*" The nature of the truths announced by Jesus Christ required this testimony to his divine mission. They were such as could not be proved by any process of reasoning, nor by comparisons with anything that comes within the natural range of man's faculties. They were truths which reason by itself could not have acquired—upon which it could not lawfully have sat in judgment. They were supernatural. The only proof, therefore, upon which they could have been admitted, was the divine sanction in behalf of him who preached them. Without this divine sanction, manifested externally to men, unbelief would have been excusable. "If I had not done among them the works which no other man hath done, they would not have sin." The work he thus established was to be propagated and continued. After his ascension, we find his disciples claiming to have received authority from him, to teach in his name, as from one to whom had been given all power in heaven and on earth; as from one who, "though in the form of a man, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." The authority claimed was "to teach all things whatsoever he had commanded them." The object of their teaching was to bring all men who required a Saviour, to the knowledge and service of the Saviour. But as man will, till the end of time, stand in need of a Saviour, their commission must also last till the end of time. "Lo! I am with you all days, even till the consummation of the world." This command and promise they pleaded as their justification in the iniquitous courts of Judea, and in presence of the cruel magistrates of pagan Rome. In fulfilment of this commission, they offered their bodies to the tortures, to the lions, and to the flames. That the great work might suffer no interruption by the death of our Lord's immediate disciples, they, in the exercise of a power necessary for the preservation of the Christian body, appointed men to succeed themselves in the ministry. This power was necessarily supposed in the nature of the work intrusted to the apostles, and expressly contained in their

commission. "As my Father hath sent me, so do I send you." In the exercise of this power, we find Titus ordained by St. Paul for the island of Crete, and Timothy appointed bishop of Ephesus.

The miracles by which the authority of our Saviour was sanctioned to his contemporaries, and the divinely-guaranteed commission of the apostles, are facts agreed upon by all who bear the Christian name, about which there is neither doubt nor discrepancy of opinion. They afford the only and sufficient ground for divine faith, since they engage the veracity of God to the teaching of the apostles, while, at the same time, they render Christianity reasonable in the highest degree. For the works by which God has manifested his sanction are external, and may be made certainly known to all men, during all ages, by the usual motives of credibility. They are to be found, not only in the pages of the sacred writers, but also in those of the pagan historians, by whom we know of Cæsar Augustus, and of the glories and infancy of the Roman empire. They were acknowledged by the most deadly enemies of Christianity—Julius Celsus, Porphyrius. They are also recorded in the works of the Christian apologists, whose appeals to the pagans themselves, as the witnesses to many of the miracles and facts connected with the foundation of Christianity, were never met by a denial. The graves of the first martyrs have contributed their share to the already abundant proof, and it is still further confirmed by the monuments that still survive of primitive Christian art. The body of men to whose teaching God has pledged his truth, Catholics call **THE CHURCH**. And as that body is to be perpetuated till the end of time, they call it indefectible. Since, in fine, God has pledged himself to preserve its teaching pure and entire throughout all ages, they call it infallible.

It is acknowledged by all, that the religion of Christ was established and widely spread ere yet a Christian writing, sacred or profane, existed. The revelation of the new law was therefore established by oral teaching, propagated by oral teaching, and provision made for its perpetuation by the same means; and no document, no tradition, no indication of the

remotest kind is to be met with in any primitive writing, that the polity of the Christian Church was to undergo any change, much less such a change as would be involved in the adoption of a written rule of faith, interpreted by each individual for himself. From the middle of the first century to its close, various writings began to circulate in the Church, some of which were composed by the apostles, others by their immediate disciples. The object of a portion of these writings was to record the principal events of our Saviour's life, the establishment of the Church and her first conquests. Other portions were letters of instruction or comfort or congratulation. Some were addressed to the faithful of particular cities, some to the universal Church, and others to particular individuals. But, in the entire collection of those primitive writings, not one contains a complete statement of the doctrines of Christianity; not one proposes, as its object, to teach Christians what they are to believe. All suppose that their readers had been already taught. Many of those writings were at once admitted by the churches or individuals to whom they were addressed, as divinely inspired. The miracles of their writers were the divine vouchers for the claim to inspiration. As books of divine authority, they were read in the churches, and collections of them made; but, for many years, these were necessarily incomplete, and yet without the formal guarantee of the Church's sanction. The authority which such writings obtained, soon prompted men who already sought to introduce novelties among the believers, to compose gospels, epistles, &c., under the names of apostles and other really inspired writers, in order that they might the more effectually spread the power of their errors. Thus, by the middle of the second century, there were upwards of thirty gospels in circulation, and innumerable other writings, many of which were false and pernicious; others, undoubtedly genuine, and breathing the very spirit of the apostles, but yet not inspired; and, last of all, writings which were both genuine and inspired. Partizans were not wanting to claim inspiration for writings even of the first two classes. To all these must be added the sacred books of the Jews, some of which were held by that people as

canonical, while others, composed after the formation of the canon by Esdras, although looked upon as sacred by all, and by many held to be inspired, have never yet been declared canonical. The Church, under the guidance of her divine Preserver, separates those writings as circumstances demand, condemns the bad, and judges, among the good, on their claims to inspiration. She forms authoritatively and infallibly the canon of Scripture. To do this, she has only to know herself—what she has always held as inspired writings, and to be able outwardly to give true testimony to her consciousness. Thus it was that the churches of Africa (which had received the faith, and with it the Scriptures from Rome), in the councils of Hippo and Carthage, held respectively in the years 393 and 396, published the authentic catalogue of the books which they had received as inspired. This same catalogue is given by Pope Gelasius in a decree issued in the year 494, and again published by Pope Eugenius IV., and finally ratified without addition, alteration, or diminution, by the Council of Trent, in the year 1546. Those, on the other hand, who, at the Reformation, rejected the Church's authority, have placed themselves in a position which they can continue to occupy only by closing their minds against reason and facts. This we shall show in the proof of the following propositions:—

1. *The doctrines of the Westminster Confession render impossible the formation of the canon; and, therefore,*

2. *The adherents of the doctrines contained in that Confession cannot know, and in fact do not possess, the canon of Scripture.*

I. We have supposed, but by no means granted, that Protestants, without the aid of the Catholic Church, could prove that there exist inspired writings. The farther question now occurs: Can they identify those writings? They have made it a fundamental principle, that the collection of inspired books is the only rule of faith. As, however, they are considered to be the rule of faith solely because of their inspiration, the Protestant who does not *know* that they are inspired has no rule of faith; and, if there be any books or chapters in the collection of whose inspiration he is uncertain, those books or chapters can form no part of his rule. If, moreover, there be

any inspired writing which he has omitted from the collection, his rule is incomplete; while, if an uninspired composition be admitted, his rule will be uncertain, if not fallacious. Before, therefore, the Protestant can come into possession of his rule of faith, he must have proved—1°, the inspiration of every book, chapter, and verse of the Bible; 2°, that he possesses all the inspired writings which the Holy Spirit ever dictated; 3°, that he has excluded from his collection everything which is not the dictate of inspiration; and, 4°, that he possesses the books, in their integrity, as they came from the hands of the writers. That we have exaggerated in nothing the obligations of the Protestant before he can become possessed of his rule of faith, will be seen by the following extract:—“In order to establish the canon of Scripture, it is necessary to show that all the books of which it is composed are of divine authority; that they are entire and incorrupt; that, having them, it is complete without any addition from any other source; and that it comprises the whole of those books for which divine authority can be proved. It is obvious, that if any of these four particulars be not true, Scripture cannot be the rule and supreme standard of religious truth and duty.”¹ In forming the canon of Scripture, the Protestant cannot look upon the Bible as one book; he must regard it as a collection of writings, differing in date, origin, authorship, and topics. The proofs brought for one portion will, for the most part, have no reference to any other, and can have no effect on its claims. To form the canon, book by book must be examined, and the specific proofs which can be adduced in favour of each, can alone decide its right to a place in the canon. Thus the proof which the Protestant may be able to find for the gospel of St. Matthew, can have no influence in deciding on the inspiration of the Apocalypse. Nor can a proof of the inspiration of Scripture generally, demonstrate the canonicity of a particular writing.

In proof of our first proposition, we now say—By the Westminster Confession, divine authority cannot be alleged for any doctrine, unless it be “either expressly set down in

¹ Rev. W. L. Alexander in *Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*: Article, “Canon.”

Scripture, or may by good and necessary consequence be deduced from Scripture."¹ But the canon or list of inspired books is nowhere set down in Scripture, nor can it be deduced from Scripture. Therefore, by the teaching of the Westminster Confession, divine authority cannot be alleged for the canon of Scripture. The first member of this argument cannot be questioned by Presbyterians without ceasing to be Protestants. It is their own doctrine expressed in their own words. The second member resolves itself into two parts. The first is a fact which no one who has seen the Bible will question—there is no list of inspired writings set down in any book or books of Scripture. The next, that such a list cannot be deduced by good and necessary consequence from the Scriptures, we proceed to prove. The canonicity of a book cannot be deduced from writings which neither mention the book in question, quote from it, nor in any way make reference to it. But there are many books of the canon, such as Ruth and Canticles in the Old, and Epistle of St. James and record of St. Peter in the New Testament, which are neither mentioned, nor cited, nor referred to, either directly or indirectly, in any of the sacred writings. The inspiration and canonicity of such books cannot, therefore, be deduced from Scripture. We conclude, therefore, that the canon neither is set down in the sacred writings, nor can be deduced from them.

It will be seen, that in this argument we have given to Presbyterians every advantage which they have asked. The argument from Scripture for the inspiration of Scripture is at best a begging of the question, and would be still a mere fallacy even were the conclusion sought for contained in the premisses. But we have shown that the conclusion is not so contained. Presbyterians suppose the Scripture to be the sole rule of faith. We have shown that, if it be so, they must remain for ever destitute of a rule of faith. But, to go further still in our concessions—even if a list, complete and detailed, of the canonical books were contained in the Bible, the inspiration of the book in which it was contained must be certified ere its testimony could decide the matter. But as the obstacles

¹ *Confession of Faith*, chap. i. 6.

to the proof of inspiration which must be encountered by those who reject the Church's authority, are of the same nature in the case of one book as in that of all, it would be as impossible for the Protestant to prove the single book as to prove the entire collection. Yet this illogical reasoning is even yet resorted to by Protestants. The Rev. Dr. L. Woods,¹ in an attempt to prove, upon Protestant grounds, the inspiration of Scripture, confines himself exclusively to the proof from the book itself. As his reasoning is a fair summary of the common Protestant arguments on this subject, we shall give a short account of it. He introduces his subject thus:—"The more direct and conclusive evidence that the Scriptures were divinely inspired, is found in the testimony of the writers themselves." He then goes on—"The prophets generally professed to *speak* the word of God. In one way or other they gave clear proof that they were divinely commissioned, and *spoke* in the name of God." This is the sole proof he brings—"from the testimony of the writers themselves,"—for the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures. But it has not even the small merit of referring to the subject which was to be proved. The author had to establish, by the testimony of the writers themselves, that they were each and all under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in writing the books of the Old Testament. But his proof embraces only some individuals of one of the classes of sacred writers; and even of them, he shows not that they *wrote*, but that they *generally professed to speak* the word of the Lord. But the Old Testament embraces many books which contain no prophecies, whose writers were not prophets, and give no testimony of their inspiration, either as prophets or writers. The Professor's argument abandons them to their fate. "But," he proceeds, "the strongest and most satisfactory proof of the inspiration and divine authority of the Old Testament writings is found in the testimony of Christ and the apostles." Here it will be observed, that the Professor has, perhaps inadvertently, slipped from the line of argument which he professed to follow as "the more direct and conclusive." He had under-

¹ *Biblical Cyclopædia*: Article, "Inspiration."

taken to prove the inspiration of the Old Testament from the testimony of its authors; but he seems to have had some doubts as to the sufficiency of his "direct and conclusive method," and promptly avails himself of another proof, which he complacently styles "the strongest and most satisfactory." The first part of his new argument—"from the testimony of Christ"—we quote entire:—"Every one who carefully attends to the four gospels, will find that Christ everywhere spoke of that collection of writings called the Scripture as the word of God; that he regarded the whole in this light; that he treated the Scripture, and every part of it, as infallibly true, and clothed with divine authority." The Professor's argument is worthless. He has fallen into the usual Protestant blunder of assuming what he had undertaken to prove. He professes to prove, on inspired testimony, the canonicity of the Old Testament. If he adduce the passages of the New Testament as inspired, he has assumed their inspiration; if he urges them as uninspired, then they are not sufficient; nor do they correspond to his professions. But let us pass that over; for we cannot expect to find Protestantism and logic in the same argument. As to the matter of his proof, we remark—1°. Here again the testimony adduced bears upon a subject quite distinct from that for which proof was required. The texts referred to do not assert the *inspiration* of the Scriptures, nor of any part of them. Yet this was the true and sole purpose for which their testimony was sought; and anything short of a formal testimony to their inspiration, is simply beside the question. Divine guidance and infallibility, or exemption from error, are not equivalent to inspiration. Thus the Church is divinely guided, and she infallibly teaches truth, yet she claims not inspiration. 2°. Even if the terms in which our Saviour speaks of the Jewish Scriptures did imply their inspiration, his authority could avail the Protestant only for such books of Scripture as he is related by the Evangelists to have named. But if we except Isaias, Jeremias, and the Psalms, he is not related to have mentioned any book of Scripture by name. His references are general; such as "the Law," "Moses," "the Prophets," "the Scriptures." But to

know that "the Scripture" is inspired, or that "the Prophets" are inspired, is only a preliminary to the formation of the canon. The Protestant has not brought the authority of our Saviour for the canon, unless he produce His testimony that Genesis is inspired, that Canticles, Proverbs, Ruth, &c., in a word, that each book composing the canon is fully and separately inspired. Moreover, the Professor can know what books are meant by "the Prophets," "the Law," &c., only by having recourse to the Jewish¹ and Catholic tradition—sources not only supplementary to that from which he professes exclusively to draw, but formally rejected by his first principle as a Protestant. Besides, there are many books of the Old Testament which our Saviour neither quotes nor alludes to. Were the Professor's argument valid, they must be rejected from the canon. Thus, even did the language of our Saviour imply the inspiration of the writings, Professor Woods could not attach the predicate of inspiration to any book in particular upon any other authority than tradition. Even, therefore, with the help of a forced and incorrect interpretation, he fails to show, from our Saviour's testimony, the inspiration of the books he holds to be canonical. From the words of our Saviour, therefore, recorded in the four Evangelists, the Protestant cannot prove the inspiration of the Old Testament; much less can he learn what are the books of which it is composed.

The second part of the Doctor's proof is from the testimony of the apostles. He commences with the text from 2 Tim. : "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." In addition to the remarks we have already made on this passage, we shall here only add, that even when Protestants have given to the apostle's words the interpretation for which they contend, they have not advanced a single step in the actual formation of the canon. As St. Paul does not name the books or parts of books which compose inspired Scripture, Protestants can allege no authority of his for assert-

¹ The Jewish tradition we shall afterwards show not to be uniform on this question.

ing the inspiration of any specific book. But, as the canon of Scripture is the catalogue of books whose inspiration has been authentically declared, it is evident that the passage in question does not enable the Protestant to determine a single book of the canon. The inconclusiveness of the rest of the reasoning can be fully seen only by perusing the entire argument.

“The other text (2 Peter i. 21) teaches that ‘prophecy came not by the will of man, but holy men of God *spake* as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.’ This passage, which the Apostle Peter applied particularly to the subject of which he was speaking, may be considered as explanatory of what is intended by inspiration. For, to say that all Scripture is divinely inspired, and that men of God *wrote* it as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, is one and the same thing. The various texts in which Christ and the apostles speak of Scripture *as the word of God*, and as invested with authority to decide all questions of truth and duty, fully correspond with the texts above considered.”

The dexterous manipulation of the sacred text which this argument displays, must at once attract attention, even on the part of Protestants, accustomed, as they are, to see it wrested and twisted to suit the notions of every private expounder. An argument like the above, coming, as it does, from the pen of a scholar, a divine, and professor of theology, displays, in but too clear a light, the corrupting influence which Protestantism exercises upon intellect and conscience, as well as upon truth. The substitution of the word “wrote” for “spake” is so obvious and so unjustifiable, that the most negligent reader could not fail to mark and condemn it. It is almost superfluous to notice, that from St. Peter’s declaration that the *prophets* “*spake* as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” the Professor is not warranted in drawing the conclusion, *all* the authors of the Old Testament *wrote* their various books under the like inspiration. The concluding sentence is of a somewhat similar nature. It is a confident, but groundless assumption. Neither the Old Testament as a whole, nor any book of it in particular, is anywhere, by our Saviour or the

apostles, called "the word of God." How a Christian can assert that the Old Testament is "invested with authority to decide all questions of truth," we cannot well comprehend; and we suspect that Protestants who make such frequent appeals to the New Testament in their controversies, will demur to this assertion of all-sufficiency for the Old. If the Professor really believed his own proposition, he was beyond measure inconsistent in striving to decide this question of inspiration by the writings of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Having concluded, in this remarkable manner, his argument for the Old Testament, the Professor proceeds to demonstrate the inspiration of the New. He advances three arguments: 1°. "Jesus Christ gave a commission to his apostles to act in his stead, and to carry out the work of instruction which he had begun. . . . But how could such a commission have answered the end proposed, had not the Divine Spirit so guided the apostles as to render them infallible and perfect teachers of divine truth?" This argument proves admirably the *infallibility* of the apostles, and, therefore, of the Church. But it does not prove that their teaching, and still less does it prove their *writings* were *inspired*. The Professor is evidently prepared to admit not only the infallibility of the apostles, but also of their successors in the office of teaching. For St. Mark and St. Luke were not apostles, and to them, personally, the commission was not addressed. Thus, if the terms infallibility and inspiration be considered as different and independent, the Professor fails to prove the inspiration of the New Testament. If they be taken as identical, then, also, he fails to prove the inspiration of the books in question; but does succeed in proving, against himself, that the Church in her teaching is infallible. 2°. "Jesus expressly promises to give them the Holy Spirit, to abide with them continually, and to guide them into all truth. . . . If these promises were fulfilled, as they certainly were, then the apostles had the constant assistance of the Holy Spirit, and whether engaged in speaking *or writing*, were under divine guidance, and, of course, were liable to no mistakes, either as to the matter or manner of their instructions." This argument confirms the infallibility of the Church's teachers,

which was established by the last; but it falls much short of proving the inspiration of their writings. The promises guaranteed the assistance of the Holy Spirit to the apostles and their successors in the fulfilment of their commission. But the commission they received *was not to write*, but to *preach*. Scripture nowhere records that our Saviour gave a commission to write. From the commission, therefore, received by the apostles, the inspiration of their writings cannot be deduced.

3°. The third argument is liable to the same objections as the former:—"The writers of the New Testament manifestly considered themselves to be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and their instructions, whether oral or written, to be clothed with divine authority, as the word of God. 'We *speak*,' they say, 'as of God.' 'Which things we *speak*, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in words which the Holy Ghost teacheth.' They declared what they *taught* to be the word of God, and the things which they wrote to be the commandments of God." All is simply beside the question. The inquiry is, whether the writers were inspired, not whether "the things which they wrote were the commandments of God." Even Professor Woods might write "things which are the commandments of God," but his book would not necessarily be inspired. Anyhow, many of the writers make no such statements; and it is evidently inconclusive to argue, that, because St. Paul claims to deliver in his writings commandments of God, therefore the Epistles of St. Jude or St. James, who do not put forward such a claim, are inspired. Such, according to this Professor of theology, is the strongest and most satisfactory proof of the inspiration of the Bible which Protestantism can furnish. It contains, from beginning to end, an assumption of the point to be proved; the passages on which it rests, do not even refer to the matter in question; and, although they did, they would not enable the Protestant to form the canon, as they furnish no list of the books of Scripture.

If this argument, so much resorted to by Protestants, and sanctioned by the Westminster Confession, were only conclusive and illogical, it might here be left. But it destroys, if

legitimately carried out, the integrity of the canon it is brought to establish. For, if the testimony of the Scriptures themselves be the proper proof of inspiration in favour of a book, then such books as have not this testimony, would not merely be without sufficient proof of canonicity, but authoritatively excluded from the canon. Such has, in fact, been to a certain extent the case: for all Protestants are not alike inconsistent. Some of the Swiss, and many of the German Protestants, reject various books from their canon, which the Westminster Confession holds to be inspired. The contemplation of the disastrous consequences of this "internal evidence," rather than its intrinsic unsoundness, has made many timorous Protestants shrink back, and, in spite of their Protestantism, throw themselves, as their only resource, upon Catholic tradition and Church authority. Thus, another writer in the *Biblical Cyclopædia*, already quoted, says,—“As for the internal evidence, one needs only to look at the havoc which Semler and his school have made of the canon, to be satisfied that where dogmatical considerations are allowed to determine exclusively such questions, each man will extend or extenuate the canon, so as to adjust it to the Procrustean couch of his own preconceived notions.”¹ Would Strauss have denied the canonicity of the four gospels, had he found it asserted in any book he believed to have divine authority? If Luther had seen the Epistle of St. James declared to be inspired in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, would he have expunged it from the number of canonical books? Or, would Calvin have refused to admit the canonicity of the Second Epistle of St. Peter, if he had found it named in any of the four gospels? It is then impossible, from the Bible itself, to form the canon of Scripture. But the Confession of Faith teaches, 1°, that there can be no divine authority for any doctrine, unless expressly set down in Scripture, or, by good and necessary consequence, may be deduced from Scripture; and, 2°, that the canon of inspired writings cannot be formed, save by divine authority. Our conclusion is, therefore, evident, “that

¹ Rev. W. L. Alexander, author of *Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments*: Article, “Canon.”

“the doctrine of the Westminster Confession renders the formation of the Scripture canon impossible.”

II. The second proposition which we undertook to prove, is an evident corollary of the first. The canon of Scripture cannot be known by men who adhere to doctrines which, as has been demonstrated, render the formation of the canon impossible. In this second part, our chief object shall be to examine the question of fact. Is it not possible for Presbyterians, if not by means of their principles, then in violation of them, to discover the canon of Scripture? Do they not, in fact, possess it? And, if they do, then have they not their rule of faith, although they may, indeed, hold it on illogical or insufficient authority? To this we answer, that even did Protestants possess the entire canon, if they hold it upon any other than divine authority, they cannot make it a rule of faith; for faith is essentially grounded on the authority of God. But an illogical or insufficient authority cannot be the authority of God; so that, if they hold the canon illogically, they have no rule of faith.

But as to the question of fact, we assert that Protestants, while rejecting the authority of the Catholic Church, cannot know what are the canonical books. Besides the methods already noticed, there remains only one by which Protestants can seek to learn the canon—Tradition. However inconsistent it may be with their principles to have recourse to this means, learned Protestants are not wanting who assert, that by it alone can they hope to know what books form the canon of Scripture; and that, in reality, tradition, backed by the authority of the ministers, is the only ground upon which the people hold the Scriptures to be the word of God. Thus, Richard Baxter (*Saint's Rest*, p. 2):—“Few Christians among us, for aught I find, have any better than the Popish implicit faith in this point, nor any better arguments than the Papists have to prove the Scripture to be the word of God. They have received it by tradition. Godly ministers and Christians tell them so; it is impious to doubt of it; therefore, they believe it. . . . Papists believe Scripture to be the word of God, because their Church saith so; and we, because our Church

or our leaders say so." As, however, the researches which must be undertaken in a personal examination into the belief of antiquity, require a thorough knowledge of several languages which are no longer spoken, and a certain familiarity with the principles of criticism, and cannot be conducted without access to patristic libraries, and a leisure which few can command, the bulk of men—the people—are absolutely precluded from entering upon them. With the people, then, it is no question of choice. If they are to believe the first article of the Protestant creed—the sole source of all their doctrine—they must believe it on the word of other men. The inquiry into the genuineness, authenticity, integrity, and canonicity of the Scripture, they must abandon to men of leisure and learning; and, upon the results of *their* studies, found their faith. So self-contradictory is Protestantism! If the people had but *thought*, the Reformation could not have taken place; if they would but think now—did they but *act* for one day on their principle of private judgment, Protestantism would not survive till the morrow. They threw off the infallible authority of the Church, only to cast themselves, bound hand and foot, on the mercy of fallible men, who not only made up for them the creeds they must believe, but mocked them, by assuring them of their entire freedom and independence, and of their unquestionable right and ability to judge all things, to decide all things for themselves. The existence of a ministry is a scathing sarcasm on the intellect of Protestants. After three hundred years of warfare against Church authority on the part of the people; after three hundred years of flattery and falsehood on the part of their ministers; persuading their simple and confiding followers that they could judge for themselves, and that it was intolerable tyranny on the part of the Catholic Church to pretend to dictate in matters of faith; and that "no other party, whether civil or ecclesiastical, can come between Christ and his disciple,"¹—the true state of the case begins to be acknowledged. Let Protestants learn, at last, to recognise the real grounds of their belief, and cease to stun

¹ Catechism of the Principles of the Free Church of Scotland. Q. 18.

the world with the encomiums of Private Judgment, which common sense pronounces to be *vox et præterea nil*. Let them cease to look upon "the right of individual examination" in any other light, than as a party watch-word, a useful war-cry, or a bait for human pride. The following passage, from an article by the Rev. W. Wright, of Trinity College, Dublin, should give matter for serious and profitable meditation to Protestants:—"Mr. Jones conceives that testimony and tradition are the principal means of ascertaining whether a book be canonical or apocryphal. Inquiries of this kind, however, *must, of necessity, be confined to the few*. The mass of Christians who have neither time nor other means of satisfying themselves, *must confide*, in questions of this kind, either in the judgment of the learned, *or the testimony, at least, if not the authority of the Church.*"¹ It is, certainly, no slight consolation to find even a solitary truth thus, at last, resuscitated and confronted with the Protestant body, the very breath of whose nostrils was drawn from its supposed death; a body which never wearies of treading on its grave, and assuring itself and the world that its resurrection can now be believed in by none;—it is consoling to find that many are so drawn towards the religion of Jesus Christ, as to show themselves in palpable contradiction with themselves, rather than quit their hold of his revelation. But what becomes of their Protestantism? They ought, indeed, to believe the gospel—they ought to believe the Scriptures—for our good God has given them to be believed, and has given such grounds of belief as to make unbelief inexcusable. But let them cease to believe unreasonably. Let them cease to believe in a principle which destroys the credibility of Scripture, while they profess belief in the Scripture itself. Let them cease, therefore, to be Protestants.

Yet, when the Protestant has resolved to rest his faith upon the learning and honesty of another man, to whom shall he apply? Such has always been the diversity of opinion among learned Protestants, that they have not yet been able to fix upon a common list of the books which they are disposed to

¹ Article "Apocrypha," in Kitto's *Biblical Cyclopedia*.

consider inspired. The canon of Luther¹ was adhered to by a part only of his own followers. That of Calvin,² and the continental Calvinists, differed from the canon of Luther, as well as from that adopted by the Westminster Confession. Among the leading men of modern Protestantism, the differences of opinion are still more sweeping and numerous. Strauss and Bauer look upon the four gospels as only a collection of ecclesiastical anecdotes, neither authentic nor inspired; and, indeed, throughout Germany, various schools of Protestant divines have been formed, each of which lops off books or portions of books from the canon, until, at length, they have left the world in doubt whether they admit a canon at all; and if they do, whether they do not regard it in the light of a pure myth. Several portions of books are, by many Protestants, called spurious, which are considered by others as only doubtful. Thus Protestant critics, both English and foreign, deny the authenticity of the famous verses of 1 John, ch. v.; many also refuse to admit the concluding chapter of St. Mark's gospel. In fine, there is scarcely a book or portion of a book on whose canonicity Protestant scholars are agreed. And to whom shall the distracted inquirer, on his introduction to this learned Babel, adhere? All the great Protestant critics have had access to the same documents; all may be supposed capable of accomplishing whatever is within the

¹ "There are various and abundant reasons why I regard this book (the Apocalypse or Revelation of St. John) as neither apostolical nor prophetic. . . . It seems to me far too arrogant for the author to enjoin it upon his readers to regard this, his own work, as of more importance than any other sacred work. . . . My spirit cannot adapt itself to the production, and this is reason enough for me, why I should not esteem it very highly."—Luther's Works, as cited in Kitto's Cyclopædia, art. "Revelation." Of the Epistle of St. James, Luther says, "This Epistle, in comparison with the writings of John, Paul, and Peter, is a right strawy epistle, being destitute of an evangelical character. . . . I do not hold it to be the writing of an apostle, and these are my reasons: first, it directly opposes St. Paul and other Scriptures *in ascribing justification to works*," &c.—*Id.* art. "James." This is the fruit of private judgment—to deny the Scripture rather than sacrifice an opinion which it opposes.

² Calvin, speaking of the Second Epistle of St. Peter, writes, "If it is to be received as canonical. Peter must have been its author;" but, he observes, "notwithstanding some affinity in style, the discrepancies between it and the former (1st of St. Peter), are such as to indicate that they had not the same author."—*Comment. in Epist. Catt.*

range of human abilities; all are to be judged to have been actuated by the same high motives in seeking the true canon of Scripture. On what ground, then, is an ignorant man to give a preference to one over the others? How shall he have greater confidence in Calvin than in Luther? Or on what grounds prefer the Westminster divines to Calvin, Strauss, or Parker? The Westminster divines avow their inability to form the canon, for they acknowledge no such power in any man or church. On what authority, then, do they give a list of books, and declare them canonical? Who passed the canon for them? The list they give (that of the English Protestant Bible) does not correspond with any one list of sacred books, of ancient or modern times. It differs from the lists of the first Reformers. It differs from the canon of the Catholic Church. In a word, it has not the sanction of any man or body, church or council, since the days of the apostles. The Presbyterian has no sanction to adduce for his canon, save the fact of its being in the Confession of Faith—a weak guarantee, in truth, since it is expressly said by the Confession itself to be of no value. Nor let it be for a moment imagined that Presbyterians have, after examination, *agreed* upon their list. There may, perhaps, be uniformity among them; but let subscription to the Confession of Faith be abolished, or even let biblical studies be prosecuted freely and logically by the Presbyterians of Scotland, *on Protestant principles*, and the unvarying result will infallibly take place—the word of God will be unblushingly pushed aside as an antiquated fable.

It is, then, a fact that Protestants have been hitherto unable, on any principle they have adopted, to know the canon of Scripture. But if they have not been able, in the course of three hundred years, to accomplish this necessary, and to them primarily necessary object, could a more incontestable proof be required to show that their principles are false, and that their method is wrong? The rule of faith given by Jesus Christ must have been attainable at all times by all men, because meant for all ages and all classes—the poor and ignorant, as well as the rich and the learned. The Protestant rule is admitted to be unattainable by “the mass of Christians,” and

the fact demonstrates that "the few" have not yet succeeded in their attempts to find it. But if the Scriptures be a rule of faith—as indeed they are—much more, if they were the sole rule, as Protestants assert, their canonicity could remain unknown and unproved only to such as seek the proof on false principles; for it cannot be supposed that Christ established a rule of impossible or even difficult attainment. As, however, those who proceed on false principles cannot obtain the proof, Protestants, by the fact of their failure to establish the canon, prove that they cannot establish it.

Disappointment was the only result to have been expected from a search into tradition by those who start without the Church as their guide. Declarations of the canonical books, like definitions of faith, were published only as occasion called them forth. Hence, for several centuries, particular writers, and even particular churches, possessed only portions of the canon; or, while they might have been in possession of all the books, were yet without the published guarantee of the Church for the canonicity of all. Thus we find the canonicity of some books spoken of as doubtful by early Christian writers, that of others denied; and, in fine, some few looked upon as inspired which the Church never admitted into the canon. This state of things gradually disappeared, however, as the decrees of Pope Gelasius and of the African councils became known. It is evident, however, that in not a few of the earliest fathers, we can only look for the partial tradition of the churches with which they were best acquainted. The different parts of the New Testament were sent at first to particular individuals, as Philemon and the Elect Lady, or to particular churches, as those of Cyprus and Corinth. In this manner portions of the apostolic writings could not have become generally known for many years. Those who came to know of them afterwards, by copies or report, required, where they considered the proof of authenticity deficient, to await the decision of the Universal Church, before they could unhesitatingly admit them as canonical. It was, then, by the junction of partial traditions, that the entire canon could be formed; and those who now seek in isolated writers for the canon, will, in some cases,

find only the books known as canonical at the time by the nearest churches. Hence, the tradition of the Universal Church can alone suffice. To this, as expressed without variation at Hippo, Carthage, Rome, and Trent, the partial traditions of individuals must be referred. In reference to it they are invaluable; but their words, if not judged with reference to the position which the authors occupied in the Church, by the age in which they lived, and, above all, by the fact that they are each consigning to posterity his own contribution to a great whole, of which the Church is the depository and the guardian, can lead only to confusion and error.

Nor, if taken by itself, is the tradition of the Jews regarding the Old Testament so clear or so decisive as most Protestants have been led to imagine. Here, too, an inquirer needs the Church to shed her light upon his labours. The tradition of the Jews, confirmed by the Church, assures us that Esdras formed the canon after the rebuilding of the temple. But they have no tradition that it was then finally closed. On the contrary, the writings called Deutero-canonical (as having been placed in the canon at a later period), which the Confession of Faith has, without much reflection, denominated Apocrypha, were looked upon by all Jews as sacred and authoritative. As such they were read in the synagogues. They were not, however, admitted to be canonical Scripture by that part of the people which made use of the Hebrew text. But until many years after the commencement of the Christian era, the great majority of the Jews held these books to be divine, and made use of the Greek version of the Seventy, in which they were contained. It must be allowed to add much weight to this belief of the majority, that our Saviour and the apostles, in their quotations from the Old Testament, make use of this version. For, when they speak of the Scripture, they point out no difference in the authority of its different books; and, as the version they quoted from contained the Deutero-canonical, as well as the Proto-canonical books, and as the former were held to be divine Scripture by those who made use of that version, there is at least a strong presumption afforded in favour of their canonicity. Anyhow, the private

inquirer must find himself nearly helpless when he sees the people from whom he seeks information divided among themselves.

Meanwhile, what is the state of the individual during the inquiry? Protestantism tells its adherents that they are to take no article of their creed on the word of any man—that each must examine for himself, and satisfy himself as to the divine truth of every dogma he is to believe. Until, then, he has satisfied himself, by personal examination of the canonicity of the sacred books, he cannot believe in the Bible; and, as his starting-point is the principle that Christian truth is to be found exclusively in the Bible, belief in any of the truths of Christianity is, at least during the examination, equally impossible. Now, as all children, “the mass of Christians,” and even “the few,” until they finish their inquiry, are in this state, they are precluded, by Protestantism, from belief in any article of the Christian revelation. Such are the necessary consequences of Protestantism. It is in contradiction with revelation, not less than with itself.

Let not, however, the Protestant suppose that the case is hopeless. It is so *only to him*; and even to him it will cease to be so, whenever he shall cease to take for granted the omnipotence of private judgment. Let him look around, and he will see a body of Christians who profess to hold the canon of Scripture on an infallible authority. He will see in that community the same authority equally available to all. The child, the poor, the ignorant, receive the same divine assurance for every inspired book as is given to the man of lofty station or high attainments. Protestants are aware that it was from this same body—the Catholic Church—they themselves received the sacred books. Surely, then, they must see that, on throwing off her authority, they could not reasonably have retained the Scriptures which they first received from her hands. Her authority to establish the canon, as the only means left untried by the Protestant, should, at last, attract his notice. Let him give her claims a hearing. True, he has hitherto considered the Catholic Church as simply out of the question; not, indeed, that he has himself found her wanting,

but that he regards her as a body whose claims do not admit even of being taken into consideration. Let him, however, be thus far consistent with his present principles. *Let him judge her claims for himself.* Let him take up her belief *as she herself defines it*, not as it is distorted and mutilated in the writings of interested adversaries. Let him weigh her reasons as they are in her own writers, not as they are retailed, clipped up and adulterated, by those whose object is to read for the people, to judge for them, and to save them from the fatal temptation of exercising what they, with such withering irony, call the right and duty of private judgment.

To sum up this argument. All are agreed that an infallible authority alone can either establish, or give to men a sufficient guarantee, of the divine inspiration of the canonical books. But there is no man, nor body of men, on earth, that even claims an infallible authority, save the Roman Catholic Church. She alone, therefore, can establish or guarantee the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. This argument must be held valid by all who believe that the canon *can be established*; and that it can be established, must be admitted by all who believe the divine mission of Jesus Christ, or the historical truth of the four gospels. Protestants, therefore, who believe both His divine mission and the credibility of the gospels, must admit, 1°, That the inspiration of the canonical books can be established only by the authority of the Roman Catholic Church; as consequences of this, 2°, That those who reject her authority, can neither fix the canon nor know the canonical books; 3°, That, therefore, Protestants do not, in fact, profess the canon, since they have it not as fixed by the Church;¹ and, 4°, That as the Roman Catholic Church alone can form the canon, she is infallible.

¹ Although the object of this work is to show the untenable and self-contradictory nature of Protestantism, and not directly to prove the truth of Catholicity—and, therefore, a formal defence of the canon would perhaps be out of place—it may not, however, be considered ill-timed to give in this note a short view of such objections as Protestants make to the canonicity of those books of Scripture which they have rejected. We give those objections in the words of the Rev. J. Begg, D.D., of Edinburgh, because he is the latest Protestant writer we have found who treats of this subject; and may thus be supposed to bring forward all that Protestantism is

SECTION III.—THE OBJECT OF SCRIPTURE.

This section leads us from those difficulties, which are but of a preliminary character, to such as are immediately connected with the nature and working of the Protestant's sup-

able to object to the inspiration of the Deutero-canonical books; and because the title attached to his name is a guarantee that his biblical learning and controversial powers are considered to be of a high standard in the body to which he belongs. His performance thus becomes of some interest, as it may be considered a fair index of the state of theological, biblical, and logical science among the Presbyterians of Scotland. We give his objections consecutively, and without abridgment, numbering each, that all may be distinctly met without interrupting his argument.

1°. "It is certain that not one of them (the Deutero-canonical books) is extant in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament. 2°. Jerome, in the fourth century, gives the list of Hebrew inspired books precisely as we have it. 3°. Not one apocryphal writer, in direct terms, claims to be inspired. 4°. Their works were never received by the Jews as part of the Old Testament. 5°. They are never quoted by our Lord or his apostles. 6°. The early fathers do not quote them as being on a level with canonical Scripture. 7°. The Popish Church seems to have had a special object in attempting to thrust them unwarrantably into the inspired canon, inasmuch as they countenance prayers for the dead and salvation by works. This, however, is plainly an internal evidence of their forming no part of the word of God. 8°. And Rome has never been able to give any satisfactory proof of their inspiration beyond her bare word, which is of no value in the face of such undoubted facts as we have just stated."

We answer, 1°. That no book was inspired unless written in the Hebrew language is not a self-evident proposition; and those who believe that God could have inspired a Greek, or Syro-Chaldaic writer, will naturally remind the objector that he has fallen into the usual Protestant fallacy of begging the question, when he limits the original text of the Old Testament to the Hebrew. But the doctor, who seems, from the style of his objections, to have fallen, by some untoward accident, from the clouds into the field of biblical criticism—he looks so strangely, and expresses with such simplicity his rare notions of the curiosities among which he finds himself—perhaps means to admit that the books were at one time inspired, and had been originally written in Hebrew, but had unfortunately lost their inspiration as soon as they ceased to be extant in their original tongue. His words will fairly bear this interpretation. But in this case the objection is too sweeping; for the original Syro-Chaldaic of St. Matthew's gospel is no longer extant; and the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apocalypse, and some other books of the New Testament, are supposed by many Protestant critics to have been originally written in Hebrew or Syro-Chaldaic; and these critics maintain that the Greek text we possess of those books is, at all events, only a translation. Does Dr. Begg suppose that the inspiration of those books ceased to be a fact from the time that the originals disappeared? 2°. This assertion, although containing truth, has, by suppressing part of the truth, all the effect of a misstatement. St. Jerome gives, indeed, the list of canonical books as acknowledged by all Jews, and this list not only corresponds with the Old Testament books in the Protestant Bible, but, strange as this will sound to the doctor,

posed rule of faith. From the foregoing pages, it will not be difficult to infer that we are not likely to admit the competence of Protestants to discuss the question—Is the Bible the sole rule of faith? We have shown that, on their own principles,

“is precisely such as” the Catholic Church retains it. But neither St. Jerome nor the Catholic Church held those to be *the only inspired books* of the Old Testament. It did not enter into the saint’s design to translate all the writings which the Jews held sacred; his list, therefore, contains only those which had been declared canonical by Esdras. In the Appendix (A) the reader will find sufficient evidence that St. Jerome’s sentiments, as to the inspired books, were by no means such as a Protestant would gather from the statement of Dr. Begg. 3°. Even if the Deutero-canonical writers did not, in direct terms, claim inspiration, this would not afford the slightest presumption against their inspiration. This objection is founded on a total misconception of the nature of the proof by which alone inspiration can be established. The proof of inspiration is to be found, not in the claim of the writer, but in the *sanction of God to the claim* of the writer, where made; or directly to the fact itself of inspiration. We have seen already, however, that in the whole Bible no single writer claims, “in direct terms,” or indeed in any terms at all, inspiration for the book he writes. The learned doctor is truly unfortunate in the choice of his arguments. Some of his brethren, who may perchance be gifted with a clearer view on those matters, might charitably remind our friend that he is too strong a reasoner—he proves too much—he has acquired an unfortunate habit of striking at random, and thus doing more damage to himself and his friends than to his opponents. He ought quietly to expunge this third objection from his book, since its validity would *uninspire* every page of the Bible. 4°. This is but a variation of the second objection. We would here remind the reader that the Hellenistic Jews did believe in the inspiration of the Deutero-canonical books, and ranked them among the inspired writings, although they had not been authoritatively declared canonical. It does occur to us as something anomalous, that a Christian writer should thus insinuate that the authority of the Jews is necessary to fix the canon of Scripture. The Christian church has specially received the divine sanction for every book of Scripture. If the Jews are to be the Protestant’s authority in fixing the canon, what will become of the New Testament? The doctor is evidently handling tools of whose power and use he is totally ignorant. We would respectfully remind him of the trite but sensible adage, “*Ne sutor ultra crepidam.*” 5°. If the Deutero-canonical books are not quoted by our Lord, they will be only in the same position as Judges, Ruth, 1st and 4th Kings, 1st and 2d Paralipomenon, Esdras, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, Abdias, and Sophonius. They are, however, frequently referred to in all parts of the New Testament. Compare Matt. vii. 14, with Tobias iv. 16; Hebrews i. 3, with Wisdom vii. 26; Romans xii. 15, with Ecclesiasticus vii. 38; 1 Corinth. x. 9, 10, with Judith viii. 25; 1 Thessal. v. 17, with Ecclesiasticus xviii. 22; Luke xii. 19, with Ecclesiasticus xi. 19. These are but a few of the references that a careful reader will find. Certainly, on reading the doctor’s objections, one is tempted to ask, has this divine lent his services to some anti-Bible society? He seems incurably bent upon urging objections which, if they had any force, would simply show that there was no inspired Scripture. 6°. This objection could be made only by one

they can neither know what books compose the Bible, nor that the Bible is the word of God. Further discussion seems to be superfluous. Yet, to show that Protestantism is on every side indefensible, and that the Protestant is,

whose acquaintance with the "early fathers" is confined to something less than the knowledge of their names. We do not content ourselves with giving it the most emphatic contradiction, but refer the reader to a few passages (Appendix B) out of hundreds that might be collected from the fathers of the first five centuries. It is a pleasure to find our friend at last abandoning his suicidal arguments. This objection supposes only ignorance of facts, and a certain unscrupulous readiness of assertion—blemishes of a venial nature in an argument against Popery. They will not call down such severe censure as his use of arguments fatal to the entire Bible, and his ignorance of the meaning and effect of his own words. 7°. The "object" of the Church, and her grounds for declaring the books in question canonical, may be learned from Pallavicini's History of the Council of Trent, and the deliberations of the theologians, whose duty it was to examine all the objections which human learning and ingenuity could urge against their canonicity. The supposition of an unworthy object is as calumnious as it is gratuitous; and certainly would not have been ventured by one who had ever read a moderate abridgment of church history. Although, however, we cannot allow this doctor, who knows as much about the Catholic religion as he does about the parents of Melchisedech, to teach us the "objects" of our Church, we do not object to his testimony as to those of his own. It may be that the Presbyterian body has found in J. Begg, D.D., an honest and competent exponent of her "objects." The learned gentleman, speaking apparently in the spirit of his Church, avows and adopts the principle on which Luther rejected the Epistle of St. James and the Apocalypse, and the Rationalists reject the entire gospel. Those books did not accord with the opinions which Luther and the Rationalists had formed, the one on the subject of good works, and the others on the questions of miracles and mysteries. This was to them "plainly an internal evidence of their forming no part of the word of God." With such respectable authorities, then, the doctor makes his preconceived opinions the avowed standard of Scripture; although Protestants profess to consider Scripture the standard of their opinions. 8°. A sufficient reply to this objection will be found in the text. The Church of Rome proves her divine commission, and her continued support and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Such as refuse to admit the inspiration of Scripture on her word, thus guaranteed, may abandon the hope of ever reaching this truth. The "undoubted facts" spoken of may now be estimated at their proper value; and the condition of theological studies among the Presbyterians of Scotland pretty accurately determined. The work we have been citing is entitled "A Handbook of Popery." Since we have named this book, we cannot refrain from expressing our reprobation, as Christians and members of society, of the manner in which it conducts the controversy. We do not allude so much to the bad reasoning it contains, or the pitiable ignorance it displays on every biblical and theological subject, as to the calumnies against the persons and doctrines of Catholics, and the obscene tales which it has collected from American and European newspapers, and from the pages of unprincipled and licentious travellers or apostates. That the book is not a regular

even on the ground he has usurped, and from which he can with such ease be removed, altogether unable to reach divine faith, we shall suppose that he has been able to identify the books of Scripture, and has got possession of the canon in its integrity. When these concessions have been made, are his difficulties at an end? Has Jesus Christ appointed the written word to be the sole rule of faith? And does He require every individual to interpret it for himself? We propose now to examine the teaching of the Westminster Confession on these points.

The leaders of the Scotch Reformation, following the example of their brethren abroad, commenced by asserting or assuming that it was the right and duty of every man to seek his religion for himself in the Scriptures. The individual was declared to have been invested by the Almighty with full authority to bring the Church to the bar of Scripture, to sit in judgment on her, and to reject her, if found not to accord with his ideas of Scripture truth. This doctrine, however, although very serviceable in the destruction of the old, proved to be by no means so auxiliary in the formation of a new religion. No sooner, then, had the people been forced or duped into the abandonment of Catholicity, than they were called upon by the Reformers virtually to sacrifice their lately-acquired right of private judgment, by submitting themselves to the obedience of the Lutheran, Calvinistic, or Scotch Church, as the case might be. Even those whose ideas of a church are the most removed from dogmatism, men who would explain away or reject spiritual power as far as it can be done, without an absolute denial of all authority on religious matters, must admit that no number of individuals, how concordant soever they may be in their opinions, form a church by the sole fact of their uniformity. An outward bond of some sort is required.

treatise on any subject, we have no right to complain; nor do we find much fault with it because it is but a farrago of seraps from anonymous letters, books, pamphlets, newspapers, &c., strung together by the drawling reflections and sapient platitudes, which were to have been expected from the author of the reasonings and "facts" we have been examining. But, against books of religious controversy being made cesspools for the very sediments of newspaper obscenity and anonymous slander, we think that society as well as religion has the right to protest.

A church essentially supposes a certain organization. It must be a corporation, with power at least to declare its own belief, and the conditions on which its communion can be obtained. These conditions are the boundaries within which only the free action of the members is permitted by the body. As a church exists in order to teach and perpetuate certain doctrines, both speculative and practical, her conditions of communion necessarily affect both the intellect and the will. The intellect operates by judging. It is impossible, therefore, for any one to be a member of any body which claims to be a church, without consenting to a certain limitation in the exercise of his judgment. Where there is limitation of a right, there the right ceases. There is no right, there can only be transgression beyond the limits marked. The limits, however, cannot be appointed without authority; and the party who appoints them exercises authority over the judgment for which it declares the limit. But the Reformers had started from the principle, that there was no outward authority on earth which could interfere with the individual, or limit his right of judging, so that the very attempt on their part to form churches was a virtual apostacy from their principle of private judgment. It would, however, have exposed to the people too clearly the hollowness and inconsistency of the new religions, to have at once openly claimed church authority for the ministers. The whole movement might have proved abortive, if some compromise could not be effected, which should happily unite the obnoxious but coveted authority with a liberty which must, at least in name, exist. Nothing, indeed, is more evident than that any number of individuals, really acting on the first principles of the Reformation, could never form a church. They might have arrived at like conclusions, or formed similar opinions; but each, resting on himself, takes nothing from another, yields nothing to another, and consequently can form no part of a corporation or church. They are but a number of units. They may be brought together by external influence, but like a handful of sand they have no cohesion, and crumble down from the moment the force which brought them together is withdrawn.

To assert, then, even to the smallest extent compatible with the idea of a church, the principle of authority in matters of faith, and, at the same time, to acknowledge the right of private judgment in the people, could not, by any subtlety, be done without falling into contradiction. As, however, contradictions are not only a self-condemnation, but a complete refutation of the system containing them, they were, by every means, to be avoided in the reformed Confessions of Faith. But to avoid the contradictions noticed above, and thus prove no church, would have been the abandonment of Christianity, while, to assert an authority which should limit the exercise of private judgment, would have reduced the Reformation to an impious rebellion. The Reformers, it seems, were less solicitous about consistency, than they were eager to secure for themselves the reins of spiritual power, which they had torn from the hands of the Catholic clergy. They resolved to have their churches and their Confessions of Faith. Since, however, these were impossible without admitting the contradiction, the best was done that the circumstances would permit—the contradiction was overlaid with ambiguous expressions, and attention withdrawn from it by endless citations of irrelevant texts.

The teaching of the Confession of Faith on “the object of Scripture,” will be examined in the course of our proof of the following propositions:—

1°. *The Bible is not the Rule of Faith appointed or intended by Jesus Christ.*

2°. *The so-called Right of Private Judgment (by which we understand an alleged right of every individual to examine and decide on the sense of Scripture), is by its nature either a delusion or an impiety.*

3°. *Private Judgment (as already defined), where exercised, renders Faith unattainable.*

I. THE BIBLE NOT THE RULE OF FAITH ESTABLISHED BY JESUS CHRIST.

For greater clearness, it may here be explained, that the word *faith* signifies both the divine virtue by which man is enabled to make a supernatural act of belief in the truths of

revelation, and those truths themselves which are the object upon which the virtue is exercised. Thus, St. James, speaking of the virtue, says—"Do you not see, that by works a man is justified, and not by *faith* only?" and St. Paul—"If I should have all *faith*, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." In the second acceptance it is thus employed by St. Paul—"In the last times some shall depart from *the faith*, giving heed to spirits of error and doctrines of devils." The same apostle points out thus the origin of all heresies—"For the desire of money is the root of all evil; which some coveting, have erred from *the faith*." To elicit an act of the virtue, the understanding must have been directed to the proper object—revealed truth. That, then, which directs the virtue in its exercise may be called the rule of faith. In this sense, the rule of faith must propose the truth divinely guaranteed, point it out to the understanding, and exclude error. It declares authoritatively what is divine truth, and what is not. It must, then, be something distinct from the revelation which it proposes to the intellect. It is identical with the source or record where man acquires the knowledge of revealed truth. Protestants maintain that the Bible is the only rule of faith in this sense of a record and guarantee of divine truth. If by the expression "rule of faith" be understood a standard of comparison, then its purpose is implied in the name. It is the object with which a proposed doctrine is to be compared, by which it is to be measured, in order that, from its conformity or discrepancy, its nature may be deduced.

A rule of faith, as a standard, necessarily gives but a negative decision. As it is impossible for any truth to be in contradiction with any other truth, any doctrine found to be in contradiction with a revealed truth, is evidently neither revealed nor true. But it is impossible to conclude that a doctrine has been revealed, solely from the fact of its conformity with revealed truths. We cannot, by a standard, know that a doctrine has been revealed, nor have more than a presumption that it is true. In as far as it coincides with the standard, *it may be true*; if it is in no respect discordant, it may also be

revealed. But the *fact* of its revelation must be discovered by positive testimony. Comparison can be made only where there is resemblance, and to the extent of that resemblance. In as far as two objects or truths do not resemble each other, no comparison can be instituted between them. Now, doctrines may have many points of contact with each other, they may perfectly harmonize with each other; but they could not, unless identical, be subjected to a perfectly adequate comparison. Thus it is that a standard for the whole Christian revelation, and each of its truths, could be no other than the Christian revelation itself. It could not be the truths of science, or those acquired by experience, consciousness, or the reasoning faculty; for all those, as well as every truth we can know without revelation, are natural, while the truths of revelation are of a different order. They are supernatural, and can no more be truly judged of by natural truths, than that which is infinite can be compared with that which is finite. Nor can one revealed truth be made the standard for another, as each, although harmonizing with all others, and that in a manner and to an extent wonderfully surpassing our apprehension, yet differs from every other. The standard, therefore, is incomplete, and can give only an imperfect, because an incomplete result. By what standard could the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity be judged? No other truth of revelation resembles it. Compare it with any other among the truths of revelation, and you can only say, it contradicts none of them. But from this negative judgment, you can conclude neither the truth of the doctrine nor its divinity. The rule of faith, then, if understood as the standard of revealed truth, cannot bring any man to the knowledge of the divine revelation, nor tell him whether any single doctrine has been revealed. An adequate standard could be only the divine revelation itself, and available only to him who already possessed it. But it is then evidently superfluous; since where the revelation is already known, the need of a standard by which to discover it has necessarily ceased. Revealed truth is, however, an infallible standard for discovering the errors of human teaching, and judging of the soundness of those deductions which reason draws from revelation. But

as our object at present is with the truths of revelation themselves, not with the operations of reason upon them—how man acquires the knowledge of these truths, not what consequences he may draw from them—to find the rule of *faith*, not a rule for human opinions—a standard for them would be, at present, altogether beside the question. Our arguments will show that the Bible was not appointed by Christ to be, and, in fact, it cannot be, the only rule of faith, whether it be considered as the standard, or as the source of faith.

The opinion we oppose is thus enounced in the Westminster Confession:—“It pleased the Lord to reveal himself, and to declare his will unto his Church, and afterwards for the better preserving and propagation of the truth . . . to commit the same wholly unto writing.” (Chap. I.) Again, “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of man.” The list of books contained in the Protestant Bible is given, and the Confession continues, “All which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.” (*Id.*)

The Free Kirk is even more explicit. In the Catechism of the Principles of the Free Kirk, we find the following questions and answers: “Where are his revelations contained? In the Scriptures alone. Comes not the voice of the great Teacher through the medium of tradition also? It comes only through the written word. Is the adoption of a Confession of Faith by a Church consistent? Yes; provided the Bible is always received as the ultimate standard of reference and appeal.”

1. Our first argument shall be a simple statement of facts. As far as the nature of Christianity, its history, its government, its doctrines, the duties it inculcates, are contained in the Bible, the record is to be found in the New Testament. But the New Testament gives direct and conclusive evidence that our Saviour, far from having appointed it to be the rule of faith, or any part thereof, had founded the Church, constituted her

the depositary of his doctrines,¹ appointed her teachers and governors, provided for the continuance of their functions,² completed the work of redemption, and ascended into heaven, years before one line of that sacred volume was penned. To say, therefore, that our Saviour established the Scripture as the sole rule of faith, is to contradict the facts narrated by the inspired writers themselves, and to represent Him as establishing for a rule of faith *that which did not even exist*. The only standard established by Jesus Christ, was the doctrine He delivered orally to his disciples, and directed to be preached till the end of time. The only source of doctrine He established was the teaching body of his Church.³ If, then, we regard the Church in the message she has been sent to deliver, she is the standard; if in her authority to deliver and guarantee the message, she is the rule of faith established by Jesus Christ.

This fact can be denied by none who admit the Scripture narrative. Did, then, our Saviour establish two rules? Or did he make any provision for a total change in the constitution of his Church, so that, after a certain number of years, those who had been forbidden to listen to an angel from heaven, against the teaching of the Church's pastors, were to listen neither to angel nor pastor, but to teach themselves from a book which millions of Christians in every age could not read, and which millions of readers, as the innumerable multitude of conflicting biblical sects demonstrates, could not understand? No authority for such a change can be produced. It is then a fact, that the Scriptures were not established by our Saviour, as, in any sense, the rule of faith. Any presumption against this fact would be not only gratuitous, but subversive of the Scripture narrative. A presumption that a radical change was

¹ "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. "All things whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you," John xv. 15.

² "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world," Matt. xxviii. 19. "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matt. xvi. 16.

³ "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me," Luke x. 16. "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen, or a publican," Matt. xviii. 17.

to be effected in the constitution of the Church, by the introduction of a new rule of faith, differing in its nature, in its application, in its extent and capacity, from the one he had established—changing the nature and duties of the ministry he had appointed while on earth—which he had so minutely described, so amply guaranteed, and endowed with such magnificent privileges, to which he had promised perpetuity, and subjected the whole human race for ever—that this was to be effected without any announcement from our Saviour, who seemed so solicitous to consolidate his Church, and to seize opportunities, as they offered, of preparing his followers for whatever could have appeared likely to embarrass them after his departure—without any hint from the apostles, or any of the sacred writers, that so momentous a change was ever to take place, is amply refuted by its own extravagance. Yet, those who maintain the Bible to be the sole rule of faith, must presume that this incredible change did take place; and this most extraordinary presumption is the sole ground of their belief. Truly, Protestants in favour of Protestantism are satisfied with slender proof!

2. A second fact. The canon of Scripture was not declared until the year 393, at the Council of Hippo, and, even after that declaration, it was not known in many places for several centuries. But what is not known cannot be a rule of faith. Either, then, there was no rule of faith before the Church had collected together the scattered books of Scripture, separated them from uninspired writings, and made them known throughout the world, or the rule of faith was not the Bible. But it is granted that there was a rule of faith established by Christ. Again, therefore, the rule of faith established by Christ was not the Scripture. Ecclesiastical history, which tells us of all the fortunes of the Church, of her sufferings, her progress, her triumphs—which points out to us the origin of heresies, and the means adopted for their confutation and suppression—records nothing of any change in her rule of faith, either as expected or accomplished. It tells us how the canon of Scripture was gradually formed, but hints not at its superseding the dogmatic authority of the Church. On this subject a silence equally profound is observed by both profane and sacred historians.

Since, then, Christ did not establish the Scriptures to be the rule of faith, nor give any announcement that they were ever to become so; since the Scriptures could not have been the rule for many centuries; since there is no record that they ever did become the rule in the Church; by what authority have Protestants made them the rule of faith? The first who ever appealed to the portions of the inspired books they possessed, as a higher authority from the teaching of the Church, were the Nicobites, the Ebionites, and other Gnostic sects, who confidently cited the sacred text to justify their unnatural lusts. All succeeding heretics followed the course marked out by those impious sectaries. The Marcionites, Nestorians, Arians, all clung to the Scripture as their sole rule; and by it strove to establish their tenets. But the Church constantly condemned their doctrines, and denied the lawfulness of any appeal from her decisions. None made or defended such appeals, save those whom Protestants themselves will condemn as heretics. The Protestant must admit that his rule of faith is that of all the heretics of the first six centuries, and that it was not, nor could have been, the rule of the Church of Christ. As, then, the facts of Scripture and history testify that the Protestant rule was not that established by Christ, and show not a vestige of evidence which a Christian can admit in support of such a rule, it must fall to the ground as a baseless assumption.

3. A Church which asserts the Scriptures to be the sole source of its doctrine—which seeks in them alone the reason of its existence, demonstrates, by that single fact, that its claims are false, and draws a line of distinction between itself and the Church of Christ, which the most illiterate and inexperienced of mankind can hardly fail to perceive. The origin of a Church which pretends to derive existence from the Scriptures, must be posterior to that of the Church of Christ. It is admitted that our Saviour gave his Church her origin years before the Scriptures were written; it is also admitted by Protestants,¹ and proved from Scripture, that He declared she

¹ "There shall always be a Church on earth to worship God according to his will," *Confess. of Faith*, chap. xxxv. "The visible Church hath the privilege of being

should never cease to exist. It must, therefore, be also admitted that a Church claiming the Scriptures as the sole source of its doctrine and existence, demonstrates, by that fact, that both its claim and itself are spurious. Besides, the dates of their composition show that the Scriptures were not originally, and therefore never could become for an imperishable body, the source of revealed truth. The inspired writers received the doctrines of Christianity from our Saviour himself, or, as in the case of Luke and Mark, from the Church. These were the sources of doctrine. The writers, where they establish a doctrine, do but record that which they had already received. The Bible can no more be the source of doctrine for the Church of Christ, than an authentic history of England could be the source of English law and government.

4. The Protestant assumes that the Bible contains the whole of those truths which God has revealed, and upon this assumption founds his belief that it is the sole rule of faith. It is evident, that if there be any revealed truth to which God demands our assent, the evidence of which is not contained in the Bible, but rests upon some other authority, that authority at least, jointly with the Bible, must share the title of "the rule of faith." Are there, then, no truths, the belief of which Protestants consider to be commanded of God, which yet are not to be found in Scripture? The Protestant must, with whatever reluctance, recognise the existence of such truths. This is, indeed, a hard fact for Protestantism, and singularly at variance with the axiom that the Bible is the religion of Protestants; but, welcome or ungrateful, it must be admitted by all who believe in the Bible—nay more, it must be admitted *as a necessary condition of belief in the Bible*. The Westminster Confession asserts the doctrine of infant baptism, and the validity of baptism by aspersion. Yet, in the whole Bible, it is nowhere said that infants may or even can be admitted to this sacrament; nor is a single instance recorded, either of

under God's special care and government; of being protected and *preserved in all ages*, notwithstanding the opposition of all enemies," *Larger Catechism*, Q. 63. It seems strange that the Scotch Reformers should have preferred creating a Church for themselves, to joining the one which was to be "preserved in all ages."

infant baptism, or of baptism administered by aspersion. The apostles assembled at Jerusalem, prohibited, along with idolatry and fornication, the use of blood and things strangled. No part of Scripture indicates that the prohibition was only temporary; yet Protestants believe they are breaking no divine law by the use of those forbidden things. God, by express command, enjoined the sanctification of the seventh day of the week from sunset to sunset. The Scripture contains no abrogation of that command. Neither in its substance nor manner is that law said by the Bible to have been changed; and we find our Saviour, and his disciples after his ascension, frequenting the synagogues on the Jewish Sabbath. Nevertheless, Protestants consider the sanctification of the first day of the week to be of divine or apostolic origin, and that they have the authority of God himself for the abolition of the Sabbath.²

² It must not be supposed that because none of these things are contained in the Bible, Protestants are prepared frankly to acknowledge their debts to tradition, for example, or the Church, or their own imagination. Far from it. Protestants, rather than admit the insufficiency of their rule of faith, will find a doctrine "clearly set down in Scripture," or "by good and necessary consequence deduced" from it, to which there is not even an allusion in the sacred volume. Their excruciating attempts to force their opinions from the reluctant text of the Bible, show, indeed, that they are deeply impressed with the necessity of finding Scripture support, but do not display much critical skill, nor any very sharp appreciation of the ridiculous. Some might even say that they manifest no high standard of honesty, as they evince eagerness to find the means of wrangling with an opponent, rather than a ground to justify belief to their own minds. Be that as it may, we give in this note a specimen of their "Scripture ground" for doctrines. Of the different subjects mentioned above, we select that on which Protestants have laboured most, and for which their allegation of Scripture, although eminently strained and inconclusive, is not, however, so much so as to appear ridiculous. They adduce three texts for the abolition of the Sabbath, and the sanctification of the first day of the week. "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him, in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come," 1 Cor. xvi. 2. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, and continued his speech until midnight," Acts xx. 7. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," Rev. i. 10. The first text contains no allusion to the abolition of the Sabbath, nor does it order the first day to be sanctified, nor even insinuate that it was sanctified by the Christians, or distinguished in any other way than by putting apart the collections which were to be made for the brethren. It does not so much as mention or allude to either of the two points it is adduced to prove. The passage from Acts is as little to the purpose. From the fact of the disciples meeting on the evening of the first day, it will require great ingenuity to

They maintain also the doctrine that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, although this procession is nowhere mentioned in any of the inspired books.

We have already examined, at some length, the Protestant proofs for the doctrine of inspiration, and shown that no book of the Bible claims inspiration for itself, or asserts it of any other book, and that few even declare certain of the doctrines they contain, or prophecies they record, to have been immediate messages from God. If, however, there be any doctrine which the Protestant considers eminently vital and essential, it is this of the divine origin of Scripture. He professes to ground solely on this the acceptableness of his belief and worship before God; on this he professes to rest his hopes for eternity. It is the master doctrine of his system, or rather, it is the base upon which he constructs his system of Christianity. Belief in this fundamental dogma must precede all others, for no other is possible to him until this foundation has been made good. If this rule of faith be complete, it must contain, prominently, clearly, unassailably established, this first principle of Protestantism. It is needless to enlarge upon the general question. It will bear more upon our argument to apply here the principles previously established. It is an article of faith among those who adhere to the Westminster Confession, and among Protestants generally, that the Epistle of St. James is inspired

deduce either the abrogation of an express command which was to be observed as "an everlasting covenant," (Exod. xxxi. 16,) or the sanctification of the Sunday. If the mere assembling of the disciples for worship indicates that the day on which they met was to be sanctified, then would there be a choice of seven days for observing the Christian Sabbath, or rather the Jewish festival would be superseded by the entire seven days of the week. For, from Acts ii. 42, we learn that the disciples *met every day* for prayer, and the administration of the Eucharist. "And they were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayer, (v. 46.) And continuing *daily* with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house." Lastly, St. John "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." But as Scripture does not give any clue to discover which of the seven days this was, Protestants, if disposed to sanctify the third or fourth day, could on this text display, in behalf of the novelty, as much learning, and derive as satisfactory proof as they now do in favour of the first. Such is the manner in which Protestants understand the Bible to be their rule of faith. Its texts are violently, often outrageously appropriated as pegs on which to hang previously-formed opinions.

Scripture. This article either can be proved from the Bible, or it cannot. If it can, let the passages which prove it be produced. Here no reasonings nor declamations nor presumptions will serve. Texts direct and explicit are called for; no other proof can fulfil the condition. If it cannot be proved from Scripture, then it must be either rejected by the Protestant, or admitted upon some authority distinct from the Scripture. If the authority upon which he admits it be the Church, then for this article the Church is his rule of faith, and it is not true that "the whole counsel of God's will concerning all things necessary for faith" is contained in the Scriptures, nor true that the Bible is his sole rule of faith. If it be admitted on any other authority whatever, as history, tradition, or the authority of parents and ministers, then these will be, in part at least, his rule of faith. That the inspiration of the Epistle in question is not "set down in Scripture," nor can be deduced from it, is evident, for the book is not once mentioned or alluded to by any of the other inspired writers, nor does St. James himself in his Epistle claim inspiration for it or any of its contents. The Protestant must, of necessity, abandon either his rule or this book. Does he admit no doctrine which cannot be established by texts of Scripture? then he must renounce his belief in the Epistle of St. James. Does he, on the other hand, adhere to the Epistle? then let him no longer pretend that his rule is the Bible alone. What has been said of St. James' Epistle, may be said of every book in succession. The entire collection of sacred writings can be proved to be the word of God only by an exterior witness. It can be proved, as has been said by the Rev. Mr. Wright in the article already quoted, only by the testimony and authority of the Church. But, in this case, the rule of Protestants is not partially, it is *exclusively* tradition and Church authority; since, upon the evidence these afford, the Bible itself and its doctrines are admitted. The Reformers have been guilty of cruel deceit. They have made Protestants, during the last three centuries, fight for a chimera. They taught that all traditions ought to be rejected; they undertook to construct religions which should be independent of tradition, and to found churches which

should rest immediately and solely on the word of God. But their followers find, that, like all other partisans of revolution, far from realizing the flattering promises of their leaders, they have been stripped of every real advantage which they had previously enjoyed, and inextricably entangled in those very bonds, against which, as an intolerable evil, they had been persuaded to protest.

The extravagance of the opinion entertained by Protestants of the all-sufficiency of Scripture, is amply demonstrated by the necessary inconsistency of its abettors, in admitting doctrines and practices as divine, for which they have no other ground than the tradition of the Catholic Church. But the Bible itself rejects, in express terms, the claim put forward in its behalf. It certainly repudiates the officious services of its self-constituted champions, as effectually as they are belied by the practice of Protestants. Not only does it declare that the whole teaching of Jesus Christ should never be written,¹—not only does it frequently allude so obscurely to some revealed doctrines, and ground arguments upon others, which are not expressed in any of the books, that both allusions and arguments would have been unintelligible to those who had not from another source received the doctrines, and thus been enabled to follow the relations of the writers' ideas, and perceive the validity of their reasoning; but it makes known the important fact, that of the inspired books which were written, several have not survived till our day. Our Saviour himself cites from Jeremias a prophecy which is not to be found among the writings of that prophet which remain.² In the Old Testament, the Book of the Wars of the Lord, the Book of the Prophet Nathan, the Book of Gad the Seer, are not only cited frequently by the inspired writers, but referred to as documents of equal authority with Kings, Paralipomenon, &c., for the more complete history of many events which the historical books of the Old Testament seem only to have abridged from them.

¹ "But there are also many other things which Jesus did; which, if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not contain the books that should be written." John xxi. 25.

² Matt. xxvii. 9, 10.

St. Paul (1 Cor. v. 9) refers the Corinthians to an epistle which he had previously sent them ; and (Col. iv. 16) orders that an epistle he had written to the Laodiceans should be read in the church. Protestants cannot doubt that those epistles to which he refers, and which he orders to be publicly read along with his writings which are extant, were of equal authority, and equally of divine origin. Can they then pretend that they possess the whole word of God which was written ? If they do not possess the whole, their rule of faith is incomplete, and, since incomplete, cannot be the rule which was established or intended by Jesus Christ ; for it would have been incompatible with his goodness to have established a means imperfect, and thus inadequate to the end proposed.

5. The object of the rule of faith being to give men the knowledge of revealed truth, to retain them in the profession of the true faith, and to enable them to reject all erroneous doctrine ; in a word, to secure to them that "faith without which it is impossible to please God," the rule established by Christ must be within the reach of all, and suited to the capacities of all. It is utterly repugnant to all the ideas of justice, goodness, and charity which man has received, whether by nature or revelation, to suppose that God has given to his creatures, as the sole means of coming to the knowledge of his revelation, a rule which lies beyond their reach, or which when possessed should be impracticable. Is it possible to reconcile with the perfections of God the necessity he has laid upon all men of believing his revelation, and the assertion that he has established, as the sole means of coming to the knowledge thereof, a rule of faith impracticable for any man ? Well, even at the present day, when societies whose resources seem boundless, whose organization is complete, whose influential supporters remove all difficulties at home and abroad, and prepare the field for their undisturbed and untrammelled operation, exist for the sole purpose of circulating Bibles—when throughout the country a perfect mania for "education" has seized all classes of society—when national schools, and denominational schools, and ragged schools are each exalted by their partisans into the panacea which shall restore health

and vigour to the putrid members of British society—the Bible is still far from being a possible rule for every individual, whether we speak of its mere possession or its use. We are perfectly aware of the subterfuge by which Protestants seek to escape the force of this objection. It is but an evasion. The unlearned, they say, and the poor can have the Bible read to them; or receive from their ministers its doctrines, and thus become fully possessed of the Protestant rule of faith. So, then, it is not the Bible, but the doctrines which the individual or his minister for him draws from the Bible, which form the rule of faith. Be it so; but how can it be said that doctrines not yet known are the means by which the knowledge of revelation is to be acquired, seeing that revelation consists of those very doctrines? Can the Protestant make use of doctrines as a rule which he is yet only seeking to learn? He must *have* the rule before he can *use* it; and since it is the sole criterion of divine truth, he cannot know what is divine truth until he has the rule. Until, therefore, he has learned the truths of revelation, he has no rule to determine what is or is not revealed truth. Granting, then, for the sake of the argument, that the Bible did contain all divine truths necessary to be believed, the Protestant cannot possibly know what these are until he is in possession of his rule of faith. But how shall he acquire his rule; for it consists of the doctrines of revelation? How shall he learn the first truth of his system? Until he has got that first truth, he is absolutely destitute of the rule of faith. He has no part of it. He has not even the beginning of quantity. But without the rule of faith it is impossible for him to know any article of faith whatever—even the first truth, which might be the commencement of his rule. On the supposition, therefore, of the *doctrines* of Scripture being the Protestant's rule of faith, he can never possibly have either the rule or the doctrine. He cannot have the doctrine without the rule, for it is only by the rule of faith that he can know what is revealed truth and what is not. He cannot have the rule until he has got the doctrine, for by the supposition the doctrine is itself the rule. If, on the other hand, the book, not its doctrines, be the rule of faith, then it is self-

evident that those who possess not the book, and all who cannot read, have no rule of faith. And men are found who fear not to attribute to our Saviour the establishment of a rule of faith—that is, a necessary condition of faith, and therefore of salvation—which would, either physically or morally, be impossible of attainment to far the greater number of his followers in every age, and those, too, the poor, the young, the ignorant—ever the special objects of his predilection.

But the case bears a still more intolerable aspect in the pages of the Westminster Confession. We have hitherto been reasoning as if the *English Bible* were the Protestant rule of faith. Such, undoubtedly, is the popular persuasion. The unthinking, credulous crowd among Protestants have always thought so. No doubt their ministers, when declaiming against Catholicity, or attempting to show the practicability of their pretended rule, or exalting the high privilege of freely perusing the Bible of King James in the vulgar tongue, allow the people to depart with the understanding that the English version has been put into their hands to be their rule of faith. But nothing could be further from the truth. The English version has been given them as a sort of edifying spiritual book; or, as the Confession of Faith has it, “that the word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope.” But the rule of faith established by the Westminster Confession is *the Hebrew text of the Old, and the Greek text of the New Testament*. Nothing can be more explicit than its teaching on this point: “The Old Testament *in Hebrew*, and the New Testament *in Greek*, being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical, so as, *in ALL controversies of religion, the Church is FINALLY TO APPEAL UNTO THEM.*”¹ There can be no appeal from the rule of faith, which, as its name implies, has been established as the last and highest resort in matters of faith. But an appeal is here recognised from the English or any other version to the Hebrew and Greek texts. The English version is, therefore,

¹ *Confession of Faith*, chap. i.

not recognised by the Westminster Confession for the rule of faith. Since, moreover, the original texts are declared to be the final arbiter, from which no appeal is permitted in controversies of religion, these texts are established as the sole standard and rule of faith. The consequences of this article of the Presbyterian standard to that numerous body of Protestants, who, it is to be presumed, have not yet acquired a competent knowledge of the Oriental tongues, are serious indeed, and will doubtless receive their close consideration. But even the most accomplished scholars of our Scotch universities will meet with no slight embarrassment in their efforts to complete their rule of faith, according to the terms of the Westminster Confession. Originals alone are, by that authority, pronounced to be authentic. What, then, becomes of St. Matthew's gospel, of which there are extant only translations? What of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the original of which is considered by respectable Protestant critics to have, in like manner, disappeared? Protestantism, then, at one stroke of the pen, strips a considerable portion of the New Testament of its authority, and throws upon another a doubt which, without aids which the Protestant dare not employ, cannot be dissipated. Such teaching may well fill with consternation the minds of Protestants, who have been accustomed to contemplate their system, not as it is in itself, but in its anti-popery characteristics. It has, since the Reformation, been to Protestants an occasion for much religious indignation, that the Church has sanctioned the continued use of the liturgy or service of the mass in the language in which it was first delivered to the different nations she has converted. Thus, over a great part of the East, the Greek liturgy, called of St. James, is used, and in the west, the Latin, or liturgy of St. Peter. It is needless to say, that the priests, the only parties whom the Church calls upon to use the liturgy, must know the language in which it is composed. The faithful have translations of the liturgy itself, and special devotions besides, in their native tongue, for accompanying the priest during the celebration of mass. This is the object of that ceaseless torrent of abuse which, since the Reformation, has

been poured upon us under the title of "prayer in an unknown tongue." Could it have been imagined that the men who have so strenuously and so perseveringly declaimed against this part of ecclesiastical discipline, would have given themselves up with such humble docility to their leaders as to accept from their hands, not indeed a form of prayer, understood by him who uses it, and certainly by Him to whom it is addressed, but a rule of faith—the only source of their belief—their final standard of dogma—their last appeal, "in all controversies of religion"—written partly in Hebrew and partly in Greek? Yet there stands the decree. Let Protestants read it again and again; let them weigh it well, and learn to appreciate, at their full worth, the privileges which their Church bestows upon them. They have indeed been deprived of the tradition and living voice of the Catholic Church to guide them into all truth; but in exchange they have received truly precious favours. They have been empowered to collect for themselves a system of religious opinions, from the pages of the Hebrew and Greek Testaments! They have had put into their hands a rule of faith, not, it is true, in the "unknown tongue" of ancient Rome, but partly in the sacred language of Moses and the prophets, and partly in that of Homer and Demosthenes. He would be blind, indeed, who could fail to see how readily this Protestant rule of faith is made available to all; how peculiarly it is fitted to the capacities and attainments of all; how admirably corresponding with what might have been anticipated from the wisdom and beneficence of Jesus; how rarely calculated to bring to a speedy and happy termination every difference of religious opinion! Let the poor man, who with difficulty procures the necessaries of life for himself and family; whose literary efforts have had their highest flight in a tedious spelling through a chapter of the gospel; let the boy from the ragged school procure his Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament. They are then provided with their rule of faith, completely equipped for any "controversy of religion," able and authorised to set at defiance the decisions of any Synod or General Assembly on earth. The magnetic current of Protestantism is no sooner sent through the people,

than each individual starts off in fretful independence—a perfect magnet, with one pole attracting the negative fluid of Protestantism, with the other repelling all that is positive in Christian theology. He becomes a church in miniature, and keeps up an establishment of ministers only by way of religious luxury, or as a perennial provocation for his critical powers—a sort of gladiatorial institution, to keep alive the contentious spirit of private judgment, and the Hebrew and Greek acquirements of our Presbyterian population. Can anything be more opposed to all that Christians believe of the wisdom, the power, the goodness of our divine Redeemer, than this preposterous doctrine of the Westminster Confession? The first elements of reason will suffice to show that our Saviour never could have established, as the rule of faith for Christians of every age, the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible. The Confession of Faith, by establishing an appeal to those texts, precludes any claim for the English or any other version; and we conceive that few will be found to assert that our Saviour constituted any translation whatever of the Scriptures to be the rule of faith. We have proved that the doctrines of the Bible cannot be the sole rule to any man, and to the Protestant cannot be a rule at all. And we have shown that Christ did not, in fact, establish the Scriptures as in any sense the rule of faith; and that, for several ages, they were not, nor could they have been, the rule; that they are not yet the sole rule even to Protestants, and that they cannot be made the sole rule without rendering faith impossible. We are therefore entitled to our conclusion, that our Saviour neither constituted nor intended the Scriptures to be the rule of faith.

II. THE SO-CALLED RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT, A DELUSION OR AN IMPIETY.

Protestantism, which is a system of suppositions built upon other suppositions, has raised its supposed right of private judgment, on the supposition that the Bible is the sole rule of faith appointed by Jesus Christ. A lengthened examination of this alleged right cannot be necessary, after the demonstration we have given, that the supposition upon which it rests

is both gratuitous and false. We shall, therefore, consult brevity as far as possible, consistently with the exclusiveness of our argument.

1. Wherever private judgment is exercised, the result must be either truth or error, for an interpretation cannot be true and false at the same time. The "right of private judgment," then, either implies the right to form a false as well as a true judgment, or means the right of forming only true conclusions; in other words, the "right" is either absolute or limited by objected truths. In the first sense, the "right of private judgment" is no right, but an impiety; in the second, it is a delusion. 1°. All right is from God. To suppose a right received or held independently of God, is to destroy either the unity or the perfection of God. It is to set a limit to his power, and therefore supposes either a plurality of Gods, or imperfection in the Divine nature. Private judgment is in fact claimed by Protestants as a right bestowed by the Almighty. Now, God cannot give a right to form a false judgment in regard of that to which he demands our assent; for, as belief follows judgment, a right to form a false judgment would include the right to reject the truth and believe a lie. If man had the absolute right to interpret the Scriptures, then he could not be condemned or punished for unbelief or false belief, since he could interpose the "right" he had received between the justice of God and his own infidelity. God could not condemn or punish his creature for doing that which he himself had given him the right to do. The doctrine of an absolute right of judgment would overthrow the whole of Christianity, which essentially requires faith in the truths of revelation, and denounces wrath to "him that believeth not." It is also incompatible with the perfections of God, as it would destroy his veracity by involving his sanction for error. Private judgment, therefore, if understood as an absolute right of interpretation, is an impiety. 2°. If the right contended for be not absolute but limited—if no right be claimed beyond the circle of revealed truth, interpretation can with no propriety be termed "private." For a system of truth, objectively real, existing independently of the mind, is then acknowledged as the

standard with which all interpretation, to be true, must accord. We have seen the Confession of Faith asserting that there would always exist on earth a Church holding and teaching those truths. The individual's interpretation of Scripture is, therefore, if true—that is, if made according to the conditions on which he holds his “right”—no other than the doctrines of that Church; and his right of private judgment proves to be only imaginary, for it resolves itself into the *duty* of learning and believing the truths of revelation as taught by that Church, which the Westminster Confession says, shall always subsist “on earth to worship God according to his will;” which Jesus Christ authorised when he said, “He that heareth you, heareth me.” The Westminster divines saw clearly that the Scriptures, instead of being the rule of faith, were, in reality, the thing for which the rule of faith was required; and that, if the individual were really to interpret them for himself, he would be his own standard of faith and morality. But this would necessarily suppose individual infallibility, since the standard of faith must itself have all the security of faith, and faith is essentially grounded on the veracity of God, the infallible truth. If, however, every individual were to be his own standard of truth, or gifted with infallibility, not only would the entire Protestant theory on the rule of faith be at once uprooted, but the very idea of a Church would be annihilated. It was, however, necessary to preserve both, and, for this purpose, an article was inserted in the Confession of Faith,¹ the complete efficacy of which bears indisputable testimony to the meek pliability of the Presbyterian body. Notwithstanding the stubborn self-sufficiency, and the intolerance of dictation which the history of the Covenant shows to be no stranger to the breast of the Scotch Presbyterian, he is not unwilling, at the voice of the Westminster Confession, to close his eyes to the palpable impracticability of his position, and to believe that all is made smooth and consistent by the simple assertion,

¹ “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself, and, therefore, when there is question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”—Chap. i. 9.

that the text A is interpreted by the text B. Text B itself requires, it seems, no explanation. It explains both itself and A; meets no obstacle in the mind from prejudice or passion, nor does it pass through any coloured medium. The mind of the reader is, of course, purely passive. It makes no comparison, puts no meaning on B, and forms no judgment. The true interpretation falls of its own accord upon the purely passive mind. So that the doctrine evolved from the collation of texts, is not a mere human opinion—a result of the reader's ingenuity, learning, prejudice, or ignorance—nor, after all, a "private interpretation." It is the pure voice of the text; or, as the Confession of Faith says, the voice of the Spirit speaking in the text.¹ Here, no doubt, we might find the explanation of the very remarkable unity of Protestantism. For as truth is one, the true interpretation of Scripture is one. And as it seems not to be the individual but the Spirit which interprets the Bible for Protestants, the same word is, of course, spoken to all, to Baptists and Anabaptists, to Pedobaptists and Antipedobaptists, to Mormons, Independents, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Unitarians, Seceders, &c. The members of the harmonious whole are too numerous for individual notice. It is evident, indeed, that the same Spirit *does* interpret the Scripture for them, and his identity few will fail to recognise. His name is "Legion." To resume: Whether we look upon private judgment as necessarily limited by divine truth to the one true interpretation of Scripture, or, with the Westminster Confession, regard the Holy Spirit, and not the individual as the sole interpreter, it is evident that the alleged individual "right" is a pure delusion—a flattering motto, it may be, to flaunt on no-popery banners, but bearing, on close examination, a suspicious resemblance to the proscribed doctrine of Church authority.

2. Protestants must admit that the "right of private judgment" is a delusion, if it cannot be established by their sole

¹ "The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined . . . and doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture."—*Id.* 10.

rule of faith. But neither our Saviour nor his apostles assert or sanction such a right in favour of Christians. It must, therefore, be condemned as a figment. Certainly, Protestants are accustomed to cite in its support certain passages. But, from their bearing, they seem to be adduced for the sake of form, not as if the Protestant really hoped to derive his opinion from them; useless, indeed, in his scriptural investigations. None act upon the principles of the grammarian who made *lucus* a derivative from *non lucendo*. A number of passages of the Old Testament are quoted, in which the Israelites are urged to learn and meditate upon the law of God, and to conform their lives to its precepts. These must be all set aside together. They are wholly irrelevant to the question at issue. For the reasoning is inadmissible, by any stretch of indulgence, which concludes that *Christians* have the right to *interpret the whole Bible*, because *the Jews* were directed to learn and meditate upon *the commandments*. But, unfortunately for the Protestant argument, we know the nature of the Jewish "right" of interpretation, and can assure those who clamour for private interpretation, that if their demands go not beyond the right which was enjoyed by the Jews, their war against the Catholic Church has certainly been conducted on a grievous misunderstanding. The Jews were bound, by the express ordinance of God, to *interpret according to the teaching of their Church*; and the man who should dare to judge for himself, and refuse to submit to the teaching of the priests, *was commanded to be put to death*.¹ From the New Testament, two passages are generally quoted as bearing on the question. Our Saviour says, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." This is the Protestant version. The original word, *ερωᾶτε*, may be rendered either "search" or "ye search;" but the Protestant translators

¹ "If thou perceive that there be among you a hard and doubtful matter in judgment . . . thou shalt come to the priests of the Levitical race, and to the judge that shall be at that time, and thou shalt ask of them, and they shall show thee the truth of the judgment. And thou shalt do whatsoever they shall say, and what they shall teach thee . . . But he that will be proud, and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest, . . . that man shall die, and thou shalt take away the evil from Israel." Deut. xvii. 8—13.

have decided the meaning of the word to prevent the possibility of an erroneous impression being received by the people from "the Spirit speaking in the Scriptures." The second reference is to Acts xvii.,¹ where the Bereans are said to have searched the Scriptures to see if these things were so. In both passages, the men spoken of were not believers in the divine mission of Jesus Christ. Our Saviour and his apostles sought to draw them to Christianity, by appealing to the authority of the Old Testament, which they admitted, for proof of the single fact that "Jesus was the Christ." The reasoning of Protestants upon these facts is more characteristic than conclusive. It is, that because *men who were not Christians* were referred to *the Old Testament*, interpreted for them by Jesus Christ and his apostles, *for the proof of one fact, therefore all Christians* are required to interpret for themselves *the whole Bible*, in order to discover *all the doctrines of Christianity*. The simple statement of such an argument leaves nothing to refute. The imagination can scarcely conceive reasoning more ludicrously extravagant. But although the Scripture does not establish the private interpretation of Protestants, it does not altogether pass over the matter in silence. St. Peter, as if he had had before his mind the future pretensions of Protestantism, recorded their formal condemnation, nearly fifteen centuries before they were made the battle-cry of Luther. "Knowing this first, that *no prophecy of Scripture* is of *any private interpretation*." As if it had not been enough for his zeal to condemn the principle, he returns again to the subject, and warns men of its ruinous consequences. "In which also (he says, speaking of the Epistles of St. Paul) are some things

¹ "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." In rendering the passage thus, the Protestant translators consulted rather the necessities of Protestantism than fidelity to the text. The passage has been corrupted, in order to secure, in favour of Protestant doctrine, a support from *English Scripture* which the Greek refused to afford. The sacred writer appears, from the English version, to assign the superiority of the Bereans to the fact that they searched the Scriptures. But the original only narrates the fact, without either qualifying it, or making it a ground of commendation: 'Ουτοι δε πσαν ευρημιστηρι των εν Θεσσαλονικη υπιτινι ειδιξαντο τον λογον, κ.τ.λ. "These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, who," &c.

hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction," 2 Peter iii. 16. Protestants are, of course, neither convinced nor silenced by those texts; for the right they claim to *explain* is extended, when the text formally contradicts their opinions, into a right to *explain away* the Scripture. The difficult passages referred to are said to be "non-essentials." All that is essential to be believed, is easily understood and interpreted. The proper answer to this startling assumption, is the repetition of St. Peter's words. Were anything more required, it would be found in the fact, that the consequence of the erroneous judgment in question is the eternal destruction of the aspirants to "the right of private interpretation." Passages, whose misinterpretation involves this penalty, have a well-merited title to be ranked among "essentials." Since, then, the Scriptures acknowledge no such right to Christians as is claimed by Protestants, but, on the contrary, condemn it in express terms, it ought to be abandoned by those who profess to make the Bible their sole rule of faith.

3. We shall take but a passing glance at some of the practical difficulties which must be encountered by any one who undertakes to interpret Scripture for himself. The oldest copy of any part of the Hebrew text dates from the beginning of the twelfth century. Of the Greek texts, the copy known by the title of *Codex Vaticanus* is the most ancient. It was written about the middle of the fourth century. It will thus be seen that the original of no portion of the Scripture exists at the present day. We have only copies, and in the case of at least St. Matthew's Gospel, the copy only of a translation. The Protestant interpreter must satisfy himself that the copies and translations are in conformity with the original. This is possible for him only by means of tradition, and that is to him a sealed book. This task is anyhow more difficult from the many variations which are to be found among the ancient copies of the sacred books. The different readings published by Mills, in his celebrated edition of the Greek New Testament, amounted to upwards of thirty thousand. The edition from which we have taken the Greek texts previously cited,

contains, besides the different readings given by Mills, many thousands which have been more recently discovered. How is the unlearned Protestant to distinguish the words of the inspired writers from the mistakes and interpolations of copyists? To him who would draw his faith from the Bible alone, this distinction is of essential importance; for while the true text is the word of God, the variations are only the word of man. It must be admitted by Protestants, that our Saviour did not constitute the English Bible the rule of faith; and that, even if the Scriptures were the rule, the original texts alone, as is maintained by the Westminster Confession, could claim the title. The right and duty, therefore, of private interpretation, means the right and duty of every Protestant to interpret for himself the Hebrew, Syriac, and Greek originals. Thus Dr. Kitto, in his preface to the Biblical Cyclopædia, says—"The science which discloses to us the tenets of holy writ, we call biblical exegesis, or interpretation. It involves the difficult task of discovering the true meaning attached to the words by the writer. To be able to do this, a thorough knowledge of the language in which the author has written down his thoughts is indispensable; consequently, *a profound knowledge of Hebrew* for the Old Testament, and *of Greek* for the New, *is of the utmost necessity*, and is *one of the first requisites in an expounder of the Bible*. But as the sacred writings have greatly suffered from, and have been disfigured by, the liberties of transcribers and emendators,¹ it is needful to try to discover or restore the real words of the original text." Are such qualifications very general among Presbyterians? Is the working man able to interpret Scripture for himself? Is the merchant or man of business able? Is the literary man able? Nay, how many ministers can boast of a "thorough knowledge of Hebrew and Greek," or find the necessary leisure and facilities for deciphering and comparing manuscripts, and estimating their age, authenticity, and comparative authority? Yet all these requisites are but "*the first requisites*" to the interpre-

¹ Compare this language with that of the Confession of Faith, when justifying its supposed rule—"The Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek . . . being, by God's singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages."

tution of Scripture. Did we not find it solemnly declared in the authoritative exposition of Presbyterianism, that this “right and duty of private judgment,” requiring, as it does, for its exercise, such rare attainments and opportunities, had been established by Jesus Christ, we should have doubted the possibility of such a doctrine having been ever put forward by sane men. What ideas the authors of the Westminster Confession entertained of the wisdom and goodness of our Saviour, we know not; but their doctrine, that he has bestowed on his people a “right,” but denied them the power to use it; that he has laid upon them a “duty,” which he knew they could not possibly perform, shows that they were not of the most exalted nature. It will, no doubt, be said by Protestants, that it is sufficient for the people to interpret the English Bible, admitting, on the authority of the translators, that it conveys with sufficient accuracy the meaning of the original. But, 1st, the *English Bible* is not the Protestant rule of faith. 2d, Even if it were, however, the Protestant cannot receive it upon human authority, without admitting *all* upon human authority, and making man the rule of faith. 3d, It would still be necessary to the exercise of private judgment, that every one should assure himself, by personal examination, that the translation he uses is faithful. This obligation will appear the more imperative, when the number, and above all, *the nature*, of the errors in the Protestant Bible are considered. There are many passages, bearing on controverted doctrines, in which the Protestant translators have permitted their prejudices to triumph over their sense of duty, and to give a sectarian colour to their translation, while not a few texts have been altogether falsified.¹

4. As error is necessarily self-contradictory, we need not look beyond Protestantism itself for a complete demonstration of the futility of “private judgment.” The existence of a Church, of a Catechism, or of a Confession of Faith, is an authentic protest against the “right” in question; while it is opposed, with no less force, by the standards of Scotch Presbyterianism. These define the Church to “consist of all those

¹ A few examples will be found in Appendix C.

throughout the world *that profess the true religion*, together with their children, and is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, *out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.*"¹ They declare and oblige their members to adopt the declaration, that their doctrines are those of Jesus Christ, and that the adherents of the Confession of Faith are members of the true Church of Jesus Christ, out of which there is not salvation. "We all, and every one of us, . . . subscribe with our hands, and constantly affirm before God and the whole world, that *this only* is the true Christian faith and religion, pleasing God and bringing salvation to man, which now (1580) is, by the mercy of God, REVEALED to the world by the preaching of the blessed evangel; and is received and defended by many and sundry notable kirks and realms, *but chiefly by the Kirk of Scotland*, the King's majesty, and three estates of this realm, as God's eternal truth, and only ground of our salvation."² The founders of Scotch Presbyterianism not only denied private judgment to others, but bound themselves by an oath, never, during life, to make use themselves of the dangerous "right." They continue—"And finally, . . . promising and *swearing by the great name of the Lord our God*, that we shall *continue in the obedience of the doctrine* and discipline of this Kirk, and shall defend the same, according to our vocation and power, *all the days of our lives*, under the pains contained in the law, and danger both of body and soul in the day of God's fearful judgments."³ Now, apart from the astounding assertion, that the truths of Christianity were revealed about the year 1580, in favour of "the Kirk of Scotland, the King's majesty, and the three estates of this realm;" and abstracting from the inconsistency of Protestants swearing constancy to any doctrine, the fundamental sentiment of the above extract is in itself such as a church must entertain. For, faith is certainty. Nay, it is certainty of the highest order, for its guarantee is the Divine veracity. A church can exist only by professing to hold divine faith; and, consequently, every church must profess certainty in the

¹ *Confession of Faith*, chap. xxv. 2.

² *Confession of Faith or National Covenant*.

³ *Ibid.*

doctrines she holds to have been divinely revealed. As, moreover, God has revealed truth in order that it should be believed, his will is, that man, by accepting revealed truth, should render Him the homage of his intellect, "bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ."¹ Can a church, then, which believes its own doctrines to have been revealed, admit a right in any man to reject them, and thus frustrate the immediate object for which they were revealed? Can it even admit a right of choice? Heresy is sin. For the denial, or rejection, or corruption of revealed truth is opposed to the will and command of God, just as theft or murder. It is because error is sin, that "they who believe not shall be condemned." Man possesses, indeed, the *power* to commit sin, but not the *right*. He has the power of choice, for he has free-will, but not the right to choose. To embrace virtue and truth is *a duty* expressly commanded by God, and therefore man can have no right to choose whether he will believe or not—whether he will believe truth or error, any more than he has a right to choose whether he will practise vice or virtue. Where God commands, unconditional obedience alone is the part of man. It is evident, then, that no church which believes its own doctrines can possibly admit a right in any one to refuse his assent to her teaching. She must consider belief, on the part of all, as an absolute duty. Thus a church, by the sole fact of its existence, enters a most unequivocal protest against the "right of private judgment;" and a church which professed to grant or acknowledge such a right, would but delude its members with a mock right; unless, indeed, it be possible to suppose a church which neither believes nor requires belief in the truths of revelation. It follows from this, that infallibility is of the very essence of the true Church; and that even false churches cannot subsist but by acting as if they themselves had that infallibility against which they protest. The testimony such churches afford against "private judgment," is not less valuable because in flagrant contradiction with their principles. It is the very nature of things which compels them to overthrow the pre-

¹ 2 Cor. x. 5.

tended right upon which they strive to base the justice of the Reformation. Does not the body which could have demanded the oath above cited, necessarily suppose its own infallibility? If that body could have supposed itself deceived in holding the doctrines to which it required subscription, or if it could have supposed itself as possibly deceiving those to whom it proposed the doctrines, it never could have enjoined the oath. For an oath cannot be taken where there is not certainty, and certainty is not possible where the proposer of the fact or doctrine to which the oath is demanded can deceive, or be himself deceived in admitting it. Unless, then, the General Assembly, in demanding this oath to the truth of the doctrines it proposed, believed itself to be incapable of deceiving or being deceived, its procedure would have been no less immoral and impious than tyrannical. It is on the supposition of the Kirk's infallibility that her claim to authority in matters of faith can be understood. "It belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith, . . . which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the word, *but also for the power whereby they are made*, being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in his word."¹ Were there on the part of the Kirk any latent longings after the prerogative of infallibility, they would perfectly harmonize with this article. But of what avail to Presbyterianism could this solitary instance of consistency prove? The article is in contradiction not less formal with the Protestant system, than would be the claim to infallibility itself. Protestantism is a *caput insanabile*, which cannot be purged of contradictions. Although the power is asserted in the above article to be derived from God, there is yet a superior authority acknowledged to exist somewhere; for the clause, "if agreeable to the word of God," necessarily supposes an authority to judge the acts of the synod, and pronounce definitively on their conformity or non-conformity with the Bible. There is, indeed, no little confusion here; and we should think it a difficult matter for Protestants to learn what they are to

¹ *Confession of Faith*, chap. xxxi. 3.

believe, or where to have recourse on controverted questions. For, first, the individual is said to have the right, which is the foundation of Protestantism, of interpreting the Scriptures for himself; then it is said that the Church has authority from God to interpret and settle controversies, and that to her decision the individual must submit. Again, it is asserted that neither the individual nor the Church is the interpreter, but the Bible itself; and again, that the Holy Ghost, speaking in the Scripture, is the supreme judge in all controversies; and, finally, as we have just seen, all is thrown again into the hands of the individual, who is to judge for himself whether the decrees of the Church be according to the teaching of the Spirit. The Free Church involves the matter in still greater difficulty, by seeming to deny the right of the individual to judge the Church's decisions, but yet conceding him a right of appeal from them.¹ The appeal is not, however, as might have been expected, to "the Bible as the ultimate rule and standard," but to Jesus Christ. This implies, either that there is no rule of faith, or that the rule is the Church; for there is *no appeal acknowledged from the Church's decision to any authority upon earth*, not even to the Bible; and the rule of faith is but another name for *the highest authority on earth in matters of faith*.

From this dark mass of contradiction, one truth stands forth intact and indestructible, resplendent in contrast with the dense obscurity from the midst of which it sprung. It is, that *infallibility is an essential attribute of THE CHURCH*, since even churches which expressly renounce infallibility for themselves

¹ "Are the office-bearers of the Church not liable to err? Doubtless, they may err. Is there no remedy to those aggrieved by their proceedings? Doubtless, they have a remedy. They can take their appeal to the Head of the Church. What does this right of appeal imply? That the right of private judgment belongs to the individual members and office-bearers of the Church. Are those who take an appeal to Christ at liberty to disregard the sentence of which they complain? They are, *but at their peril*, and as they shall answer to Christ when he decides on their appeal."—*Free Kirk Catechism*, Q. 95—98. This is strange doctrine indeed, that Christ has left *no final authority on earth to decide in matters of faith*, but that certainty as to the doctrine which men are to believe cannot be had till the day of judgment. And it is altogether incomprehensible, how an appeal to the proper tribunal can involve peril, if God himself had conferred the right of appeal.

are yet compelled, in direct opposition to their profession, to establish, as the first indispensable requisite to their having the form of a church, the very infallibility they repudiate. That Church alone, then, which claims infallibility has logical existence. All others are but carcasses, for they are necessarily in contradiction with themselves, and contradiction necessarily produces dissolution. Yet the necessary truth they involved survives. It is the gold ornament which is found unbroken and uncorroded amid the mouldering dust and bones of the charnel-house. The Free Kirk shall complete the argument against "the right of private judgment:"—
 "The commission *authoritatively to declare the mind of Christ*, respecting *all the affairs of his Church*, was given NOT TO THE MEMBERS, but to the pastors and presbyters of the Church."¹

III. THE EXERCISE OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT RENDERS FAITH IMPOSSIBLE.

Faith is described in the Westminster Confession as being "the grace whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls; the work of the spirit of Christ in their hearts. . . . By this faith a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein." (Chap. xiv.) We pass over at present the grave errors involved in this description, as our immediate object regards only the truths which it contains. The first great truth here admitted is, that the act of faith, without which salvation is impossible, is an act of belief made *on the authority of God*. The second great truth is, that the object of this act of belief is "whatsoever God has revealed." Faith is, then, essentially supernatural, both in its motive and in its object; for its object is the truth, as God has revealed it, and its motive the veracity of God, who makes the revelation. Wherever, therefore, the supernatural motive or object is wanting, there cannot be faith. Since the truths of faith rest immediately on the authority of God, they are infallibly certain. Since, too, the man who has faith has the authority of God for the truths which he believes, he has infallible

¹ *Free Kirk Catechism*, Q. 453.

certainty. Thus, faith, really such, is absolute unwavering certainty.

In the system of the Westminster divines, the individual believer becomes, by the above definition, infallible as well as impeccable. For the Confession of Faith declares that grace, once conferred, can never be lost, and that faith alone justifies a man, as well as enables him to believe the truths of revelation. The Catholic Church, however, teaches that grace may be lost; and that even faith may be uprooted by enormous or long-continued sin. The individual, therefore, although infallibly certain of the truth of those doctrines proposed to him, so long as he continues in his allegiance to the Church, through which the authority of God can be realized, in which the Spirit of God teaches, according to the declaration of our Saviour—"he that heareth you, heareth me," is not infallible. At all times, but especially in these days, when the love of money, which St. Paul reckons the great cause of heresy, has become the motive power of society, it is necessary to warn men to "continue in the faith, grounded, and settled, and immovable;"¹ and to preserve, in the midst of infidelity and seduction, "a good conscience, which some rejecting, have made shipwreck concerning the faith."² From the nature of faith, it is then evident—1°, that a man cannot have faith in a doctrine if he entertain any doubt or uncertainty as to its truth; 2°, that even where he is convinced of the objective truth of a doctrine, if he has any doubt or uncertainty as to whether he has the authority of God for believing it to have been revealed, he has not faith. For that a doubt can be entertained as to the truth of that which is received on the authority of God is impossible, as it is also impossible that the formal motive of belief in a dogma is the authority of God, when the existence of this authority in its favour is doubtful or uncertain; 3°, religious opinions are essentially different from faith.

This brings us to the question of such vital importance to the Protestant. Is it possible for man, by the exercise of private judgment, either to arrive at certainty as to what those truths are to which God demands his assent; or to ob-

¹ Colos. i. 23.

² 1 Tim. i. 19.

tain the authority of God, as the ground of his belief in the doctrines he professes? It is here admitted that the doctrines contained or sanctioned in the Bible have been revealed by Almighty God; and that, therefore, they are the proper object of faith; and have, in the authority of God, by whom they were revealed, the formal motive of faith. Protestantism has established private interpretation, as the legitimate means of discovering what the doctrines are which the Scriptures contain. This means, we maintain, to be altogether inadequate to the attainment of faith, either as to its object or motive.

1. The doctrinal expositions of all Protestant sects deny that any Church or any individual is infallible. They make fallibility in matters of faith, to be an essential predicate of the human intellect. No judgment which man can form will they admit to be infallible. This universal fallibility is necessarily an axiom with Protestants. For, were they to admit any infallible individual or body, they would admit the obligation of all men to adhere to his judgment on all doctrines, in regard of which his infallibility was acknowledged. Protestants must, therefore, admit, that in the exercise of their private judgment, they are liable to error; and that, consequently, their interpretations of Scripture may be erroneous. But his interpretation of Scripture is what the Protestant judges to be the doctrines of Scripture. Since, then, he admits that his judgment may have been erroneously formed, he must also admit that what he considers to be the doctrine of Scripture may, in reality, be not the doctrine of Scripture, but an erroneous opinion of his own. But the object of his belief is that which his judgment presents to him as the revealed truth; and this he admits, by acknowledging the fallibility of his judgment, may not be revealed truth, but his own erroneous opinion. By the exercise of private interpretation, then, no other object of belief can ever be obtained, than an opinion which may confessedly be erroneous. But an opinion which may be erroneous, cannot be the object of faith; for it is not a revealed truth, and revealed truth alone is the object of faith; nor has it the sole motive of faith—the authority of God—for if it had, it could not possibly be erroneous. From

the exercise of private interpretation, opinion only can be obtained; but God never revealed an opinion. Faith is, therefore, simply incompatible with the exercise of private judgment.

We do not, however, require the admission of Protestants, in order to know how liable private judgment is to err in matters of faith. Although absolute certainty may be attained by reason in regard of things which are of the natural order, it must be carefully borne in mind that the truths of revelation lie beyond the sphere of reason—that they can be known only by a revelation from God; and only to the extent, and in the manner, He has been pleased to reveal them. Where, then, the revelation has been made in a past age, its truths can be made known only by testimony. If the language of the witness who announces those truths be obscure, or admit of various interpretations, the attempts of reason to clear up the obscurity, and bring out the one true interpretation, must ever give an uncertain result. For the natural powers of man, and the natural objects of his knowledge, are of a different order from the truths which he seeks to obtain. And it must not be forgotten, that even those natural powers have been deteriorated and weakened,³ so that the certain attainment of truth, even in the natural order, is not unfrequently difficult, sometimes it is impossible. What hope, then, of a certain result, can that man have who attempts, by his natural powers, to discover doctrines which differ in their nature from all things of which he has naturally cognizance? Analogies or comparisons between natural and supernatural are evidently perilous—they may often be erroneous, they must always be inconclusive. To these elements of uncertainty and error, must be added uncertain, or even fallacious principles of judgment, which have been adopted upon insufficient grounds, or having been imbibed from prevailing modes of reasoning, without ever being formally examined, or distinctly brought

³ The Westminster Confession goes so far as to make the attainment of truth not only doubtful, but impossible. It declares that since the fall, "we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." Chap. vi. 4.

up before the mind, have been allowed to lie as it were latent. Those only who have been accustomed to analyse the phenomena of their own minds, can appreciate the extent to which those latent principles influence the judgments even of men who have made generous efforts to divest themselves of all that they looked upon as prejudice. The question of Philip, "Understandest thou the Scripture which thou readest?" was answered by the Ethiopian eunuch in the name of the human race, "and how can I, unless some man show me?" And, in fact, the truth of this humble acknowledgment of inability received the sanction of God; for a man was divinely sent to point out the true interpretation.

If a just estimate be formed of the power of such influences as we have alluded to, and still more, of the constant though unacknowledged agency of passion, interest, human respect, and a will indisposed to the confession of previous error, neither the number nor the magnitude of those differences which have shivered the work of Luther into a thousand pieces, will cause us much surprise. It is with Protestants as with all who speculate upon subjects on which they have not been instructed by some man qualified to show them their nature: they leap at conclusions without any process of reasoning whatever; they set up objects of comparison where no points of resemblance are to be discovered, and fly to the most extravagant and untenable principles and hypotheses, in order to avoid some difficulty which their own imagination, it may be, or the want of some simple principle, had conjured up. The Bible is, in fact, forced into the eccentric mould of a contracted and undisciplined judgment, and made to assume forms the most violent, contradictory, and fantastic, instead of being, as Protestants so fondly but so falsely imagine, the standard to which they conform their ideas. There is no doctrine asserted, on the authority of Scripture, interpreted by private judgment, by any sect of Protestants, which is not, on the same authority, refuted and anathematized by some other. The nature of God, his attributes; the sacraments, their number, nature, administration, and power; the inspiration of Scripture, and the number of inspired books; grace, liberty, eternal punish-

ments, good works, faith, are a few of those subjects on which the various sects of Protestantism are at open war with each other. Yet each of these sects employs the same rule of faith, which it consults and applies by the same means; they all possess the same authority to form their judgments; and claim, on the same grounds, the same supernatural assistance in their task of interpretation. It frequently happens that contending sects seize upon the same passage of the sacred text, the one passionately maintaining that it establishes, the other as resolutely asserting that it refutes, the disputed doctrine. The seamless garment of Christ is rent by clamorous combatants, who, bending the knee, call Him their King, whom they are hurrying off to execution as a teacher of contradictions, and a deceiver of the people.

As an illustration of the working of the Protestant principle, we may instance the controversies upon the words—"This is my body." Upon this simple affirmation, Protestants have advanced upwards of fifty different opinions. Some, with Luther, maintain, that words so plain, so often repeated in Scripture, uttered on so solemn an occasion, cannot be explained away, or taken in any other than the literal sense, without overturning the whole system of Bible teaching. For they who assert that our Saviour gave only a figure of his body, when He says he gave his body itself, can answer nothing to those who maintain that Christ gave himself up to death only in figure, although he says, "This is my body which is broken for you;" or that "the Word was God;" or that "the Word was made flesh;" or that "God created the heavens and the earth." For not one of these truths is more forcibly or more clearly affirmed than the one in question. Their opponents, however, have a strong impression, that the real presence is an impossible doctrine; and their grand object is to show that it is neither "set down in Scripture, nor can by good and necessary consequence be deduced from it." Here the principle is distinctly admitted, that the object of faith is *not the mere words*, but *the true interpretation of Scripture*. Those who deny the doctrine of the real presence, must even go so far as to hold, that a man may assert a doctrine in

the very words of inspiration which shall nevertheless be erroneous, while he may maintain a real Scripture doctrine which can be correctly expressed *only by the contradiction of the text*. For the doctrine of the Eucharist, which the majority of Protestants hold to be scriptural, cannot be gathered from the text, "this is my body," while it would be accurately conveyed by the contrary, "this is not my body." Let us follow still farther this process of private interpretation. Protestants say that Scripture is to be compared with Scripture, and the passages which are clear will serve to illustrate those which are obscure. This canon of interpretation seems, at first sight, very satisfactory and very reasonable; but in practice it is of difficult application, as the contending parties claim, each for itself, the clear texts, and insist upon their adversaries explaining all other passages in accordance with them. Thus every sectarian considers all texts which he thinks favour his own views to be clear texts, and those which oppose him to be obscure. However, let us apply the rule, such as it is. Let us examine, in succession, all the passages which bear upon the real presence, and find, if possible, words clearer than the proposition, "this *is* my body," by which these may be made to say, "this *is not* my body." Does, then, the account of St. Mark tend in any way to show that the words of institution, as quoted above from St. Matthew's gospel, are to be understood in a figurative sense? St. Mark gives the same identical expressions. St. Luke, who also records the institution of the Eucharist, repeats the same terms. St. Paul, declaring the doctrine which he "had received of the Lord," uses the same words, "take and eat, *this is my body*."¹ The accounts of the institution are not, however, the only portions of Scripture in which this doctrine is spoken of. St. Paul reasons upon the Eucharist, drawing from the nature of this sacrament practical consequences which should have perpetual influence in the Christian church. He insists on the necessity of reflection and self-examination on the part of intending communicants, lest, by precipitance or negligence, they should fail to discern in the sacrament "the

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 24.

body of the Lord." The unworthy communicant he pronounces to be guilty, not against a figure, but "*of the body and blood of the Lord.*" All this is evidently unfavourable to those who interpret figuratively. Here is a public teacher, declaring a certain act to be sinful, and explaining the nature of the sin. In such an exercise of his office, figurative language would not only be out of place, it would inevitably produce confusion of ideas, and give rise to the formation of a false conscience; while the language of exaggeration would be equivalent to deceit. Where, then, the guilt of the Lord's body and blood can be contracted, there the body and blood of the Lord must exist. But the apostle does not confine himself to the effects of bad communions; he likewise explains their cause. It is the spirit of Rationalism refusing obedience to the teaching of faith. "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, *not discerning the body of the Lord.*" The body of the Lord can be discerned only where it exists; and it cannot be a crime in any one not to perceive it where it does not exist. Lest the people should still be more inclined to trust to the outward appearance than to the sure word of faith, the apostle affirms the real presence in the strongest form that language affords—an interrogation:—"The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? and the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?" To the Protestant these texts must, we presume, be themselves obscure; for if the words of institution are to receive any light from St. Paul, they must, more than before, be accepted in their literal signification. We must then seek elsewhere for the text which is to "speak more clearly." In St. John's gospel (chap. vi.), our Saviour promised that the time should come, when he would give his flesh to be eaten, and his blood to be drank: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world." Here, too, the language is very simple, but in perfect conformity with that of St. Paul and of the other three evangelists. Still Protestants hesitate as to the meaning of our Saviour. The expressions are,

indeed, the same in all the passages; and each succeeding text serves only to confirm the impression naturally made by the first. But yet the Protestant insists upon his question. "Did our Saviour intend this language to be understood figuratively, or did he really mean that his flesh and blood were to become meat and drink to his followers?" This inquiry was anticipated by our Lord, for (v. 56) he says, "My flesh *is* meat INDEED, and my blood *is* drink INDEED" (*αληθως*—truly, really). Any doubt *as to the meaning* of our Saviour, seems, after such a declaration, impossible. It now only remains for private judgment to question *the truth of the doctrine* so repeatedly, so strongly declared. Indeed, the principal, if not the sole objection to the real presence, urged by Protestants, is that it seems to be an impossibility—that God could not work such a miracle; and that, therefore, the words of Scripture must be made to yield—they must be bent from their obvious sense, and interpreted figuratively. How, it is asked, can a body be in many places at once? How could Christ give, with his own hands, his own flesh to his disciples? If it were once admitted, that, where God has spoken, man may yet refuse belief to His words, as often as unaided reason does not see how they are to be accomplished, these questions would be admissible. They will naturally occur to men who have not received "the faith of God," nor been able to comprehend the words—"With God *all things are possible.*" The Jews, in fact, summed up the objections of Protestants to our Lord's declarations, in their ready exclamation—"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" The answer of our Saviour gives no countenance to the idea that he had been using figures of speech. It is a repetition, in still more forcible terms, of his precious declaration; strengthened yet more by the assurance, "Amen, amen, I say unto you; unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye shall not have life in you." The assurance that "with God all things are possible," and the words "my flesh is meat indeed," do not afford a *direct* answer to the "How?" of Jews and Protestants. Both parties remain, therefore, still at issue with our Saviour as to the truth of his asseverations. They

declare that this of the real presence, "is a hard saying, who can hear it?" (v. 61.) The Jews, consistently with their sceptical ideas, abandon the teacher, because they cannot listen to his doctrine. But the Protestant, who will neither abandon the teacher nor admit his doctrine, is driven to search for a figurative meaning to apply to words which our Saviour saw that his hearers understood literally; yet was so far from correcting their literal interpretation as erroneous, that He strengthened their impression, and permitted them to abandon him for ever, solely because they objected to believe his words *in the sense in which he saw they were understood*. To give a colour of probability to an interpretation which was unknown to those who heard the words of our Lord, one solitary verse of the Scripture is singled out (v. 64):—"It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." This is supposed to make all plain.¹ It is true, indeed, that wherever, in the

¹ The 64th (in the Protestant version 63d) verse of St. John's Gospel has much occupied the attention of Protestant commentators. Yet no one of any note will be found who does not reject, with contempt, the interpretation alluded to in the text, which, we believe, is peculiar to our anti-popery expounders. When a man's sole object is, *per fas aut nefas*, to strike Popery, he will not be restrained by considerations of mere probability or consistency. But popular lecturers and others should pause ere they urge, even against Popery, an argument which, if it be not equivalent to a denial of the redemption, is so utterly absurd as to be capable only of throwing ridicule upon the entire science of biblical interpretation. Does the Protestant refer the word "flesh" literally to the flesh of Christ? Will he pronounce it to be profitless? This, we believe, many have done. But how they could maintain such an opinion, and yet believe that that flesh had redeemed the world, and reconciled man to his offended God, we are at a loss to understand. We may be permitted to suggest an interpretation certainly more in harmony with the analogies of Scripture, and more in keeping with the language and conduct of our Saviour on the occasion when the words were uttered. Our Saviour, seeing the unwillingness of his hearers to admit the truth of his assertion—"He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, shall abide in me, and I in him," proceeded to allay the offence that had been taken at this "hard saying." He assures his disciples that man, as he is by nature dead in sin, is incapable of admitting or appreciating divine truths; that, of himself, he is absolutely fruitless—unable to believe what even a divine authority proposes. But the Spirit gives life, and light, and strength; and it is to those who have been quickened by the Spirit, that the words of the Spirit—the mysteries of faith—are specially addressed; by them they are received and appreciated. That the meaning we have given to the term "flesh," as here contrasted with "spirit," is strictly correct, may be seen on a perusal of

sacred volume, the words *flesh* and *spirit* are contrasted, they mean the corruption and weakness of fallen nature, as compared with the regenerated and strengthened soul; and that nowhere do they mean or refer to literal and figurative language. But, in this particular passage, if they were interpreted in such a manner as to explain our Saviour's previous words metaphorically, they would afford such timely support to the Protestant doctrine, that our popular controversialists have resolved that the "flesh" shall here, at all hazards, bear *the literal*, and "the spirit" *the figurative meaning of words*. Had our Saviour given to those disciples who left him in consequence of his "hard saying," any reason to understand the words of verse 64 in this novel sense, they would, undoubtedly, have continued in their adherence to their beloved Master; but as they saw no sanction in those words for any modification or figurative interpretation of the "hard saying," after hearing the supposed explanation, "they went back and walked no more with him." How truly might our Lord's reproach to the Sadducees be applied to Protestants—"You err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God!"

From this single instance, the uncertain and unsatisfactory working of private interpretation may be known. Upwards of twenty texts speak on this subject the same language, declare the same doctrine; and, although showing it in various relations, all exhibit it without a shade of difference or modification. The clearness and simplicity of the language employed could not be greater. Terms more appropriate could not have been found to express the doctrine of the real presence; terms more inappropriate or more fallacious could not have been selected to convey the figurative meaning of Protestants. Yet a single passage, whose language is, avowedly, neither so obvious nor so simple, is itself interpreted in a figurative sense; and this figurative interpretation is made the authority for rejecting texts in their obvious signification, by forcing upon them a metaphorical meaning, the

Romans viii. 1—14, and Galatians v. 16—26. The interpretation we have given to the word "profits" ($\omega\varsigma\epsilon\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma$, to assist, to aid, to avail), is, we submit, in complete accordance with the radical signification of the word.

most extraordinary to be met with in any language. We consider that the Calvinist must abandon the hope of certainty in his explanation. But we would ask him—What ray of probability, that he has obtained the true interpretation, can cheer his anxious mind? His procedure violates all the canons of interpretation; and, if admitted, would speedily reduce the whole divine revelation to the level of a German myth. He has against him all the authority and learning of the Catholic Church. He is opposed by the Greek and Russian Churches, as well as by all the remnants of Nestorian, Eutychian, and other ancient heresies; while several Protestant sects are equally opposed to his meagre creed. Such an accumulation of testimony, adverse to his judgment, might well stagger the confidence of one, whose fundamental principle supposes that he himself may be wrong, and that his adversaries may be right.

This argument may now be reduced to a more concise form. The man who sees that the probabilities for the adoption or rejection of a doctrine are balanced, or nearly so, cannot be certain that he is right, either in admitting or denying the doctrine. His judgment on the one side or the other, can amount only to a more or less probable opinion. Certainty it cannot be. But the Protestant sees that the probabilities for and against every specific doctrine of his sect are equal, or nearly so. He cannot, therefore, have certainty for the truth of any one of the articles of his creed. The first member of this argument is self-evident. It simply says that a man cannot be certain he is right, when he admits that there is nearly an equal probability he may be wrong. The second member we prove thus:—The probabilities for and against a doctrine are balanced when its opponents are men of equal abilities, equal learning, and equal piety; and who have formed their judgment by the same right, with the same means; and drawn their reasons from the same source, and by the same process as its supporters. Now, unless the individual Protestant set himself up as the most able, the most learned, the most pious, and most favoured of men, by special revelations of truth, he must admit that the opponents of his

doctrinal views are his equals in all those respects. He must, therefore, also admit that the moral probability is as great in favour of their denial as of his affirmation. And as he holds no single doctrine which is not denied by some church or other, he can have no more than a probability in his favour on any one point. But faith in a probability is an absurdity; for it is a contradiction in terms, since faith is absolute certainty. There can be faith only in what God has revealed; and He revealed facts, not probabilities. As the exercise, however, of private judgment has been proved to be capable of yielding in matters of revelation only probabilities, it renders faith impossible.

An explanation is, no doubt, due, and we consider that here it may most fittingly be given, of the manner in which our argument has hitherto been, and, throughout these pages, will be conducted. We have, it will be observed, made use of passages from sacred writ, almost exclusively in illustration of our reasoning and definitions. Rarely, if at all, have we sought to introduce them as direct proof of our positions. If we have thus departed from the general course of controversial writers, it has not been without a purpose, which reasons maturely weighed amply justify. 1°. We have seen the Westminster Confession lay down the incontrovertible fact, that *the work of the Holy Ghost*, the inspired word of God, is *not the English Bible*, but the original texts. Those are the only authentic documents acknowledged by the Confession. Now, an argument conducted by appeals to the original texts, would be altogether unsuited to a popular work. And to what purpose should we argue from the English Bible against men who deny it to be any authority? 2°. The words of Scripture, whether in the original texts or in versions, are but the outward instrument for conveying to the reader *the word of God*. The thought suggested to the mind of the inspired writer by the Holy Spirit, is *the word*; and that word, as the Confession of Faith has truly said, "is not manifold, but one." The outward expression may be tortured by the caprice or malice or ignorance of the reader, but *the word* is eternal truth, one and unchangeable. When the letter is divorced

from the true interpretation, or attached to another, it killeth. The language of Scripture, when made to convey a meaning which was not intended by the Holy Spirit, is not the word of God, but error—the perverse offspring of the human mind.

3°. The Catholic believes the Church to be the sole authorized interpreter of the Scriptures; and, therefore, holds that every interpretation which has not been sanctioned by her, or is not in accordance with her teaching, is not the word of God, but error. When, then, the Catholic quotes the language of Scripture, he does so in the sense of the Church; for this sense alone is true—thus alone is the Scripture the word of God. Does the Protestant admit the application of passages quoted in this sense? Then there can be no controversy between us. He is ready to embrace the entire system of Catholic dogma. Does he deny that, in the sense of the Church, the passages are the word of God? Then they are for him no authority, and any appeal to them would be made in vain.

4°. To convince the Protestant, by philological and hermeneutical principles, that the Catholic is the true interpretation, would be a tedious process, and lead us far beyond the bounds we have prescribed to ourselves. It would, moreover, place the weight of the Church's authority on a seeming level with that of the private individual; and betray us into the inconsistency of acting as if the Scripture, interpreted by private judgment, were a true rule of faith—the very doctrine we proposed to demolish. The Protestant is not entitled to make or call upon us to make any appeal to Scripture, until he can show that he has Scripture to appeal to; and *that*, we have proved, he cannot show. We might, indeed, have argued from the Bible as an argument *ad hominem*; but we have preferred to take the more direct and logical process of bringing the Protestant to the only ground he really possesses along with us—our common reason. We convince Protestantism of error and deceit, first, from principles which we demonstrate, or which are admitted by all men; and, secondly, from its own formularies, whose authority will not be called in question. It seemed to us that our task might thus be most honestly and most effectually accomplished, and that no room for cavil or exception could thus be left to an honourable and consistent opponent.

CHAPTER II.

ON GOD.

THE all-sufficiency of Scripture, and the "right of private judgment," lie at the root of Protestantism. These were not, indeed, the first questions brought up in the contest between the Reformers and the Church; but they necessarily preceded, in the minds of all who broke off from the ancient faith, every other innovation. The principles of Protestantism were latent in the mind of Luther; the doctrine of indulgences was only the agent which excited their activity. That the Reformers, even before their defection from the Church, acted as if they supposed the entire Christian revelation to be contained in the Bible, is evident from the fact, that they would admit only texts of Scripture in proof of revealed truths, and that the words of Scripture were acknowledged by them as authoritative, not when explained in the sense of the Church, but as they were interpreted by the Reformers themselves. So deeply-rooted, however, had the principle of Church authority become, that those new principles were, for some time, acted upon by the Reformers, not only unconsciously, but even contrary to their wishes and intention. Hence Luther long and repeatedly expressed his willingness to abandon his innovations, if they should ever be pronounced erroneous by the Pope. Nor did their reiterated condemnation at Rome suffice to make him acknowledge the principles on which his reforming career had been conducted, or convince him that he was in open rebellion against the Church. He continued for many years, in spite of his gross and public acts of insubordination, to profess his readiness to submit to the decision of the Pope "better informed." And it was only towards the close of his life that he withdrew (if, indeed, he ever did

withdraw) his protestations of submission to the judgment of a General Council. Many causes were, however, at work, to propel the disciples of Luther far beyond their teacher in the career of reform. The element of Rationalism has, since the desire of our first parents to "become as gods, knowing good and evil," been restrained at times, but not eradicated from the human breast. Even the severe enactments of the Mosaic law were insufficient for its total repression. Hence we find the Sadducees denying the mystery of the resurrection, because of its seeming repugnance to their reason. Jesus Christ gave a new sanction to the principle of authority in matters of faith. But six hundred years elapsed ere it obtained the mastery over that Rationalism, which, more persevering and more dreaded than the sword of the persecutors, strove without ceasing, at one time to assault, at another to undermine, the truths of Christianity. At no period has Rationalism been more active than during the first seven centuries of the Christian era. But, under the evident guidance and protection of God, the Church was finally victorious; and, with the overthrow of Arianism, that principle seemed to disappear. The Church was then left free to devote her energies to the conversion of heathen nations, to the civilization of those barbarous hordes which had been brought in to execute the divine vengeance upon pagan Rome, and to effect a complete revolution in society. It was necessary that the distractions caused by those swarms of sects to which the restless spirit of Rationalism had given rise, should be removed when the Church had before her the great work of moulding society anew, and laying the foundations of the great European monarchies. From time to time, however, the hydra which had been overpowered gave signs of life; and Photius, Abelard, Wicleff appeared as the heralds of those future evils, of which they were also to a certain extent the cause.

The revival and excessive study of the heathen classics about the opening of the sixteenth century, did more, however, for the Reformation, than the dogmatic efforts of previous sectaries. The voluptuous poetry of Greece and Rome was ill calculated to strengthen that spirit of mortification and self-

restraint which is still made so serious a reproach to Catholicity, while the philosophy of those countries, by its endless doubts and subtle speculations, adorned as they were with all the graces which the language of men such as Plato and Cicero could impart, tended not less to introduce and foster the spirit of scepticism, than to create in the minds it had effeminated an aversion to the iron philosophy of the schoolmen. Luther appeared, just as the rage for classical studies had attained its height. Prepared, as were the minds of men, by their passion for the classics, to welcome a religion which should afford free scope to the speculations of reason, and impose a gentler yoke on the appetites than did the unbending morality of the Church, they readily seized upon the principles which were the spring of Luther's actions, and gave to them a meaning and a development at which their daring author himself stood aghast. Although the principle of Rationalism, which received its logical development in the systems of the German Anabaptists, of Socinus, of Fox, Swedenborg, Strauss, and perhaps Irving, be really the essence of Protestantism, yet all Protestants have not ranged themselves under the banners of such leaders, nor formed for themselves religions analogous to theirs. For there is another element in Protestantism. Luther and his followers professed to be *reformers*. They did not come to publish a new, but to reform the old revelation. Thus it was, that, along with their own peculiar tenets, most of the Protestant sects have retained several of the doctrines which they carried with them from the Church. It is true, in every case, the old dogmas are in contradiction with the new. But such is the nature of things. And if it were not so, that error destroyed itself, it might have been said that God had left man without sufficient light to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Men cannot "put new wine into old bottles; otherwise the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish."

The new and old doctrines being mutually repulsive, have been mixed in Protestantism; but they cannot, by any process, be combined so as to form one homogeneous body. There is a continual struggle for a separation between elements so un-

congenial. Thus Protestantism is ever more and more breaking up, and all its developments are towards entire liberty, and a complete emancipation from the trammels of dogmatism. The advanced Protestant of the present day occupies the ground which was held by the so-called "free-thinkers" of last century. As to those who fear to push their principles to their results, they offer to us the melancholy spectacle of men professing to be guided by reason, yet establishing principles against whose legitimate consequences they see themselves compelled to enter, by anticipation, repeated protests. Again and again, in the Confession of Faith, are doctrines laid down, the authors of which, perceiving at once that the most fatal consequences flow directly from them, have with a moral weakness, equalled only by their reliance on the blind obedience of their followers, declared that the doctrines themselves are to be held, yet so as that their consequences are to be strenuously rejected. When the Westminster divines treat directly of the nature and attributes of God, their language is clear, correct, and eloquent. They simply transcribe the Catholic doctrine. But when, in other articles, they define certain of the new doctrines, in consequence, confusion and imbecility contend for pre-eminence. At one time, as the writers of the Confession feel themselves approaching dangerous ground, they close the article abruptly with some pompous nothing, or take themselves off with an edifying but irrelevant text of Scripture. At another, when the results of their principles are so evident that they must occur to the mind of the simplest reader, a formal reprobation of the impiety is recorded. This conflict must continue so long as a single dogma is retained in Protestantism of all that were carried out from the Catholic Church. The Protestant who wishes to retain the old doctrines, must suffer a constant martyrdom from the new. He finds himself continually flying from the face of the creature which his own hands had made. He turns on every side for some asylum or means of escape from his relentless foe. But on the ground he has chosen he can find none. He is condemned to be "ever learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth."

The doctrines of Calvin, which have been embodied in the Westminster Confession, are held, at the present day, in their integrity, by few, perhaps, besides the ultra-evangelicals. Yet they have never been formally repudiated. They retain, unchanged, their place in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms; and the office-bearers and communicants of the Presbyterian bodies are still required to subscribe to their truth. It can scarcely be believed that the nature of these doctrines is known by the majority of those who profess them; for they are quite irreconcilable with the language generally used by Presbyterians when speaking of the divine attributes. We shall demonstrate, in this chapter, that the doctrines of the Westminster Confession strip God of his Justice, his Truth, and his Sanctity.

SECTION I.—THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

There are certain doctrines of Calvinism which the Confession of Faith orders "to be handled with special prudence and care." (Chap. iii. 8.) The defenders of Calvinism, when speaking of these doctrines, dwell much upon the weakness of human reason, and the necessity of a jealous guard against its intrusion into the domain of faith; and affect a modesty of expression which would be highly edifying and exceedingly honourable to their religious sentiments, were it only consistent with their general conduct, or honestly intended to define the boundaries between faith and reason. But men who reject books of Scripture, because they find their opinions condemned in those books; and who deny doctrines established by the clearest words of the books they do admit, because such doctrines are above the order of nature and incomprehensible to reason, cannot be permitted to withdraw at pleasure their opinions from the bar of that reason to which they themselves had appealed; much less can they be allowed to hold unchallenged opinions which make a mockery of the universal reason of mankind, merely because they are supported by the authority of Calvin. No truth can be in contradiction with any other truth. The truths of revelation cannot be in contradiction with the truths of reason. For God is the author of reason as

well as of revelation, and he cannot be in contradiction with himself. If, therefore, an opinion or interpretation of Scripture be in evident contradiction with a truth which, lying within the natural order, is or has been made really evident to reason, that opinion or interpretation must be erroneous.

There are certain ideas and principles which precede in the human mind all reasoning, and all belief grounded upon reasoning. To these principles and ideas all reasoning can be traced back; for by them only is it intelligible, and from them it derives its validity. Were they to be displaced or called in question, reasoning and knowledge would become impossible. To unsettle them is to overturn reason itself. In the moral order, such are the ideas of good, right, responsibility, guilt, duty. The first principles of morality are practical forms of those primary ideas. Although they are expressed as judgments, and the expression may be both the object and the result of a judgment, the principles themselves are anterior to the judgment in which they are expressed, and are held and acted on independently of all formulas of morality. They are believed, not in consequence of reflection and judgment, but because their truth is seen and felt—it is an object of consciousness. All men feel and know that they are responsible; that they can contract guilt; that they can do wrong; that they can abstain from doing it; that the limit of power is the limit of duty; that where duty ceases, guilt can no longer be contracted; and that the degree of guilt is the measure of punishment. Such are a few of those principles we have been alluding to, which bear more immediately upon the questions to be discussed in this chapter. They cannot be proved by direct demonstration, and they stand in need of no proof; for they are self-evident as soon as understood. The universality of these principles shows that they are not acquired by a process, but have been planted in the human breast by the hand of God. By them society exists. All the rules of human actions are grounded on them, or framed in relation to them. On their truth all laws are based, and justice is administered. Even those who have called them in question, find it impossible to act without supposing their truth. Like

the sophists who deny the possibility of motion, or the existence of an exterior world, they are compelled, with the crowd, to laugh at their own sophistry, which in truth serves only to puzzle or irritate the scholar, and to forget all their theories from the moment they lay aside the mantle of Zeno, and descend from the halls of the academy into the walks of real life.

I. Among those who have signalized themselves by their efforts to overturn the first principles of morality, the leaders of the Reformation occupy a conspicuous position. All of them did not, indeed, so directly as Zwingle, Luther, and Melanethon, subvert the justice of God; but, by establishing doctrines which were incompatible with it, Calvin, Beza, and the more reflecting sectaries, virtually denied all justice, and rendered morality unintelligible and absurd. The ideas of Calvin have been adopted by the Westminster divines, and still form part of Presbyterian orthodoxy, as will appear in our proof of the proposition, that—

The Doctrines of the Scotch Confession of Faith are subversive of the Divine Justice.

1. It is unjust and tyrannical to require of any man a service which it is impossible for him to render. But the Confession of Faith represents God as requiring from his creatures services which it is impossible for them to render; the Confession of Faith, therefore, represents God as tyrannical and unjust. The major term of this syllogism has, by the universal consent of mankind, been declared a first principle of reason, and a self-evident truth. It would be a fruitless task to undertake the demonstration of a first principle, or to render more forcible a self-evident proposition. Those who deny first principles place themselves beyond the pale of reason. They cannot be reached by any syllogism or figure of logic; for all reasoning rests upon the principles which they reject. They are in the position of a blind man who should deny the existence of colours. It is in vain that he is instructed in the different properties of red, violet, and yellow rays. He denies that there is such a thing as red, or yellow, or violet. What he requires is not argument but a faculty.

Those who deny first principles, in like manner, stand in need rather of a faculty of reason than of reasons. The subject, however, admits of illustration to an extent sufficient to place, in a very strong light, the inconsistency as well as the unreasonableness of those who are prepared to deny that it is tyranny and injustice to command an impossibility.

There is nowhere to be found any discrepancy of opinion as to the parties for whom legislation has been instituted. The wildest despots whom the world has yet seen, never dreamt of passing enactments to bind those whom nature had incapacitated from observing them. Even Caligula, whose mad tyranny led him to outrage reason so far as to create his horse a consul, never reached such a pitch of extravagance as to draw up a code of laws for the good conduct of the brute; nor did he attempt to hedge in with pains and penalties the acts of infants, or of those unfortunate beings in whom the light of reason had been extinguished. Their incapacity was a sufficient protection against the caprice of a man who recoiled from no known species of injustice. Could any possible palliation be found for a legislator who should venture to do that which Caligula dared not attempt? Is there a man who would hesitate for a moment to characterize as the supreme effort of human wickedness, a law commanding, under pain of death, all the inhabitants of a distant island to present themselves at court on a given day, and directing, at the same time, the officers of government to remove every possible means of transport from the unhappy people until the appointed day should have passed? Would the injustice of such a law be in any degree lessened, if the government were arbitrarily to name a small number of individuals, without any regard to their conduct or circumstances, and exempt them from the general massacre? Again, when the avarice of an employer stimulates him to exact of his dependents tasks unsuited to their years or strength, he will find, on every tongue, eloquent denunciations of his cruelty and injustice. What shouts of indignation filled the land when the horrors of the factory system were first exposed to public view! No one waited for the passing of the ten-hours' bill to stigmatize,

as it deserved, the conduct of a great body of the mill-owners. Yet those men had not gone so far as to require absolute impossibilities : nay, it is probable that few among them had formally broken the law. Even the high authority which parents have received from God would prove no justification of their conduct, were they, from any motive whatever, to exact of their children an obedience which nature had rendered impossible. That relationship from which their authority is derived, involving, as it does, proportionally stronger mutual duties, far from excusing their tyranny, would but increase the heinousness of their guilt.

The most rigid Calvinists will not deny, that, between man and man, the principles of justice on the point at present under discussion are undeniably clear, and universally admitted. But they are accustomed to say : We dare not apply those principles to the conduct of the Almighty, nor circumscribe him by the boundaries within which we ourselves must move. "His ways are not as our ways." His supreme dominion over all his creatures gives him the right to do throughout creation as he will ; so that, what in a mortal superior would be tyranny and injustice, may in him, as Creator and absolute Lord of all, be but the exercise of his legitimate authority. In fine, what appears to us unjust—judging by the common principles of justice—may in him be the most exalted righteousness. Yet the men who speak with such diffidence of the powers of reason, refuse to believe the real presence because their reason cannot comprehend how a *spiritual body* can subsist and act, save in subjection to the ordinary laws which govern the *material* world. If the spiritual body will not subject itself to the laws of gravity, nor become present conformably to their ideas of space and time, it cannot be admitted to be present at all. If its motion cannot be traced by the equation of a parabola, its movement is only the fancy of a superstitious mind. When they can thus invest their reason with powers to subject the spiritual world to the *mechanical laws*, their modest fear lest it should overleap its limits by assenting to a self-evident principle, can only be considered as a cloak to conceal some dreaded

truth. There can be no presumption in saying that the providence of God is guided by the principles of justice which universal reason proclaims for the direction of mankind. For since those principles are universal and unchangeable, they come from God himself; and thus it is, that if man be required to conform his life to them, he is in reality called upon to make the rule of his conduct the principles of eternal justice on which God himself acts; it can no way be said that God is circumscribed by the ideas of man. It is a perversion of ideas as well as of language to say that justice can be one thing in God and another in man. Justice is eternal, and therefore unchangeable and one. The justice of man is true only as it is a reflex of the justice of God. It is true that "God's ways are not as our ways," for the perfections of God are infinite, those of man are finite. But the Calvinist's reasoning upon the text makes the justice of God differ from that of man, not by showing it to be infinitely perfect, but by changing it into injustice. If the justice of God differ in its nature from that of man, then the more that man seeks to approach his Maker, and conform himself to the pattern which God incarnate set before him, the more will he wander from the standard of true perfection, whereas all Christendom has agreed to take as the rule of life the sayings:—"Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect;" and "Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy." If the fundamental ideas of justice possessed by man were false or inapplicable to the dispositions of divine providence, then the perfection which was so resplendent in the life of our Saviour was a deception. All morality would be a lie; for morality rests upon the perfections of God for its reason as well as for its form. If those ideas were false, there could be no sufficient proof for the existence of God; or rather, there could be no God. For we can conceive God only as a being possessed of all perfections in infinite measure. Justice, as we understand it, is a real perfection, and, if not found in God, the idea of a being of infinite perfection is destroyed. If infinite justice consist in what reason compels all men to pronounce injustice, then all reason and all language is a delusion and a

snare; and man knows nothing, and must ever remain incapable of knowledge. That man is the creature of God, and absolutely at his disposal, is true. But it is a blasphemous explanation of the rights of creation or parentage, which changes them into injustice and tyranny. In proportion as the tie of creation and providence is more powerful than any earthly relationship, so much more will equity and mercy mark the conduct of the Creator towards his creatures. As, therefore, the fundamental principles of justice are the dictates of our rational nature, and therefore the voice of God, and as those principles are supposed and sanctioned throughout both the Jewish and Christian revelation, and, in particular, are the groundwork of the divine law, they cannot be denied without denying reason itself, and, with it, all knowledge, even the knowledge of God and his attributes. And as those principles of reason and precepts of the divine law, have been given by the Almighty in order that, by following them, man might conform his conduct to the holiness and perfection of God, they are the expression of divine as well as of human justice. To assert, therefore, that God can be in contradiction with them, is to assert that God could act in contradiction with himself. The proposition, therefore, that "it is unjust and tyrannical to require of any man a service which it is impossible for him to render," must be admitted as an absolute truth by all who do not deny both God and reason.

2. The proof of the second member of our argument—"the Confession of Faith represents God as requiring of his creatures services which it is impossible for them to render"—will require little to render it conclusive, beyond extracts from the Confession itself and its authorized accompaniment—the Larger Catechism. Luther, by his doctrine of "gospel liberty," paved the way for the atrocities of the Anabaptists, and established the principles whence the various sects of the Antinomians sprang. Although he waged a deadly war, both morally and materially, against the sectaries to whom his own opinions had given birth, and, in consequence of their excesses, modified, or at least qualified, to some extent, his

expressions, yet he constantly maintained that the observance of the divine law was impossible, and, indeed, that it was not binding upon the righteous. Calvin, whose cooler and more disciplined judgment enabled him to examine his principles and weigh his expressions, avoids, indeed, the irreverent sallies of Luther; but, by adopting his doctrine that the observance of the law was impossible, while, nevertheless, he held it to be really binding upon all men, fell into a contradiction which his more daring brother reformer had avoided. If, however, his more moderate language was inspired by reverence for God, whose revealed will the law is, the same motive might well have urged him a step farther, and induced him to reject the impiety contained in the doctrine of Luther, as well as the revolting terms in which it had been published. The opinions of Calvin have been adopted, almost in the language of their author, by the Westminster divines. According to them, God has imposed upon us a yoke too grievous for any man to bear, and a burden too heavy for any man to carry. The great obligations which God has imposed upon man, may be summarily said to consist of belief, obedience, and repentance. That all men, without exception, have been required by Almighty God to believe in him, to obey his will, and to repent of sin, is asserted in the Westminster Confession with a force and clearness which could scarcely be surpassed. "The moral law doth for ever bind all, *as well justified persons* as others, to the obedience thereof. . . . Neither doth Christ in the gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.¹" The Larger Catechism (Q. 93) explains very satisfactorily the basis of this perpetual obligation. "The moral law is the declaration of *the will of God* to mankind, directing and binding *every one* to *personal*, perfect, and perpetual obedience and conformity thereunto, in the frame and dispositions of the whole man, soul and body; and in performance of all those duties of holiness and righteousness which he oweth to God and man, promising life on the fulfilling, and threatening death upon the breach of it." The law, then, is the will of God. Now, without contradicting

¹ *Confession of Faith*, chap. xix. 5.

himself, God cannot fail to require this real and *personal* obedience to the law; for he cannot cease to desire that his own will should be accomplished. He desires, however, its accomplishment, not solely because of its intrinsic holiness and justice, but also as a means to an end. It is the condition of salvation, "promising life upon the fulfilling, and threatening death upon the breach of it." This is certainly sound teaching, and entirely in accordance with the words of Jesus Christ—"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." No man is or can ever be exempted from this obligation of full obedience to the law. The Confession of Faith not only states, as above, the general obligation of all men, the just and the unjust, but reiterates it again and again, and details, moreover, the special uses and advantages of the law for each of those classes into which it divides the human race. That the unregenerate are bound to the observance of the law is evident; for, if they fail to observe it, they are "left inexcusable and under the curse thereof."¹ Obedience to the law brings special advantages to the elect: "It is of great use to them (the elect) as well as to others, in that, as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly."² The duties of belief and repentance, although included in the law, are, however, specially required: "That we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us by reason of the transgression of the law, he (God) requireth of us repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."³

These extracts leave no doubt as to the mind of the Westminster divines. They affirm, in terms which admit of no reservation or double interpretation, that God has imposed upon all men, the just and the unjust, the duties of belief in himself and in his revelation, of a real and *personal* obedience to his law, and of repentance for sin. To complete our argument, we now proceed to show that those same divines have declared that, of the duties above mentioned, belief and repentance are possible only to the elect, and that the fulfil-

¹ *Larger Catechism*, Q. 96.

² *Confession of Faith*, chap. xix. 6.

³ *Larger Catechism*, Q. 153.

ment of the divine law is absolutely and for ever impossible to all, the elect not less than the reprobate.

The natural inability of fallen man to do anything in order to salvation, without the assistance of divine grace, is acknowledged, we believe, by all Christians. Salvation is a supernatural state of happiness, and no natural act could bear any proportion to it, unless God freely bestowed on the act a virtue by which it should acquire a supernatural value. Hence we can neither believe nor obey, so as to please God, without grace. This St. Paul affirms when he writes—“Without faith it is impossible to please God;” for faith is a grace. Whilst, however, the Catholic Church teaches that God offers his grace to all men, and bestows it upon all who will, so that the condemnation of the wicked is to be attributed solely to their free rejection of the grace which they had the power to have accepted, the Calvinists maintain that God either offers not his grace at all to those who shall be lost, or, if an offer is made, that it is insincere, since there is not, and cannot be, on the part of God, any wish or design to confer it. In either case, the Calvinist finds the reason of the sinner’s condemnation exclusively in God. We are here simply stating the fact; we are not exaggerating an opinion. If even a Calvinist should feel a natural horror of such doctrines, when stated in intelligible terms, let him only, with a firm eye and impartial judgment, as in the presence of God, measure and weigh the proofs; and say whether Calvinism be not the enemy of God, as well as of reason and revelation.

As to the belief which God requires of man, the Confession of Faith speaks thus:—“God freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved, and promising to give unto *all those that are ordained unto life* his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and *able to believe.*”¹ The ability to believe in the manner God requires is not possessed by the natural man; hence the act of faith is impossible to him until he has received the grace of faith. Now, if the words of the above article be considered, it will be seen that, although belief is

¹ *Confession of Faith*, chap. viii. 3.

required of all, and life and salvation are offered to all, God will not grant to all *the ability* to believe; for it is only those that are "ordained unto life" whom he has promised to make able and willing to believe. It must be borne in mind, in our appreciation of the words just noted, that the inability of men to please God is not in consequence of any actual transgression of their own. They are conceived and born in this state of spiritual impotence; and, in the system of Calvin, it depends solely and exclusively upon God, and neither directly nor indirectly upon man, to remove this disability. For it can be removed only by grace; and God gives the necessary grace only to those whom he has from eternity determined to save; and he withholds it from all the rest of mankind, not because they will not admit or respond to his goodness, nor even because of their sins, but solely because it is his pleasure to take one and reject another. His offer of life and salvation to those whom he has absolutely foreordained to perdition, is, therefore, by this system altogether illusory. It is a greater mockery of helpless weakness and misfortune than would be an offer, on the part of a sovereign, of life and liberty to a condemned criminal, upon condition of his accepting a pardon authenticated by the royal sign and seal, which, however, the sovereign had no intention of granting—nay, had unchangeably determined never to grant. The strict accuracy of this statement of the Calvinistic doctrine will be made most fully evident by the citations to be brought from the Confession of Faith in proof of our next proposition. Meanwhile we give proof to show that Calvinism represents the observance of the law which God has imposed upon us, as simply impossible to any of his creatures: "They who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life . . . fall short of much which in *duty they are bound to do.*"¹ In regard to the "best works" of the just, it is said—"as they are wrought by us they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment."² If we now consider the nature of works which are defiled, as it is explained by the Larger

¹ *Confession of Faith*, chap. xvi. 4.

² *Id.*, chap. xvi. 5.

Catechism, we will understand how utterly impossible it is for even the just, by their best efforts, to fulfil the obligations which God requires of them: "Every sin, even the least, being against the sovereignty, goodness, and holiness of God, and against his righteous law, deserveth his wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come."¹ Thus far as to the just—those who are destined to reign in happiness eternal. To show that the authors of the Westminster Confession denied the possibility of men in general fulfilling the law, may now seem superfluous. However, to adduce even seemingly superfluous proof in support of a charge so important, in which the attributes of God are concerned, will scarcely be considered extravagant or unprofitable. The Larger Catechism exposes, in the following terms, its doctrine on the spiritual incapacity of mankind generally: "No man is able, either of himself or *by any grace received in this life*, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed." (Q. 149.) As to the "unregenerate" (that is, the great bulk of mankind—those unhappy beings for whom the Confession of Faith says that Christ did not die—who have not been redeemed²)—"works done by unregenerate man, although for the matter of them they may be *things which God commands*, and of good use both to themselves and others, yet . . . *they are sinful, and cannot please God*, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God."³ This doctrine, apart from its bearing on our present object, is an astonishing example of the extravagances which men will, without hesitation, maintain when they have once lost their hold on the sheet-anchor of the Church's infallibility. Here the God of infinite holiness is represented as commanding the unregenerate to commit sin, and as being more displeased with them for the omission of the sin, than he is with the sin itself. It seems to be the last

¹ *Larger Catechism*, Q. 152.

² "Neither are any other redeemed by Christ effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only."—*Confession of Faith*, chap. iii. 6.

³ *Confession of Faith*, chap. xvi. 7.

conceivable refinement of injustice, to render, by an immutable decree, every action of a man sinful, and yet charge the sinner with a heavier guilt, should he seek to avoid the sin by omitting the action. But bad principles are often responsible for bad consequences. *Abyssus abyssum invocat.* We may here adduce the words of Calvin himself in confirmation, and, if that were necessary, in explanation of his doctrine, which we have been endeavouring to state: "We must now briefly explain and prove our assertion, that the observance of the law is impossible. I shall not here enter upon any tiresome discussion as to the various kinds of possibility. I call that impossible which never was, and, by the ordinance and decree of God, is prevented from ever being."¹ The law of God, therefore, by the teaching of the Westminster Confession, never was, and never will be kept by any man; and this arises from its observance being absolutely impossible. We say *absolutely*, because the impossibility, as explained expressly by Calvin, and, as we shall immediately see, also by the Confession of Faith, arises not from the want of will in man to observe it, nor even (save in a secondary sense) from his inability, but directly from the eternal and immutable decree of God, which, without any regard to the will or dispositions of man, has prevented its observance from ever becoming a possibility to any of Adam's descendants. Meanwhile, we may here present to the reader's eye the ground we have thus far made good. The Confession of Faith expressly teaches that God requires of all men the real and personal observance of his law; which observance it declares, in terms

¹ "Quod autem impossibilem legis observationem diximus, id est paucis verbis explicandum simul et confirmandum. Non texam hic longas ambages de variis possibilitatis generibus. Impossibile appello quod nec fuit unquam et, ne in posterum sit Dei ordinatione ac decreto impeditur."—*Calvini Institutiones*, lib. ii. c. 7, § 5. Patrick Hamilton, whose "godly doctrine" was so highly extolled by Knox, expresses the doctrine which Calvin adopted in very plain terms: "The law biddeth us do that which is impossible for us; for it bids us keep all the commandments of God and yet it is not in our power to keep any of them. Ergo, it biddeth us do that which is impossible for us. Thou wilt say, *wherefore doth God command us that which is impossible for us?* I answer, to make thee know thou art but evil."—*And Knox's History*, p. 67.

equally express, to be absolutely and for ever impossible to any man. But all reason rightly pronounces the command of an impossibility to be unjust and tyrannical in every possible case. It is therefore proved that the Confession of Faith teaches the impiety, that the infinitely perfect God is, in his relations to his creatures, both tyrannical and unjust.

II. Hitherto we have not seen the worst of Calvinism. "In the lowest depth, there is a lower still." The formularies of Calvinism teach *that God punishes his own creatures with eternal torments, because they fail to do that which his own decree has made impossible for them; and because they do those things which He himself had, from eternity, determined and ordained them to do.* To some it will doubtless appear incredible that the human mind, even when abandoned to the fantastic guidance of private judgment, could have adopted ideas so perverse and so manifestly repugnant to all the principles which guide the thoughts and acts of all men—of Calvinists themselves, on every subject, save religion. But, when the only principle upon which faith can be held has been once rejected, it seems impossible to imagine a limit to the excesses of which the mind, now the slave of a grovelling credulity, and now the dupe of scepticism, will be guilty. "Therefore God shall send upon them the operation of error, that they should believe a lie."¹ Absolute predestination is asserted by the Confession of Faith as follows:—"God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."² The utter futility of the last clause, as a vindication of the holiness of God, will be fully demonstrated in the following section; here we need only point out that the liberty of man is directly contradicted by the context. For, either it is in the power of the sinner to avoid his guilty act, or it is not. If it is, then the act cannot have been "unchangeably foreordained" of God. If it is not in his power

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 11.

² *Confession of Faith*, chap. iii. 1.

to avoid the act, then he sins by a necessity which God, by his unchangeable decree, has imposed upon him. What, then, becomes of his liberty? Either liberty, or the doctrine of absolute predestination, must be abandoned. But Calvinists have taken their stand upon predestination, and left liberty nothing but the name. For, confounding liberty with the spontaneity which is common to man with all animated beings, they say that man sins freely, because he sins willingly. Is then, we would ask, the life of the wicked so very smooth, so full of contentment? Does his every action spring from a mind where no contradiction, no conflict, ever enters? Is he really so far exempt from the miseries of human life, that he never requires to do violence to himself, and act, as alas! so many do, with much unwillingness? Such untroubled peace on the part of the wicked has not yet, we believe, been adopted into any of the creeds even of modern sectarianism. There are, then, acts of the reprobate which are unwillingly performed—therefore not free, even in the unphilosophical sense attached by Calvinists to “freedom.” But every act of the unjust man is said, by the Confession of Faith, to deserve the eternal wrath of God. Therefore, even by their own doctrines, and according to their own terms, Calvinism is responsible for the impious tenet that God necessitates men to perform certain actions, and then condemns them to eternal flames for their compliance with His decree. Moreover, granting still to Calvinism its own definition of liberty, the necessity which, by the theory of absolute predestination, compels every man at every moment to act as he does, and prevents him from acting otherwise, would be in no degree modified. For Calvinism makes man’s very willingness to have been predestinated from eternity, not less than the acts which it accompanies. Thus the sinner is necessitated by the unchangeable decree of God, not only to do the act, *but to do it willingly*. The willingness, then, can as little be attributed to him as the act. This is not a one-sided view of Calvinism. Our wish is not merely to make good our case, but to give an honest representation of that religious system.

That the absolute decree of God includes even the acts for

which he condemns the wicked, and, therefore, makes them necessary, will appear by the description which the Confession of Faith gives of fallen man:—"We are (it says) utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil;"¹ and again—"Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation."² As the Confession of Faith lays it down that God had also decreed that none but the elect should ever receive grace (by which only their disability could be removed), it is evident that those who are not of the elect number, even if they had liberty, could not avoid sin. For "all the acts of unregenerate men" are declared to be sinful; and the guilt of the sinner is said to be in many cases greater by the neglect, than by the commission of the sinful act.³ If, then, men can do nothing but sin; and if God will not render it possible for them to avoid sin—if men can do absolutely nothing but that which God hath predetermined them to do, and in the manner, with the intentions, dispositions, and motives, which had, in like manner, been eternally fixed by the immutable decree of God, is it not clear as the sun at noon-day, that men are to be punished by the Almighty for doing that which He himself had determined and ordained them to do: and for not doing those things which God himself, by his decree, had rendered it impossible for them to perform?

If we inquire, why then are men to be condemned? The Confession of Faith replies:—"The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by and to *ordain them to dishonour and wrath* for their sins, to the praise of his glorious justice."⁴ But that men are to be punished *for their sins*, is a portion of Catholic doctrine, which could have been admitted into such an uncongenial article only by some unaccountable oversight, or by a remarkable oblivion of the words which are to be found on the same page—"God hath not decreed anything, because he foresaw it as

¹ *Confession of Faith*, chap. vi. 4.

² *Id.* ix. 3.

³ *Id.* xvi. 7, already cited.

⁴ *Id.* iii. 7.

future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.”¹ This is the genuine Calvinistic doctrine. This only is consistent with the spirit of Genevan theology. So far is sin from being the reason of the sinner’s punishment, that *no condition whatever* is admitted by the Confession of Faith, as influencing God in condemning men to the endless torments of hell. God, it tells us, has simply decreed the condemnation of all who shall be lost. In himself alone he finds the motive of his decree. He requires neither that they should sin, nor that He should foresee that they would sin, nor any such conditions. He has destined the vast majority of mankind to everlasting flames, not, therefore, to punish their sin, but for a motive which begins and terminates in himself: “By the decree of God, *for the manifestation of his own glory*, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, and *others foreordained to everlasting death*. These angels and men thus predestined and foreordained are *particularly and unchangeably designed*; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.”² Even the distorted view taken by Calvinists of the effects of Adam’s fall, can furnish them with no intelligible motive for the condemnation of any man; for the fall itself was, in their opinion, not only ordained and decreed from eternity, but by a special interposition of God’s power, Adam was bounded, ordered, and guided in the commission of his first sin: “The Almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that *it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of men and angels*; and that *not by a bare permission*, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them in a manifold dispensation to his own holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God.”³ Since, then, all the actions—nay, in express terms, “all the sins of men and angels”—are not only decreed by God from eternity, but are also “bounded, governed, and ordered” by him, for his own ends, sin is simply the accomplishment of his will. The

¹ *Confession of Faith*, chap. iii. 2.

² *Id.* iii. 3-4.

³ *Id.* v. 4.

Westminster divines found, therefore, in the "manifestation of God's glory," a reason for the condemnation of those who shall be lost, somewhat less revolting to the common sense of their followers, and, at the same time, in happier agreement with their own gentle notions of goodness and justice, than they could have met with in "sin;" which, although in the Catholic system consistent, intelligible, and sufficient, would yet, according to their theories, be a palpably false pretext. For, as they make sin to be, in every respect, the accomplishment of God's will, it is certainly more consistent and less unreasonable on their part to say that God condemns men for his own glory, or his own pleasure, than it would be, were they to assert that he does so because they accomplish his will, by their faithful fulfilment of his decrees.

Let all the revolting misrepresentations of Catholic doctrine which the Reformation has yet produced, be fused into one monstrous caricature, and let any man who believes that God exists, say whether its hideousness could be compared with the wickedness of the doctrines we have shown to be contained in the authorized symbols of Scotch Presbyterianism. No man who has attentively studied the doctrines of Calvin, can wonder at his rejection of the great mysteries of God's love. He destroys the very idea of an atonement; and the mystery which conveys to us the most lively idea of God's mercy, love, and condescension to fallen man—the ever sweet and adorable Eucharist—he reduces to a cold, cheerless, lifeless shadow! His gloomy and vindictive soul cared not to contemplate God, save as He presents himself armed in the terrors of his justice. He lost sight of the Being in the intense study of the attribute—he saw no more than the vengeance of God. For him God was not a God of love. He was to Calvin a Being capricious, not bountiful in his favours, without pity and without motive in His anger. If we abstract from those enumerations of God's attributes and perfections which the Calvinistic formularies have retained from the Catholic Catechism, and which, far from harmonizing with the system of Calvin, stand over against it in violent antagonism, we must rise from the perusal of the "Institutes," or the Confession of

Faith and Larger Catechism, persuaded that the Reformers had imported into Europe the demonolatry of Africa, shorn only of its propitiatory rites. No propitiations could have been logically tolerated by Calvin. For, since he represents the Supreme Being as himself fixing "whatsoever comes to pass," by the inflexible decree of fate,¹ the creature cannot move off the iron way of his decree, even to ask for the mercy which would not and could not be given.

SECTION II.—THE TRUTH OF GOD.

How bright, how holy, does the Catholic doctrine appear when contrasted with the system we have just been examining! It tells every man, that, if he will, he may be saved—that his condemnation (if he shall be condemned) will be wholly from himself—that grace is really offered to him; and that God is

¹ It may be here said, once for all, that the conclusions to which we have been led on the subject of Calvinism, are not formed in any case upon isolated passages; nor, properly, upon mere passages at all. They are the results of a careful and conscientious study and comparison of the doctrinal books of Presbyterianism and the writings of Calvin. From the few extracts we give, it will be impossible to see so clearly and satisfactorily the truth of our representations, as it would be by the careful perusal of the evidence to which we have referred. We have, however, in every case adduced what we consider to be evidence amply sufficient for the justification of our assertions. Those who wish for more complete proof of our fidelity, will, by consulting the authentic documents from which we quote, find it in profusion. The bare doctrine of Calvin may, indeed, be correctly represented by a collection of citations; but his spirit, and the full mutual bearing of the different parts of his system, cannot be perfectly conveyed in any number of extracts. Thus it is that the employment of the word in the text, to which reference is made in this note, will best be justified; although we confidently refer also to the foregoing pages. As a more formal warrant, however, we adduce the following passage in justification:— "God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect; . . . nevertheless *they are not justified until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them.*" (*Confession of Faith*, xi. 4.) If it were possible for one of the elect to die before his justification, he could not be saved, for those only who have been *actually justified* can enter heaven, and he is, previous to justification, the enemy of God, and therefore incapable while in that state of salvation. But, by the very fact of his being of the elect, he must, by the immutable necessity of God's decree, be both justified and saved. It is, therefore, impossible that he can die before the day fixed from eternity for his justification. But if it be impossible that he can die until a certain day, in what does this differ from the fatalism of the Turks, or the fatism of the Pagans? The charmed life of the elect bids defiance to all the dangers of the battle-field, to the rage of the elements, to fire, and sword, and pestilence, and all that host of reapers which death sends forth to his harvest.

at all times waiting, with that solicitude which nature and revelation tell us the Creator entertains for the creature of his hands, ready to strengthen, to heal, to comfort, and to save him. While life remains, the sinner may and can repent; nor will his repentance be rejected by the God of mercy and truth. Religious hope throws over a Catholic people a ray of happy light, that may be seen reflected in every countenance, and can be traced in the national customs, amusements, and salutations, as well in the more important pursuits, as in the trivial occupations of life. When no extraneous cause of depression exists—when the people are truly Catholic, and the canker-worm of heresy has not entered to dry up the sap and corrode the fibres of their frame—there is a cheerfulness and buoyancy to be seen in all their movements, running through all their speech, which tells how intimately hope pervades their being. The truth of God is the security of hope. What the Eternal truth has said, that he will certainly accomplish. He has said, that whoever really calls upon him shall not call in vain; and he tells all the children of Adam to come and receive of the gifts he has in store for them. His truth makes him as incapable of a deceitful word or act, as of a lie. Since, then, he tells all to come, he has put it in the power of all to approach for mercy. Calvinism says it is not so. For by its doctrine of absolute predestination, it either puffs up man with the flattering but delusive presumption of an “infallible assurance of salvation,” or plunges him into utter and irremediable despair. An infallible assurance extinguishes hope, just as fruition terminates desire. As the assurance of salvation is said by the Confession of Faith to be given to all the elect, the man who receives it not, sees in this privation the seal of an immutable reprobation pronounced against him from eternity. For him, then, there remains only the “dreadful expectation of judgment, and the rage of a fire which shall consume the adversaries.” This everlasting misery is a sacrifice necessary to “manifest the glory of God.” With Christian hope, there disappeared also, from the system of Calvin, the ground on which it reposed. That system represents God as wantonly mocking and deceiving his creatures. This is a

fearful charge; and were not the proof by which it is supported irresistible, we should not dare to urge it against a system professing to be Christian. Our justification rests upon the proof of the following propositions:—

The truth of God is destroyed by the doctrines of the Westminster Confession.

To appreciate sufficiently the teaching of Calvinism in relation to the divine veracity, it will be necessary to premise a very brief account of the designs of God upon the human race, and particularly of the dealings of his Providence with the sinner. This we shall do, as far as possible, in the very words in which God himself, or his authorized messengers, describe his designs. In drawing thus to some extent upon the sacred text, our departure from the plan of argument which, at the outset, we proposed to ourselves, will be more apparent than real. We do not, in reality, enter upon a biblical discussion. We shall but give, in the language of the inspired writers, a few of those details which God has vouchsafed to us of his designs upon fallen man, in order to show, in more forcible and appropriate terms than we could employ, how directly Calvinism represents Him as contradicting or rendering illusory his words.

We know that God created man for his own glory. For the formal end of God's action must be worthy of himself; and an infinitely perfect end is alone worthy of the infinitely perfect God. His own glory was to be served and shown forth by the perfections and homage of his creatures; and the end of man himself was to be the everlasting enjoyment of his Creator. The attainment of his end, or eternal felicity, by man, was, however, to be conditional; for God had made him free, and had imposed upon him certain conditions, by the fulfilment of which his happiness and that of his posterity would have been secured. Had he observed the conditions, then, heaven would have been the infallible lot of all the descendants of Adam; and the glory of God would have been manifested by the universal praises of his creatures, whom his own bounty and justice would have crowned. As, however, our first parents forfeited by sin their right to heaven, they could not convey

to their posterity that which they themselves no longer possessed. Men are, therefore, born in sin, aliens to God, and excluded from every claim to his kingdom. But the fall did not change the goodness of God into cruelty, nor absolutely close the gates of heaven against any member of our fallen race. It seemed but to open up a wider field for the exercise of the divine mercy, and to prepare a way for the stupendous combination of justice and goodness, which was displayed in the incarnation and subsequent career of the Son of God. The end of man is what it was before the fall—eternal felicity; but its attainment, though possible to all, is now conditional in the case of every one. “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be condemned.”¹ The mercy as well as the justice of God is shown to every man—the just and the unjust; while Calvinism represents the wicked as experiencing a justice with which no mercy is mingled. As if the attributes of God, his justice and mercy, were not really one, but different, and even independent. God still regards with benevolence the works of his hands, and calls on man to look up to heaven from the scene of his exile, and to consider himself to be only a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth: “But now they desire a better, that is to say, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.”² The conditions of our admission to that country to which his free bounty invites us, are such as all may, if they will, accomplish: “His commandments are not heavy.”³ And “My yoke is sweet, and my burden light.”⁴ His desire has been repeatedly and pressingly manifested, that all should avail themselves of his beneficence, throw themselves upon his mercy, and flee from the wrath to come: “The Lord delayeth not his promise, as some imagine; but dealeth patiently for your sake; not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance.”⁵ Far from having unconditionally ordained any of his creatures to destruction, he wishes that all sinners, even the chief, should return to him and be saved: “As I live,

¹ Mark xvi. 16.

² Heb. xi. 16.

³ 1 John v. 3.

⁴ Matth. xi. 30.

⁵ 2 Peter iii. 9.

saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; why will you die, O house of Israel?"¹ To the same effect he says: "The soul that sinneth, the same shall die. . . . But if the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die. . . . Is it my will that a sinner should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should be converted from his ways and live?"² The use of such expressions as "to be reconciled with God," "to return to God," taken in connection with the parable of the lost sheep, and the words of Isaias—"All we, like sheep, have gone astray; every one hath turned aside into his own way,"³ show, that even yet, the true end after which God wishes all men to aspire is eternal happiness; for it supposes that a man in sin is wandering from the path in which God had placed him; for his reconciliation does not change the end of his creation, but *restores* him to the course he must pursue for its attainment, from which sin had carried him away. The sincerity of the will which God expresses for the salvation of all men, is amply demonstrated by the superabundance of means he has provided for its accomplishment. He declares that he hath done everything which could be done compatibly with the freedom of men for their salvation. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done it?"⁴ He gave up to death for the redemption of sinners his only-begotten Son; and offers to every man who requires a Saviour, the participation of his merits: "For the charity of Christ presseth us; judging this, that if one died for all, then all were dead. And Christ died for all."⁵ His express wish, that the sufferings which Jesus Christ endured for all should be universally available, he declares in the most decisive manner. "He will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all,

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.² Ezek. xviii. 20—23.³ Isaias liii. 6.⁴ Isaias v. 4.⁵ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

a testimony in due times.”¹ And again, “We see Jesus for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour; that, through the grace of God, he might taste death for all.”² Lest it should be imagined that the phrase, “all men,” did not include really the whole human race, but only the elect, St. Paul tells us, that “We hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of the faithful.”³ The same truth is thus repeated by St. John: “But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for those of the whole world.”⁴

Such professions of goodness and of justice tempered with mercy, on the part of an offended God, awaken an almost intuitive perception of their truth in the heart and head of every right-thinking man. They give meaning and consistency to the preaching, sacraments, and worship of Christianity. They afford to all men a sure ground of hope; yet check the approaches of a delusive self-righteous presumption. Consistent as those professions are with themselves, harmonizing with all that we know of God from the study of his works, and consonant as they must appear with the dictates of right reason, they were all, nevertheless, cast aside by Calvin and his followers, the Westminster divines, as they could not be bent to the opinions which those interpreters had attached to other portions of the sacred text. The doctrine of absolute predestination is the essence of Calvinism. It is the main pillar of the entire edifice. Let it but be shaken, and the ruins of Calvinism would not be distinguishable from the shapeless fragments of those numerous sects whose ephemeral existence had been, from time to time, contributing to raise the motley buildings of the Reformation. This essential dogma of Calvinism admits of no contingency, no conditions in the conduct and government of the universe. All is rigid, fixed, unalterable. Whatever *is* was so determined. Whatever *is not* could not possibly have been. Whatever *shall be* must be; because it shall be in consequence of an eternal, unchangeable, unconditional decree. To retain such a doc-

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 4—6.

² Heb. ii. 9.

³ 1 Tim. iv. 10.

⁴ 1 John ii. 2.

trine, and yet believe the words we have quoted above as conveying to us the intentions of God towards sinners, is evidently impossible. In order, therefore, that Calvinism might escape an untimely fate, and come into the world a living thing—in order that it might not fall still-born from the pen of its author, it was necessary to give such an explanation to those and similar professions of mercy, as would virtually render them either false or intentionally delusive.

Closely connected in the mind of Calvin with the doctrine of absolute predestination, was the opinion which he had formed of the inamissibility of grace. He considered that whosoever once received grace could never again be deprived of it. No crimes, no infidelities, could again separate him from the friendship of God. He must persevere and be saved. This made it necessary for Calvin to say that no grace can be conferred on any man who is not in the number of the elect; for, otherwise, men would be saved who had been foreordained to destruction. Calvin was by no means blind to the inconveniences of his opinion. Indeed, if we may judge by the dictatorial and intemperate manner in which he attempts to cover this portion of his theory from the united attacks of Scripture, reason, and experience, he must have felt by no means satisfied with either his system or the arguments he could find for its support. It was not in the days of Calvin, nor is it now, an unheard-of thing, that men who bear about them in their carriage, in their conversation, in their deeds, and in their desires, the evidences that divine grace is producing its happy fruits in their souls—who love the things of God, whose delight it is to praise him and labour for the advancement of his glory and the conversion of sinners—who are ready to suffer for his sake, and to make any sacrifice in his cause, yet miserably fall away from their first fervour, and abandon virtue, religion, and even faith. What we meet with in common life is the exact counterpart of the view of God's economy, in respect of grace presented to us in the sacred pages. There we meet with a Saul, who, after having received from God the most signal favours, both spiritual and temporal, abandoned the paths of justice, turned with ingrati-

tude against his divine benefactor, and at length, rejected of God, gave himself up to despair, and terminated his life by a deadly crime. Similar to this is the case of the traitor Judas. All this was accurately represented by our Saviour in his parable of the sower. The divine seed falling upon rocky ground, symbolized, as our Lord informs us, the state of those unstable believers who gladly receive the grace of God, correspond with it for a time, but finally forfeit their crown by failing to persevere: "They receive the word with joy, they believe for a while, and in time of temptation they fall away."¹

Such facts and statements were of evil augury for the permanence of Calvinism. That those men finally fell away, excluded them in Calvin's estimation from the number of the elect. Their joyfully receiving the advances of God's mercy, and for a time admitting special favours from above, and acting in all things precisely as if they were the friends of God, could not, in consequence of his doctrine of the inamissibility of grace, be attributed by Calvin to the presence of grace in their souls. To account, then, for such phenomena, he had recourse to the hypothesis which we cannot trust ourselves to qualify, that God produces in the souls of the reprobate effects similar to those of grace, in order that the unhappy men who experience them may, by their failure to profit by what can only be termed mock graces, furnish cause for their own condemnation. And this condemnation, says Calvin, is to be justified on the ground that they rejected and failed to profit by real grace. Thus Calvin—"Nor can this be called in question, that to those whom God *does not wish* to be illuminated, he presents his doctrine involved in obscurity, *lest they should derive* any other profit from it *than that of being abandoned to a greater blindness.*"² More to the purpose still, he says—"Although *none are either enlightened by faith or actually feel the power of the gospel, save those who*

¹ Luke viii. 13.

² "Neque hoc quoque controverti potest, quos Deus illuminatos non vult, illis doctrinam suam ænigmatibus involutam tradere, ne quid inde proficiant, nisi ut majorem hebetudinem tradantur."—*Institutio*, lib. iii. c. 24, § 13.

have been predestined to salvation; yet experience shows that the reprobate also are at times influenced in a similar manner to the elect, *in order that they may think* they differ nothing from the elect. There is, therefore, no impropriety where the apostle attributes to them the participation of heavenly gifts, and our Saviour temporal faith; it is not that they experience solidly the power of *spiritual grace*, but because the Lord, *in order to render them more guilty and inexcusable, insinuates himself into their minds*, as far as his goodness can be tasted without the spirit of adoption.¹ The Larger Catechism is upon this subject equally explicit: "All the elect, and they only, are effectually called; although others may be, and often are called by the ministry of the word, and have *some common* operations of the Spirit, who, for their wilful neglect and contempt of the grace offered to them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Christ." (Q. 68.) Let the Presbyterian reconcile, if he can, this article with his doctrine that God's decree for the sinner's condemnation was unconditional. The article comes before us at present, however, from another point of view. The reprobate are said to have "some common operations of the Spirit," and to be condemned "for their wilful neglect and contempt of the grace offered them." Now, one of two things—either those "common operations of the Spirit" are the "grace," whose rejection is said to constitute the guilt of the sinner, or they are not. If they are, then Calvinism falls to the ground; for the reprobate are thus made really recipients of grace, and have the power to resist and reject it; for they actually do both. If they be able to resist and reject grace, then predestination is not absolute, but conditional upon man's admission of grace and correspondence with it. Such con-

¹ "Etsi non illuminantur in fidem, nec evangelii efficaciam vere sentiunt nisi qui præordinati sunt ad salutem, experientia tamen ostendit, reprobos interdum simili fere sensu atque electos affici, ut, ne suo quidem judicio quicquam ab electis differant. Quare nihil absurdi est quod cœlestium donorum gustus ab apostolo, et temporalis fides a Christo illis ascribitur, non quod vim spiritualis gratiæ solide percipiant, ac certum fidei lumen, sed quia Dominus, ut magis convictos et inexcusabiles reddat, se insinuat in eorum mentes, quatenus sine adoptionis spiritu gustari potest ejus bonitas."—*Institutio*, lib. iii. c. 2, § 11.

sequences would overturn Calvinism to its foundations. If, on the contrary, the "common operations" are not the "grace," for the rejection of which the wicked man is condemned, then those "operations," which produce all the effects of grace, and which the sinner joyfully believes to be grace, are but a delusion, and he is to be punished on the charge of having contemned the reality, when he had only failed to produce the fruits of grace from what was in truth but a shadow. If the Calvinist say that real grace was offered, can he imagine that this will improve the aspect of his theory, when he reflects that his system makes such an offer itself an equally cruel deception? Does not his Confession of Faith say, that wherever God really offers or wishes to confer grace, man can neither refuse nor resist;¹ and that no act of his is required in order that grace may reign in his heart? Does it not assert that all this is *solely* the word of God; and that man, until he has been actually justified, is in the admission of grace simply passive?² What, then, becomes of the justice and truth of God, when he is thus represented as condemning men for the rejection of grace which was not seriously offered, and which, if offered, by its very nature could not have been rejected? Where is the sanctity of God in the system of those who describe him as offering to his creatures that which, by the free act of his own will, he has rendered them incapable of receiving? Can they believe in the truth of God, who attribute to him a double and discordant will; who represent him as making known to sinners, by his *declared will*, that they shall not die but live; and, at the same time, by his *secret will*, determining that they shall not live, but die; who represent the Spirit of God as *insinuating itself* into the hearts of men, not to sanctify, not to enlighten or strengthen them, that they might be elevated to an union

¹ *Confession of Faith*, xvii. 2. Grace also is said to be conferred and really offered only where God had so decreed. But the decree is infallible, irresistible, and unconditional.

² "This effectual call (to grace and salvation) is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit," &c.—*Id.* x. 2.

with himself, and enabled to reach the goal of everlasting happiness, but for the distinct purpose of producing abortive effects and works, in order to have in those effects and works the motive, or rather the pretext for a more dreadful punishment?

The deceit which Calvinism depicts the God of truth as employing, in his dealings with his creatures, is not confined to his treatment of the reprobate. Even in regard of his own elect, he is described as acting and speaking with the same insincerity. Although in his denunciations of sin he repeatedly threatens that its consequences will be fatal to every soul that yields to its enticements—although he makes no exceptions, and grants to no one the privilege of offending him with impunity, Calvinism ventures to trace even here a hidden will directly at variance with that which has been manifested to the world. The justified are a people truly favoured by Calvinism. Their privileges are indeed exalted. They may offend God to any extent; but they can neither lose his favour nor incur his wrath. They sin with impunity. The law, that is, the expressed will of God, has nothing to say to them. They are above the law. By it they can neither be justified nor condemned. Their sins are no longer imputed to them. Although they sin, it is not true that they shall die. They shall only become more enlightened. They shall only with greater clearness see their inability to do good and their proneness to evil. Such imputations of secret designs on the part of God at variance with his professions are not new. They were resorted to in the earliest days of our race by the first of heretics. The incident is remarkable, and bears too fully upon our subject to be omitted. It furnishes us with a perfect illustration: “And the woman answered him, saying, God hath commanded that we should not touch it (the forbidden fruit) lest perhaps we die. And the serpent said to the woman, *no, you shall not die the death*; for God doth know, that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”¹ Calvin has, in this part of his system, adopted the

¹ Genesis iii. 3—5.

language of one who, like himself, could make a liberal use of Scripture in support of his theories. But it is for those of his followers who sincerely desire to honour God according to his will, to say whether Scripture be well employed in defending doctrines like to that which now occupies our attention. The Confession of Faith thus assures us of the readiness of the justified to violate the law of God: "They (the just) may, through the temptations of Satan . . . *fall into grievous sins*, and for a time continue therein."¹ Nevertheless, the impunity with which they commit those "grievous sins" is in the same chapter thus complacently established: "They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved . . . can *neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace*, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved."² How utterly the immunity from the guilt of sin, which God is here represented as conceding to the justified, is in contradiction with his expressed purpose, will be made strikingly apparent by the declaration which he publishes by the mouth of Ezekiel: "The soul that sinneth, the same shall die. . . . The wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. v. 24. But if the *just man turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity*, according to all the abominations which the wicked man useth to work, shall he live? All his justices which he had done shall not be remembered in the prevarication by which he hath prevaricated, and in his sin which he hath committed, *in them he shall die*. v. 26. For when *the just* turneth himself away from his justice and committeth iniquity, *he shall die therein*; in the injustice that he hath wrought he shall die."³ Any hypothesis which supposes that God is truth, must be unequal to the task of reconciling the published designs of God, found in the above verses and in every portion of Scripture, with those "secret counsels" attributed to him by Calvinism in general, and by the Confession of Faith in particular.

On this subject, where its usual inconsistency would have been a virtue, Calvinism is consistent, and fears not to describe the action of divine Providence in the affairs of men, in a style

¹ *Confession of Faith* xvii. 3.

² *Id.* xvii. 1.

³ Ezekiel xviii. 20—26.

perfectly harmonizing with those secret reservations and designs it had attributed to God. All is one vast system of unreality. Christianity itself is, by the principles of Calvin, only a magnificent fiction. Its preaching is instituted to induce men to believe that they are masters of their own actions, and that they can abstain from sin if they will, and practise, if they will, the good required of them. It tells all men that they are called to labour for salvation, just as if God had not absolutely determined the lot of every individual from eternity, regardless of whether they should believe or not, whether they should work good or devote themselves to evil. It threatens men with punishment if they transgress the law, and promises heaven to all who will repent and turn to justice, just as if the justified could fall from the state of grace, and the wicked had it in their power to turn from their evil ways and live. Conscience, too, has been taught by God to aid in the general plan of deception, and to rouse from the depth of man's being a resistless conviction that he can avoid sin, and attain the end of his being. In a word, the gospel speaks to man as if he were free; it treats him in all things on the supposition that he is free; its instructions, admonitions, reproaches, threatenings, promises; its efforts to seek the recesses of the sinful heart, and hold up the evil-doer to himself; its anatomy of his character, affections, passions, weaknesses, to discover the proper chord to be touched, that the joyful sounds of the eternal truths may find an echo in his breast; to find a point on which to rest the lever that shall raise his being from its state of degradation, and make him worthy to be numbered among the sons of God; all suppose that man *can* be moved, that he *can* act or refuse to act; that he has the power of acting in the manner God requires, or contrary both to the divine law and the dictates of conscience; that he is free from any necessity, arising from an absolute predestination, as well as from external coaction. The sacraments of Christianity have in like manner been appointed to confer and to increase grace, and to prepare the Christian for meeting the temptations to which he is exposed, and surmounting the difficulties which obstruct his spiritual

progress. The self-examination which precedes the reception of a sacrament, the self-reproach which follows the discovery of sin, and infidelity to grace, suppose that man had the power to have avoided the sins with which he reproaches himself of having been guilty. If his every thought and action has been determined for him from eternity without any contingency on his own will, then his purposes of amendment are but the last act of a humiliating force.

The redemption, too—all Christianity is full of it. Its excellence, efficiency, and necessity form the constant theme of the preacher. It is represented as the fountain of infinite merit, and the source of grace. How pressing are the invitations given by God himself, in his gospel, and by his ministers in his name, to all that thirst, to come and receive the living water of this fountain, without money and without price! How beneficent must such an invitation appear to a world groaning under the weight of sin! How sweet, how boundless seems the mercy of God towards his ungrateful creatures! Alas! it is all but a dream or a deception. The world may again sink back into despair. The redemption *only of the elect*, says Calvinism, was wrought on Calvary. An offer of redemption, therefore, made to any others, is but one piece more of that miserable web of disappointment and deception in which man is on every side enveloped. Even the Confession of Faith speaks in every page of the duties of men, whether they be regarded as saints or sinners, as if they were really free, as if they could, if they chose, attain to both grace and salvation. But it acknowledges, without tergiversation, that in reality there is no such thing—that all is but a fond imagination. “Although,” it says, “in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God—the first cause—all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.”¹ It is here said that God so orders all events as to induce men to believe that they have power to act otherwise than they do; that they are following the dictates of their

¹ *Confession of Faith*, v. 2.

own uncontrolled will, when they are, both in their outward acts and the movements of their will, only accomplishing that which they had been absolutely predetermined to do, and forming so many links in that chain of second causes which have been “*ordered*” to fall out *freely*. The language is certainly far from being philosophically correct; but the meaning no one can be at a loss to understand. The world with all its inhabitants is a grand and ingenious piece of mechanism. It is a philosophical toy on a gigantic scale, where the workmanship is most perfect, and the wires, and pulleys, and cranks which produce its varied motions are perfectly concealed, and not liable to decay. So perfect, indeed, is the machinery, that the creatures which appear in succession, and perform their part in the general design, imagine themselves that they are free, and their acts contingent solely on their own will. To this opinion they are irresistibly led by the voice of God addressed to them through revelation and conscience. But all this only tends to the completeness of the effect, and shows how perfectly all the arrangements have been combined for the conduct of the automata, and how admirably those things which men call free, fall out as they had from eternity been “*ordered*.” The secret will of the Creator is the real and sole mover and director of all. It orders all things—even every violation of the expressed will; yet so as that every act of compliance with the secret dispositions of the divine decrees shall appear to have been, not merely spontaneous, but free effects of the human will. Calvin can here throw important light upon the above article of the Westminster Confession: “That men do nothing but by the secret will of God, and even by deliberation do nothing whatever but that which he himself had already decreed, and by his secret direction determined, is established by many and clear proofs.”¹ Perceiving that this doctrine destroyed the truth of God, by falsifying the authentic declarations of his will to all men, and especially his invitations and exhorta-

¹ “Quod, autem nihil efficiunt homines nisi arcano Dei nutu, nec quicquam deliberando agitent nisi quod ipse jam decreverit, et arcana sua directione constituat, innumeris et claris testimoniis probatur.”—*Institutio*, lib. i. c. 18, § 1.

tions to sinners, Calvin undertakes to defend his teaching from the attacks of his adversaries. He says: "As to the objection that, if nothing happens unless by the act of God's will, there are in God two contrary wills, because, *by his hidden counsel he decrees things which he distinctly forbids by his law*, it is easily resolved."¹ And by Calvin's method it certainly is. The charge that there are contrary wills in God *is admitted*, and the responsibility of the doctrine thrown from the shoulders of Calvin upon the third person of the blessed Trinity: "I wish the reader," he continues, "to take notice that *this cavil* is directed, not against me, but against the Holy Spirit."² *Habernus confitentium reum*—There needs no further evidence. Not only are principles laid down which destroy the veracity of God, but their consequences are intrepidly acknowledged. Such is Calvinism. The portrait is from the hand of its author.

The bearing of this double will attributed to God by Calvinism upon the practical doctrines of Christianity, is to render them altogether meaningless, and, by their want of reality, insulting to many of those to whom they are addressed. If prayer be considered from the Calvinistic point of view, its practice will appear to be as preposterous on the part of the creature as its inculcation on the part of God will seem to be hollow and delusive. The published will of God says to the man who is lost in sin, ask for pardon and reconciliation, and you shall receive. The secret will has already written his doom. He shall neither receive the promised gift nor the power to ask it. The published will says to him: "Whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."³ The secret will has decided his fate. For him no Saviour died. No gift, therefore, can be bestowed upon him. He must look for nothing but the frowns and maledictions of

¹ "Quod primo objiciunt, si nihil eveniat nisi volente Deo, duas in eo contrarias esse voluntates, quia occulto consilio decernata quæ lege sua palam vetuit, facile diluitur."—*Id.* lib. i. c. 18, § 3.

² "Monitos volo lectores, cavillum hoc non in me, sed in Spiritum Sanctum torqueri."—*Id.* *ibid.*

³ John xvi. 23.

God in this life, and in the next his place has already for ages been prepared in that lake which burns with fire and brimstone. The published will says, "Cry to the Lord, and he will turn from his anger."¹ The secret will has closed for ever the ears of the Most High against men who had received their existence for the sole purpose of glorifying God by their destruction. By the expressed will, "prayer is to be made for all men; because this is pleasing to God, *who will have all men to be saved.*"² The secret will has "particularly and unchangeably designed"³ the individuals for whom there is no mercy, no redemption, no salvation. Prayer is the breath of the Christian; but by this system of imposture it serves only to foster that false impression which Calvinism supposes every outward manifestation of God's will tends to produce. Principles are indestructible. Where they are really held, they live and act even while their possessor may be unconscious of their presence, or, at least, unaware of the nature of the guest he entertains. Gradually, though perhaps unobservedly, the principles of Calvinism have been producing their natural fruits in the Presbyterian body. Prayer, or, to be more accurate, public prayer, has virtually ceased. A moral or doctrinal academic essay is committed to memory by the officiating minister, and addressed ostensibly to God, but in reality to the hearers. So well is this understood by the people, that "the prayer" furnishes the weekly staple of pastoral criticism. Were the people even inclined to look upon the exercise *as prayer*, and join with their minister, in the spirit of humility, they would find serious difficulties to the accomplishment of their purpose. They are unacquainted with the petitions their minister intends to prefer. They know not the sentiments to which he may feel inclined to give utterance. How, then, could a people, zealous with such a burning zeal for orthodoxy as Calvinists are, turn their minds to the placid confidence of prayer, when they must be all attention lest some Erastian, Pelagian, or even Popish doctrine, some unacceptable sentiment or uncircumcised expression, should commit them in the presence of God as the aiders and

¹ Jonas iii. 8, 9, and iv. 11. ² 1 Tim. ii. 1-4. ³ *Confession of Faith*, iii. 4.

abettors of heresy? With serious care, "the prayer" must be examined as to its literary, logical, and moral qualities. Nor must it be imagined that this general view of prayer is discouraged; much less is it pronounced to be unsound, or an usurpation of the prerogative of Him to whom it is officially addressed. On the contrary, it is encouraged, in the most unequivocal manner, by the whole economy of Presbyterianism. The people are instructed that, when engaged in the election of a minister, they must carefully examine his gift of prayer—they must watch closely the structure of his sentences, the flow of his language, the shade of his opinions, the very tones of his voice, and the acceptableness of his doctrine, as far as it can be gathered from his "trial prayers." Does he pray so as to please the congregation? That is the point. The question whether his prayers were pleasing to God is quite another matter, and enters not into the programme of the inducting Presbytery. This is a step in advance; for it places prayer on the list of marketable commodities, whose value can be estimated with as much precision as a given amount of writing for a magazine or review. There is, however, an element in such prayers which, while raising their interest as exhibitions of literary and philosophical talent, detracts much from their respectability, if viewed as serious religious exercises,—they partake so much of the nature of the prize essay. To a Catholic, at least, it seems no trivial act of irreverence which selects the very mercy-seat of God for the battle-ground of men who have met to wrestle for a living. Such prejudices must be looked upon with indulgence, for they are now of old date with the Catholic. It is indeed in the essence of his moral nature to regard prayer as a reality—as an instrument capable of moving earth and heaven; able to raise the dead in sin to life; able to erase from the book of judgment, the sentence of the sinner's condemnation. The principles of Calvinism will, sooner or later, discard prayer as a useless form of words—a mere waste of time. The utter impossibility of its producing any effects, or of conducing directly or indirectly to any appreciable end, has been already maintained by influential parties among the Calvinists of

France.¹ Their conduct in this is not merely justified, it was necessitated by the principles of their sect. Nor have the governing and administrative bodies of Calvinism ventured to repudiate their views. Perhaps they fear to touch the sore. It will not bear to be probed. To one who looks dispassionately upon the elements and present aspect of Calvinism, it appears evident that there are several questions, of which this of prayer is one, which cannot be safely handled. It is one of those cases in which to draw the weapon from the wound, or to open the gangrene, would be instantaneous death.

We have referred to the Atonement. It will, we doubt not, be of interest to the reader, that we examine more closely the influence of Calvinism upon this great dogma. The subject is well worthy of our deepest attention, for all Christianity

¹ We allude principally to the pastor Cockerell of Paris. This man is the leading Calvinist of France. There is not a more distinct notice taken here of his system, as we have no longer at hand the work in which he treats at length of the nature and effects of prayer, which, however, we some time since read with considerable attention and no little surprise. We were scarcely prepared for the full blaze of Protestant light which poured from that work upon our dazzled eyes. The author advances with firm step on the path which Luther and Calvin had opened up for him. He is certainly a better Protestant; and if we regard the fundamental principles of Calvinism, a truer Calvinist than his fellow sectaries on this side the channel. He maintains that prayer can get no favour from God, either spiritual or temporal; that is to say, as far as prayer *is petition*, it is folly. He admits, however, that at times it does produce effects; but they are, he says, only indirect—by reflection, as it were—and confined to the mind of him who prays. It may, he says, compose the mind, and, to some extent, promote a spirit of resignation to God's will; or, more properly, to fate. It will be seen that its function, by M. Cockerell's theory, is that of a mere philosophical meditation, or a soothing distraction from care and grief. A man of this school would betake himself to prayer solely for a purpose which he might more consistently, and with not less efficacy, accomplish by the perusal of a few pages of Plato, Shakspeare, or Walter Scott. M. Cockerell is, we believe, the chief minister in the church which is the scene of Pastor Monod's labours. The intimate connections of the latter gentleman with the Calvinists of the United Kingdom, would seem to indicate that the theories of his senior colleague are by no means unknown either to the members of the Scotch General Assemblies, or to the heroes of the Evangelical Alliance. Certain it is, his speculations have, as yet, excited little or no alarm, nor have they given rise to any public expression of surprise. Is it possible that men so zealous for every iota of that blessed evangel, which was revealed in 1580 to the king's most excellent majesty and the three estates of the realm, as are our friends of the Free Kirk, can connive at error or wink at heterodoxy?

turns upon it—it is the key to the history of our race, and throws a bright light upon the conduct of Providence in the affairs of men. The world, by sin, had cut itself off from God, and contracted a debt which could be cancelled only at an infinite cost. All the efforts of created beings must have for ever fallen infinitely short of making even one step towards the remission of sin. The goodness of God sought out a remedy. The only-begotten Son of God offered himself to become a propitiation for the sins of the world, that the justice of his Father might be fully satisfied, and that the world through him might be saved. The incarnation and subsequent humiliations, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ, opened to man the gates of heaven, and restored him to his lost inheritance. The religion of Christ was instituted for the preservation and propagation of this truth, and for supplying to men, till the end of time, the means by which the merits of Christ's death might be made available. From this mystery the word of God derives its unction and its power. From this, the sacraments receive their efficacy. By this, faith is possible, and through it has been privileged to open the minds of men to see something of the greatness and goodness of God, and to prepare the way for that sanctification with which He desires that every soul should be adorned. By this, prayer is able to invest mortals with the power of omnipotence; for the blood of Christ has obtained for them access to the presence of God, and clothed their petitions with its own infinite power. By this, the poor efforts of men are elevated beyond their nature, and acquire before God a value incalculably greater than the mere natural abilities of any creature could have conferred.

Following the example of Luther, Calvin and the other Reformers gave the utmost prominence to the doctrine of the Atonement. It is, indeed, impossible to exaggerate its importance, whether we regard its nature or effects. But, in as far as they seemed to dwell so exclusively on this one point, as to exclude, or affect to consider of little consequence, the other mysteries of religion, they certainly allowed themselves to be carried to excess. This, however, was the natural consequence of the view taken of justification by the majority of

the Reformers. If faith alone, as they asserted, were the instrument of justification, and if its efficacy consisted in the act of the mind apprehending the merits of Christ, then evidently the Atonement was not only the centre and turning-point of Christianity, but it was, literally, whole and entire Christianity. The Evangelicals in particular have confined their religion so exclusively to the worship of this mystery, that they consider it to be a depreciation of the Atonement to think or speak of any other doctrine. And a sermon which should, for a moment, leave the favourite theme, even to venture into the region of duties, and inculcate obedience to the law of God, would be indignantly condemned as a return to the bondage of Popery; or, at least, censured as a worthless piece of "dead dry morality." With this influential party of the Protestant body, it has ever been a favourite charge against the Catholic Church, that she does not speak with sufficient frequency of the Atonement—that, in fact, she conceals it from public view—that she withdraws attention from it, and teaches men to trust to the intercession of the saints, to the virtue of the sacraments, and to good works; that she insists upon explicit belief in many other mysteries, and refuses to accept of faith in the Atonement as a complete equivalent for all truth, and substitute for all morality. They say, it suffices for us to know that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin—that Christ has satisfied for us fully; and that, by his death alone, exclusive of all co-operation on our part, we have salvation. The Church will readily, indeed, plead guilty to all the charges save this, that she seeks to conceal or draw attention from the Atonement, or to lessen its importance in the eyes of her children. So far from this, she considers that all the practices she recommends, all the devotions, all the duties she insists upon, are but applications or instruments of the Atonement, or in some intimate way connected with it. If the saints have power to aid their brethren on earth, this, she is careful to instruct us, they owe solely to the death of Christ, which made them saints. If the sacraments have efficacy to heal and strengthen us, they have received it from the merits of Christ, which they have been instituted in order to apply to the soul.

Relics, penitential works, prayer, even belief in the various truths of religion, all receive their efficacy from the death of Christ. Whatever influence, direct or indirect, they have in the soul, they exercise solely through the virtue they have drawn from that fountain of all grace. The Church, then, in her various offices, feasts, practices, and instructions, does but present before us, in some view or other, the great dogma of the Atonement. She herself lives by it and for it; and if the word is not so often on her lips, the mystery is not the less deeply engraven on her heart. She has no such contracted ideas of the efficacy of Christ's blood, as to imagine that its virtue cannot extend beyond the narrow circle of the elect. She maintains it to be infinite, and capable of saving the whole world. She does not say, with the Confession of Faith, that Christ died only for the elect, but with the apostle, that "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." But let us now trace the effects of the Calvinistic view of God's truth upon this fundamental article of the Christian religion.

Calvinism expressly teaches that the Atonement is a limited work. Its efficacy is confined to the elect. Whether this limitation supposes that the work of redemption was but of finite value, and is thus equivalent to a denial of our Saviour's divinity, is a question which does not at present fall within the scope of our inquiry. The limitation, then, in the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is said to arise, not from the bad dispositions of men, or their refusal to appropriate to themselves the benefits of redemption, but from the nature of the sacrifice. The extracts already given from the Confession of Faith assert, in formal terms, that Christ offered himself for the elect, *and for them only*. Such a restriction seems to detract much from the weight which might have been attached to those professions of thankfulness and admiration of God's goodness and power displayed in this mystery, which are the unfailing distinction of evangelical Protestants. If we look upon the overwrought expressions, in connection with the limited purpose attributed to the Atonement, we find the conclusion forcing itself upon us, that they savour more of self-righteous congra-

tulation than of humble and adoring gratitude. Anyhow, the principles of Presbyterianism are still more fatally at variance with the infinite value of the Atonement, than even the avowed doctrines to which we have just alluded. Let the reader recall once more that article of the Westminster Confession, in which God is said to have foreordained all things absolutely; that is, to have decreed and determined all that shall come to pass, directly, and without decreeing, or supposing, or foreseeing anything whatever as a condition.¹ The justification of the elect, their perseverance in grace, and final triumph in heaven, have then all been ordained from eternity, without requiring or supposing anything as a condition. Thus it is that good works, faith, and final perseverance are formally excluded by the Westminster Confession as conditions of salvation. The elect are said to be saved solely because God decreed their salvation: "Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature as conditions or causes moving him thereunto."² The early Reformers, imagining that, in the salvation of sinners, the Church attributed too much to means and to the co-operation of man, went so far as to deny all activity on the part of man, and left him, according to the comparison of Luther, a mere log in the hands of God. In order to make God all, they annihilated man. Their motive may have been pious; but it is certainly a morbid piety that contents itself only with gross exaggeration, and seeks to honour God by depreciating the bounties of his providence. Some such motive may have dictated the above article of the Westminster Confession. However that may be, its teaching destroys all idea of an Atonement. If the Atonement be a reality—if there be any meaning in the words, Christ died for the salvation of sinners, they mean that it is by, and in consequence of, the death of Jesus Christ, that God

¹ *Confession of Faith*, iii. 2.

² *Ibid.* iii. 5.

pardons sin, and admits the penitent to his favour on earth, and to salvation after death. If they do not mean this, they mean nothing. They mean, then, that the Atonement is really both the means and the motive, in consequence of which, and the condition upon which, God consents to save any man. But the above article declares that those who are saved, are saved solely by the decree of God; and that neither faith nor "any other thing" is admissible either as a condition or motive. This is confirmed by the general doctrine of Calvinism on the subject of the divine decrees. God is said absolutely, immediately, and without any condition, or foreknowledge of any future event, to decree everything that comes to pass. Calvinism, therefore, by its general theory, and by a special article, denies that the elect are saved from any other motive than the decree of God. It is then evident, that since the decree is, as alleged in the above article, the sole cause of salvation, the elect must have been saved, even although the incarnation and death of Christ had never taken place. In fact, that the Atonement has no influence whatever in the affair of salvation. The Calvinist cannot avoid this consequence. He cannot say that the Atonement is not excluded from being a condition or cause of salvation, because the causes spoken of in the article are said to be "in the creature." For, the causes excluded are not those qualities which man has by nature, or which he could of himself acquire. They are expressly said to be such as are immediate gifts of God. Thus, among the excluded causes, faith and perseverance in grace are specially named. Now, the Atonement, to be a cause of salvation, must be in the creature, at least in the manner he possesses faith, or charity, or any other grace, for it must be applied to his soul. If it is not so applied, he remains in his sins. The Atonement itself, then, if a cause of salvation, is in the creature; and that, too, in the same manner as faith, perseverance, and the other causes which the Confession of Faith declares to be neither motives nor conditions of salvation. It is, therefore, directly excluded by the words of the article. Nor can it be said that, although the Atonement do not directly move God to save the sinner, it might yet have been the motive of his

saving decree. For if anything future had been the motive of God's decree, then would the decree have been conditional, and Calvinism, with its absolute predestination, would fall to the ground. It is proved, therefore, that the teaching of the Westminster Confession annihilates, or at least renders meaningless and fruitless, the sacred mystery of the Atonement. By thus "making void the death of Christ," Calvinism classifies the work of redemption among those unrealities to which its principles reduce the other doctrines and institutions of Christianity. For four thousand years the whole world had expected the coming of the Saviour. His advent had been announced by the Almighty to the patriarchs, foretold by the prophets, and shadowed forth in the sacrifices and rites of the old law. God had raised the hopes of the world that the Holy One would make an offering for sin, and that His sacrifice would be the condition and cause of salvation. Calvinism, forgetful of its professions of regard for the Atonement, tells us that the secret will of God has frustrated the credulity of the world, by determining, *without any condition whatever*, the salvation of all who shall be saved, and the damnation of all who shall be lost.

Calvinism, therefore, places God in conflict with Himself. While it represents him as announcing that certain events are possible and conditional upon others, it at the same time tells us, that He himself has rendered those same events absolutely and unchangeably impossible, and that, by directly decreeing all things, he has precluded the possibility of any conditional or contingent event in the conduct of the universe. Calvinism, therefore, attacks *directly* the truth of God. It also represents Him as encouraging what the Calvinist can regard only as a false prejudice—the notion that men are free; and as instituting rites and means the most extensive and varied, which, were not all men free, and their salvation possible, and the price of their redemption paid, would be nothing else than a gigantic apparatus of deception. Calvinism, therefore, also *indirectly* subverts the truth of God, and represents him as adding insult to the misfortunes of his creatures, which he himself had rendered irremediable.

SECTION III.—THE SANCTITY OF GOD.

The proofs adduced in the two preceding sections, would, of themselves, amply justify the conclusion which we here propose to establish. Whatever derogates from the justice or the truth of God, derogates also from his holiness, which consists in the infinite perfection of all his attributes, and the absolute opposition of his nature to moral evil. To attack, therefore, or to deny any one of his attributes, is to deny his holiness. But Calvinism assails, in a still more formal manner, the sanctity of God. Had it not been so, we might have contented ourselves with calling the reader's attention to the indirect antagonism of the system to this divine attribute. The matter is, however, certainly among the most absorbing that can claim the attention of the Christian; and the voice of Calvinism is so portentous, yet so clear in its utterances, that it well merits at our hands a more special notice.

No question with which the human intellect has attempted to grapple, presents to unassisted reason problems of deeper interest or greater difficulty, than that of the origin of moral evil. Where their investigations have been conducted without the lights of revelation, men have, on this subject, been led farther and more fatally astray than, perhaps, on any other question which has ever occupied their attention. The existence of moral evil, or sin, is a fact of consciousness. All men, in every age, have seen and believed that there is sin. But God is infinitely perfect, infinitely holy. Sin, therefore, can, in no respect, be traced up to him. Whence, then, is sin? Where does its guilt attach? These were the questions which the founders of sects and systems of philosophy felt themselves obliged to answer. This was the rock upon which they split. The difficulties which the sages of Paganism had to overcome, ere they could solve the problem, were simply insurmountable; and they became still more hopelessly so, in proportion as the existence of an absolute necessity or fate was, with greater distinctness, acknowledged in their systems. For it was evident of itself, that that which could necessitate all things must be supreme. But it was in no degree less clearly seen,

that the Supreme Being must be infinitely holy, and sin infinitely abhorrent in his sight. This evident truth drove the philosophers either to deny the existence of moral evil, or to seek some other cause of sin than the all-perfect God, or the necessitated creature. Sin they could not deny. It was palpable. Their conscience published it. They saw it in the world around them—a dark, loathsome, overwhelming flood. Its presence was testified by the existence of laws, by the consent and universal tradition of mankind, and by the sacrifices, whose traces were to be found wherever a vestige of the human race could be discovered. Whence, then, or from whom did it spring? This was the difficulty; and the philosophers lost the clue to its solution, by their denial of the divine and human liberty. To cut the knot, the most ancient of the Persian and Egyptian sages divided the empire of God. They supposed that there were two eternal principles—the one good, the other evil. The latter was the author of all sin and physical evil; the former was the cause of all good. It is evident that this hypothesis explained nothing; while the previous question returned, embarrassed with additional difficulties. It destroyed the unity and infinity of God, and thus overturned the very truth it had been devised to save. Such as it was, however, it formed the basis of almost all the systems subsequently elaborated by the Greek and Roman philosophers, as well as by the heretics, who, during the first two centuries, threatened to reduce Christianity to their own bastard heathenism. Plato adhered to this system, so far as to make the cause of evil co-eternal with God. Matter, he said, was the principle of evil. That God, therefore, in the creation (or in his system, the formation) of the world, might not be represented as the author of evil, he created intelligences, through whose instrumentality all things were made. The instruments were made the authors of evil; and the First Principle was said to be unaffected by the wickedness which his agents produced. This miserable subterfuge, by which the responsibility of the author is thrown upon his instruments, contains the prototype of Calvinism. Let not the reader imagine that we are wandering from our subject in thus

lightly glancing at the long-exploded theories of Paganism. We have a very distinct end in view, and it bears directly upon one subject of this section. If those theories be studied with attention, it will be found that, however much execrated when presented in the terms of their authors, they have yet been revived in modern heresy. It is true, the phraseology and grosser ideas of polytheism would not for a moment be tolerated, even in the lowest ranks of sectarianism; but it is surprising how much of the eastern ideas Calvin has been able to embody under scriptural forms of words, in his scheme of reformed Christianity. The doctrines of Plato were, with some modifications, the most prevalent to be found in the philosophical world, when the apostles of our Lord were preparing to carry forth to the ends of the earth, the Gospel which was destined to overturn those doctrines, and to replace them by a system of truths at once holy in themselves, and divine in their origin.

The fundamental ideas which Plato had borrowed from Zoroaster and the other eastern philosophers, had, for ages, held almost exclusive possession of the human mind. They had thus come to be regarded as first principles. Christianity, therefore, required to bring about a revolution, not only in the acquired ideas of men, but—a task of infinitely greater difficulty—to eradicate the very principles upon which men had been taught to form their ideas and judgments. With comparative ease, a man will throw from him an erroneous idea which he may have formed; but to divest himself of his principles—to abandon his cherished modes of thought, is an almost super-human task. Instead of frankly confessing their ignorance, men are often inclined rather to compromise, than undergo the trouble, and sometimes pain, of an entire change. Thus it was that many of those who had heard the preachers of the divine revelation, were desirous of engrafting it upon the putrid stock of their own pagan philosophy, and produced that monstrous spawn of impious sectaries, known by the general appellation of Gnostics. There is nothing in the foul systems of these sectaries to attract our attention, beyond their general doctrines of the essential malignity of matter; and the exist-

ence of a demiurgos, or inferior god—the creator of matter, and cause of evil. They are mentioned here, only because they form the last link in the chain which connected Zoroaster with Manes. The followers of the latter soon absorbed into their ranks the scattered remnants of discomfited Gnosticism.

The resemblance between the doctrines of Manes and those of several modern sects is so striking, that more than a mere passing notice must be taken of Manicheism. Manes, from whom the various sects of Manicheans derived their name, revived, and asserted with greater distinctness than the ancient Persians had done, the belief of two eternal principles—the one good, the other evil. He maintained that the empire of the universe was divided between these two principles, or gods. One of them, he said, was the creator of the soul, of light, and of certain portions of matter; the other was the author of darkness, the body, and the greater part of the material world. Like Platonism, this system confounded moral with physical evil; or, to speak more correctly, established principles which were incompatible with the possibility of moral evil. With the Platonists, the Manicheans held that all the actions of men were absolutely predestined; and that, consequently, man is not free. They said that he is, nevertheless, capable of contracting guilt, because he willingly violates the law. They taught that although the two principles were co-eternal, and therefore equal, yet the evil one had made an irruption into the region of light. In other words, that he had corrupted, and, to a certain extent, obtained power over the souls of men, the offspring of the good principle. Upon this, the latter, desirous of saving, at least, a part of his creation from the power of his adversary, made a compromise, by which he agreed to sacrifice the greater portion of the human race, in order to preserve the remainder. Hence the majority of men are wicked—they have been handed over to the Evil One—they are the price of safety to the elect. God, or the good principle, acts, they said, necessarily, in conformity with his nature, and, therefore, can act only in a beneficent manner. The elect, who alone had been left to him, and who are his absolute property, on whom the evil principle had renounced all designs, thus cannot, for

any crimes, receive punishment, nor lose his favour. The evil principle, acting in like manner necessarily, can give to the portion of men that belongs to him only unmixed evil. They cannot, therefore, by any faith, or works, or desires, cancel the doom which has been recorded against them. Reprobation is, therefore, the consequence, not of the sins of the wicked, but of the unchangeably malignant will of the evil principle. Salvation is, in like manner, unconditionally accorded to the elect. They are saved by the sole act of God's will, without regard to faith, or works, or any other condition. Another doctrine of the Manicheans, remarkable in itself, and interesting by reason of its revival in modern heresy, we shall yet notice. They held the soul to be an emanation from the supreme light, or good principle; and the body, as matter, they declared to be not only sinful, *but sin*. It was simply evil. This doctrine led to those awful errors upon the subject of marriage, which rendered the Manicheans a moral plague wherever they appeared. A system such as this, utterly incompatible with the existence of society, soon brought upon the sectaries the eyes of all civil rulers. Driven from the East, they sought refuge or concealment in Spain, in Bulgaria, and in the southern parts of France. In those countries, under the names of Cathari, Bulgari, and Albigenses, they perpetuated their system of error and their impious practices, until some years after the introduction of Calvinism into France; the last of them seem to have sacrificed the most obnoxious of their tenets, and assimilated their creed to the standard of Geneva.

It may have been that Calvin had, upon this subject of evil, adopted, for his model, the system of Manes; or that the Manicheans who joined his ranks reacted upon Calvinism, so as to tinge it with their old opinions. At all events, the resemblance between the systems is too extensive and too marked to have been altogether accidental. Some of the points of resemblance, or even identity, will already have suggested themselves to the reader; more will appear in the following pages. The differences between them consist, perhaps, on some points more in their respective terms, than in their doctrine. When we examine the theory of two contrary

principles, it appears so evidently absurd and self-contradictory, that it is with difficulty we can conceive how it could have ever been entertained. It is generally believed that many of the Persian magi, to avoid the contradiction, supposed that the two principles were, though eternal, the offspring of one only God. But they could have been eternal only by being God himself; thus they would have been identical with the divine will, not as it is in itself, but as it was manifested in creation and providence. Instead, however, of attributing to God himself two wills thus mutually destructive, the one producing only good, the other constantly neutralizing the good and producing evil, they adopted the equally preposterous idea, that the two wills were distinct beings. They, in fact, attributed to the Deity two contradictory wills, which, to avoid inconveniences, they personified. But it was impossible for them thus to effect their object. Indeed, it is a hopeless task to endeavour, without the aid of revelation, or independently of it, to account for the existence of moral evil in a manner which can be reconciled with the sanctity of God. Whether the magi supposed matter to have been eternal, or the principle of evil which acted upon it to have existed from eternity, they equally limited the empire and the power of God, and thus rendered him only a finite being; that is, they denied the essence of God; for God is essentially infinite in all perfections. The Manicheans, moreover, by supposing a principle essentially evil, fell into an error, if possible, still more absurd. Evil is the negation of good. An evil principle, or infinite evil, would, therefore, have been the absence of all good, even existence. It would, therefore, have been nothing. Yet such a principle was that in which the Manicheans believed. Even here, the traces of Manes are to be found in Calvinism. As the question is intimately connected with the nature and cause of evil, it will scarcely be considered a digression, to consider how upon this subject the two systems coalesce.

In the description given by the Confession of Faith of the sanctified man, the "corruption of nature" is said still to abide throughout the whole man. It is spoken of, not as a defect, or weakness, or proneness to sin; but rather as something

which forms a real part of man's being, but which is, at the same time, sin. In the sanctified man, there seems to be established a real dualism. He is spoken of as having a double nature, the one part rendered holy after justification, the other evil in itself, and incapable of being sanctified. As the two principles of Manicheism acted necessarily; so here, in man, an interminable war rages between his "unregenerate" and his "sanctified part." "In which war (says the Confession of Faith), although the remaining corruption may for a time much prevail, yet . . . the *regenerate part* doth overcome, and so the saints grow in grace."¹ This is strictly consistent with the Protestant idea of justification. None of the Reformers would admit that sin could be cleansed from the soul. Their justification consisted in the apprehension, by faith, of the merits of Christ, which then stood between the sinfulness of the soul and the justice of God. The soul remained unchanged. It was precisely as before, only its sins, whether past or future, could be no longer laid to its charge. If the blood of Christ be incapable of washing clean the guilty soul, and its effects be, as the Westminster Confession asserts, only to "cover over" and to "conceal sin from the eyes of God," this inadequacy cannot arise from any want of virtue in the merits of Christ, which, undoubtedly, would wholly purify the just, if the nature of the "corrupted part" was such as to admit of cleansing. If the "unregenerate part" were only *sinful*, surely the blood of Christ, infinitely efficacious, could thoroughly purify it. If it were in its essence good—if it had been the work of God, but had become stained by sin, unquestionably the blood shed on Calvary would be capable of washing out the stain, and rendering the part "white as snow." But if it be not only sinful, but *sin*, then we have at once the reason why Protestants so separate justification from sanctification, as to say that a man, without falling from the state of grace, may continue to be guilty of grievous sin—why the just are never truly sanctified—why even the death of Christ cannot sanctify the whole man—why, in a word, sin is said to be only "covered over" and "concealed," but not extirpated from the soul. A

¹ *Confession of Faith*, xiii. 3

true sanctification could not take place without the annihilation of a portion of the just man's being. For the part which is said to be "sin," could not cease to defile the man without ceasing to exist; for sin cannot cease to be sin. Were, then, the "unregenerate part" to become holy, the change would involve a new creation; or, at least, the substitution of another being; and thus the saint who would be crowned in heaven, would not be the same being who had fought on earth. The penitent sinner would repent of sins which he had not committed; and the elect, before justification, would hope, not through faith and repentance, but by the loss of his identity, to receive the favour of God. But is this portion of Manichæism which, by pronouncing a part of man's being to be "sin," gives to sin a real substance, only a remote consequence of Calvinism? Far from it. The doctrine of Manes is laid down, in the Confession of Faith, with greater precision of terms than we have ventured to employ in the above remarks. The doctrine cannot be repudiated by Presbyterians; for it is clearly contemplated by their standards, reasoned upon, and, of course, supported by the due complement of Scripture texts: "From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions. This corruption of nature *during this life*, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet BOTH ITSELF, and ALL THE MOTIONS THEREOF, are truly and properly SIN."¹ That which is here said to be truly and properly *sin*, must be a real substance. For, if it were not, it could form no part of man. But the Confession of Faith speaks of the corruption of nature as a part of man's being, contrasting it with his "regenerate part." That to this "corruption" substantial existence is attributed, appears also from this, that it is said to be endowed with activity; for activity can be predicated only of being. "From it spring all actual transgressions." Transgression, then, is the manifestation of its activity. Not only itself, but "all its motions" are said to be sin. Now, a negative, or want, is in

¹ *Confession of Faith*, vi. 5, 6.

itself nothing, and can produce nothing. Real being alone is capable either of moving or producing motion—let the nature of the motion be what it may. The motions, then, attributed to the corruption of nature, being real, show it to be a real cause. But a cause must have being; for if it had not, it would be nothing; and *nothing* cannot, in any case, be said to be a cause. From the Confession of Faith, therefore, we conclude, that the “corruption of nature” is a part of man’s being; that it is itself a real being; and that this being is “truly and properly sin.” Whence, then, comes this substance which is said to be sin? Has it existence from itself, or did it derive its being from any other than God? In the latter case, God is not the sole creator—he has an equal—there would be more gods than one; for creation is an act of infinite power. In the former supposition, sin would be self-existing and eternal, and, therefore, the evil principle of Manes. Did it receive existence from God? Then God is the author of sin. That there is no other alternative, is demonstrated by the works of many among the Reformers, who, to escape from the iniquitous errors of Manes, feared not, with at least equal impiety, to proclaim that *God was the author of sin*. But, like many illogical reasoners, by their attempt to escape one of the evils, they only succeeded in subjecting themselves to both.

No one who has even cursorily examined the doctrines of Calvinism, whether in the writings of its author, or in the Presbyterian standards, can fail to be struck by the manner in which all agency is made to disappear from the world, and God is represented as exclusively active. This general impression will be strengthened by a closer study of the system. Second causes disappear, responsibility is destroyed, and those beings who are distinguished by the name of “free agents,” prove to be only instruments in the hands of the Creator for the accomplishment of his will. So intimately is the force of an absolute necessity made to pervade all things, so distinctly are all things said to be the immediate results of God’s eternal decree, that it seems impossible for the Calvinist, without admitting Pantheism, and destroying thus the idea of evil, to find any other author for sin than that one agent whom his

system acknowledges. We are perfectly aware that Calvinists repudiate with horror the imputation of making God the author of evil. Calvin himself did so, and the Confession of Faith repeatedly protests against the impiety with no less vigour, and equal inconsistency. For, impious as is the doctrine, loudly as it may have been repudiated by the followers of Calvin, it is the strict logical consequence of the principles they have set up and still defend. So long as the Westminster Confession and Larger Catechism continue to be the standards of Presbyterianism, so long as Presbyterian ministers and office-bearers subscribe the Confession of Faith, as "the confession of their faith and belief," so long may they be justly charged at least with unpardonable inconsistency; for they adopt and subscribe, in the teaching of that summary, the very doctrine they reject as an impiety.

The first part of the article on predestination asserts that "God did, from all eternity, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass."¹ It is necessary here again to remind the reader of the meaning which Calvinism attaches to this eternal decree. It is said to determine all that comes to pass, directly, and without any contingency on the will of the creature, or foreknowledge of its determinations. So that man wills only that which the decree ordained him to will, and he does so solely *because* it was thus ordained; his act, or the movement of his will, was not ordained as a consequence upon God's foreknowledge of his free determination. Whenever, in the course of this argument, we reason against predestination, it is against the doctrine in this purely Calvinistic sense. Now, as it is but too evident that there is sin in the world, and as the existence and extensive prevalence of evil is freely acknowledged by Presbyterians, it might naturally be concluded that they consider the existence of evil to be the consequence of God's decree. If evil does take place, and if God has from eternity "ordained all whatsoever comes to pass," it seems to be a rigorous consequence that evil was embraced by the decree. To put the argument more formally: The Westminster Confession teaches that God decrees and

¹ *Confession of Faith*, iii. 1.

ordains, immediately, "all whatsoever comes to pass." But sin comes to pass. Therefore, by the Westminster Confession, God ordains and decrees sin. Moreover, it teaches that the decree of God is the cause of whatever is, and denies that either God's foresight of future events, or "any other thing," was the cause or motive of his decree. But we have proved that it also teaches that He decrees sin. Therefore it asserts the decree of God to be the cause of sin. What fatuity, then, could have dictated the concluding portion of the article we have referred to, and offered an outrage to the common sense of mankind? It concludes thus, "Yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures." Fruitless and foolish effort! Calvinism cannot be cleansed from the dreadful stain. If there be meaning in language, if reason be not in its essence an imposture, undoubtedly Calvinism makes God the author of sin. If Calvinism could be cleared of this fearful charge, and if it were possible for the latter part of the above article to be reconciled with the first, it could only be by one or other of the following suppositions: either, 1°, that, although God absolutely foreordained all things, yet he did not therefore foreordain sin; or, 2°, that He could have so ordained sin without becoming its author. But it will not be difficult to show that neither supposition can, for a moment, be admitted.

1. We assert that, if God foreordains "all whatsoever comes to pass," he foreordains sin. In sin, we may distinguish between what we may call the matter of sin, as the external act, or the thought of the mind; and the malice of the will, which gives its evil quality to the guilty thought, word, or action. As to the first, there can be no doubt that the Confession of Faith included all sinful acts in the general decree. If they were not included, then so far from "all whatsoever comes to pass" having been foreordained, far the greater part of all that does take place would happen independently of the decree. Moreover, there can be no reason why Presbyterians should seek to except the mere physical acts, whether of mind or body, from the eternal decree; for, apart from the malice of the will, which renders them sinful, they may be indifferent

or even virtuous. To take the life of a fellow-creature is murder, when cupidity, revenge, or passion is the motive; in necessary self-defence, or in lawful warfare, it is guiltless before both God and man. The judge who sums up the evidence, contracts no guilt by repeating the testimony of a perjured witness; nor does the witness who merely narrates the blasphemy of a criminal partake of his crime. But, as we have seen, the Confession of Faith (chap. v.) admits expressly that the providence of God "extends itself to the first fall, and all other sins of men and angels." It may, therefore, be considered established, that at least the outward act of sin is, by the Confession of Faith, included in the decree of God. As to the malice of the will, it, too, must be held by Presbyterians to have been foreordained of God. For the alienation of the will from God, which we have termed the malice of the will, is a real state of existence; and the will, by formally assuming this disposition, passes from its previous state, and acquires a new relation towards both God and the sinful act. But every state of existence, every modification of the will, every change which takes place in its relations, how minute, how secret soever it may be, is a phenomenon as real and as appreciable as any external act can be. It can on no ground whatever be excluded from the category of things "which come to pass." When the just man admits the grace of God, and seeks in acts of praise, or adoration, or charity, to manifest his gratitude, his virtues, and the acts by which he strives to conform his will to the will of God, were, according to the Confession of Faith, all contained in God's eternal decree. In like manner, then, the perversity of will, by which the soul is rendered sinful, will have been foreordained, for equally with pious and virtuous affections, is it included in "all whatsoever comes to pass." Again, if God had not directly foreordained the perversity of the sinner's will, or sin itself, then would the Presbyterian be obliged to deny the possibility of sin. For, as he maintains that nothing can take place but what had been directly predetermined by the decree of God, perversity, and malice, and sin could never, unless so decreed, have entered the world.

We shall adduce yet another reason why Presbyterians cannot adhere to their doctrine of predestination, without maintaining that God formally decrees sin. Not to dwell upon evil thoughts, which pass not farther than a simple act of the mind, in which the act itself (which Presbyterians admit to have been ordained) constitutes the sin; even where the evil is exteriorly manifested, the sin and the act will be found so united that, on the principles of Calvinism, belief in the foreordination of the one compels assent to the predetermination of the other. There is no abstract existence. Whatever God has decreed, he has decreed not abstractly, but as it shall actually take place, with all its preceding and accompanying circumstances. The decree of God, since it is said to embrace all that comes to pass, does not determine merely solitary and isolated acts. It had determined every movement of the sinner's existence, and every act of his being, internal and external. How often does it happen, then, that a man is so placed, at the moment he is about to consent to a breach of God's law, that he can avoid sin only by the omission of the external act! If, now, the divine decree had not foreordained his sin, it would be possible for him to avoid it. For, since sin springs from the soul, a necessity of sinning could be imposed only by nature or God. The Confession of Faith admits that the will is "neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature compelled to sin."¹ If, therefore, man cannot avoid the sin, the necessity under which he labours must come from God. We have supposed the very common case, where sin can be avoided only by the omission of the forbidden act. But the act is admitted to have been preordained as one of those things which shall come to pass. If, therefore, the sin could be avoided, the act could be avoided; and thus the unchangeable and infallible decree of God could be changed and defeated. The sin, therefore, is as necessary as the external act. But it is admitted that this necessity does not arise from nature; and the will of man is subject to none else but God. It follows, therefore, that, if God has absolutely decreed the external act, he has also determined and rendered necessary its sinfulness. The justice of this conclu-

¹ *Confession of Faith*, ix. 1.

sion would have been readily admitted by Calvin, who seems to have had upon this subject more courage or more consistency than the Westminster divines. He adopts, without hesitation, the doctrine that God has ordained sin. "The first man," he says, "fell *because God had so ordained*. Why he determined we know not. . . . Man, therefore, falls by the determination of God's providence."¹ The opponents of Calvin were not slow to point out to him that this doctrine destroyed the sanctity of God, and made Him the author of sin. In his efforts to evade the self-evident consequences of his opinions, he is betrayed into the most detestable blasphemies, and led to pen many a sentence which, if cleared from the harsh epithet of blasphemous, is indebted for this favour to its own intrinsic nonsense. After all his efforts to smooth down the asperities of his doctrine, behold his opinion of the decree which he labours to defend: "How does it happen that so many people, with their infant children, have been involved, without remedy, in eternal death by the sin of Adam, but because God had thus decreed? *I confess that it is, indeed, a horrible decree*; yet no one can deny that God foreknew before he created man what end he would have; and he knew it, *because he had by his decree determined it.*"²

2. If God has foreordained sin, he is necessarily its author. The existence of contingent beings is inconceivable, save as the results of an act of God's will, which alone could have called them into being. It is evident that, previous to creation, there was no other reason for the future existence of any creature than that which was to be found in the divine will; that without the creative act of that will, no existence could have been possible. The act of God's will which determined the existence of creatures was the real and efficient cause of

¹ "Lapsus est primus homo, quia Dominus ita expedire censuerat. Cur censuerit, nos latet. . . . Cadet igitur homo, Dei providentia sic ordinante."—*Institutio*, lib. iii. c. 23, § 8.

² "Unde factum est, ut tot gentes, una cum liberis eorum infantibus, æterni morti involveret lapsus Adæ, absque remedio, nisi quia Deo ita visum est? Decretum quidem horribile, fateor; inficiari tamen nemo potuit, quin præseverit Deus quem exitum esset habiturns homo, antequam ipsum conderet; et ideo præseverit quia decreto suo sic ordinarat."—*Institutio*, lib. iii. c. 23, § 7.

their being. This act, which determined all that should ever be, is what is understood by the decree of God. The Confession of Faith gives, indeed, no definition to this effect; but the deficiency is amply supplied by its description of the effects of predestination, and by the language of the Larger Catechism. The latter says, "God's decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby he hath from all eternity, for His own glory, unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men."¹ We can suppose a twofold method, by which, in reference to the actions of men, the decree might be carried out. We can suppose man endowed with freedom of will, and power to avoid evil and to do good. The free determination of man's will, under all circumstances, having been from eternity perfectly known to the omniscience of God, his actions may be supposed to have been foreordained as the free effects of his will. Thus, the decree of God would, in our minds, be subsequent to, and dependent upon, the divine foreknowledge of the determinations of man's free will. In this case, the will of man would be the immediate and only cause of his sin; the divine will would but permit the evil, and determine the physical existence and energy of the sinner. The other system supposes that God, solely for his own good pleasure, and without any regard to the will of the creature, or even foreknowledge of its determinations, absolutely determines all things. Here, the decree for all existence and all action precedes the foreknowledge of God. He does not decree the acts of his creatures, because he foresees them as the free acts of their will; but he foresees that such will be the thoughts, words, and acts of his creatures, because his own will had already determined that they should be so. The latter is the system of Calvin and his followers. The former has ever been held by Calvinists in great abhorrence. It is true, several learned ministers of their body, alarmed at what Calvin had called the "horrible" nature of his doctrine, sought to mitigate, in some degree, its harshness. They wished to maintain that the foreknowledge of God precedes his decree. But the death of Barneveldt, and the impi-

¹ *Larger Catechism*, Q. 12.

sonment of Arminius, Grotius, and other leaders of the Remonstrants, proved to all men that Calvinism would tolerate no encroachment on the dogmata of its founder. The Westminster Confession rejects emphatically the ideas of Arminius,¹ and Calvin had, in even stronger terms, condemned, by anticipation, the rash attempt of the Dutch reformers. "Nor," he says, "ought that which I maintain to be considered absurd, that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man and the ruin of his posterity, *but had, by his own decree, determined it.*"² Speaking of predestination, he says, "There are some who confuse this question by their cavils, but especially those who make the foreknowledge of God its cause. We also affirm that both are in God; but we say it is absurd to subject the one to the other."³ To say that God only permits sin, was heresy in the ears of Calvin. He, as the Westminster divines have also done, would, on no account, limit the decree of God to a "bare permission of evil, but made it an efficient creative act." After relating that some, through timidity, had urged the distinction between *permitting* Satan and the reprobate to sin, and *impelling* them, he continues, "They are only shuffling, who say that this takes place by the permission and not also by the *will* of God. He himself openly proclaiming that he does it, repudiates the evasion. . . . God wishes that Achab should be deceived; the devil offers himself to accomplish his purpose; he is sent with orders to be a lying spirit in the mouth of all the prophets. If the blindness and wickedness of Achab be effected by the determination of God, the figment of a bare permission vanishes; for it would be ridiculous if a judge should only permit, and not also decree that which it was his will should exist, and whose

¹ "God hath not ordained anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions."—*Confession of Faith*, iii. 2.

² "Nec absurdum videri debet quod dico, Deum non modo primi hominis casum, et in eo posteriorum ruinam prævidisse, sed arbitrio quoque suo disposuisse."—*Institutio*, lib. iii. c. 23, § 7.

³ "Sed eam (prædestinationem) multi cavillis involvunt, præsertim vero qui præsentiam faciunt ejus causam. Ac nos quidem, utramque in Deum statuimus; sed, præpostere dicimus, alteram alteri subjici."—*Institutio*, lib. iii. c. 21, § 5.

accomplishment he had committed to his servants.”¹ Calvinism, then, repudiates with all its energy the “figment” of a mere permission of sin on the part of God. The quotations we have given from the Confession of Faith and the writings of Calvin show that it holds the relation of God with sin to be much more intimate. They prove, in fact, that Calvinism maintains sin to have been, from eternity, directly decreed by God, both as to the external act and the malice of the human will. But the decree of God is, even in the system of Calvin, the effective act of the divine will, as first cause, determining that which shall come to pass. This act, we have seen, is the cause, and the only real cause of existence. Calvinism, therefore, teaches that God is the cause or author of sin. Since Calvinists reject conditional predestination, they cannot escape this conclusion. For the act of the divine will, which absolutely determines what shall come to pass, is as immediately and as really its cause, in the case of a mental movement, as of an external action; or, as the act of the same will which determines the existence of man himself, is the real cause of his being. God determines that man shall be. He determines, says the Calvinist, that sin shall be. He allows no condition, no foreknowledge, to influence his decree in the one case, any more than he does in the other. The nature of his act is, therefore, in both cases the same. He is, therefore, by the Calvinistic theory of absolute predestination, the author of sin, just as he is the author of man’s being.

3. To throw back the entire responsibility of sin upon God, seems, in spite of their repeated protestations, to have been contemplated by the Westminster divines, in closer connection with their system than solely as a deduction from their principles. They feared not to stand by their doctrine that

¹ “Tergiversando, igitur, effugiunt, Dei tantum permissu, non etiam voluntate hoc fieri; ipse, vero palam se facere pronuntians, effugium illud repudiat. . . . Vult Deus Achab decipi: operam suam offert diabolus, ad eam rem; mittitur, cum certo mandato, ut sit spiritus mendax, in ore omnium prophetarum. Si Dei iudicium est excecatio et amentia Achab, nude permissionis figmentum evanescit; quia ridiculum esset, iudicem tantum permittere, non etiam decernere, quid fieri velit et mandare executionem ministris.”—*Institutio*, lib. i. c. 18, § 1.

God had decreed sin, so far as to make his providence the ruler, director, and governor in all the sins of his creatures. After defining providence to be the active influence of God's power, carrying out infallibly, in his creatures, his eternal decrees,¹ they thus describe its functions in regard of moral evil: "The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that, *not by a bare permission*, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends, yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature."² In vain do they thus qualify as "holy" the ends for which sin was decreed. When evil means are directly employed to accomplish an end, the end itself becomes as unholy as the means. It is against the essence of holiness to do evil that good may come.³ In vain, too, have they, with a fatuity which calls forth pity rather than indignation, fled to their accustomed shelter—a repudiation of the visible consequences of their teaching, when these start up terrible and tangible before them. The voice of reason they do not silence, by merely stopping their ears against its sounds. The sun at noonday does not shine less brightly, that the perverse man shuts his eyes and refuses to see and believe. If God orders, bounds, and directs the sinner in his evil course, and decrees and governs sin solely for his own ends, then is the so-called sinner the helpless instrument of this will, and no more responsible for the evil brought about by his means than is the dagger or pistol answerable for the guilt of the assassin. Were a parent, from a motive of his own interest, to determine his child to the commission of a sinful act, and, lest his intention should be frustrated, to direct the movements of his son by a most wise and powerful bounding, and

¹ "God, the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will."—*Confession of Faith*, v. 1.

² *Id.* v. 4.

³ Romans iii. 8.

otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, "to his own (holy) ends," what would be the sentence which religion, justice, and reason would pass upon his impious hypocrisy? Did he attempt to justify his conduct, by pleading that he had indeed done all that was alleged, "yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from" the child? When the steersman sees a sail at a distance, and turns his vessel's head right upon the object, regulating the movements of his own ship, and directing them in such a manner as at last to send the unfortunate stranger, with her crew, to the bottom, would the justice either of God or man pursue the sails or engines or rudder, and leave the pilot blameless? He who governed and directed the offending vessel would surely be accounted the author of the catastrophe; nor would he escape the heaviest sentence which human laws impose, by protesting that his object was only to procure his own pleasure or glory.

Luther compares the will of man to a horse whose movements are determined and directed by the hand of his rider. When God, he says, holds the reins, then the will is bent towards good; but when the devil rides, it is impelled into every sin. The comparison will apply perfectly to the Calvinistic idea of human responsibility, if it be borne in mind that Calvinism represents every movement of the evil spirits as having been equally decreed and governed by God. To be sure, if a rider had, with his own hand and spur, plunged his horse into the midst of a crowd, trampling down and scattering the weak and helpless, he would in the tribunals of men be held answerable for all the injury which the animal might have inflicted. If in this case it were to be said in justification of the rider, that although he had, for his own ends, ordered and guided in this manner the movements of his horse, yet it had been so as the sinfulness should proceed from the horse, we should have a parallel to the ineffable folly contained in the latter clause of the article quoted above.

On this subject, Calvinists will study with much interest the very explicit language of their founder: "As to those

secret movements which, says Solomon, speaking of the heart of the king, are inclined to one side or the other as God sees fit, all the human race is embraced; and he might equally have said, that whatever we conceive in our minds is directed to his own ends by the secret inspiration of God. . . . I admit, indeed, that God, by interposing the service of Satan, often acts in the reprobate; but it is in such a manner as that it is *by his impulse* Satan himself performs his part, and advances as far as he has been directed."¹ The following is the answer he gave to those opponents who wished to say that God only permitted sin, and objected to him, that if God determined and willed the breaches of his own law, he would be in contradiction with himself: "I have already plainly shown that God is called the *author of all that those critics make to happen only by his idle permission*. He testifies that he creates light and darkness, that he forms good and evil, that *nothing evil takes place which he had not done*. I beg they will say now, does he willingly or unwillingly execute his own decrees?"² To leave no room for evil as to his meaning, and the extent to which he was willing to push his principles, the courageous reformer thus applies them to examples: "Although," he writes, "when Absalom violated the wives of his father, God wished, by this disgrace, to avenge the adultery of David; it was perhaps only for David's sake *that he commanded this criminal son to commit the incest*."³ To the same effect he says: "Whatever, therefore, man or Satan himself does, nevertheless God holds the helm, that he may turn their

¹ "Quantum ad arcanos motus spectat, quod de corde regis prædicat Solomo, flecti huc vel illuc prout Dei visum est, ad totum humanum genus extenditur, tantumque valet, ac si dixisset, quicquid animis concipimus, arcana Dei inspiratione, ad suum finem dirigi. . . . Fateor, quidem, interposita Satanae opere, sæpe Deum agere in reprobis; sed ut ejus impulsu Satan ipse suas partes agat, et proficiat quatenus datum est.—*Institutio*, lib. i. c. 18, § 2.

² "Jam satis aperte ostendi Deum vocari eorum omnium auctorem quæ isti censores volunt otioso tantum ejus permissu contingere. Testatur se creare lucem et tenebras, formare bonum et malum; nihil male accidere quod ipse non fecerit. Dicant, obsecro, volensue an nolens judicia sua exerceat?"—*Id.* lib. i. c. 18, § 3

³ "Etsi dum, stupravit Absalom patris uxores, voluit hoc Deus probro ulcisci Davidis adulterium; non ideo, tamen præcipit sclerato filio incestum committere, nisi forte Davidis respectu."—*Id.* lib. i. c. 18, § 4.

efforts to the accomplishment of his decrees. . . Absalom, by an incestuous intercourse, defiling his father's bed, commits a detestable crime, *yet God claims this work as his own.*"¹ He says, again, that "man, by a just *impulse of God*, does that which it is unlawful for him to do."² And to the same effect: "The devil and all the legions of the wicked are so constrained, on every side, by the hand of God, as by a bridle, that they are *unable to conceive any evil* against us, or to accomplish what they have conceived; nor, how much soever they may try, can they move a finger in its perpetration, save in as far as he has permitted—*nay, save in as far as he has commanded.*"³

The harmony between the standards of Scotch Presbyterians and the writings of Calvin is, on this subject, most complete. The Presbyterian would certainly derive a more distinct view of his religious system from those writings, than he can hope to meet with in the works of the more modern of his teachers. For not only was the "Institution" the principal source of inspiration to the divines who assembled at Westminster, but the ideas of Calvin are there expressed with an openness and boldness which would be looked for in vain among the works of his successors. The brevity of the Confession of Faith necessarily leaves considerable room for explanation. To one who had already become familiar with the Scottish symbol, the writings of Calvin will seem to be its natural complement. Some doctrines which in the Confession are stated with too great brevity, and others which are expressed with a vagueness which gives no little occasion to doubts as to their real meaning, are in the "Institute" enlarged upon, enforced, and illustrated by appropriate examples. Presby-

¹ "Ergo, quicquid agitent homines vel Satan ipse, Deus tamen ipse clavum tenet, ut ad exequenda sua judicia convertat eorum conatus. . . Absalom, incesto coitu, patris torum polluens, detestabile scelus perpetrat; Deus tamen, hoc opus suum esse pronunciat."—*Id. ibid.* § 1.

² "Hic (homo) justo Dei impulsu agit quod sibi non licet."—*Id. ibid.* § 4.

³ "Diabolum, totamque improborum cohortem sic omnibus partibus manu Dei tanquam freno cohiberi, ut nec concipere ullum adversus nos maleficium, nec conceptum moliri, nec ad perpetrandum, si maxime moliantur, digitum movere queant, nisi quantum ille permiserit, imo, nisi quantum mandarit."—*Id. lib. xvii.* § 11.

terians, we are aware, are not unwilling to publish their obligations to Calvin ; but it is to be feared that many praise him, extol the godliness of his doctrine, and enlarge upon the share he had in the creation of the Kirk of Scotland, who know him, not from his writings, but only by tradition. To such the few extracts we have scattered through these pages will, without doubt, prove an acceptable boon. They may, perchance, excite in the minds of Presbyterians a desire to form a personal acquaintance with the able author of their religion. The gratification of such desire could not fail to prove both interesting and useful. The character and religious scheme of the Genevan reformer, can be adequately gathered only from the sketches of his own graphic pen. Even the few extracts we have given will demonstrate, not only that the belief of Presbyterian Scotland is, on all important matters, identical with the original creed framed by Calvin for the Protestants of Geneva, but that Scotch Presbyterians have been much more faithful to the founder of their sect than even the people who long basked in the sunshine of the reformer's presence. While Socinianism and infidelity have swallowed up the remains of Calvinism in Geneva, the Presbyterians of Scotland yet cling with tenacity to such essentials of Calvinism as "inamissible grace," "irresistible grace," and the Shibboleth of the sect—"absolute predestination." Thus we have shown, under the present section, that, in the strictest conformity with Calvin, they maintain that every sin had, from eternity, been ordained by the divine decree ; that, in the movements of Satan and wicked men, it is God himself who acts, for ends known only to himself ; that he "impels" men to sin ; and that he has, by the infallible operation of his providence, prevented the possibility of their avoiding sin ; and, in fine, that he does all this purely for his own good pleasure and glory, and to obtain sufficient grounds for the condemnation of the reprobate.

Doctrines such as those we have shown to belong intimately to the body of Calvinism, render absolutely vain and worthless every protestation against their necessary consequence—that God is the author of sin. The evident results of their

principles ought certainly to induce those who disclaim their impious results, not to rest content with an inconsistent and unreasonable repudiation, under the impression that such a repudiation will justify them in adhering to the principles in which those results are contained, but to examine the grounds of their belief. It cannot be, that true doctrines will ever result in false consequences. Truth produces only truth; and a single false consequence fairly flowing from a principle, suffices to demonstrate that it is erroneous.

There is still another aspect under which this subject claims our attention. The will which effectively consents to evil is itself sinful. The guilt of the sinner consists precisely in the perversity of his will, and its attachment to a forbidden object. Calvinists hold that God has decreed sin; and the decree of God is, they tell us, but another name for the effective act of his will. That which is decreed, is not willed by a mere act of permission or even assent. We have seen that such words as "permission" are reprobated by Calvin as a mere temporizing or evasion. The object of the divine decree is willed directly and efficaciously, so much so, that the sole reason of its existence lies in the decree of God. Calvinism, therefore, makes God first to will sin, and then determines man to will it. Whether the sinner be thus cleared from all guilt and responsibility, is a question which will occur more appropriately hereafter. Meanwhile, it is evident that, if sinfulness consist in the consent of the will to evil, God himself, by the doctrine of Calvin, contracts the stain of sin. Here we dare not venture to do more than raise a corner of the veil. The terrible features of such a system might, perhaps, by some, be contemplated in safety; but they ought not to be uncovered to the promiscuous gaze of men. To dwell upon certain phases of evil, moral as well as physical, is both painful and dangerous. Although none of the Reformers had the boldness to acknowledge this consequence of their principles which we have just suggested, yet, in the assertion of doctrines which involved, some more, some less directly, that God was the author of sin, they showed a harmony in their speculations to which upon scarcely any other

question did they attain. Of Calvin's opinions we have already spoken. But to show that they were cordially shared by many of those who are looked upon as the authors or chief supports of the Reformation, and to demonstrate that the entire Protestant movement has sprung from the same source; that the chief Reformers have held the same ideas of God, and represented, in the same light, the relations of the Creator towards his creatures, we shall here bring forward a few passages from the works of the most distinguished among the reformed writers.

The following are a few of the propositions asserted by Wickliffe:—"The world, and all that it contains, is of an absolute necessity. It is useless to inquire why God does not prevent sin; the fact is he cannot; or, in general, to ask why he does or does not act in a certain manner; for he necessarily does all that he can do. God has decreed all things; he necessitates as well the predestinated as the reprobate to all that they do, and every creature in particular to every one of its actions. In certain circumstances, a man necessarily sins; and God wills those circumstances. Thus he wills that man should sin. He wills the sin because of the good he draws from it. God approves of sin; he necessitates to sin, and man cannot do better than he does."¹ How justly has Wickliffe been called the father of the Reformation! Few, we fear, of those who most loudly glory in their descent from such a stock, are fully aware of the legitimacy of their relationship.

Beza is nearly as explicit:—"It behoved God to decree the sin of Adam; but for the end which I have spoken of." He continues: "We must seek the origin of evil in the spontaneous (not free) movement of God's instruments; so that God justly decreed what they sinfully do. But, you say, they could not resist the will of God, that is, his decree. I admit that; but as they were unable, they were likewise unwilling. But their willingness was also necessitated. I admit this too, as to the result and activity; but the will of

¹Wickliffe Trialogus, apud Bossuet, Variations, livre xi. c. 153.

Adam was not forced." In his Aphorisms he says: "God so acts by means of those instruments, that not only does he permit them to act, and only regulates the result; but also excites, impels, moves, governs, and therefore, further still, even creates them, in order that, by means of them, he may accomplish what he had decreed."¹

The language of Zwingli is equally explicit:—"One and the same action, such as adultery or homicide, in as far as it is the work of God, its author, promoter, and instigator, is not sin; but in as far as it belongs to man, it is guilty and criminal." He thus explains how his ideas are to be understood, and why the same action is criminal only on the part of man: "Whatsoever God does is not sin; because it is not against the law; for to him, as the Just One, there is no law laid down, since, according to St. Paul, the law is not for the just. The one (God) is not bound by the law, but the other (man) is condemned by the law." Again: "When God impels to any action which to the instrument is a sin, yet it is none to him; for he acts freely, and does no injustice to the instrument, since all are more his property than are his tools the property of the workman. He impels, therefore, the robber to murder the innocent, even although unprepared for death."²

Melancthon, although perhaps the most moderate of the Reformers, seems to have been carried away by the general current of the new ideas; and, when writing on this subject, has fallen little, if at all, short of Zwingli in the force of his language:—"Let it be held," he says, "as certain that all things are from God, as well evil as good. We maintain, not only that God permits his creatures to act, but that, strictly speaking, he does all himself; so that, as they confess that the vocation of Paul was properly the work of God, so they may admit that all things are the personal (*propria*) work of God, whether they be indifferent, as eating and drinking, or evil, as was the adultery of David and the ferocity of Manlius. For it is certain that God does all things, not by a bare per-

¹ See Appendix D.

² See Appendix D.

mission, but by the influence of his power; I mean that the treason of Judas is as strictly his work as is the vocation of Paul. . . . Therefore we cannot admit the meaningless expression, that God permits evil but does it not."¹

Such sentiments were no more than modifications of those opinions which Luther had published on the relations of man's will to God's decrees. He thus writes:—"This, therefore, it is most necessary and most salutary for the Christian to know, that God foreknows nothing as contingent, but he foresees, decrees, and performs all things by his immutable, eternal, and infallible will. By this thunderbolt is free-will completely annihilated." A little further on he adds: "From this it irrefragably follows, that all we do, although it appear to us to be done contingently and mutably, and even to us may happen contingently, yet, in reality, if we regard the will of God, it takes place necessarily and immutably." Again: "Whatever is done by us is done, not by free-will, but by pure necessity."² "Man's will is like a horse; if God sit upon it, it goes as God would have it; if the devil ride it, it goes as the devil would have it. Nor can the will choose its rider; but each of them strives which shall get possession of it. The great perfection of faith consists in believing God to be just, although by his own will he necessarily renders us worthy of damnation, so as to seem to take pleasure in the torments of the miserable. God works the evil in us as well as the good."³

Such were the ideas of God's nature, attributes, and operations which the Reformers proclaimed before an astonished world. Such was the Reformation effected by those unsent apostles on this part of the Christian creed. The men who published those ideas, professed to have received their commission from the Spirit of God, and pretended to draw from the sacred writings the sanction of their dreadful doctrines. Not one of all the blasphemies we have copied above from their writings, did they fail to support by copious and frequent quotations from Scripture; nor did they hesitate to

¹ See Appendix D. ² See Appendix D. ³ See Appendix D.

affirm, that those who refused to accept their impious opinions, resisted the Spirit of truth. Strange delusion this of Protestantism! Yet it is the secret of its growth and strength. It has ever identified its own interpretations of the sacred text with the word of God. Protestants *did not*, in the heat of the Reformation controversies, now they *will not* distinguish between their own fallible deductions from the Bible, and the actual doctrines of the Bible. No sooner, then, have they dragged a reluctant text into the arena in support of their most extravagant notions, than they forthwith identify this phantasy of their imagination with the sacred oracles, and scatter around, profusely enough, their denunciations upon the heads of all who resist "the evidence of Scripture." Labouring under this hallucination, the Reformers exerted themselves, under the supposed authority of the Holy Spirit, to destroy the justice, the truth, and the sanctity of God. We have shown that the Reformers, and Calvin in particular, cannot appeal, without offering an insult to reason, to the studied phrases in which they assert all the attributes and the perfect holiness of God. Such expressions, could they by any possibility be reconciled with the essential principles of the Reformation, we should hail with joy, as in perfect unison with the voice of the Universal Church. But when we see that those attributes, the remains of Catholic teaching, are destroyed, wherever they are brought into contact with the proper principles of Protestantism, we can look upon their retention in the symbols of the Reformers, only as an unwitting homage to the force of Catholic tradition, and a testimony to the truth of Tertullian's saying, that the soul is naturally Christian. What, then, has the world gained by this Reformation? What accession has been made, by its means, to the knowledge men previously possessed of the nature of God, his attributes, and his relations to fallen man? Until the fatal period of the Reformation, the Christian world not only professed belief in the justice, truth, and sanctity of God, but held no doctrine at variance with the infinite perfection of each one of those attributes. It believed that God gives power to all men to avoid evil and to do good; that he rewards every good, and punishes every wicked action; that,

as no one will be crowned who has not fought and conquered, so no one shall be punished, but for iniquities which he could and should have avoided. In a word, that God rewards the good, because they are faithful, and punishes the wicked, because they have sinned. Calvinism, reversing all this, teaches that God saves the elect, solely because he decreed their salvation, and without any regard to their faith or sanctity; and condemns the wicked, because he willed their eternal torments as a means of manifesting his own glory; it teaches that God has imposed upon his creatures a law, the observance of which he alone can make possible to them, and yet, exclusively for his own secret ends, he refuses to make it possible to the great majority of mankind, and then draws from their non-observance of it the motive for their condemnation. Until the Reformation, men were taught that the will of God is one, and just and truthful in the highest degree; that God is the unchangeable Truth, incapable of falsehood, prevarication, or deceit; that he desires, in the only manner he can desire, sincerely the salvation of all his creatures, and gives to all sufficient means of salvation, with power to make use of those means and be saved. Calvinism proclaimed that in God there is a secret will by which all—the salvation or reprobation of every member of the human family, and their every thought, word, and deed—had been from eternity absolutely and unchangeably determined, and that there was also an expressed will, which addressed men as if they were free, and able, on every occasion, to act or not to act, to act in this manner or in that, as they themselves might determine; that God professes by this outward will to desire the salvation of all, even of those whom, purely for his own pleasure and glory, without reference to their good or evil acts, he had from eternity condemned; that he offers them salvation through Christ's merits, which he cannot bestow, for Christ, it is said, died only for the elect; and invites them to partake of graces which He has determined not to grant, alleging, with a duplicity which we should expect to find only in the gods of mythology, as a reason for the sinner's condemnation, his non-acceptance of the very grace which He himself had

determined him to refuse. Until the baleful apparition of Wickliffe presaged the Reformation, the Christian world not only believed that God is holy, but its entire creed supposed and perfectly harmonized with the dogma of his absolute holiness. It had been taught to believe that God had created man with freedom of will and power to do good, and placed him in a state of probation upon earth. His everlasting destiny was to be decided by the use he should make of his liberty. In the exercise of his power, he might embrace good or evil—respond to the calls of his Creator, and conform his will to the will of God, or turn away his soul from duty, and set his will in opposition to that of God. Man being left free by the Almighty to choose good or evil, and having been endowed with power to embrace the part which he might choose, became completely and most justly responsible for the evil he performs; while the sanctity of God remained unshaken by the sin of the creature. Calvinism, attempting, perhaps, to exalt the Creator, and show the worthlessness of the creature, annihilated all real agency, save the First Cause, to whom it traced up the very evil by which it sought to depress the creature. It shows us a God, who, without regard to anything but his own will, determines all things that come to pass, the evil as well as the good; who hedges in man by His decrees, so that he can move only on one line, and for the majority of men He has made that line to terminate in hell. It shows us a God who creates men for the purpose of doing by them the evil which He will not accomplish by his own immediate act. It shows us, in fine, a God whose acts are not sinful, only because He is said not to be bound by his own law. It thus exhibits the divine law as something distinct from God, and independent of Him; forgetful of its own statement, that the law is nought else than the expression of the perfect will of God. What, then, we again ask, has the world gained by the Reformation? Let men only study the Reformation in the works of its authors. Let them especially study the doctrines of Calvinism in its authoritative fountains; let them pursue its principles to their legitimate results, and they will find that, far from exalting their ideas of the goodness, justice,

truth, and holiness of God, or bringing out new harmonies in the relations of his attributes to each other and to creatures, it has cast over them a gloom so dense and so repulsive, as to lead its disciples to look upon God, not with the affectionate confidence of children, but with the shuddering dread of slaves upon a tyrant master.

CHAPTER III.

OF MAN.

THE dreadful heresies on the subject of God's nature and attributes, which Calvinism partly originated and partly revived, drew after them many corresponding errors on the state of Man. As the heresies alluded to regard God in his relations to man, it is evident that they would either suppose or produce analogous errors on the relations of the creature to God. The direct object of revealed religion is to point out to fallen man the means of salvation. For all, therefore, who have assumed to themselves the task of preparing for the world religious systems, the great problem has been, How is man made just before his Maker? It was by attempting to solve this problem in a manner more satisfactory than, it seems, Christianity had done, that Luther commenced his reformation. But, although Justification was the first of the new doctrines in point of time, it was not the first in the order of logic. It may, therefore, have given occasion to the various tenets of the new religions; it may have decided the course of the stream, or given a tinge to the colour of the waters; but it cannot be regarded as their source. Revelation has many truths to make known ere it reaches the doctrine that man stands in need of justification. When Luther broke through the circle of Catholic truths by his innovations on this point, he found that the opinion he had formed required him to look back as well as forward—that, in fact, it compelled him to modify some, and abandon others, of those views on man's nature and state which alone had hitherto been received in the Christian Church. He found that Christianity contained a perfect body of doctrines, firmly bound by the principle of divine authority, and intimately united to each other, not only by dependence on their common centre, but by their mutual

position and relationship. They were a circumference formed, not of a mere collection of separate points, but of a continued homogeneous line. The fragments of the line, once broken, could never again be formed into one. Integrity, union, and the centre would all be lost. Christianity is indeed one, and its unity is perfect. But it is impossible to form a system out of any number of its separate truths. Thus Luther soon discovered that he could not hold the Catholic system, deprived only of its doctrine on justification. This doctrine was found to be the necessary consequence of another; and itself, in its turn, the source of a third. These also stretched out in both directions, as producers and produced, until they met again.

No other argument is necessary to demonstrate the human origin of Protestantism, than that which is presented by the manner in which its different sects commenced their revolt from the Church. In spite of their incessant clamour, that the Church had become totally corrupt, no one of all the Reformers ever dreamt of attempting a total reformation. Each seized upon the point or points in the Catholic system which chance, or passion, or fancy, or interest suggested, reformed it or them to his taste, and then summoned the world to come and behold the religion of Jesus Christ, which, after more than fifteen centuries of experiments and failures, was now, by his efforts, produced pure and undefiled. Yet, although Catholicity had been pronounced to have become totally corrupted, the labours of those modern lawgivers resulted in an unskilfully-executed copy of Catholicity, which had also been mutilated by the copyists of purgatory, or miracles, or confession, or the divinity of Christ, or good works.

Too much honour has been done to the Reformers by those divines who, in their refutations of Protestantism, treat it as *a system*, and endeavour to trace it as a logical consequence to some generating dogma, and to reduce its teachings to some appreciable principles. Protestantism, as such, has but one principle—that reason is supreme in all matters to which man's assent can be required. It has but one essential dogma—that Popery is false. The Protestant may be driven in succession from every opinion he thinks he holds, but so long as he

adheres to this principle and this dogma, he is as real and as unexceptionable a Protestant as if he were the first-born of Luther or Calvin. The peculiar doctrines of the different sects are but so many isolated points of belief. The adoption of one, or the rejection of another, is only a question of more or less. The essence of Protestantism is unaffected by any such accidental changes. Instead of a system, it exhibits to us only the *disjecta membra* of Catholicity, arranged according to individual caprice, and mingled here and there with crude theories and undigested thoughts. Whether we believe Luther's own account of his commencement as a Reformer, or adopt the puerile fable recorded with dramatic effect by d'Aubigne, in his romance of the Reformation, we must equally conclude that it was no inspiration from heaven, but a mere casualty which selected the doctrine of justification for the point of attack on Catholicity. The contest which chance originated was continued by the vanity of Luther, who constituted himself, or was pushed on by his short-sighted companions, as the champion of a party-interest in the controversy on Indulgences. The covetous eyes of several temporal sovereigns were not slow to perceive the immense accession which such a contest might be made to bring to their influence and personal wealth. Nor were there wanting men, like the Landgrave of Hesse, who saw that the supporters of the new ideas would not be likely to refuse to the frailties of a powerful ally such indulgences as were simply hopeless under the moral rule of Catholicity. In England, the Reformation was the offspring of the eighth Henry's lust. Under him, however, the Reformation received a form materially different from that which it had assumed in Germany, Scotland, or indeed any other country. It bore, in every feature, the likeness of its parent. Henry had more than even the Tudor's pride. He could brook no superior. The Reformation proclaimed him supreme head of the Church on earth, with power to confer spiritual jurisdiction, to define doctrines in the last resort, and even, as in the case of his supremacy, to append new articles of faith to whatever of Christianity he had condescended to retain. As Henry was needy and covetous to the extreme

point of rapacity, the Reformation made him master of the Church's wealth; and unblushingly assured him that he was guilty of no moral transgression in tearing from its owners, to reward his paramours and the tools of his despotism, property which had been confirmed to them by every title which religion and human laws could confer. As he was unprincipled, it told him that where only religious men and women were concerned, to slander their good name, and invent the most atrocious lies in order to furnish a pretext for their suppression, was all right and proper; for the holiness of the end sanctified the means. In Scotland, a compound in which Calvinism was predominant became orthodox, because it so happened that the vilest and the most traitorous of European nobility sorely wanted a reformation which should transfer the lands and treasures of the Church to themselves. They were poor to a proverb, and could not afford to allow a generous share of the spoil to those who should undertake to accomplish for them the theological portion of the work. Their ecclesiastical auxiliaries must be content to do their work cheaply. They were expected to occupy the attention of the people with interminable prayers and denunciations of the Church's iniquity, in heaping up the mammon of this world, until such time as their employers had secured for themselves a sufficient share of the obnoxious wealth. Fortunately for the purposes of the nobility, the Protestants then in Scotland were, like Knox, men whose religious opinions had, for the most part, been imported from Geneva. Stern men they were, something of republicans withal, and vehement enemies to all squandering of the precious metals in the worship of God. They were the very men to accomplish the kind of reformation which was desired. The riches of the ecclesiastical establishments became the prize of the nobility; the ministers whose clamorous demands for a due share of the spoil were preferred with a pertinacity proportioned to the vehemence of their protestations of disinterestedness, picked up with noisy discontent the dribblets which were thrown them by their employers; and the people, who were the really plundered party, after having swept their own wealth into the pockets of their masters, were compelled to accept such a

religion as the leading ministers could agree to frame. That Calvinism is the established religion of Scotland, is then a mere accident ; unless, perhaps, it be contended that divine Providence appointed it as the true and fitting religion for Scotchmen ; while it raised up Luther to discover a revelation which should be true and fitting for Denmark and the German states ; and Henry the Eighth to accommodate the English people with a set of opinions differing from both, but true, and fitted to the more liberal ideas and loyal leanings of Englishmen.

No branch of Protestantism ever rose to the dignity of a philosophy. Whatever it selected for its first doctrine, it made merely its point of departure. It started from that doctrine : it was not developed from it. Unlike the philosopher who, starting from a known or demonstrated principle, unfolds his sure conclusions, and exhibits a system solid and consistent, the Reformers chose, apparently at random, and laid down a controverted proposition for a first principle, and, to its exigences, they endeavoured to accommodate and change the various articles of their previous creed. It may readily be supposed that they soon found themselves struggling to maintain, by the side of their innovations, a portion of doctrine entirely antagonistic. Thus, at every step were they compelled, like the baneful empiric, to alter, amend, reject, and modify ; confessing that here they had gone too far, there they had stopped short too soon ; and, in fine, leaving their religions full of inconsistency, without cohesion, and destitute even of a base upon which to rest.

Hence, in the midst of all its variety, after all its changes, Protestantism shows the deepest intellectual poverty. If we except the modern ultra-Protestant sects, such as the German Rationalists, the Universalists, and Transcendentalists of America, the various bodies of Protestants may be said to do no more than ring the changes on the notes which Luther sounded. Even Calvin, throughout a considerable part of his system, may be looked upon only as a free commentator on Luther. If his doctrine of election, and his views on the subject of the Eucharist be excepted, he might have subscribed

the Formulary of Concord. To at least an equal extent has this been the case with the various sub-sectaries of Protestantism. They made the doctrines of the body from which they broke off the groundwork of their new creed, holding forth, as their peculiar excellence and characteristic, their mode of baptism, their views of a congregation's rights against the Church, or the rights of the Church over congregations; some shadowy thought upon Predestination, or the fancied manifestations of an indwelling Spirit. But over the wide extent of Europe to which the Reformation spread, we will look in vain for any noble ideas, any prolific principles, or even for the consistent application of such principles as were the legacy of Luther.

We have said, however, that there were some ideas whose adoption gave occasion to much modification in doctrines to which the Reformers had previously yielded unhesitating assent. In this respect the Protestant doctrine of Justification occupies a most important position. It called for radical changes in the Reformers' ideas, as well of man's primitive as of his present state. Luther and his followers yielded freely to its requirements; yet, great as their changes were, they did not suffice to make contradictions disappear. From a few of the instances which will incidentally come under our notice in the course of this chapter, it will be seen that the great discovery of the Reformation, that man is justified by faith alone, has, after every effort to bring it into shape, and give it some degree of consistency, been left in a state of irreconcilable hostility with Scripture, with common sense, and with itself.

Luther traced the first germ of his reformation to a conversation he had held in his convent at Erfurt with an aged monk. Meditation on the sins of his youth had made such an impression upon him, that he was in a state of mind bordering on despair. The well-meant language of the companion from whom he had sought consolation, by exalting the power of faith, soon carried the ardent mind of Luther, excited as it then was, into the tempting regions of speculation. The old way of self-denial, of penance, of abnegation, of the cross, seemed so forbidding, so irksome to flesh and blood—while it

was so simple, so easy, so pleasant to think that all might be set right by a simple act of faith—that Luther did not long hesitate in choosing the more comfortable path. It was, therefore, resolved, in the mind of the Reformer, that henceforth man should be justified by faith alone. Ranke, and other Protestant writers, consider the doctrine thus discovered to have been the pole-star of Luther's after-life. By it, say those authors, were the theological studies of the Reformer directed; his new doctrines were, as far as possible, shaped in conformity with it. There is, however, no vestige of evidence to show that Luther acted steadily under the guidance of any fixed principle whatever; and the wayward bursts of passion in which the greatest of his reforms were effected, totally annihilate the fond theories, by the aid of which his admirers seek to cover their master with a philosophical cloak, which he himself would have torn in shreds, or trampled in the mire. That many of his doctrines were, however, to a certain extent shaped in conformity with his theory of justification, we have already admitted, and some of those modifications will immediately draw our attention. Luther had been taught, by the Catholic Church, to believe that whatever man has, he received from God; and, therefore, owes the service of his faculties and of his whole being to Him from whom all had been received. Hence his obligation to love God with all his heart and all his strength. The Reformer had also been taught the immediate consequence of this, that, in justification, man cannot be passive, but must respond to the call of grace—that, to be justified, man must will his own justification. All this teaching, however, required to be displaced, in order to make room for justification by faith alone. Yet how set aside an obligation which had its force from the very fact of creation? There was but one method, and it was adopted by the Reformers. They denied the *possibility* of man's correspondence with God. They considered that if man had the power to co-operate with God, his obligation to do so was self-evident; and that, if no such obligation lay upon him, the reason could be found only in his want of ability. But they had already settled the point of obligation, by declaring that justification was by faith alone;

and that, in justification, man was altogether passive. Thus they concluded that grace operated without respect to the state of man's will, and that he had no power either to admit or reject grace, or to correspond in any way with the designs of God.

Will, however, is the source of moral power. The Reformers therefore, finding themselves obliged to deny to man all moral power towards the performance of a good act, were compelled also to deny him free-will. Luther, accordingly, asserted boldly that man was not free; but that, on the contrary, he acted, in all things, as God had determined him. In this he was followed, though with not a little tergiversation, by Calvin, and his followers, the Westminster divines.

Thus far the consequences of the new doctrines were retrospective. But their effects were to be more directly felt, and soon became manifest in more startling inroads upon the old creed of Christendom. Since it was laid down that man in justification remained passive, and that God was the sole agent, it followed that the justified man might remain in all other respects unchanged—still bent upon evil, and yielding to his corrupt inclinations—in other words, that the just man is not necessarily sanctified. From this again it followed that justification was quite external to man, and really consisted in the removal of responsibility for sins past and future, but by no means in the cleansing of the soul. It also followed, that a soul still perverted from good, and pursuing sin, might nevertheless be a pleasing object in the sight of God. All this was contemplated and admitted by Luther and Calvin. But there was another consequence equally necessary and equally evident with those, which was not, however, contemplated by the authors of the Protestant doctrine. This consequence will fall to be considered in the present chapter. It is, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone closes heaven against all the children of Adam; so that, even those who have been called and justified, must, no less than their unregenerate brethren, be excluded from the hope of salvation.

SECTION I.—MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY.

The further one advances in the study of religious revolutions, the more strongly does the conviction press upon him, that, from Simon Magus downwards, "reformers" have considered themselves authorized to set aside the universally-received axioms of reason. Their followers, too, seem tacitly to have granted them the perilous privilege of imposing on public credulity paradoxes, whose palpable absurdity should not be allowed to militate against their adoption. No principle of reason could have enjoyed a more perfect sanction, than did the axiom which declares that liberty or free-will is the basis of responsibility. Remove even the most fanatical sectary from the little field of his peculiar dogmatism, and he will, like other men, attribute blame only to the abuse of liberty, and regard as irresponsible such agents as can act only at the impulse or by the direction of another. Yet liberty has been denied by the majority of modern reformers, and, strange to say, the extremes of Protestantism have been united in this denial. For, while the Socinians, Owenites, &c., are driven at once to this negative by their pantheistic elements, Calvinists have arrived at the same result as the first consequence of their theory on predestination.

In our argument against Calvinism, we scarcely know whether to look upon it as an advantage or an embarrassment, that the system we oppose has so frequently and so directly stumbled against the very foundations of reason. For if the few will at once perceive where a self-evident truth has been violated, and know that the system which openly or by implication denies such a truth, impresses on its brow the fatal stigma of imposture; the many—those who do not or cannot pierce below the surface of things—will hardly admit that a religion which they have been taught to look upon as the work of learned and pious men, and which they see supported by men of talents and education, can be so palpably in error. The evidence which convicts Calvinism is too clear, too bright, too overpowering. Men say there must be something in the system which they have not yet studied or understood. That

its patent contradictions and bold absurdities must be supported below by some hidden wisdom, which, perhaps, their "slowness of heart" prevents them from reaching. It cannot be that grave divines should have framed a religion, whose falsehood could thus be seen and touched, even by the most simple and uneducated. But so it is. Calvinism is in the most direct and fatal contradiction with many of those truths which are self-evident—which are by legislators, philosophers, and divines held as axioms or first principles. The question which at present occupies our attention will give ample opportunities for the proof of this assertion. This we shall endeavour in part to show, by proving the proposition that—

The teaching of the Westminster Confession leads to the denial of man's responsibility and of future punishments.

Without liberty or free-will there cannot be responsibility. But the Westminster Confession destroys liberty: it therefore destroys responsibility.

To avoid all ambiguity, we shall define the terms of our argument. When we say that man is responsible, we mean that he must render an account to God of all his thoughts, words, and actions; and that, according to the nature of the account he renders, his eternal happiness or eternal misery will be decided: "They that have done good shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."¹ By "will" we mean the power and faculty of choosing, resolving, determining, with which the soul has been endowed. By freedom or liberty we mean an immunity from necessity or dependence on the part of the will, in choosing, resolving, and determining. When we say, then, that the will of man is free, we mean that man has a real untrammelled power of choice and self-determination; that where two or more objects are presented to the intellect, the will has the power of adhering to one and rejecting another, approving or disapproving of one or more, of disapproving or rejecting all. In a word, that the movements of the soul are not predetermined nor necessitated by any external power whatever; that the soul, previous to its

¹ John v. 29.

determination or choice, was equally able and equally free to have chosen or determined otherwise, or not to have determined at all; that whether it approves or disapproves, embraces or rejects, *its act is its own*. It is necessary to notice that the liberty spoken of is a moral power—a *power of the soul*. The ill-digested definitions and preposterous speculations of Locke, have done much to confuse this question in the minds of English readers. He defines liberty to be “the power a man has to do or forbear doing any particular action, according as its doing or forbearance has the actual preference in the mind,”¹ as if the question of moral liberty regarded the body, or the freedom of the soul could be destroyed by the chains which bind the body. Indeed, the entire chapter on liberty, in the *Essay on the Human Understanding*, demonstrates that this father of modern materialism understood neither his subject nor himself. The worship paid in England to his hollow name, shall not prevent us from recording our opinion of his merits. To resume: the outward act may give evidence of the freedom of the will; but the will acts not less freely when it chooses that which cannot be outwardly accomplished, than when it finds in the body a competent minister of its power. A man in prison may yet render himself guilty of every crime in the decalogue.

I. Without liberty, then, there can be no responsibility. For—

1. If the volitions of man were necessitated, that is, if man had power to will only that which he does actually will—if he were, previous to his decision, destitute of the power of suspending or withholding or refusing his assent—it is evident that he can have no real control over his thoughts or determinations. They would be as little under his dominion as if they were the thoughts or volitions of another. But it would be absolutely unjust to hold a man responsible for that over which he has not control. If, therefore, man had not freedom of will, he could not be made responsible. For a fuller view of this argument, we refer to the last chapter, where it was treated at some length.

¹ *Essay on the Understanding*, chap. xxi.

2. If man is responsible, he is so *only for his own acts*. No one will maintain that one man can be called on to answer for acts which are really another's. Not even the most virulent partisan of fatality will say that Pius the Ninth could be made accountable for the bad theology of Calvin, or the atheistical hypotheses of Locke; or that Socinus could have been punished for the murder of Servetus. Yet, why not? unless that men cannot be held responsible for acts which are not their own. But, unless the will of man be free, his acts are not his own. He is only the instrument of another, not a self-directing agent. Where the will acts necessarily, that is, where it has power to act only as it does, and previous to its decision had not power to have acted otherwise, it is itself determined by another. The efficient cause of its act is not itself; it is from without. But all acts are morally the acts of the determining power, not of the instrument or necessitated agent. Thus, the explosion of a magazine is the act not of the match, but of the man who applies it. The destruction of the Philistine's crops was the act of Samson, not of the animals he employed. If agents which are not free could be responsible, then the animals would be responsible—then infants and the insane would be responsible. But all men agree that such are irresponsible, and consider that their movements, whether physical or moral, spring not from an adequate internal principle, but from a power which is without themselves—in a word, that their acts are not their own. When, therefore, man is not able and free to choose between different objects—to act or not to act—his acts are not his own, and he cannot be held responsible for them.

3. The reasonableness and the binding force of all human laws are based upon their conformity with the divine will. "The power is from God;" and legislators have ever believed that they could bind by their enactments only those whom the will of God subjected to their authority. Yet, wherever human laws exist, they have been instituted solely for free agents. Is God, then, less just than his creatures, that *He* should hold men responsible for acts which they could neither avoid nor modify? It is, then, the universal conviction of

mankind, that, at least in regard of external acts, where there is not liberty there is not responsibility. But the quality of outward acts is derived from the state of the will. If this be in conformity with the will of God, the acts are good ; if otherwise, they are evil. To declare, therefore, the outward act exempt from responsibility, is simply to say that, because of the necessity under which it acted, the will contracted no guilt.

4. The compilers of the Westminster Confession were not unaware of the truth, that liberty is the basis of responsibility. With their characteristic inconsistency, they seek to embrace the truth and its contrary error in their religious scheme ; or rather, they endeavour to save in words the truth which, with all the followers of Calvin, they were obliged to sacrifice in effect. It seems thus to have been only as a sop thrown to the common sense and intimate conviction of mankind, that they sanctioned the following article : “ God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor, by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good or evil.”¹ How misplaced is the assertion of any species of liberty in a statement of Calvinistic doctrine, we shall presently see. Let the article serve here as even a Calvinistic testimony to the truth, that responsibility cannot be conceived without liberty.

II. But Calvinism destroys liberty. This we prove—

1. From its doctrine of justification. If we experience any difficulty in the proof of this portion of our argument, it arises neither from the paucity nor inconclusiveness of the evidence, but from a certain degree of embarrassment to which the conflicting ideas of the Calvinistic formularies give rise. There is, indeed, no little discrepancy of opinion among Calvinists as to the nature and cause of justification ; and the opposition to be found between the various definitions and explanations of their doctrine, whether the effect or the cause of that discrepancy, proves a serious impediment to the attainment of a clear apprehension of what modern Calvinism really is. The Westminster Confession says, indeed, that “ faith is the

¹ *Confession of Faith*, ix. 1.

alone instrument of justification ;”¹ and the formula—“ Man is justified by faith alone,” is, we are aware, looked upon not only as the main pillar of what are called the evangelical sects, but even as a test of legitimate Protestantism. But to how many Protestants do these expressions call up a distinct idea? In what statement of Presbyterian, or indeed of Protestant doctrine, shall we search for an authentic explanation of what is understood by the term “faith alone?” Does it mean that the grace of faith—simply the gift of God—independently of any act or co-operation on the part of man, justifies the sinner? Or rather, that it is the act of the mind vivified, or, as we may say, informed by faith, which apprehends the merits of Christ, and obtains the forgiveness of sin? The former was, unquestionably, the doctrine of Luther and the first Reformers. But new light has arisen upon their followers; and even in the ranks of Calvinism are to be found not a few who assert that the act of faith, not the grace, is the instrument of justification. As we know not to which of these parties belongs the honour of truly representing the Presbyterianism of Scotland, and as each can produce from the Confession of Faith the most satisfactory testimonies of its exclusive orthodoxy, it will be necessary for us to meet both in our reasoning.

If the meaning of the Protestant formula be, that grace alone, without concurrence on man’s part, is the instrument of justification, then it is not man, but God himself who apprehends and appropriates the merits of Christ. We have thus the sinner pardoned and rendered the friend of God, not only without any effort or even desire on his part, but it may be without his consciousness of the great boon that has been conferred upon him—in fact, as much a stranger to his good fortune, as if the sins forgiven had been those of the grand Mufti. A peculiarity of this species of justification, perhaps still more worthy of notice, is, that since faith is a grace which renders possible a supernatural act of belief, and its activity is properly manifested in an act of belief, sinners are released from the guilt of their transgressions by an act in which God believes in himself, hopes in himself, and confides in his own

¹ *Confession of Faith*, xi. 2.

mercy through the merits of the Redeemer. Another consequence of this doctrine of the Reformation, of a character equally extraordinary as the preceding, is, that a man may be rendered the friend of God, not only without desiring it, but while actually renouncing and blaspheming God; nay, he may continue in this awful frame of mind for an indefinite period of time, still remaining a pleasing object in the sight of God—still entitled to the glorious epithet of “just.”¹ The reader will also readily perceive, that on the hypotheses we are examining, the entire economy of divine Providence, in relation to the justified, is overturned. A man whose justification and final perseverance in grace should be absolutely secured by God, without the concurrence of the creature being required, would no longer exist on earth in a state of probation. His salvation, unconditionally and immutably fixed, would render any trial or probation, in his regard, altogether unmeaning. Far from resembling the saints of Christianity, who, like St. Paul, strive to “work out their salvation with fear and trembling,” who, though in the grace of God, yet fear “lest while they preach to others, they may not themselves become castaways,” the saints of Luther’s theory present a spectacle, to which a parallel can be found only in the heroes and demigods of Grecian mythology, who could not, by any amount of crime, forfeit the immortality to which they had been destined by Jupiter.

Let it not be imagined that we have needlessly stepped aside to notice the consequences of what many Protestants will, no doubt, call a defunct form of their religion. An opinion which can allege in its favour the respectable authority of the Westminster Confession of Faith, is certainly entitled to some consideration beyond the bare development of that particular consequence for which principally it has been here introduced. To resume, then, our argument: Calvinism, as we have said, affords unequivocal support to those who maintain that man is entirely passive, and in no way concurs in his own justification. How, indeed, is it possible for a being so essentially corrupt and sinful as man

¹ *Larger Catechism*, Q. 71.

is represented by Calvinism to be, to share in any work of holiness? How could God, a being essentially holy, become a moral partner with man in a work essentially sinful? Calvinism represents corrupted nature as "not only sinful, but sin;"¹ and in harmony with this view, pronounces all the works of unregenerate men to be sinful,² and therefore deserving of eternal flames. But man remains "unregenerate" until he has been justified. Any act, therefore, of his, by which he could co-operate with grace towards his justification, could serve only to defile and render of no effect the operation of the Divine Spirit. How, moreover, could a system which so loudly asserts justification to be the exclusive work of God, allow man to come in as a sharer in the labour? Can it be said that the grace of faith is the *alone instrument* of justification, if the sinner be pardoned by means of an act of his own mind, even although that act were directed and vivified by the Holy Ghost? And the whole world knows that Calvinism has ever adhered to the motto—"Justification by faith alone." Through a desire for consistency, or, it might have been, from conviction, the Westminster divines were not unwilling to guarantee the orthodoxy of this motto, by formally asserting that man is altogether passive in the important movement of his justification: "This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it."³ Did Calvinism admit the co-operation of man in justification, a fatal blow would be

¹ *Confession of Faith*, vi. 5.

² *Id.* xvi. 7.

³ *Confession of Faith*, x. 2. If the effectual call here referred to be not justification, it supposes that grace to have been already conferred, and, therefore, that man is passive in the work of regeneration. It is said that the call cannot be embraced by the sinner, until he has been quickened and renewed by the Holy Ghost. But to be quickened and renewed by the Holy Ghost, supposes that sins have been forgiven, grace actually imparted, and the person of the sinner rendered acceptable before God; or that the quickening and renewing operation is itself but another expression for the forgiveness of sin. But the forgiveness of sin, and the acceptance of man as righteous, is precisely what the Confession of Faith understands by

given to its doctrine on the subject of works. No sect has ever more strenuously asserted the utter worthlessness of all the works of man. If, then, the faith which justifies were the act of the mind—the act of man—and not the pure grace, without any admixture of human effort, justification would be by works; for, certainly, an act of the mind is a human work. The instrument of man's regeneration would be man himself, and grace would but afford subordinate assistance. The doctrine, therefore, which Calvinists have ever held on the subject of works, not less than their ideas of the state of man since the fall, are absolutely untenable, unless on the supposition that justification is the exclusive work of God, and that man, in the accomplishment of his regeneration, is entirely passive. Since, then, no act is required on the part of man, his justification is simply unconditional. It can be neither procured nor prevented, neither accelerated nor retarded, by his disposition or state of mind. It depends, therefore, solely upon the will of God. But God is unchangeable; and whatever he has willed, without imposing or requiring conditions on the part of the creatures which change, is absolutely and immutably determined. But the absolute determination of God's will is his eternal decree; and thus, from the doctrine of justification by faith alone, flows, necessarily, the theory of absolute predestination. Predestination, however, as we

justification. The approval, therefore, meant to be given, by the article quoted in the text, to the theory of justification without man's concurrence, is sufficiently distinct. But the logical consistency of the article is not so easily perceived. Perhaps some of those who subscribe the Westminster Confession could inform us how a man who remains "passive" contrives to "embrace a grace;" and how, *after he has been "renewed by the Holy Ghost,"* it still remains for him to "embrace the grace" which is then offered for the purpose of renewing him! If it be necessary for justification that man should first "embrace the grace," then he cannot be renewed until he has embraced it; yet the article declares that he cannot embrace the grace until he has actually been renewed. So that the first and most necessary preliminary required in the process by which Calvinism justifies the sinner, is *his justification*. He must, it seems, *be renewed* in order to make it possible for him to commence the work of his renewal. If the votary of Calvinism can save himself from being transfixed on one or other of the horns of this cruel dilemma, he must have been gifted with very ample powers for the interpretation of the Scotch Confession.

have already in part shown, and shall immediately prove, necessarily annihilates liberty. If, therefore, Calvinists hold that justification by faith alone means justification without the co-operation of man, they must admit, as a consequence of this opinion, that the will of man is not free.

In direct opposition to this interpretation of the Protestant formula, is that of those who maintain man's act of faith to be the instrument of his justification. Strong as are the grounds which the Confession of Faith affords to the supporters of the previous theory, they will scarcely outweigh those which the partisans of the second opinion can adduce from the same source. According to this opinion, the instrument of justification is faith, not, however, alone or in itself, but in the act of the sinner, by which he believes that Christ died for him and purchased his redemption, and that his sins have been covered from the sight of God by the justice of the Saviour. So much is this considered to be the act of man, that popular divines have been applauded for giving a happy expression to the general opinion of Protestants, in the assertion that "man is justified by thinking by an act of the mind." Nor was the applause less which followed the declaration, that it was the boast of Protestantism as an intellectual system, that it believed man to be saved by the act of his intellect, in opposition to Catholicity, which attributes justification to certain sacraments which God has appointed for conveying his grace. Nor could such declarations have been opposed by any one desirous of giving a consistent adherence to the religious scheme of the Westminster divines. Whether it was that they were anxious to unite the conflicting views of the two parties, or that they drew up their Confession without having themselves any fixed opinions on the subject, we are scarcely called upon to inquire: the result, not the motive of their labours, is the present object of our research. In answer to the question, "How doth faith justify a sinner?" the Larger Catechism says, "Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God . . . only as it is an instrument, by which he (the sinner) receiveth and applieth Christ and his righteousness." When we consider that the same authority had pronounced man to be *pas-*

sive until he had been renewed by the Holy Ghost, and that justification was the exclusive work of God, we might be induced to doubt whether the answer just cited had been ever penned by the Westminster divines. It does seem strange that they should thus make sinners capable of receiving and applying Christ to themselves; in a word, the instruments of their own justification. Such, however, is the fact. The Confession of Faith itself, after defining faith to be "the act of believing," says, "Faith, *thus receiving and resting* on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification." ¹ It is not therefore faith in itself, as a virtue or gift of God, but as the act of the mind receiving and resting on Christ which justifies. Quite in conformity with this, is the following account of the acts of the grace of faith, whereby "*the elect* are enabled to *believe to the saving of their souls.*" ² "By this faith a Christian believeth to be true whatever is revealed in the word. . . . But the principal acts of saving faith are *accepting, receiving, and resting* upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace." ³ In conformity with the teaching of such texts, we find that Calvinists have ever insisted on the necessity of sacraments and a public ministry. The use of such aids as sacraments or such an institution as a ministry, could not be required if faith alone were the instrument of justification. Nay, if grace alone operated the renewal of the sinner's heart, any ministry wherein man bore a part, would, by its imperfections, necessarily mar the effect of grace, and, perhaps, render justification altogether impossible. The Confession of Faith insists, too, upon the duty of ministers to call constantly upon all men to repent and turn to God. Such calls, however, would be no more than an insulting farce, if men were not required to co-operate in their own reconciliation with God. The sinner's duty as well as interest would clearly be, to leave aside all care of the matter—to sit down in patient expectation, since his interference, if it had any influence at all, could only tend to defer, perhaps even to frustrate, the happy consummation.

¹ *Confession of Faith*, xi. 2.

² *Id.* xiv. 1.

³ *Id.* xiv. 2.

We may thus fairly assume that the Confession of Faith does hold the concurrence of man to be necessary towards his justification. The question then immediately arises: Is it possible for man to refuse his concurrence? is his will free to follow the call of grace, or is it not? One or the other it must be. If not free, then our demonstration is complete—Calvinism, it must be granted, destroys free-will. If man can refuse his concurrence, it follows that he is able to resist grace, and that the salvation of the just is not absolutely determined, but conditional—that man's salvation depends upon himself, not indeed as the cause, but as a necessary co-operator. But Calvinism stands or falls by its doctrine on grace, and it has asserted, in the most solemn manner, that grace operates infallibly, and that where God offers grace with an intention to grant it, man can neither refuse nor reject it. Another doctrine on which the existence of Calvinism as a separate sect depends, is, that the justification and salvation of the elect have from eternity been absolutely and unconditionally decreed; and consequently, that their regeneration, final perseverance, and salvation, depend in no degree upon themselves,¹ since they can neither resist grace nor refuse salvation. Again, therefore, the doctrine of justification by faith alone compels the Calvinist to deny the free-will of man.

To whatever point of Calvin's system we direct our attention, we find his theory of predestination forcing itself upon our notice. It is, undoubtedly, not only the most prominent, but also the most characteristic of that Reformer's opinions. Although it cannot be said to have been the source of his system, it cannot be denied to have suggested not a few of his ideas, influenced more, and cast its dark shadow over his entire theory. Any opinion which can be abandoned without impairing the integrity of this doctrine, belongs not to the essence of Calvinism; the Calvinist may cast it off, without fear of being swallowed up undistinguished among the masses of undefined sectarianism. But wherever we have reached an idea which supports or springs from the predestinarian theory, we are touching that which affects the very life of Calvinism. If,

¹ *Id.* x. 2, and other passages already cited.

therefore, we wish to know whether Calvinism necessarily denies human liberty, we must examine the question in the light which is thrown upon it by the doctrine of absolute predestination. Little, however, will require to be added to the arguments on this subject which will be found in the previous pages.

Let the reader recall once more the texts¹ in which the Confession of Faith defines the decree of God to be the counsel of his will, by which he "unchangeably ordains whatsoever comes to pass," and, in explanation of this doctrine, declares that God did not ordain anything, because he foresaw that it would take place, and that nothing is decreed in a conditional manner. These explanations were but an extension of Calvin's sayings, that God does not decree future events, because he foresaw them; but that he foresees them, because he had ordained them—that he foresees them in his decree.² All therefore that comes to pass has been immediately, unchangeably, and unconditionally foreordained by God. Now, the movements of man's will are "things which come to pass;" they have, therefore, been from eternity unchangeably determined. Nor have they been determined because God foresaw that man's will would so determine itself; but man's will so determines, because such was God's eternal decree. Is, then, the will which God has unchangeably and unconditionally determined to act in a certain manner, and in no other, free? Is it free to withhold assent where God has determined that it shall assent? Or is it free to embrace that which he has foreordained it to reject? It is impossible for any man who understands the terms of the question to answer in the affirmative. That which God has unchangeably determined *must* take place, and it is impossible that it can fail to take place. The being whom he has unchangeably determined to be his agent or instrument *must* fulfil the decree, and it is impossible for him to evade, or refuse, or fail to fulfil it, with all its circumstances, according to the decree. Every act, therefore, of the human will, having been unchangeably foreordained, must take place precisely as it does, and man cannot possibly evade, or avoid,

¹ *Confession of Faith*, iii. 1, 2.

² *Institutio*, lib. iii. cap. 23, § 7.

or refuse giving or withholding his assent. As far, therefore, as man is concerned, every act of his will is necessary and not free—determined by a power over which he has no control. But if the acts of his will be necessary, free-will is absolutely destroyed. Such, again, is the inevitable result of the essential doctrines of Calvinism.

The evidence in support of our argument is thus conclusive. But, if we were unable to make good our position by yet another kind of proof, it might be said by Calvinists that they had not contemplated such consequences of their doctrines, and that they were prepared to disavow them. There are, however, chapters in the Confession of Faith which profess to explain the nature and present state of man. There his tendencies and moral powers are treated of; and the language employed confirms, in the clearest manner, the conclusion which we have already reached. The effects of the fall are described to have been truly fatal to the human race; its immediate consequence was to bring upon the posterity of Adam a “corruption of nature,” which was not only great, but “total,” and extending to “all the faculties and parts of soul and body.”¹ One would imagine this to be sufficiently explicit and forcible. If man be totally corrupt in all the faculties and parts of soul and body, certainly his will is wholly incapable of turning towards good. It is necessitated to do evil. This consequence is admitted: “From original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.”² Little evidence need be adduced beyond this article, in which Calvinism commits itself to the assertion, that man is by nature wholly corrupt and inclined to all evil, and disabled and made opposite to all good. To establish our conclusion, we shall refer to one other passage only, to show that these sentences are not to be looked upon as rhetorical exaggerations or hastily-adopted phrases, but to be regarded as the deliberate and acknowledged opinions of Calvinism: “Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be *things which God commands*, and of good

¹ *Confession of Faith*, vi. 2.

² *Id.* vi. 4.

use both to themselves and others; yet . . . *they are sinful* and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God.”¹ From these statements two inevitable consequences follow: 1, that man can will nothing but what God has determined him to will; and 2, that no man, unless actually justified, can will anything but what is evil. Since, therefore, every movement of the will is said to have been determined by the decree of God, man does not will evil in general: he must will the precise evil which he does, for that it is which has been decreed. The impossibility of willing good, under which man is said, by the Westminster Confession, to labour, is from nature. The necessity under which he is placed, according to the same authority, of willing evil is from the decree of God. We are now able to understand the real meaning of one of those passages, which are not unfrequently to be met with in the pages of the Scotch Confession, of which the conclusion is so little connected with the beginning, as to induce one to believe that the wandering mind of the writer had retained, ere reaching its close, no impression whatever of the idea with which it had commenced: “Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”² The compilers of the Scotch Confession were unusually cautious in thus drawing so very modest a consequence from their premises. These would certainly have authorized a little more boldness than is shown in the deduction of what must be considered, if not a mere truism, certainly a very puny effort of the logical faculty. That a *natural* man cannot by his own strength operate his salvation, which is a *supernatural* effect, is a truth—nay, a very important truth. But as it is only a special application of a self-evident maxim of philosophy—an effect cannot be greater than its cause—we can scarcely imagine this to have been the conclusion which the Westminster divines wished to draw from their startling proposition, that man had wholly lost all ability of will to do

¹ *Confession of Faith*, xvi. 7.

² *Id.* ix. 3.

good. This, however, is a subordinate matter—the article points to an opinion of more immediate interest in the present discussion. The articles of the Confession which were cited a little above, declare that the will is powerless, not only for any good accompanying salvation, but simply for any good whatever; for they tell us that every act and thought of the natural man is necessarily sinful. When the Westminster divines now tell us that the natural man has wholly lost all ability of will to do good, do they regard the will *as a power of the soul*—the power of choice and self-determination; or do they look upon it as a distinct being, having existence and abilities of its own? The latter view receives some colour of probability from their previous assertion, that man had become corrupt in all the “parts of soul and body.” If this interpretation of their words be correct, then they admit that the will of every man who has not been justified is not only hindered (not free), but absolutely incapacitated from embracing good. We can scarcely, however, attribute to men who distinctly profess belief in the spirituality of the soul, an opinion which would at once destroy its simplicity. The will, then, is not *a part*, but a power of the soul. To lose the ability of a power, is a phrase which has no strong title to the praise of philosophical accuracy; probably it is intended to convey the idea, that the natural man in the exercise of his will is restricted to evil. Even from this interpretation, the most favourable to Calvinism which can be made, we justly conclude, that if the ability be lost, will itself is lost; for the will *is* the ability or power of choice with which the Almighty had endowed the soul. A total privation of “the ability of will to do good,” is then a total privation of the power to choose between good and evil. Where, then, man can embrace only evil, it is evident that he has been deprived of will itself; for will is the power of choice, and a choice requires at least two objects. Where the only object man can embrace is evil, he has no choice; and therefore he has no will, still less has he free-will.

The proof we have adduced in support of our argument, not only demonstrates that Calvinism denies the freedom of man’s

will or liberty as an isolated opinion, but also shows that this denial pervades the entire system of the Genevan Reformer; that it is contained in the doctrine of justification, as it is held by Calvinists; and that the doctrine of absolute predestination, the very essence of Calvinism, is that which directly annihilates the free-will of man. But we have seen that, without free-will, there can be no responsibility. Man, therefore, by the Calvinism of the Westminster Confession, is not a responsible being. Yet, inasmuch as the Confession restores the "ability of will" to the justified, can it not maintain that they, at least, are responsible? Far from it. Calvinism, as if it had repented of yielding so much in favour of reason and religion as to concede a basis for responsibility in the case of the justified, declares them to be irresponsible by the very fact of their justification. For, while admitting that the just man may grievously sin against God, it yet asserts that he cannot, by any crime he may commit, incur the penalty of sin.¹ To the just man, his sins are not imputed. In other words, he is from the moment of his justification irresponsible. Thus does Calvinism destroy all responsibility—that of the unjust, by the denial of free-will; that of the just, by a special privilege.

The wedge thus driven into Calvinism, soon rends open the entire system, and exposes to our view the appalling negations

¹ See page 183 note 1; also the following: "God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified, and, although *they can never fall from the state of justification*, yet they may by their sins fall under God's fatherly displeasure," &c. (*Confession of Faith*, xi. 5.) This piece of rare theology is worthy of notice for its own sake, as well as on account of its incidental confirmation of the statement in the text. Where there is forgiveness, there must, we presume, have been guilt. If there were no guilt, there would be nothing to forgive. But the Westminster divines have said that the guilt of every sin is deserving of eternal punishment; and therefore, that any man who is under the guilt of sin is a child of hell. To render the forgiveness of sin possible in the case of the justified, they must have contracted guilt, and thus rendered themselves the enemies of God. But this, the Confession of Faith tells us, they cannot after justification become. If, then, they cannot become the enemies of God, they cannot contract the guilt of sin. Yet this article obliges the Presbyterian to believe that God forgives the just, guilt which they had not contracted, and that they fall under his displeasure for sins of which they were not guilty! And men of education are found to affix their signature to the nonsense we have quoted, and send it out to the world as the Confession of their *Faith!*

which lie concealed within this form of Protestantism. No responsibility requires the denial of guilt; and the denial of guilt is equivalent to the denial of sin. If no responsibility nor sin, then there can be no punishment, for punishment is the wages of sin. If no punishment for sin, then there is no hell. If there be no sin nor hell, then there is no Saviour; for the object of a Saviour is to deliver men from sin and hell. We need not look farther into the consequences of that fatal denial of free-will which we have shown to be so deeply seated in the very essence of Calvinism. They will occur to every one. The glimpse we have afforded gives ample confirmation to our assertion, that the question of which we are at present treating, is of transcendent importance to all who look upon the Westminster Confession as a faithful exponent of the doctrines of Christianity. So great, in our estimation, is its importance, that we scarcely fear to incur the charge of tediousness, by devoting a few additional pages to the consideration of those reasons and statements by which Calvinists endeavour to clear their sect from the terrible consequences with which we have shown it to be chargeable.

Has not Calvinism, then, acknowledged a sufficient basis for responsibility in the "natural liberty" which, it says, is still to be found in fallen man? "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any *absolute* necessity of *nature* determined, to good or evil."¹ The species of liberty here admitted, is by far too narrow to support the moral responsibility of man. For 1°. It is only physical, not moral liberty. It amounts to no more than this, that the acts of man's will do not necessarily spring from his nature, as, for example, do the involuntary sensations of pain, fatigue, &c. But the liberty which man, to be responsible, must enjoy, is moral liberty; not merely the absence of physical impossibility to will good or evil, but the moral power to choose either. 2°. This "natural liberty" does not exclude necessity. A man might possess it in its fulness, and yet be subject to the most inexorable fate; as, indeed, is shown in the case of Calvinism; for such is its theory. The necessity which the above

¹ *Confession of Faith*, ix. 1.

article excludes is, it will be observed, "of nature." It is not said that the will is not necessitated; but only that it is not forced by an *absolute* necessity of *nature*. And, in effect, the necessity under which Calvinism places the human will, arises only indirectly from nature. It is, as we have seen, imposed directly *by the decree of God*. Man, according to the Westminster Confession, is not free in the exercise of his will, because God had, from eternity, determined all its movements; not because they have been forced upon it by nature. But the necessity imposed by the divine decree has been demonstrated to be as fatal to liberty as any conceivable influence of nature could have been. 3°. The article, it will be noticed, does not deny that man is necessitated to evil; nor even that he is so necessitated *by nature*. It denies only that the necessity is in itself *absolute*. But this distinction does not much improve the Calvinist's position; for, although the necessity is not absolute, if reference be made to the whole human race—since God can remove it from the justified—yet, as regards the reprobate, it is as absolute as the "immutable decree" of God can make it. Calvinism tells us that the necessity of sinning, under which the reprobate are placed *by nature*, cannot be removed either by the blood of Christ, or the will of the Almighty. 4°. The article is directly refuted by the Confession of Faith itself, which has decreed that, by the "corruption of nature," man "is *wholly disabled*, and made opposite to all good, and *wholly inclined* to all evil."¹

Here, again, is a verbal assertion of liberty, but equally unsatisfactory as the last: "Nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."² To this we reply—1°. That, if the will of man has been predetermined to all its acts, it matters little whether the necessity under which it lies be effected by "violence" or not. We have shown that the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, takes from man all dominion over the movements of his will, and fixes it absolutely in the decree of God. To say, then, that the will is not seized as it were by violence, and compelled, in spite of

¹ *Confession of Faith*, vi. 4.

² *Id.* iii. 1.

its struggles, to decide against its own determination, is nothing to the purpose. For the charge against Calvinism is, that it annihilates freedom by the necessity which its doctrine of the eternal decree imposes, not that it accuses God of offering violence to the will. Calvinists, by having recourse to such grounds of defence—leaving their real doctrine without a word of apology, and dexterously defending themselves from a purely imaginary attack—in reality abandon the field, and tacitly admit that they have no defence to make. The real question between them, as fatalists, and their opponents is, whether or not the acts of man's will be predetermined by an absolute decree? Calvinism again and again, directly and indirectly, asserts this predetermination. The consequence instantly follows—that man is not responsible. To avoid this consequence, Calvinism does not retrace its steps and repudiate the necessity; but shows that it means to adhere to its fatal principle, by busying itself solely on a subordinate point which was not even in question. It merely denies that the necessity is caused by “violence offered to the will.” This defence however, besides being altogether irrelevant, proceeds on a supposition which is philosophically untenable. Indeed, it is a pure absurdity to speak of violence being offered to the will. As the will is *the soul determining itself*; to suppose it determining against its decision, is to suppose it deciding and not deciding at the same time. The philosophy of the Scotch Confession is on a level with its logic and theology. 2°. The previous clause of the sentence under consideration, is as direct a contradiction to the words we have quoted, as anything which we could say: “God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.”¹

On the present question, there remains to Calvinism no ground of defence. If Calvinists are still found to press into their service some worn-out sophism or oft-detected fallacy, it is rather with the hope of effecting an escape, than in the expectation of justifying their cause. One only of these feeble devices we shall notice. Seizing upon an expression of the

¹ *Confession of Faith*, iii. 1.

Westminster Confession, which says that the elect *freely* answer the call of God, *because* grace makes them *willing*, Calvinists have made the equivocation contained in the term "willing," a ground for responsibility. As *willingness* is here made an equivalent of *freedom*, they consider that man may be made responsible for all that he *willingly* does. But, although, in ordinary conversation, the term *willingness* may be used as an equivalent for *will*, such a license can by no means be extended to an authoritative exposition of faith. For, as the present argument shows, to confound those words in the question of human liberty, is to overturn both religion and morality. The freedom necessary for responsibility, is the power to choose good or evil, not merely the power to do evil, which is all that Calvinism concedes to the unregenerate man. Willingness is not, in any sense, liberty; nor is it an infallible sign of liberty; for it expresses only inclination, pleasure, or readiness, but not power. It is rather the voice of the sensitive appetite than the criterion of free-will. There may be most perfect willingness where there is not a vestige of freedom. Of all men, Calvinists should best know this truth; for it is an article of their creed, that a man may *willingly* do that which God had unchangeably determined him to do, and which, therefore, he had not freedom not to do. An act which favoured both interest and inclination, would be assented to by the will with great alacrity or willingness. But where the will decides for interest against inclination, the act will be by no means willingly performed. Yet the will displays greater power in the latter than in the former case; for willingness was against the performance of the act, and was thus an obstacle which had to be overcome by the will. Thus, a man, who for worldly interest professes belief in a document whose contradictions and absurdity he clearly sees, will tell the world, by the sign which accompanies his signature, how *unwilling* is the testimony afforded by his outward act to the freedom of his will. The liberty which the evasion at present under examination supposes, means no more than the power to will or do that which must be willed or done; but not a power to refuse or refrain from acting. Such liberty is

enjoyed by the stone as it falls through space towards the body which most powerfully attracts it. Such freedom is possessed by the lower animals in all their acts, whether under compulsion, or spontaneously performed. If the will were predetermined to all its acts by the absolute decree of God, it would gravitate towards its object as the stone gravitates towards the earth, with equal certainty and equal freedom. The decree of God would be the law of its nature. Thus, then, is Calvinism driven to the utter denial of human responsibility. Not only so; but so intimately does this denial pervade the essential doctrines of the sect, that the Calvinist can never find a rational foundation for responsibility, until he has pulled to the ground the entire fabric of the Westminster theology.

SECTION II.—BEARING OF THE CALVINISTIC DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFYING GRACE ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

The truth has amply avenged itself of the inroads of Calvinism; and, in the vengeance it has taken, read to the world a lesson which may well make religious innovators tremble. As if heresy were, by a special providence, destined to be its own executioner, and to proclaim before the eyes of those whom it has deluded, its own folly and impotence, the means which, in its imaginary wisdom, it adopts to insure a certain result, are the very instruments by which the desired end is frustrated. Calvinism, in order to be able to vindicate the condemnation of the wicked, represented the absolute decree of God as the supreme reason and justification of the torments of hell. That supposed absolute decree abolishes the doctrine of human punishments, by cutting away the sole ground upon which their justice could rest. In examining the doctrine of the Westminster Confession on the state of man after his renewal by grace, there, too, we shall trace the effects of the same intellectual fatuity. Grace is the free gift which a bountiful God concedes to man, to enable him to regain his forfeited right to heaven. Calvinism closes the gates of heaven against the entire human family; and its doctrine on grace it is, by which this disastrous result is accomplished. The proof of our

next proposition will save us from the charge of advancing a paradox, when we assert that the doctrines of Calvinism lead to the denial of the future existence of the soul.

Calvinism denies that the just are really sanctified, and therefore destroys belief in a future state of supernatural happiness.

It is here necessary to return for a moment to speak of the nature of justification. No one of the Reformers retained the doctrine of justification as it was taught by the Church. Her doctrine was, that, in justification, the merits of Christ are not only imputed, but applied to the soul. Their immediate effect is to remove sin and its guilt. By "remove," we mean that sin is really extirpated from the soul, and its guilt forgiven. As sin alone is in itself displeasing to God, and creatures are displeasing to Him only as they are defiled by sin, its ejection from the soul leaves nothing in man but what is the work of God himself. There is, therefore, nothing in the justified man displeasing to God. In the justification, therefore, of sinners, the Church teaches that God not only "accounts their persons as righteous," but really *makes them* righteous. She teaches also that no being can exist in a state of indifference towards God; but that all must be objects either of his complacency or of his displeasure; and, therefore, that the man, from whom has been removed that which alone was capable of making him an object of displeasure, is, by the very fact, admitted into favour. This effect, moreover, having been produced by supernatural grace through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, really infused into the soul, the just man becomes, even in a supernatural manner, pleasing to his Maker. Thus the effect of justification is not alone the forgiveness of sin, but necessarily also sanctification. In opposition to this, Luther affirmed that the sole effect of justification was the forgiveness of sin. Nor would he admit that this forgiveness was more than declaratory. God, he affirmed, only declared the sinner forgiven; He did not remove sin from the soul. The justified man still remained really unclean as before, and in himself an object of detestation to God. The justice of Christ was, however, thrown as it were a cloak over his guilty person. This justice *as it is in Christ*—for it never entered the soul to

quicken it, or become a part of its moral existence—was alone righteous and accepted before God. The sinner is only *accounted as righteous*. Sanctification was thus altogether severed from justification; and here Luther proceeded to such an extravagance of impiety, as to urge the justified to sin,¹ in order that holiness of life might not throw any doubt upon their salvation.

Calvin so far modified the impious theory of his brother Reformer, as to make sanctification an inseparable accompaniment of justification. The retrograde step which he thus took towards the ancient faith, was unfortunately rendered nugatory by his definitions and descriptions of sanctification. According to him, the sinner is justified, not by a real and personal appropriation of the merits of Christ, but by their imputation to him. Christ, by his theory, dwells in the heart of the believer; yet in such a manner as that there is no moral union between them. The sanctification which results from the forgiveness of sin, does not suppose its extirpation; it only diminishes the power of the “original corruption,” and enables the justified gradually to repress their vices, and become less impure in the sight of God. Sanctification, then, was conceived, by Calvin, to have been the power of tending to sanctity; but not a real purifying of the soul, or rendering it holy. In this manner it is represented as being, during life, partial and imperfect. Such, substantially, is also the teaching of the Westminster divines, to which we now turn our attention.

The nature and results of sanctification are thus described: “They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, by his word and spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the

¹ “If grace be real, work real and not sham sin. God does not save sham sinners. Be a sinner, and sin stoutly; only trust more strongly, and rejoice in Christ. We must sin so long as we abide here.”—“Si vera gratia est, verum non fictum peccatum fertur. Deus non facit salvos fecte peccatores. Esto peccator, et peccata fortiter, sed fortius fide et gaude in Christo. Peccandum est quamdiu hic sumus.”—*Epist. Luth. J. Aurifabro*, tom i., Jena, 1856, p. 545.

several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”¹ Gladly would we have welcomed this article as an approach to Catholic truth, far greater than had been made by Calvin on the same subject, and as a noble protest against the antichristian doctrine of Luther, had we found it harmonizing with the system of the Westminster divines; or could we even believe that it was held, in its obvious sense, however inconsistently, by their followers. But every doctrine of Calvinism, every page of the Scotch Confession, raises its protest against the truths which it unwittingly conveys. It is a truth which may be said to bear demonstration on its front, that justification by grace, through the merits of Christ, must really and personally sanctify the believer; yet, so vehemently did the first Reformers insist upon the separation of justification from sanctification; so great was the stress which they laid upon this separation, as one of the pillars of their Reformation, that we cannot but admire the courage which the framers of the Westminster Confession have displayed by this testimony, advanced in the face of strong prejudice, to a truth which they did not even understand, and still less were at liberty to maintain. Indeed, they were compelled to frame articles utterly subversive of this great truth, as well as to put on record distinct protests against its consequences. Fearing, apparently, that they had betrayed, by their admission of a real and personal sanctification, and their glowing description of its effects, one of the fundamentals of Protestantism, they hasten, in the article which immediately follows the above extract, to qualify and limit, and we believe it must be also added, entirely to nullify their unguarded words. “This sanctification (they continue) is throughout in the whole man, *yet imperfect in this life*; there abideth still some remnants of *corruption in every part*, whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war; the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.”² The words we have marked emphatic in this extract, begin to dispel the pleasing

¹ *Confession of Faith*, xiii. 1.

² *Id.* *ibid.* 3.

illusion that the Westminster Confession meant to admit a sanctification either real or personal of the believer. Real sanctification is opposed to that which is only imputed. It requires that *the soul be itself rendered holy*. Whereas the theory of imputed sanctification leaves it without any essential change in its moral state, but yet regarded by God *as if it were holy*. Personal sanctification is opposed to vicarious. Luther said that man is, and must always be, in himself impure; but that Christ our sanctification is infinitely pure. It is the holiness of Christ, as it is in Christ, that constitutes this species of sanctification, for it never becomes subjective in the soul of the believer. Man's sanctification is thus out of himself; it becomes not internal and personal. It effects no change in the moral nature of the soul. So that the sanctified man remains essentially in the state he was in previous to justification; his tendencies may be less wicked, or he may yield less to temptation, but the difference, if any, between his previous and present state will be only of degree. The change is not in man, but in the relation of God towards him. He is now seen, by the Omniscient, no longer as he is in himself, or directly, he is regarded through the medium of Christ's merits.

These explanations will, perhaps, enable us to discover the mind of the Westminster divines even through the mist of their vague and vacillating phraseology. Our first effort must be directed to form a correct idea of the nature of the "imperfection" which is here said to be, during the life of the believer, inseparable from sanctification. Whence does it arise? What are its effects? Is it compatible with "real" sanctification, or does it, on the contrary, destroy both the reality and personality of sanctification? Its origin is expressly pointed out by the article just quoted. It arises from "those remnants of corruption" which abide "in every part." There remains, therefore, in both soul and body, some of the "corruption of nature," as Calvinism terms the terrible consequences of man's first sin. The same is affirmed, although in a slightly different form, in the chapter on the Fall: "They (our first parents) being the root of all mankind, the guilt of their sin was im-

puted, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation." ¹ Again, "This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated." ² Even then, the sanctified, so long as they remain upon earth, are defiled by this corruption of nature, and hence the imperfection of their holiness. What estimate, then, are we to form of the extent and evil of this imperfection? We can conceive of an imperfection which does not turn away the favour of God. Thus the Church assures us that the soul of the just man is an object of the divine complacency, and yet that his sanctification may not be absolutely perfect; for she holds that faults which are in themselves trivial or attributable to the frailty of nature, and not to malice, although they may diminish the favour of God, do not, however, entirely withdraw it. But how can Calvinists, who will admit no such distinction as that of venial and mortal sin, believe that there can be a moral imperfection in the just which does not prove fatal to sanctification? The corruption, they say, extends to both soul and body; nor can it be extirpated from either during the period of their union upon earth: "This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated." ³ Thus, the sanctification of the just is represented as imperfect during life, by reason "of the corruption of nature." We have already had occasion to speak of this corruption: it is alleged to be "both itself and all the motions thereof truly and properly sin." ⁴ The sanctified soul is, therefore, sinful during the entire period of its union with the body. But Calvinism denies that there is any difference in the nature of sins: it says "every sin, both original and actual . . . doth, *in its own nature*, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God and curse of the law, and so made subject to death with all miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal." ⁵ The sanctified soul is, therefore, "in its own nature," bound over to the wrath of God and all miseries, spiritual, temporal and eternal. Is a soul in this state really and personally holy? Whatever,

¹ *Confession of Faith*, vi. 3.

² *Id. ibid.* 5.

³ *Id. ibid.*

⁴ *Id. ibid.*

⁵ *Id.* 6

therefore, may be the professions of Calvinism, it cannot hold a real and personal sanctification of the just. It asserts, in express terms, that the soul of man remains until death unclean in itself, and an object of the divine wrath and detestation. The justice of this conclusion is demonstrated by the following passages, the doctrine of which differs not essentially from that of Luther, and may, without effort, be brought into harmony with the special tenets of Calvinism: "Although it (the corruption of nature) be through Christ pardoned and modified, yet both itself and all the motions thereof are truly and properly sin." Sin, therefore, even when pardoned, is not removed from the soul. The soul, then, is pardoned, not by being cleansed or rendered personally holy, but by the non-imputation of its sins. The conclusion is not denied: "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth, *not by infusing righteousness into them*, but by pardoning their sins, and by *accounting* and accepting their persons *as righteous, not for anything wrought in them*, . . . but by *imputing* the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them."¹ No change, then, is wrought in the soul by the forgiveness of sin; nor does justification infuse holiness into the just. They are pardoned, not by the extirpation of sin, but solely by the *imputation* of Christ's merits. We might add considerably to these citations, but enough has been adduced to prove—1°. That the Confession of Faith cannot consistently, and does not in fact, maintain the real and personal sanctification of the just. 2°. That its assertion of such a sanctification is a mere expression, which probably was not understood, as it certainly was not believed by its authors, and which is formally condemned by the several texts cited above. 3°. That it represents the sanctified man as remaining, during life, really and personally an unclean and sinful being, and deserving of God's wrath and curse.

These consequences, the two first of which cannot, and the last, we believe, will not be denied by Calvinists, suggest the momentous question—How, then, shall the soul thus unclean be admitted into the light of God's presence? The Confession

¹ *Id.* xi. 1.

of Faith here joins with the Scripture, in assuring us that no unclean thing shall enter heaven. Is there, then, salvation for the just, whose souls are said to remain thus defiled up till the moment of their separation from the body? It is granted by Calvinists that the soul cannot enter into heaven until it has been cleansed from all sin, corruption, and imperfection, and "made perfect in holiness." Since, then, they deny that the soul of any man can be in a state of perfect holiness during this life, they are compelled either to deny that there is a future state of supernatural felicity, or to maintain that there is after death a middle state, in which the souls of the just are purified from the effects of sin and from all imperfection. The latter alternative is purgatory. Are Calvinists prepared now to admit this third state, after their long and vehement protest against its existence? Against no other dogma of the Catholic creed, save one, has there been more or fouler abuse poured forth by Protestants. It would be strange, indeed, if even the most illiberal of Protestant sects were to discover that it was driven, by the irresistible force of its principles, to admit a purgatory, as the only means by which it could believe in heaven. We cannot, however, in justice, attribute to Calvinists actual belief in a doctrine which they not only expressly deny, but, with superfluous zeal, have sworn they never will believe.¹ Yet, but for the intense energy of the protest, we should have judged, not only from the eagerness which, we presume, they feel to maintain the great dogma of the soul's immortality, but also from certain expressions of the Westminster Confession, that they were really ready to admit the doctrine of purgatory, while exhausting their vocabulary in

¹ In the National Covenant, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has given a detailed list of those articles of the Catholic Creed which she requires her adherents to repudiate. The document closes with the most horrid oaths, by which the subscribers bind themselves, "by the great name of the Lord our God, to continue in the obedience of the doctrine and discipline of this Kirk all the days of our lives." A place of sufficient prominence is given in the list to purgatory. But besides the special condemnation, the subscribers swear to "abhor and detest all contrary religion, but chiefly all kinds of Papistry in general and particular heads, even as they are now damned and confuted by the word of God and the Kirk of Scotland."—*Confession of Faith*, p. 291.

abuse of the *name*. The important difficulty under which we have just shown Calvinism to labour, was not a secret to the authors of the Scotch Confession. They could not, of course, openly assert that there was no future life; but they saw that the only probability of escape from this denial was to establish a future purgation of the soul. This, however, would, in almost any shape, have grated so harshly upon long-fostered prejudices, that there was every reason to fear lest Presbyterians of every shade, should rise against any article which savoured of the proscribed doctrine, and perhaps sweep away, in their indiscriminating zeal, the Calvinistic with the Popish portions of the new-made creed. We have said that the Westminster Confession contains certain passages, which, by their testimony to a future state or place of purification, show how sensible were its authors of the grievous difficulty they had to encounter on the subjects of heaven and the soul's immortality. Let the reader weigh them well, and judge of our accuracy: "The bodies of men, *after death*, return to dust and see corruption; but their souls (which neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous *being then made perfect in holiness*, are received into the highest heavens."¹ The Larger Catechism speaks to the same effect: "The communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately *after death*, is in that their souls *are then made perfect in holiness*, and received into the highest heavens." Q. 86. These words seem to be the logical complement of the doctrine previously stated, that sanctification is ever imperfect during life, as the soul while united with the body is defiled by the remnants of original corruption. "Immediately after death," it is said to be "made perfect in holiness," that it may be qualified to assume its place in those mansions where nought that is defiled can enter. Were a Catholic to use this language, he would be at once understood; for it signifies completely and accurately what he believes of purgatory. Convinced, however, as we are of the entire sincerity of Presbyterians when they solemnly assure us that they neither do

¹ *Id.* c. xxxii. 1.

nor will believe in purgatory, we must look upon the above phrases, not as a deliberate expression of belief, but as the spontaneous voice of "the soul, naturally Christian," bursting from the depths of unconscious prejudice and ignorance, to tell the partisans of Protestantism, that there must be a future purgation from sin. But does not the word "immediately," which the Catechism employs, show that the soul is made to reach heaven without passing through an intermediate state? Can the Presbyterian not believe in a future purification of the soul, without throwing himself into the jaws of purgatory? He cannot, unless perhaps his object be to contend for words and not things. The essence of the Catholic doctrine is the cleansing of the soul. The duration of the state of purgation may be brief or extended; it may be but for a moment, or it may endure for ages; it is not less purgatory in the one case than in the other. Were the Presbyterian to admit that the soul, after its separation from the body, was cleansed and rendered fit to appear in the Divine presence, he would admit the essential part of the Catholic dogma of purgatory. It is with unfeigned regret that we yield entire credit to Presbyterians in their sworn protestations against purgatory, not only because we know that they thus impugn a most consoling truth of revelation, but because we see that their denial of our doctrine carries them far beyond the limits they themselves had contemplated. If there be no purgatory, there is no future purification of the soul; for purgatory is simply the purification of the soul after death. If no future purification of the soul, then there is no heaven, for Calvinism has decided that until after death the souls of believers are still defiled by corruption, and unfit to enter heaven. If the Calvinist be thus driven by his principles to the denial of heaven, and by his oaths to the denial of purgatory, he cannot admit a future life; for his essential doctrines, we have proved, lead him also to the denial of hell; and besides those, there can be no other future state of existence. If, therefore, the soul after death exist not in any of those states, it exists not at all. This consequence is sufficiently startling; but, with the most rigorous justice, it has been drawn from the acknowledged principles of Calvinism.

Chicanery may, perhaps, take occasion to cavil, but justice will point out no flaw in our reasoning. Our arguments have been, without exception, drawn from the principles of Calvinism, and founded upon its own definitions of its doctrines. Nor have we in any case sought to force a meaning upon its words; we have taken them in their obvious and grammatical sense, being anxious only to reach the ideas of Calvinists themselves, never to attribute to them an opinion which they reject. The passages we have above collated, speak for the sincerity of our wish to describe Calvinism such as it really is. If, then, the subscribers to the Westminster Confession would act consistently as Calvinists, they are bound to deny the immortality of the soul; if they would act as reasonable men, they are bound to scatter their Calvinism to the winds as a tissue of contradiction, absurdity, and impiety of the grossest kind.

In the course of this discussion, we have found ourselves, from time to time, brought close to various questions, subordinate it may be to those upon which we were engaged, but not on that account either uninteresting or unimportant. Casting, as they do, no inconsiderable light upon the genius of Calvinism, they may well be introduced here. They will serve, at the same time, to illustrate and to confirm our argument. Already the reader will have observed that the peculiar tendency of the errors of Calvinism is towards the depreciation, perhaps with more truth we may say, the annihilation of God's perfections; while he cannot fail to have perceived that the very extravagance to which Calvinists have carried their views, defeats its object, and not unfrequently drives them into the very doctrine from which they were labouring to escape.

A very succinct statement of the Catholic doctrine on sanctification will serve, by the contrast it affords, to bring into stronger relief the errors of Calvinism. The moral state of man undergoes, by justification, a radical change: it is rendered holy in itself (not, however, by itself); from having been sinful, it becomes really pleasing and acceptable to God, not immediately because Jesus Christ is pleasing and accept-

able, but because he has rendered it so. The state of the sanctified man differs essentially from that of the unjust and the heathen. He differs, not merely in degree, being less unclean than they; but his soul is supernaturally holy and pleasing before God; while those continue in a purely natural state, their whole being infected, and their persons made by sin infinitely offensive to the holiness of God. As sanctification is subjective—in the person—nay, is in effect the real holiness of the person, consisting not only in the mortification of the natural appetites, but in the effectual turning of the will from evil and directing it to good; any change, by which the will should even for an instant turn from God and embrace evil, would at once terminate this holy state of existence—the person would cease to be either just or sanctified—he would cease to be either pleasing or acceptable to God. For he, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, would see him as he is—a sinful being, deserving and actually liable to eternal wrath. Sin is thus simply incompatible with sanctification. The one is the negation of the other. The two can no more be found together in the same person, than can light and darkness, or any other mutually-excluding predicate, be true at the same time of the same subject.

The theories which Protestantism has opposed to the Catholic doctrine, labour from the outset under great disadvantages. They oppose a system of extreme simplicity, whose clearness, consistency, and conformity to reason, amount almost to a demonstration of its truth. They are compelled, if they would retain a hope of evading the overwhelming objections by which they are threatened, to envelop their ideas in such a confusion of arrangement and language, as renders it difficult to bring their opinions into view, and when they have been exposed to light, equally difficult to understand them. Stripping the Protestant theory of the verbiage under which it is, for the most part, buried, we would present it to the Calvinist, and then call upon him to realise, if it be possible, the state of that soul which is at the same time “really” sanctified and really sinful, abandoned to crime and yet “accounted and accepted by God as righteous.” Is it possible to conceive that a man

continues in the state of grace even in the very act of grievous sin? Can the Spirit of God be abiding by grace in the soul which has abandoned itself to iniquity? Yet this is Calvinism. The Confession of Faith tells us that the soul once justified, cannot, by any crimes, lose its sanctity nor its right to the heavenly crown. So that, if, in the very midst of a criminal career, the "sanctified man" were to be cut off; nay, were he to die in the actual perpetration of a crime, he would, "immediately after death, be made perfect in holiness, and be received into the highest heavens." If Calvinists do not consider the guilt of sin to be venial, surely *their* purgatory must burn fiercely, since it can so speedily prepare *such saints* for heaven.

How unintelligible this theory of Calvinism is, may be shown from another point of view. It will be seen above, that sanctification is said to be produced by the Holy Spirit abiding in the soul. Calvin was wont to illustrate his idea by the help of an earthen pot and a golden treasure. The vessel, he said, acquires value, and becomes an object of esteem to the owner, in consequence of the treasure which it contains. The gold changes not the nature of the vessel, imparts to it none of its own qualities; yet the owner considers its value to have been infinitely augmented since it was made the recipient of his treasure. The latter alone is in itself valuable; the vessel remains mere clay—in itself a worthless vessel of wrath. Now, when the vessel is clay and the treasure gold, all this is perfectly intelligible. But, when the Calvinists venture to apply those material figures to spiritual subjects, the most serious difficulties spring up. A simple and indivisible substance, such as the soul, does not contain its treasures after the fashion of an earthen pot. The close union of two moral beings, supposes something widely different from the mere physical proximity of two material substances. The latter union may well take place without either causing or requiring any change, save in their relative positions; but the former would be a self-contradiction, where there was not a similarity of aim and harmony of will. When the Spirit of God is said to dwell in the soul, we understand that, by his life-giving

energy, he is quickening the soul, and raising it from that state of helpless torpor in which it was by nature; that by his power he is strengthening the will to embrace all holiness and reject all iniquity; that he is conforming more and more the soul to the image of God—Himself beholding with complacency the image (feeble, it is true, but real) of his own sanctity reflected in the creature whom he has cleansed, and strengthened, and adorned with his graces—the soul, in its turn, rejoicing in God its sanctifier, and ever advancing from strength to strength, becoming daily more conformable in its whole being to the perfect pattern that Christ had set before it. But a moral union between the Spirit of Holiness and a soul in which self-seeking, or pride, or lust, or any other passion of corrupt nature is predominant, must appear to right reason an impossibility. Union of will is the essence of a spiritual union. Where, then, the will of man is sinful, can it be anything less than impiety to say that there is a union between it and the Spirit of God? Yet this is the union which Calvinism requires its adherents to admit—God with his graces dwelling in a soul subject to sin.

By pronouncing sanctification to be “inseparably joined with justification,”¹ the Westminster divines bore testimony to a great truth. But they seem rather to have fallen blindly upon this truth, than to have deliberately adopted it. Far from fitting into the body of their opinions, it must have caused them no little embarrassment when they came to fix its place in the midst of ideas with which it was so openly repugnant. We shall endeavour to bring out some of those strange results which flow from the adoption of the above doctrine by men holding the opinions of Calvin. Calvinism maintains that justification cannot be lost; because a man once justified can never fall from the state of grace. Since justification cannot be disjoined from sanctification, the man who has once been justified, necessarily remains also sanctified. Such a man, therefore, has the Holy Ghost abiding in him, and is, during life, in the state of grace, and accounted and accepted of God as righteous. But the doctrine of Calvinism

¹ *Larger Catechism*, Q. 77.

teaches that the justified man, not only remains defiled by original corruption, but sometimes gives himself up to the commission of grievous sin: "Nevertheless, they" ("whom God hath accepted in his Beloved," effectually called, and sanctified by his Spirit) "may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, *fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein.*"¹ But against this doctrine, that a man neither falls from the state of grace, nor ceases to be sanctified, who perpetrates grievous sin, and perseveres therein, universal reason revolts. It offers an outrage to common sense, and insults the Spirit of God, by affirming that he could continue in moral union with a soul thus abandoned to iniquity. Nor is this all. Such a doctrine, like many others in Calvinism, subverts every received idea of morality, and directly assails the attributes of God. For, the "justified" man who commits grievous sin, becomes, by the fact, really and personally sinful, or he does not. If he does not, then there is no such thing as sin, at least for the "justified." Then sin would cease to be sin. If it be said that "God continues to forgive the sins of the justified, we answer that this forgiveness must have been granted either before the commission of the sin or after. *If before,* it would be equivalent to a permission, on the part of God, to the just man to sin; for there can be no forgiveness where there is no guilt; and guilt cannot be contracted until the sin is either committed or assented to. But the permission of God precludes the possibility of sinfulness. For sin is nothing else than opposition to the will of God. *If after,* then the guilt was contracted, otherwise it could not have been forgiven; and if contracted, the soul was really in a sinful state. No Christian, however, can maintain either that God gives permission to sin, or that sin can, in any case, cease to be sin. It must, therefore, be admitted, that when the justified man commits grievous sin, he becomes really and personally sinful. But, in this case, God, by "accounting and accepting him *as righteous,*" accounts him to be, and accepts him, *as*

¹ *Confession of Faith*, xvii. 3.

what he is not, and denies the essence of his own being, by accepting of a sinful being as holy, placing thus sin and sanctity in the same relation to himself. From this it follows that God, in accounting as righteous a man who is really sinful, either is deceived or he is not. The Calvinist must either say that he is deceived, and deny his omniscience, or maintain that he is not, and deny his sanctity. The first member of this argument is self-evident—a Being who has all knowledge cannot be deceived. That the other member, which Calvinists are driven to adopt, destroys the sanctity of God, we now prove. Infinite sanctity is essentially and infinitely opposite to sin. A Being infinitely holy repels, by the essence of his nature, all that is sin or sinful. The being, therefore, who could accept of anything sinful—to whom a sinful object could be acceptable, would not be in a state of essential opposition to sin. If, therefore, God could accept of a sinful being, he would not be infinitely holy. But Calvinism goes a step farther. It asserts not only that the sinful “just man” is accepted, but that he is “accounted and accepted *as righteous*.” God is represented, not only as looking without horror upon iniquity, but of accepting it as holiness. It does seem to us that judicial blindness, on the part of its authors, can alone account for the presence of such a sentence in the standard of a Christian sect, as that which here attributes to God the miserable fiction of considering a man to be *what he knows him not to be*—of accounting that to be holy which he knows to be unholy—of being content, not only to account men as his saints who have no sanctity, but to accept their sinfulness in its stead.

Catholics, who make it their business to study their own religion, and whose curiosity has never led them to examine the theories of the separated sects, often express the most lively surprise at the extraordinary charges which Protestants are accustomed to bring against Indulgences. It seems to them impossible that men could find any foundation for such notions, save in a disordered imagination. Catholics, too, have since the Reformation been publishing in their books of devotion, in works of controversy, from the pulpit, in their

catechetical instructions, that the doctrines attributed to them by Protestants on this subject were unmitigated calumnies—that they were to be detested by all Catholics as injurious to God, and opposed to the teaching of the Church. But, with a perseverance which ages have been incapable of wearying, Protestants return to the charge, and repeat, in the same words, the same libels which the exigencies of their case induced the fathers of the Reformation to fabricate. They seem even to feel indignant, and assume the tone of injured men, if the Catholic, in his simplicity, informs them that they must have fallen into some mistake, as his doctrine is quite another thing from what they describe. The fact is, that the Protestant in defining, after the approved fashion of Protestantism, an Indulgence, defines his own doctrine on the subject of sanctification. He has, of course, a clear conviction that he is faithfully describing the ideas which are really present to his mind on the subject; and hence his astonishment when he finds himself accused by the Catholic of calumny, misrepresentation, and ignorance. The sole mistake is, that he unconsciously transfers the phenomena of his own mind to that of the Catholic. All would be made right, provided only the Protestant could get convinced of this truth, that *his religious notions* are not doctrinal definitions of a General Council; and that the Catholic is perfectly orthodox, and in full communion with his Church, when he holds her doctrines such as she herself has defined them, even although they should not thus correspond, in many particulars, to the received Protestant type. Her decisions are really all that the Catholic can be held answerable for; and they alone he will probably feel called upon to defend.

An Indulgence, according to the definition of the Church, is the remission of temporal punishment due to sin. It is grounded on this great principle, that the merits of the innocent can be applied to remit or diminish the punishment of the guilty. Can any man who believes in the redemption through Jesus Christ question the truth of this principle? By sin, man contracted guilt which no merely finite being could expiate. Sufferings temporal and eternal are the merited

punishment of every grievous sin. The application to the repentant sinner of Christ's infinite merits frees him from the eternal debt which he himself is unable to pay, but does not necessarily, and in every case, free him from those temporal punishments to which also he had made himself liable, and which it is in his power to undergo. Thus David was told that God had truly forgiven his sin, but that he must, nevertheless, undergo the temporal chastisement which still remained due to the divine justice. The Church teaches, then, that God has left with her power to apply, to truly penitent sinners, the merits of the innocent for the diminution or even remission of this temporal guilt which is incurred by the commission of sin. Such is the nature of an Indulgence according to the teaching of Catholic theology. It is evident from the definition, that an Indulgence is no pardon for sin at all. Nay, the Church is careful, on the publication of every Indulgence, to declare that those only who are truly contrite, have approached the sacraments, and already received the forgiveness of their sins, are capable of profiting by the Indulgence. How, then, comes it that Protestants *will* insist that an Indulgence is a pardon for sin, past, present, and future; or, at the least, a permission to commit sin for a time? We have repeatedly shown from the Confession of Faith, that Calvinists, by their doctrine of irresistible and inamissible grace, have been led to maintain that grace cannot be conferred on any but the elect, and that the smallest degree of grace is therefore an infallible sign of both justification and final perseverance. Unless, therefore, the Calvinist were to withdraw himself from the circle of his sect, and raise himself above the influence of his prejudices, he naturally concludes, that where a spiritual favour is said to be conferred, and especially if that favour carry with it the remission or relaxation of the bonds of sin, justification, or the pardon of sin, is really meant to be conferred. Now, the Calvinist's idea of justification is that it forgives all sin, future as well as past; for we have just seen that the justified man is saved, never again to become liable to eternal wrath, how great soever may be the sins he falls into after his regeneration. To forgive a future sin is

only, in another form, to give permission to commit that sin. When the Calvinist, therefore, speaks of remission, he will use indifferently either form of expression. So long, then, as Calvinists continue to form their ideas of Catholic doctrine and practice, not from Catholic authorities, but from Protestant authors—so long as they will persist in attaching Protestant ideas to Catholic terms, we must expect to see them fall into this grievous mistake on the subject of Indulgences. For the whole of Protestant controversy on the Catholic question is a vast accumulation of traditionary fiction. Let Protestants, however, understand, that Catholics assert, and, by every principle they maintain, must continue to assert, that no power, divine or human, can give either prospective pardon or permission to commit sin. Plants of this nature thrive best under the shadow of Calvinism.

We cannot take leave of this subject without alluding to the doctrine of assurance, so intimately connected with the Calvinistic theory of justification. On this subject, the Confession of Faith tells us, that “such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus . . . may in this life be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”¹ As to its nature, “This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded upon a fallible hope, but an *infallible assurance of faith*, founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation.”² As to the manner of its attainment, “the believer may, without extraordinary revelation, attain therewith.”³ The history of heresy presents us with one sect, which, previous to the Reformation, maintained a doctrine similar to this. The Manicheans, by their belief in a compromise made between their good and evil deities, by which the souls of men were unconditionally and unchangeably apportioned between them, were obliged to hold an opinion scarcely to be distinguished from the assurance of Calvinism. As those who had been appointed to be the portion of the evil principle could receive none but evil gifts, any sign, how slight soever, of grace or virtue, was sufficient to show an individual that he was the inalienable

¹ *Confession of Faith*, xviii. 1.

² *Id.* *ibid.* 2.

³ *Id.* *ibid.* 3.

property of the good god. The compromise of the two principles was unchangeable ; and, therefore, he who was assured of the divine favour at any instant of his life, was infallibly assured that his salvation was an absolute certainty. Calvinism has reached the same conclusion, and nearly by the same process. The elect are said by Calvinists to be absolutely predestined to salvation. Any man, therefore, who is assured of his election, is assured also of his salvation. Calvinism also represents grace as irresistible, and thus granted only to the elect. Whoever, therefore, is at any moment assured that he has received any divine grace, is assured of his election. By having pronounced that man has become by the fall altogether sinful, and, without grace, capable only of sin, the Calvinist must believe that a single good thought, if entertained, would suffice to show that God had commenced within him the work of regeneration. Thus it is, that, without an extraordinary revelation, the Calvinist acquires his “infallible assurance of salvation.”

The bare mention of an “*infallible assurance*” of salvation must strike discordantly upon the ears of men who have meditated on the nature of the gospel virtues. When believers are called upon to excite within themselves and foster a conviction of their own sanctity ; to make their spiritual privileges the object of their deliberate complacency ; and to convince themselves that their salvation has at length been removed from the sphere of contingency to which all things below are subjected, and now no longer depends even upon the goodness of God ; is not humility torn up from its deepest roots ? Humility teaches the believer to look with much diffidence upon his virtues. Scarcely will it permit him to acknowledge to himself that he possesses even the rudiments of virtue ; and, for the most part, it altogether turns away souls from the contemplation of their favours, lest the very acknowledgment of their existence should terminate its own. And hope—the Christian’s anchor amid the storms of life—hope which derives its life from our constant dependence upon the mercy of God, is swept at once by “assurance” from the earth. For, in the reprobate, who are said by Calvinism to have been condemned

from eternity, hope, even if it could be attained, would be a pure delusion; for that which is impossible is not an object of hope. But, being a divine virtue, they cannot even attain it, as Calvinism allows of no divine gift to any but the elect. In the regenerate, hope can find no place. Man cannot hope for that of whose possession he has a certainty, amounting to "an infallible assurance of faith." Hope terminates in certainty. Thus the Catholic cannot hope that the doctrines of his creed are true. He is certain of their truth. The Protestant, on the contrary, never gets beyond a hope that he may be in the right; for his religion, by excluding certainty, and opening the door to doubt, introduces hope as the only available substitute for the certainty of Catholicity. Thus it is that the glorious triad of divine virtues is broken by Protestantism. Were Calvin to revise the writings of St. Paul, he would inform the world that now there remaineth only this one—faith. Hope has been made impossible, and charity may be dispensed with; for the greatest of these is faith. In the endeavour, so earnestly pressed by Calvinism on its followers, to realise within themselves this assurance, how is it possible to avoid, on the one hand, presumption, or on the other, despair? The attempt to strain the mind to the necessary pitch, must, in many cases, give occasion to the most pernicious superstitions; while, in not a few, it cannot fail to disturb or even to unsettle reason. To this and the kindred doctrine of predestination, may be traced the cause of that compound of gloomy fanaticism and pharisaical pride, which has been ever held up as the type of the rigid Calvinist.

But let us examine this doctrine more closely. The believer, it asserts, has *an infallible assurance of faith* that he is of the number of the elect. And the essence of the doctrine is, that the assurance is a matter of faith, and not a mere conjecture or persuasion grounded on hope. The believer does not acquire the assurance by immediate revelation; much less by a revelation made eighteen centuries since. This election, therefore, which is the object of his infallible assurance, is not a revealed truth. But the Confession of Faith, along with all Christendom, teaches that revealed truth alone is the object

of faith. From the Westminster Confession itself, therefore, we conclude—1°. That assurance of salvation cannot be a matter of faith at all.

When a Protestant claims *infallibility* for any persuasion he may entertain, he seems to us to take up much higher ground than he is entitled to occupy or able to defend. Whence arises the infallibility of assurance? Not, it is said, from revelation. Is there, then, any other infallible authority on earth, besides that of divine revelation and its divinely-authorised interpreter? Is the individual Protestant the interpreter, and does he derive his infallibility from the office? The assurance of the individual cannot be more infallible than the general doctrine from which it is deduced. It is evident that, if the doctrine itself of an infallible assurance be an error, the assurance of the individual can be only a delusion. The doctrine of assurance is taught, we are aware, by the Westminster divines, and was taught by Calvin before them. Were either of these parties infallible? This doctrine has no firmer support than any other portion of Calvinism; and Calvinists must, as Protestants, admit that they were, both singly and collectively, but fallible men, and very possibly wrong. The doctrine itself, therefore, is not infallibly certain. If, therefore, it is not infallibly certain that there is such a thing at all as this “infallible assurance,” we conclude—2°. That still less can the individual ever conclude that *his* assurance is infallible.

But, it is answered, the individual feels an unhesitating certainty of his salvation. That a man whose judgment is too weak to counterpoise his imagination should reach any extravagance of self-hallucination, the annals of mental pathology too surely demonstrate. But it is something extraordinary that a sect which invokes reason, should forget itself so far as to appeal to a consciousness which its own fanaticism had disordered, or to any merely subjective phenomena in support of a dogma which it calls upon reason to accept. But, admitting the individual's impression as a proof, we shall leave to the Confession of Faith the task of determining its value: “True believers,” it says, “may have the assu-

rance of their salvation *divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted*, as by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit; . . . yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God and life of faith . . . out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may in due time *be revived*, and by which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.”¹ This infallible assurance is, then, capable of being shaken; nay, it may be measured by more and less. Philosophers will, no doubt, gladly learn from Calvinism how the certitude of faith, which is said to be already infallible, can yet be increased; or how infallibility can be predicated of that which is *less certain*. But who shall pretend to explain the paradox which follows? This *infallible* assurance may actually fall away! It may for a time be altogether “intermitted.” Thus the light which was to shine infallibly in the heart of the believer, may become dimmed, be eclipsed, and finally fall extinguished from the firmament. In its progress towards extinction, does the assurance continue to be infallible? When it finally disappears, and leaves its credulous dupe on the brink of despair, has it still its quality of infallibility? Or was it infallible only so long as the believer thought it so? If the latter be the case, then its infallibility was derived from the mind of the believer. But as the mind of man cannot give objective truth to its thoughts, the supposition that the assurance is infallible because the believer thinks it to be so, means, in ordinary language, that the believer is the dupe of his own imagination. During the eclipse of his assurance, the believer must doubt, not only of its present, but also of its past infallibility. His state of doubt is itself a demonstration that it was not infallible. To what purpose, then, is it to be desired or preserved? It is liable to be assailed, diminished, and even to disappear, so long as the soul remains exposed to the assaults of its enemies. But that is during life. The believer must, therefore, during life know that those periods of darkness and doubt may occur. His doubts, therefore, of

¹ *Confession of Faith*, xviii. 4.

the infallibility of his assurance, fall equally upon the future as upon the past. He sees that at any moment they may revive, and, consequently, that, until the end, he cannot acquire the certainty that his assurance was aught else than a delusion. We conclude, therefore—3°. That the “infallible assurance” which diminishes, disappears, and perishes, which is liable to be shaken and doubted of till death, is not certainty, but presumption based upon folly.

We have now brought to a conclusion our inquiry into the nature of Calvinism. We have limited ourselves to the discussion of but few of its doctrines, preferring to sacrifice effect, which might have been greater by condensing the argument, and crowding together in more striking contrast, a multitude of heterogeneous and conflicting doctrines, in favour of what we consider the solid utility which, it seemed to us, the cause of truth might reap from the more extended examination of the smaller number. If, then, we have confined ourselves within a narrow sphere, this has been our motive. Had it been our object to bring together materials for a more complete and detailed refutation of Calvinism, they were at hand scattered in inexhaustible abundance throughout the pages of the Westminster Confession of Faith. We have left unnoticed its doctrines on the church, her constitution, authority, and government; the number, efficacy, and nature of the sacraments; and many other doctrines, on which we would have found the same vacillation, the same contradictions, and the same fatal tendency to array man's consciousness and the first principles of his reason against the necessary attributes of God. But if Calvinism be in grievous error upon the all-important questions discussed in the preceding pages, to what purpose should we seek to extend the field of controversy? Those questions are of such a nature, that the system which essentially errs upon them cannot possess the shadow of a claim to be the true religion. Nor can the man who dispassionately weighs our reasons, deny that the manner of our argument is just. We have compared Calvinism with itself; we have also judged it by reason. We have not availed ourselves of the Scripture argument, not because we considered it to be

less clear, less keen, or less decisive than the others, but because—1°. Calvinism has no claim to be judged on Scripture grounds by Catholics, who charge its fundamental principles with being subversive of the Scriptures. 2° Consistency with itself and with the first principles of reason, is an essential property of every truth. The system which is shown to be destitute of this quality deserves no further refutation. When a mine capable of blowing the fortress into the air is ready, it would be a waste of time and labour to raze it to the ground with a golden pick-axe. Calvinism is in perpetual conflict with itself and with reason. 3°. Argument ought to be conducted on ground really common to the contending parties. But the Calvinist differs from the Catholic as to the books, the object, the interpretation, and the interpreter of Scripture. A more extended account of our reasons will be found in another chapter.

A single glance will show that many of the charges we have urged against Calvinism are entirely inconsistent with each other, and that many of the conclusions for which we have made its doctrines responsible destroy each other. Thus we have said that its principles establish a purgatory; and again, that they lead to the denial of the soul's immortality; that they, in like manner, make God the author of sin; and, on the other hand, press to the conclusion that there is no such thing as sin. But if this appear to weaken our argument, it can only be in the minds of those who are altogether strangers to a process of reasoning, who have not yet learned, that any conclusion, to be just, must follow the nature of the premises from which it is deduced. Our conclusions were in many cases contradictory of each other, and precisely in this contradiction lies their force. They were contradictory, because justly drawn from mutually contradictory doctrines. Had we from such doctrines drawn consistent conclusions, our logic must have been at fault. The only lawful question here is, do the consequences rigorously and justly flow from the acknowledged doctrines of Calvinism? If they do, then their contradiction and absurdity are the contradiction and absurdity of Calvinism. From the nature of number and quantity, the

mathematician knows, ere commencing his process, what must be the nature of his solution. And in almost every problem of physical science, the only proof which can be had that a correct solution has been obtained, is to be found in its answering the conditions which the nature of the data had, from the first, suggested. The self-contradiction of Calvinism has been demonstrated. The absurdity, then, of the conclusions drawn from its doctrines affords, in itself, a presumption that they have been fairly and logically drawn.

In speaking of Calvinism, we have throughout treated it as something more than a mere No-popery phantom. We have considered it as a body of doctrines; and we have supposed that, of its doctrines, some were so essential that the demonstration of their falsehood would be the annihilation of Calvinism. A Protestant simply (that is, considered without reference to those doctrines in which Protestants differ among themselves, and viewed as holding something common to all the body) is one who denies the truth of Catholicity. Eliminate the doctrines which constitute the points of sectarian difference, and this is absolutely all that will remain. But Calvinism, unless it resolve itself into this simplest expression of Protestantism, must unavoidably embrace something more than this fundamental denial—something properly and exclusively its own, to which it can point, as its badge of distinction, in the midst of the sects which jostle it on every side. We take the articles of the Westminster Confession as the authentic exponent of Calvinism—its symbol, the formula in which its essence and marks are expressed. We have also assumed throughout that Calvinism was not an abstraction, nor the dead letter of the Westminster Confession. We have looked upon it as the religion of Calvinists. We have taken for granted that, such as it is found in the Scottish standards, it is believed and professed by its adherents. Here, however, we must in justice make a distinction. Calvinism, like every other modern sect, comprises among its members some who are practically and theoretically, others who are but nominally such. Even those who acknowledge with greatest alacrity the authenticity of the Westminster Confession and the authority

of the General Assembly, fail not, when pressed by a vigorous adversary, to claim the right, as Protestants, to modify, or, if need be, to deny the doctrine which for the moment causes embarrassment. The uneducated, as well as the learned, when gravely meditating on, or expounding the thorny points of Calvinism, hesitate not to interpret it, each according to the bent and calibre of his mind, innocently believing that, in upholding the ludicrous blunders of his own untutored judgment, he is defending the abstruse mysteries of Calvinism. Others there are over whom the spirit of the age has passed, and withered up within them all the sap and vitality of religion. Nevertheless they wish to be considered Calvinists. They even conform to the outward requirements of Calvinism, contribute towards its missionary, educational, and charitable schemes. But here their membership terminates. They are too much engrossed in the all-important pursuit of wealth or place to trouble themselves with theological disputes, which, indeed, as they have neither heart nor head to appreciate, they put aside, in the true spirit of modern indifferentism, as undeserving of attention, uncharitable, ill-timed, and so on. They consider such things in the light of antiquated and deservedly forgotten practices of the schools, which can no more come again to be one of the affairs of life, than the mummy can leave his swathes and mingle again in the society of the living.

But there must be, among professing Calvinists, many whose hearts yearn after truth—men who would estimate the true religion at a value infinitely greater than that of gold. Educated from infancy in the tenets they yet profess, they either believe the Westminster Confession to contain pure and unmixed the religion of Jesus Christ, or, at least, hope they may find acceptance in believing that it contains no error of vital importance. They feel in their social, moral, and religious relations, the necessity of divine truth and a divinely-sanctioned worship. They feel that religion—the true religion—is not a matter of indifference; and that God will demand of every man an account of his profession as well as of his practice. These men look upon Christianity as something

more than sentimentalism or speculation, or a fashion, or a means of secular advancement. They are convinced that it must have a fixed dogma, a legislative and interpretive power, and a divine sanction for its commands. To such men we appeal. On what can you rest the most slender hope that you possess a religion pure, undefiled, and well-pleasing before God? The truth, you say, is no indifferent matter to man. His eternity depends upon his holding fast "the form of sound words." The system to which you subscribe, levels with the dust the truth and its only competent guarantee. Bear with us, for the sake of the truth, while we cast a rapid glance over the ground we have just passed. We have seen your authorized exponents overturn the work which was raised by the hands of our Saviour and cemented with his blood. Jesus Christ built his Church upon the apostles—a living body; you have removed that foundation, and attempted to build all upon the Scriptures; but you find that, by the very fact, you have removed those sacred writings from all adequate support, and left them at the mercy of the mocker and the infidel. By forming the Church from the Bible, and by your denial of an infallible authority, you cut away the only possible ground of credibility for either the inspiration or authenticity of the Bible. You throw into the hands of the individual the task of deciding on the truths of Scripture. The very nature of inspiration renders it impossible for any man to discover, without a miracle or special revelation, what are the books which compose the inspired volumes. You have not been able to form the canon; nor do you, in fact, possess it. Your demand for the Scripture as your sole rule of faith is contradicted by the whole New Testament narrative, is irreconcilable with the facts it records, and is belied by all ecclesiastical history. By calling upon all men to interpret Scripture for themselves, you confer upon them an illusory privilege, and charge them with an impossible duty. And we have found that the "right of private interpretation," besides rendering faith impossible, reduces revelation to a mere aggregate of opinions, doubts, and views. Is your system, then, calculated to slake your thirst for truth?

When men to whom God had given no commission to expound his will, presume to constitute themselves judges of what is revelation, and what is not—to admit, reject, and explain as seems good in their own eyes, need we wonder if, in the exercise of their imaginary right, they fall into mistakes more startling, if possible, and more fatal than the principle from which they had set out? When the authority of God was set aside in matters of faith, that the feeble judgment of man might be thrust into its place, not all the veneration which the idea and the great name of God inspire, could save his nature, his providence, and his perfections from the insults of reason, which, in all the self-sufficiency of pride, had been let loose, without curb or rein, upon a field where every step which is not made under the guiding hand of a divine authority must be a crime. How deep and how fearful is that abyss of error into which Calvinism has fallen on the subject of God's nature and attributes! His supreme justice is made to disappear, and a tyranny which the mind dare not contemplate, in all the length and breadth of its malignant cruelty, is presented as the august attribute of the Eternal Judge. While the true religion, joined from time to time by the feebler voice which reason sent forth from the bosom of Paganism, has echoed through all ages, that God is eternal, unchangeable, and therefore true, Calvinism, as if an inscrutable judgment had confounded its reason, holds up to you a God whose duplicity finds a parallel only in the cruelty which he practises on his helpless creatures. Proceeding with our examination, we found that the sanctity of God suffered no less from the principles of Calvinism than his justice and truth had done. By reviving the almost extinguished errors of the Manicheans, Calvinism undoubtedly gave to the materialism of the present day its special direction. Whether we consider it as denying, by its ultimate consequences, the existence of evil, or directly establishing God to be the author of sin, it equally annihilates the grounds of morality, law, and religion, and tends to the extinction of society. Those principles which we showed to be directly, no less than by implication, contained in the theory of Cal-

vinism, when drawn out to their legitimate consequences, distorted so fearfully the sanctity of God in their baleful light, that we drew back in horror from the contemplation of results which it were almost a crime to clothe in language. Are such errors of little consequence? Does Calvinism draw the soul towards God with the cords of a filial affection, and nourish in the heart the sacred flame of divine love? How does it realise the idea which its claim to be considered a revelation from God conveys?

The doctrines on man, both in his natural state and in his relations to grace, next occupied our attention. If we had entertained the hope that here, at least, the license of private interpretation would be held in check by the consciousness which all men have of the phenomena of their own minds, we meet with a signal disappointment. There is no fact, except, perhaps, existence, of which man has a clearer consciousness than that of his moral freedom. Every thought which the mind deliberately entertains is an absolute demonstration of this freedom. Yet has Calvinism subjected mind and body, thoughts, words, and acts, to the decree of an unchangeable necessity. Here, again, it removes the entire foundations of morality, and leaves man without responsibility, freed from the fear of hell, and reckless of a heaven, which the essence of Calvinism proclaims that no child of Adam can ever enter. The teaching of this portion of the system we showed to be equivalent to a denial of the soul's immortality. By the side of these impieties and contradictions arose other questions, which equally demonstrated the hopeless nature of such religions as private judgment is capable of framing. We were told of a sanctity which left man sinful, yet pleasing to God; deserving of hell, yet incapable of forfeiting heaven; defiled in all his being, and yet really and personally holy in the sight of God. To crown this sad monument of human impotence, Calvinism, again diving into the secrets of consciousness, tells its followers that, by a certain process, they may reach an absolute security of their salvation, which shall be at the same time certain and liable to doubt; infallible, and yet easily changed into an uncertainty which terminates only on the verge of despair.

There is not, we willingly grant, a Calvinist to be found, who is not prepared to reject, with all his energy, such contradictions and impieties. They would, if need were, anathematize them as blasphemies. Religion forbids us to adopt the policy of our adversaries, by attributing to them opinions which they do not avow. We make not war upon individuals, but against their false principles. You disclaim, then, those impieties, and we respect your words. But here they are in the standards of your belief. You publish to the world those standards, and subscribe them as the confession of your faith and belief, and the expression of what you consider to be the religion of Jesus Christ. Can you continue to believe in doctrines, of which some are in self-evident contradiction, and others contain the very impieties which you so warmly repudiate? He who professes a principle, is responsible for all its legitimate consequences. He cannot hold the one and reject the others. The principle and its consequences must be held or rejected together. You admit, nay, you lay down and defend the two members of the argument, and then, with incomprehensible weakness or inconsistency, you refuse to acknowledge the consequence. You admit that it is impossible for A to exist and not exist at the same time; you also acknowledge that A exists; but, nevertheless, you either refuse to deny its non-existence, or deny it "yet so as thereby" you reserve the power of retracting your denial whenever the necessities of controversy shall have become less urgent. Error and contradiction cannot legitimately be drawn from truth. The terrible consequences which we have demonstrated to be contained in your doctrines, could no more have been drawn from them, if they had been true, than grapes can be gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles. The tree is known by its fruits. Can you then justify your doctrines, or show that they are not the parents of impiety? We reply, that you never can, save by dethroning reason, and replacing it by the free-will which you deny—thus constituting your own desires the criterion and judge of truth.

But if you believe not your standards in their evident grammatical sense, with all their impious consequences, what do

you believe? Cast aside the Confession of Faith, if you dare no longer avow the doctrines it contains. Give an expression to your creed. We doubt not that a strict analysis of your religious ideas will show you that their reasonableness consists in their obscurity, and that their imagined truth disappears in exact proportion as you bring them into an intelligible form. As we showed in our first chapter, the first principles upon which your whole system rests, are assumptions equally gratuitous and indefensible. Raise, then, upon this foundation, the most perfect edifice to which the intellect of man can give birth, and it will necessarily prove as unstable as the quicksand upon which it shall have been built. You cannot hope to do more than was done by Luther, or Calvin, or Socinus, or Wesley. You may introduce variations; you may add or curtail, but you have only their fundamental principles, and they will overthrow any conceivable dogmatic system, no less than they have shattered the "religions" of previous Reformers. The true religion is one; and because true, it is unchangeable and imperishable. You cannot, any more than Calvin, extemporize the true religion. Vainly, therefore, do Protestants seek to discover it in the Bible or anywhere else. You deny that the true religion exists, by the very expectation of its discovery. It now exists. It has always existed. As a definitive, living, imperishable system, it was established by Jesus Christ. The object of every sincere inquirer ought to be to *find this religion*; not to discover a true religion. You may find it, *if you only will*. But discoveries of religious dogmas are absolutely fatal to the system in which they are adopted. This, alone, would condemn Protestantism in all its sects. Lutheranism, Calvinism, &c., are discoveries. Therefore, they are not the true religion—the religion of Christ—but the theories of Luther, Calvin, &c. They come, at least, fifteen hundred years too late. To have had even a plausible claim on the attention of reasonable men, they ought to have borne the authentic marks of an antiquity of at least fifteen centuries.

We need not multiply words. If you adhere to the Westminster Confession, avow, with honesty and frankness, its

contents; its spirit, as well as its mere letter. Accept its absurdities and impieties, and defend them as you best may; but do not stultify your reason by joining together two and two, while you refuse to admit that they make four. If you repudiate the Confession of Faith, then do so openly. Cease to acknowledge it for your standard. Release your ministers, professors, and office-bearers from the gratuitous torture of subscribing it as the summary and standard of their belief. When a member of your body is accused of heresy, let his doctrine be no longer judged by the Confession of Faith; make not conformity with its articles the proof of orthodoxy. But, once more, whatever be your real opinions, let them see the light, in the terms you judge most appropriate; and if they do not destroy themselves, and thus spare the labour of refutation, charity and the love of truth are sufficiently prevalent to assure us that you will not long look for a refutation in vain.

In the meantime, it remains firmly established, that, since Calvinism knows not the revelation of God, nor where it is to be found; since it knows not God himself, nor how he is to be worshipped; since it knows not what man is, nor his state, nor his duties, nor his relations to God, nor how he is to attain the end of his being, it is totally unfit to be a teacher or guide of mortals. Its office is a usurpation. Its existence is sin. It is a blind leader of the blind.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.

ST. JEROM, writing to those bishops who had requested him to translate the book of Tobias, says:—"You require me to translate the book of Tobias, which *the Hebrews*, separating from the canon of inspired Scriptures, have placed among the sacred writings (ἀγιολογιστά). I have fulfilled your request, but not in such a manner as I could have wished. The zeal of the Jews accuses us of opposing *their canon* in translating this book for Latin readers."—*Prefatio in Tobiam*.

In his preface to Daniel, St. Jerom thus mentions the division of the Jewish Scriptures:—"I would here remind the reader that Daniel is not placed by the Jews among the prophets (non haberi Danielem apud Hebræos inter prophetas), but among those who wrote the ἀγιολογιστά. For all Scripture is by them divided into three parts—the Law, the Prophets, and the ἀγιολογιστά."

"The book of Judith is read by the Jews among the sacred books (ἀγιολογιστά); but as we read that the Council of Nice reckoned this book among the Holy Scriptures (in numero sanctorum scripturarum), I have acceded to your request—nay, your command" (to translate it).—*Prefatio in Judith*. St. Jerom was misunderstood by some of his contemporaries, who accused him of rejecting the Deuterocanonical books. He explains his words thus:—"As to my relating what the Jews were accustomed to say against the History of Susanna, &c., which are not in the Hebrew canon (volumine Hebraico), he who accuses me proves himself to be a calumniator. For I was explaining, not my own sentiments, but what they are accustomed to say *against us*."—*Lib. ii. contra Rufinum, No. 33*.

In his Epistles (cxviii. 1), he quotes thus the book of Ecclesiasticus (ch. xxii. v. 5):—"The divine Scripture says, 'A tale out of time is like music in mourning' (divina Scriptura loquitur—musica in luctu intempestiva narratio)." Citing the book of Wisdom, ch. i. 4, his words are:—"According to the Scripture, 'wisdom will not enter into a perverse soul' (Dicente Scriptura in perversum animum non intrabit sapientia)."—*Comment in c. xvi. Jeremias*.

NOTE B.

The author of the Apostolic Constitutions (a work composed at the end of the first or beginning of the second century) supports his reasoning by passages from the Deuterocanonical writers, without making any distinction between them and the other writers. The forms of expression usual among the primitive writers, when introducing texts from the inspired books, are thus employed in the following passage:—"As it is written, 'Alms deliver from all sin and from death.'" (Tobias iv. 11.)—*Lib. ii. ch. 25*. And citing Baruch iii. 36:—"It is written, 'This is our

God, and there shall be no other accounted of in comparison of him.' He found out all the way of knowledge."—*Lib. v. ch. 20.*

St. Irenæus, who was instructed by the immediate disciples of the apostles, cites the book of Baruch (ch. iv. 36) as a part of the prophecy of Jeremias. As Baruch was the amanuensis of Jeremias, many of the Fathers regarded this book as having been written at the dictation of the latter, and forming a part of the prophecies of Jeremias:—"Jeremias the prophet exclaimed (significavit Jeremias propheta), look about thee, O Jerusalem, towards the east, and behold the joy that cometh to thee from God."—*Lib. v. contra Hæreses, ch. 35.*

Thus St. John Chrysostom cites Baruch iii. 36:—"Read Jeremias, and he will thus discourse—'This is our God, and there shall be no other in comparison of him'—(Εντυχίς Ιερεμίας κακίανος διαλιξίταί). In all the others also, thou wilt see the prophets openly teaching thee."—*Exposition of Psalm 49.*

Thus, also, St. Basil:—"Jeremias, therefore, speaking of the Son, says—(ιτων ου, Ιερεμίας πρι του υιου)—'this is our God,'" &c. (Baruch iii. 36.)—*Adversus Eunomium, lib. 4.*

St. Justin cites in these terms the book of Wisdom iii. 16:—"Since this is the case, how is the Scripture verified, which says—(πως η γρηγηη αληθειαι λεγουσα)—that 'the children of adulterers shall not come to perfection?' " &c.—*Questiones ad Orthodoxos, 78.*

St. Cyril of Jerusalem thus adduces the book of Wisdom iii. 24:—"For the sacred Scripture affirms (Sacra Scriptura confirmat) that, 'by the envy of the devil, death came into the world.'"—*In Evangelium Joannis, lib. 1.*

The following extract from St. Athanasius will better serve to show the views of the early Fathers, in the nature of the books in question, than a multitude of passages. The manner in which they are introduced throughout the writings of the Fathers, shows that, not only the Christian writers, but their readers looked upon the Deutero-canonical writings as of the same unquestioned authority with the other parts of Scripture:—"Isaias says, 'The Lord is the everlasting God, who hath created the ends of the earth.' Susanna also says, 'O Eternal God.' Baruch also, 'I will cry to the Eternal God;' and a little after, he adds, 'for my hope is in the Eternal, that he will save.' The apostle, likewise, 'writing to the Hebrews,' " &c.—*Contra Arianos, oratio 2.*

In the same manner, St. Hilary:—"The apostle says, 'The judgments of God are incomprehensible' (Rom. xi. 33). The prophet also has—"for thy judgments, O Lord, are great, and thy words cannot be expressed.'" (Wisdom xvii. 1.)

St. Gregory Nazianzen in Oracione Decima Sexta says, "I find a mystery of the same kind in the Scripture. It would, indeed, be tedious to relate all the words of the Spirit (omnes Spiritus voces recensere); yet, 'who hath numbered the sand of the sea, and the drops of rain, and the days of the world.'" (Wisdom i. 2.)

St. Clement of Rome, who is spoken of by St. Paul (Philippians iv. 3), in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, cites the books of Wisdom, Judith, Ecclesiasticus, and 1st and 2nd Machabees, as divine Scripture; as he does also the Deutero-canonical books of the New Testament, Hebrews, 2d Peter, and Apocalypse.

We now bring two extracts of another class, which show that the Canon published by the African councils and Pope Gelasius had, by the end of the sixth century, become pretty generally known. St. Augustin, enumerating the inspired books, writes as follows:—"The whole canon of the Scriptures is contained in these books—five

of Moses, . . . Job, and Tobias, and Esther, and Judith, and two books of the Machabees, and two of Esdras; then the Prophets, . . . one book of Psalms, . . . for those two books, the one called Wisdom, and the other Ecclesiasticus, since they are deservedly received as authoritative, must be ranked among the Prophets."—*De Doctrina Christiana, lib. i.*

St. Isidore of Seville gives the list thus:—"There is among us a fourth part of the Old Testament, composed of those books which are not in the Hebrew canon, the first of which is the book of Wisdom, the second, Ecclesiasticus, the third, Tobias, fourth, Judith, fifth and sixth, the Machabees. Although the Jews consider them as Apocrypha, yet the Church of Christ honours and proclaims them among the divine books." (Quos Ecclesia tamen Christi inter divinos libros et honorat et prædicat.)—*Liber sextus Etymologiorum.*

To these testimonies it may be added, that the Greek Church, which broke off from the Latin about the year 860, holds the same canon of Scripture as was confirmed in the Council of Trent; and that the Deutero-canonical books are contained in the version of the Septuagint, as well as in the Syriac version of the Scriptures, which dates from the first century of the Christian era. The Nestorians and Eutychians, who were cut off from the Catholic communion about the middle of the fifth century, have retained the same canon as the Catholic Church.

NOTE C.

St. Paul, referring to the primitive custom of communicating under one or both kinds, at the option of the faithful, says—*ὅς ἀν ἐσθῆναι τὸν ἀρτόν τούτον πίνῃ τὸ ποτήριον*, &c.—"whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice," &c. The disjunctive *ἢ* (or) is in the Protestant version rendered "and." The object of this perversion of the text is sufficiently apparent; yet a more extensive system of corruption would be required, ere all traces of the early discipline of communion under one kind could be effaced from the sacred pages.—See Acts xx. 7, and ii. 42; also Luke xxiv. 30.

The following is the Protestant translation of St. Matthew's account of the institution of the Eucharist:—"And, as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples." St. Luke is made to read thus:—"And he took bread and gave thanks, and brake *it*." St. Mark:—"And as they did eat, Jesus took bread and blessed and brake *it*." St. Paul (1 Cor. xi. 24):—"The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake *it*," &c. In the original, the pronoun "*it*" is as carefully avoided as it has been, in the Protestant version, studiously inserted. In every instance the word is a forgery. It was found, however, to aid the Protestant doctrine, because it defined *that* which was *broken and given* to be bread. The following is the text of St. Matthew:—*Ἐσθιοντων δὲ αὐτων, λαβων ὁ Ἰησους τὸν ἀρτόν, καὶ εὐλογησας ἐκλάσει καὶ εἰδὼν τοῖς μαθητοῖς καὶ εἶπε, κ.τ.λ.* The text of the other writers resembles this. The pronoun does not occur in a single instance. No doubt the inspired writers had as strong a motive for the omission of the word, as the Protestant translators had for its insertion.

To support the doctrine of man's utter inability to do good works, the passage of St. Matthew, ch. xix. v. 11, has been rendered:—"But he said unto them, all men *cannot* receive this saying." The original attributes no such inability to man. It says: "all men *do not* receive this saying"—*οὐ πάντες χωρεοῦσι τὸν λόγον τούτον.*

The angel of God, testifying that the Blessed Virgin was adorned with the plenitude of grace, salutes her—*χαίρει κεχαριστωμένη*. 'Ο Κυριος μετὰ σου—"Hail, full of grace. The Lord is with thee" (Luke i. 28). This unparalleled eulogium dwindles down, in the Protestant version, to "Hail thou that art highly favoured." Protestants seem to think that they cannot offer a more acceptable homage to the Son, than by dishonouring his mother. The translators, where doctrinal prejudices did not sway their minds, could render similar constructions to the above in a very different manner. In Revelations xvii. 4, *Και ἡ γυνὴ ἡ περιβεβλημένη πορφυρα καὶ κοκκινῶ καὶ κεχρυσωμένη χρυσοῦ* is made, "and the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold." But there seems to be no enmity between the apocalyptic woman and Protestants; they therefore find no inconvenience in translating her description with fidelity. 1 Peter i. 8, *Ἀγαλλιασθε χάρα ἀνεκλάλητον καὶ δόξασι μνησθ.* is thus translated, "ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Again, Luke xvi. 20, *ὅς ἐβιβλήτο πρὸς τὸν πυλῶνα αὐτοῦ γλῶκωμένος*, is rendered, "which was laid at his gate full of sores."

Protestant controversialists, in their popular addresses or writings, quote, as evidence against the celibacy of the clergy and religious orders:—"Marriage is honourable in all" (Heb. xiii. 4). The English Bible does certainly here favour the *γυναικομανία* of the Protestant clergy. But it does so only in as far as it misrepresents the word of God. The text says—*Τίμιος ὁ γάμος ἐν ταῖσι*—literally, "Marriage honourable in all." The ambiguity of the words *ἐν ταῖσι* (which may mean either in all men or in all things) could not well be preserved in English. But what can be said to excuse the substitution of *is* for *let it be*, in the midst of a clause where, from beginning to end, the imperative mood alone is employed? So well did the Protestant translators know that *ἔστω*, not *ἔστι*, was understood, that in the very next verse, precisely the same construction (*ἀφιλαλήγητος ὁ τῆστος*) is rendered—"Let your conversation be without covetousness."

Connected with the same subject, another passage is not unfrequently adduced by Protestants as seeming to favour their opinions. "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, &c.?" Certainly, St. Paul, who tells us he was unmarried, had not power to lead about a wife. But he had, with all the apostles, power to lead about "a sister woman," or "a sister, a woman," which is the only claim he prefers. *Μη οὐκ ἐχομεν ἐξουσίαν ἀδελφὴν γυναῖκα περιάγειν*. The word *γυνή* means "wife," only in its secondary signification. The primitive meaning of the word is a "woman." The Protestant Bible gives here not a translation, but a comment upon the original; and the fact of St. Paul's celibacy proves the commentary to be false.

NOTE D.

(a) "Oportuit ergo Deum quoque Adami lapsum ordinare, sed ad eum quem dixi finem." "Quærenda est vitii origo in instrumentorum spontaneo motu quo fit ut Deus juste decreverit quod illi injuste fecerunt. At, enim dices, non potuerunt resistere Dei voluntati, id est, decreto; fateor, sed, sicut non potuerunt, ita, etiam noluerunt. Verum, non poterant aliter velle. Fateor, quæd eventum et *επιεργίαν*, sed voluntas tamen Adami coacta non fuit."—*Responsio ad Sebastianum Castellionem*. "Sic autem agit (Deus) per illa instrumenta ut non tantum sinat illa agere nec tantum moderetur eventum, sed etiam excitet, impellat, moveat, regat, atque ideo, quod omnium est maximum etiam crect, ut per illa agat quod constituit."—

Aphorismus, xxi. (b) "Unum igitur atque idem facinus, puta adulterium aut homicidium, quantum Dei est, auctoris, motoris impulsoris, opus est, crimen non est; quantum autem hominis est, crimen ac scelus est."—*Tractatus de Providentiâ, cap. v.* "Quantum enim Deus facit, non est peccatum quia non est contra legem; illi, enim non est lex posita, utpote justo, nam justis non ponitur lex, juxta Pauli sententiam. Ille, enim lege non tenetur, homo, autem lege etiam damnatur." "Cum movet ad opus aliquod quod perficenti instrumento fraudi est, sibi tamen non est, ipse enim libere movet, neque instrumento facit injuriam, cum omnia sint magis sua quam cujusvis artificis sua instrumenta. Movet, ergo latronem ad occidendum innocentem, etiamsi imparatum ad mortem." The following sentence from the same treatise on Providence does not admit of translation:—"Quod Deus facit, libere facit, alienus ab omni affectu noxio, igitur et absque peccato ut adulterium David, quod ad auctorem Deum pertinet non magis sit peccatum quam cum taurus totum armentum incendit et implet." (c) "Haec sit certa sententiâ, a Deo fieri omnia tam bona quam mala. Nos dicimus non solum Deum permittere creaturis, ut operentur, sed ipsum omnia proprie agere, ut sicut fatentur proprium Dei opus fuisse Pauli vocationem ita fateantur opera Dei propria esse, sive quæ media vocantur, ut comedere, bibere, sive quæ mala sunt ut Davidi adulterium, Manlii severitatem; constat, enim, Deum omnia facere, non permissive sed potenter, id est, ut sit ejus proprium opus Jude proditio, sicut Pauli vocatio. . . . Ergo, non est cur frigidum glossema admittamus Deum mala permittere, non etiam facere." *Commentarium in Epistolam ad Romanos.* (d) "Est, itaque et hoc imprimis necessarium et salutare Christiano nosse quod Deus nihil præscit contingenter, sed quod omnia incommutabile et æterna, infallibilique voluntate et providet et proponit et facit. Hoc fulmine sternitur et conteritur penitus liberum arbitrium." "Ex quo sequitur irrefragabiliter omnia quæ facimus, etsi nobis videntur mutabiliter et contingenter fieri, et ita etiam contingenter nobis fiant, revera tamen fiunt necessario et immutabiliter si voluntatem Dei spectes." "Quicquid fit a nobis non libero arbitrio, sed mera necessitate fieri."—*Lutherus de Servo Arbitrio.*

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E R R A T A.

The reader is requested to correct the following errors; for which it may be a sufficient apology, that the author, residing on the Continent, was unable personally to superintend the correction of the proof sheets.

Page	6,	line	6,	for	immediately	by	miracles,	read	mediately.		
"	6,	"	11,	for	admit	a	witness,	read	admit her as a witness.		
"	8,	"	28,	for	convinces,			read	convinced.		
"	11,	"	17,	for	important,			read	important.		
"	12,	"	29,	for	falsity	of	that	system,	read	falsity of Presbyterianism.	
"	13,	"	12,	for	ingeniously,			read	ingeniously.		
"	14,	"	4	from	foot,	for	were	receiving,	read	were ruining the evidence.	
"	18,	"	3	from	foot,	for	evidences,	read	evidence.		
"	21,	"	17,	for	Cesar	Augustus,	&c.,	read	Cesar, Augustus, and the glories and infamy; also, Julius, Celsus, &c.		
"	22,	"	30,	for	power	of	their	errors,	read	poison of their errors.	
"	23,	"	3,	for	have	never	yet	been,	read	had not yet been.	
"	23,	"	2	from	foot,				inspiration.		
"	25,	"	18,	for	record	of	St.	Peter,	read	Second Epistle of St. Peter.	
"	31,	"	37,	for	only	conclusive,			read	only inconclusive.	
"	37,	"	10,	for	passed	the	canon,	read	framed the canon.		
"	38,	"	30,	for	Cyprus,			read	Ephesus.		
"	41,	"	29,	for	profess	the	canon,	read	possess the canon.		
"	43,	"	9	from	foot,	for	Septimus,	read	Sophonias.		
"	44,	"	13	from	foot,	for	guidance	of,	read	guidance by.	
"	45,	"	20,	for	means	so	auxiliary,	read	means an auxiliary.		
"	47,	"	9,	for	thus	prove	no	church,	read	thus have no church.	
"	53,	"	9,	for	Nicobites,			read	Nicolaites.		
"	56,	"	18,	for	this	rule,		read	his rule.		
"	65,	"	2,	for	exclusiveness,			read	conclusiveness.		
"	65,	"	10,	for	objected	truths,		read	objective truths.		
"	68,	"	7,	for	investigations.	None,		read	investigations, he act, &c.		
"	71,	"	32,	for	these	requisites	are	but,	read	these are but.	
"	80,	"	28,	for	supernatural	are,		read	supernatural objects are.		
"	85,	"	31,	for	precious	declaration,		read	previous declaration.		
"	94,	"	21,	for	in	consequence,		read	inconsequence.		
"	109,	"	21,	for	their	own	doctrines	. . .	their own terms, read	its own doctrines . . . its own terms.	
"	113,	"	3	from	foot,	for	fatism	of	the,	read	fatum of the.
"	114,	"	5	from	foot,	for	This	everlas.,	read	His everlasting.	
"	115,	"	4,	for	propositions,			read	proposition.		
"	126,	"	8,	for	humiliating	force,		read	humiliating farce.		
"	128,	"	12,	for	habernus	confitentum,		read	habemus confitentem.		
"	128,	"	5	from	foot,	for	decernata	qua,	read	decernat qua.	
"	183,	"	23,	for	movement,			read	moment.		
"	196,	"	33,	for	sign,			read	sign.		
"	205,	"	5,	for	probability,			read	possibility.		

