

SPIRIT OF THE XIX. CENTURY.

VOL. I.

JUNE, 1842.

No. 6.

THE RULE OF FAITH.—A DISCOURSE TO VINDICATE THE INCARNATE WORD.—DELIVERED BY ORDER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR 1841, BEFORE THAT FOR 1842.—BY ROBERT J. BRECKINRIDGE, MODERATOR OF THE FORMER ASSEMBLY.

Faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.—
1 Cor. ii. 5.

I. THE service which I am now about to perform, Fathers and Brethren of the General Assembly, and the theme which I am to discuss, were both assigned to me by your immediate predecessors in this venerable court. Called to address them while then in session, and by them, thus, a second time distinguished,* only on account of my known devotion to the great principles of the Reformation, and my humble but abundant labours in defence of the common doctrine of the Reformed Churches; I hail with joy these proofs of the reviving interest of the people of God in these great subjects, and proceed to the discussion of the one before me, as to that which presents one of the broadest lines of demarcation between an age of darkness and an age of light, between a church in bondage and a church set free, between a pure and evangelical faith and a blind, perfidious and cruel superstition. For that faith which rests upon the wisdom of man, cannot fail to be unstable, contradictory, corrupt and false as the nature of him, who at his best estate is altogether vanity; while that which stands in the power and demonstration of God, must needs be like himself, perfect and eternal.

There is, no doubt, an apparent resemblance between the religion of the Bible and that of Rome; a resemblance strengthened by the addition of the name, *Christian*, to those of *Catholic*, *Roman*, and *Apostolic*, adopted by the followers of the Pope; and still farther, in our age and country, by vague and hollow claims of fellowship with us, by those whose creed demands our blood, and whose annals are crowded with their cruel mockings and pitiless butcheries of our brethren in Christ Jesus. But this resemblance exists only in appearance, and vanishes utterly before the slightest inspection of the two systems.

* See printed Minutes of the Assembly of 1841, p. 432, and p. 437.

Thus, there is an apparent resemblance in this, that both the Bible and Rome teach the unity of the Godhead, as the grand distinction and chief foundation of revealed religion. But the Bible holds up to us, the one only and self-existent God—as the sole object of all religious worship, and denounces all worship rendered to any other object, or even to this glorious God himself by the intervention of images, as heinous sin. Rome, on the contrary, teaches that divine worship is due to the Virgin, to the consecrated host, to the true cross; and that religious adoration is to be paid to angels, to departed saints, and even to their relics, yea to pictures and images. So that they whose faith stands in the power of God, differ from those whose faith stands in carnal wisdom, even as to the grand and fundamental question of the object of religious worship.*

So as to the way of access to the only true and adorable God, and the whole method of salvation for sinful men—the religion of the Bible and that of Rome, however apparently alike to the superficial observer, are in fact wholly irreconcilable. For the one teaches us, that the only access to God is by the blood of a divine Redeemer, who is Christ the Lord, and who is the way, the truth, and the life; and that it is solely through faith in his name, effectually manifested in godly repentance and new obedience, that we are made partakers of the benefits of his work of redemption. But the other teaches, that there are multitudes of intercessors for us with God, to whom we ought to apply and to whom an important part of our salvation is to be ascribed; that the merit of our good works is efficacious with God, and a proper ground of our hope before him; that the sacraments have an inherent power to commend us to God; and that faith in Christ is not the true method of a sinner's justification. So that their teachings are precisely opposite to each other upon the most vital parts of practical religion.†

Again, as to the nature of sin, of holiness, and of the retributions of the world to come, however, at first sight, we may suppose a certain resemblance to exist, there is in reality an exact contrariety. The Bible teaches that nothing is sinful but want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God, but that every sin deserves his wrath and curse; Rome, that the transgression of her commands is heinous sin, that the violation of many of those of God is only a venial offence, and that separation from her communion draws after it the perdition of the soul. The Bible teaches that holiness of heart and life is the fruit of free grace, and the efficacious work of the divine Spirit in the soul of man, and that without this holiness no man shall see God's face in peace: Rome, that men are regenerated by baptism, kept in an estate of salvation by confirmation, confession, penance, fasts, alms, the sacrifice of the mass, &c. &c., and finally assured of salvation by virtue of

*See Stillingfleet's "Discourse Concerning the Idolatry of the Church of Rome;" and his Defence of that Discourse, entitled, "An Answer to Several late Treatises;" &c.—See also the Decrees of the Council of Trent.

†See Decrees and Canons of the Council of Trent, on Justification, the Sacraments, the Mass, Indulgences, and the Invocation of Saints.

indulgences, absolution, and extreme unction; the doctrine of the new birth as held by all Christians of all ages, being pronounced by her, not only false, but accursed. The Bible teaches that this life is our only season of probation, and that after it the bodies of men remain under the power of death till the great day of God Almighty, at which they shall be re-united to the souls, which, if they be of the just, have been in heaven, or if of the unjust, in hell—since their separation; and after that the judged enter upon an unchanging state of punishment or blessedness: Rome, that there is a purgatory, which is neither heaven nor hell, that souls in it are purified by sufferings more or less protracted, and make satisfaction more or less complete, and that the prayers of the faithful here and the power of the church are efficacious towards the relief of souls from this place of torment. Thus showing a difference as thorough in regard to the state, the necessities and the destiny of man, as in regard to the nature and influences of true religion; and the character and claims of God.*

Thus, too, in regard to that great department of religion which concerns its outward manifestation, and treats of the visible church, the communion of saints, the nature of ecclesiastical power, and the whole extent of discipline and government; the difference is not less absolute. Rome teaches that God has established on this earth, in the person of the pope; a vicar, who is invested with all the direct powers in and over his church, which Jesus Christ himself would exercise if personally reigning upon earth, and with all such indirect authority over the nations, as is necessary to protect and extend the church; that this church, of which he is the visible head, is endowed with miraculous gifts, infallible knowledge, and the perpetual and extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; and that subjection to it is not only necessary to salvation, but that conformity with it, is to be enforced by the power both of the temporal and spiritual sword.† On the contrary, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the only King and Lord in Zion; that his word of inspiration is the only statute book of his earthly kingdom; that the miraculous and extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, have long ago ceased; that the bond of union between his people is a spiritual bond; that the visible church has no commission but to preserve and to extend the revealed truth of God, and that by means exclusively spiritual; and that the soul of man, is, and from its own nature, as well as that of true religion, must be exempt from every species of physical violence. So that not the honor of God only, nor the concerns of the soul only, nor the issues of eternity only, but all these, and all the present and outward interests of man, whether socially or individually considered, are directly involved in this controversy between Christ and Anti-Christ.

It is not, then, to be wondered at, that those who differ so thoroughly in regard to the matter of their religious belief, should

* In addition to the Decrees and Canons of the Trent Council already referred to, see those on *Purgatory, Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Orders, Extreme Unction.*

† See Bellarmin, *De Summo Pontifice, and De Ecclesia Militante.* Also the *Corpus Juris Can. Tom. iii. Part ii. Titulus vi. De Judiciis.*

differ equally as to the sources of it, and the proper methods of arriving at a comfortable assurance concerning it. They whose faith is so opposite could hardly be expected to agree as to the rule of faith itself; and I shall best fulfil my present duty by clearly explaining that of the Church of Christ, and in contrast, that of the church of Rome.

II. And what is the precise meaning of the terms in which our subject is expressed? A *Rule* in things *physical*, is a measure of the proportions of material and sensible objects; in things *intellectual*, it is a measure or law by which we determine a thing to be *true* or *false*; and in things *moral*, whether they be *good* or *evil*. It is, in general terms, a measure, by agreement or disagreement with which, we judge of all things of that kind to which it belongs. *Faith*, though often and properly enough used in a general sense, yet as a term in theology, technically means, *the belief of truth upon divine authority*. The *rule of faith*, must, therefore, needs be, that measure by which we regulate our belief, in divine things. And the precise question between us and the papists, is, *what is the rule, or measure, or law, by which we are to judge what things we ought to receive, as revealed to us by God?**

"The first creature of God," says the profoundest of all thinkers, "in the works of the days, was the light of the sense: the last was the light of reason: and his sabbath work ever since, is the illumination of his Spirit. First, he breathed light upon the face of the matter or chaos; then he breathed light into the face of man; and still he breatheth and inspireth light into the face of his chosen." Thus, "truth," he saith, "which only doth judge itself, teacheth, that the inquiry of truth which is the love-making or wooing of it, the knowledge of truth which is the presence of it, and the belief of truth, which is the enjoyment of it, is the sovereign good of human nature."†

Truth, then, is the sole object proposed by God, to our belief, which is indeed its sweet enjoyment; and the light of reason in all human things, to which in all moral ones, that of conscience is superadded, and in all heavenly ones the illumination of God's gracious Spirit; is that by which our inquiry for her must be guided, and our assurance of her presence certified. Truth, which, "though this ill hap wait on her nativity that she never comes into the world," as Milton saith, "but like a bastard, to the ignominy of him that brought her forth; till time, the midwife rather than the mother of truth, have washed and salted the infant, declared her legitimate, and church'd the father of his young Minerva from the needless causes of his purgation;" yet is she "as impossible to be soiled by any outward touch, as the sunbeam;" for "truth is but justice in our knowledge, as justice is but truth in our practice;" "the daughter, not of time, but of heaven, only bred up here below in Christian hearts, between two grave and holy nurses, the doctrine and discipline of the gospel;" and to universal knowledge, "strong next to the Almighty," needing "no polices, nor stratagems, nor licensings, to make her victorious."‡

* See Tillotson on the Rule of Faith.

† Lord Bacon's First Essay.

‡ Milton.—Tract on Prelatical Episcopacy.—Dedication of the Doct. and Dis. of Div.—Eikonoklastes, Sec. xxviii.; and Areopagitica.

In seeking after truth, God has furnished us with means and instruments to use, some of which are common to every search we undertake, some more peculiar to special occasions and kinds of knowledge. He has endowed us with great faculties, with deep emotions, with vast desires; and set before us every motive, here and forever, to seek, to know, and to love the truth. He has endowed our minds with power to perceive intuitively, the unmixed and fundamental truths of nearly every part of knowledge; and in minds of the highest mould this precious gift is carried so high, that observation and reflection nearly supply the place of all instruction, and reason to them is more an instinct than a faculty.—He has blessed us with capacities to prove and try all sorts of things, of which those are the methods to arrive at certain knowledge; and our minds are so, by him, created, that we may not only assure ourselves by proof, but that we cannot without proof, believe such things, of which proof is the appropriate evidence. He has established such relations between certain kinds of truths, that they are capable of being subjected to that compact process which we call demonstration; and our minds are not only made capable of receiving this evidence, but when rightly trained, incapable of rejecting it. And to all these he has added that mighty power of truth to verify itself, known to its inmost votaries; that all-pervading sympathy of truth with truth, all fortifying all throughout creation; that lofty freedom of the human soul, as from the highest mount of truth, it overlooks “the errors, wanderings, mists and tempests in the vale below,”—capacious to discern amid the general chaos, every piece into which wicked deceivers have hewed the lovely form of truth; in search of whose mangled limbs her sad friends go up and down, gathering them as they may be found, and looking for the Master’s second coming, who then “shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection.”*

The highest kind of truth, is doubtless, that which concerns God, and our relations to him. That this should be excepted from the influence of those principles which regulate our inquiry, our acquisition, and our belief of all other truth, is in itself absurd; for in all things else, the higher we mount upwards the more rigid is the force of general laws. Nothing, then, can be more clear, than that if truth in general is the only thing proper to be believed, divine truth is the specific thing on which religious faith must rest. But as divine truth is concentrate, at last, in the mere word of God, the rule of divine belief can be no other, than that word which is itself the truth. And the grand difference between this and other cases, lies chiefly here, that God has given to his word of truth, a power, an efficacy, and an unction beyond all other truth, and that he has added therewith the enlightening, convincing, life-giving Spirit.

Thus, then, stands our case. God has given to us a nature, one of whose strongest impulses is a religious instinct, insatiable but in the fruition of himself. He has endowed us with faculties capa-

* Milton, *Areopagitica*; Bacon, *Essay on Truth*.

ble of directing the out-goings of this profound emotion. He has set himself before us, as the sole object of our supreme and everlasting love. That lost image of himself in which we were created, he has restored to us, through a Redemer, by a new, spiritual and divine creation. And now he proposes to us, as the sweet, infallible and perfect rule of faith, of duty and of love—his own unerring statement of his own glorious being, high decrees, infinite grace, majestic works, eternal providence. And to crown all, he sheds abroad within our hearts, the eternal Spirit, the inspirer and Spirit of truth itself, to keep us clear lighted on our heavenly way, and fast bound, in the free, unbroken covenant of his love. Oh! blessed faith that binds to such a God! Oh! blessed rule by which to keep that faith!*

In all fair reason, there can be but two questions perplexing the Christian's firm conviction. Is this, our rule of faith, indeed the word of God? If so, what does God say?

To the *first*, we might well say, it is no question between us and Rome; for while she has impiously added to the word of God things which he never uttered, she admits as his, all that we assert to be so. But besides this, it is enough to add, that the authenticity, the inspiration, and the uncorrupted preservation of the divine oracles, are not only capable of being impregnably established, upon such and so high evidence, as is most perfect in such inquiries; but, it is not too much to say, that human ingenuity cannot demand in its most perverse mood, a body of proof so overwhelming, as that on which the heavenly rule of faith rests its claim to our acceptance. Let him who doubts, but make the trial.

To the *second* question the answer is not less clear. God has revealed to us a rule of faith and obedience declared, by himself, to be perfect. The means by which he requires us to ascertain what he has thus revealed, are, in part, those common to the acquisition of knowledge laid up in other written records. To these, peculiar helps are added in the ordinances, teachings, privileges, and sacraments, of his visible kingdom. And all is crowned by the guidance and teaching of the promised and purchased Spirit. And so effectual are these means, that in all lands and in all generations, this rule has conducted all God's children to the same Saviour, by the same faith, through the same baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.

For it is never to be forgotten, that the perfect sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to make men wise unto salvation, the absolute completeness of the power of God to the entire exclusion of man's wisdom as the sure foundation of our faith; has been, from the beginning, the universal testimony which martyrs have sealed with their blood,† the unanimous confession of every true church of Jesus Christ,‡ the very germ and heart's-blood of the blessed re-

* On the general subject of the perfection of Scripture as a rule of faith, consult *Turretin, Institutio Theologica, Pars Prima, Loc. Sec. questio 16, 17*; and his two tracts *De Scripturæ Sacræ Authoritate*, published in his *Disput. Miscell.*—Chillingworth's *Religion of Protestants a Safe Way*, &c. Also De Moor, *Com. Per. in Joh. Markii Comp.*, the whole of the second chapter, in which a vast body of matter is drawn together in the compass of a few hundred pages.

† See Fox's *Acts and Monuments*—Beza's *Icones*, &c.

‡ See the *Magdebourg Centuriators*, for the period preceding the Reformation; and the *Corpus et Synagma Confessionum*, for that subsequent to it.

formation of the sixteenth century,* and the clear, reiterated, and ever-living assurance of God himself, by the mouths of all holy men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.†

This last consideration is, by itself, conclusive with every truly renewed heart, as it should be with every reflecting mind. The religion of God is a matter of pure revelation, in every thing that regards its essential form, substance, sanctions and issues. By it alone, are we taught that we can be saved by faith‡ in a divine Redeemer crucified for us,§ and in no other way;|| and that this faith is itself the fruit of a divine operation of the Spirit of God,¶ and the act of one born of him.** But the very same authority assures us that the only infallible rule and guide of this saving faith, is, respectively, the word†† and Spirit‡‡ of God himself. Fortified, then, by the plain declarations of revelation concerning our duty in that about which we know absolutely nothing except through the medium of this very revelation; we are not only infallibly assured that we are right when we reject the wisdom of man and choose the power of God as the foundation of our faith; but in the nature of the case, it is wholly impossible to prove that our rule can be wrong, or that any other can be right. Nor can a case be made which shall even conduce to an opposite result, which will not, as the facts exist, subvert the possibility of all divine faith whatever, by attacking on the one hand the competency of man as the receiver, and on the other the veracity of God as the impartor of divine truth.

Stand firm, therefore, Brethren and Fathers, in this faith, so clearly delivered, so firmly held, and so precious to the saints. Hold fast to this rule, made plain to our souls by a spiritual demonstration full of divine power. Contend earnestly for the freedom of the human spirit; the priceless freedom of a sure and open access to God. Uphold the majesty of the divine Lawgiver, the all sufficiency of the Incarnate Word, the infinite efficiency of the Spirit of truth. For in these questions lie hid the destinies of this ruined world, and of the church which Jesus Christ has purchased with his blood.

III. But the church of Rome proposes a *rule of faith* which she asserts, is more simple and more certain than the mere word of God! A bold proposal, and so daring in its impiety and folly, as to seem nearly beyond the limits of human presumption; yet set forth, in every form, and by every authority in that apostate body, within the few last centuries; and particularly in the decrees of its last General Council, that of Trent, and of its universal creed, that of Pius IV., made out of the Trent Decrees, and issued in the form of a Bull in the year 1564.

This creed, to which every follower of the pope is obliged to swear as a bond of papal unity—is later, by many years, than all the principal creeds of the Reformed churches. Later, for exam-

*Consult D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation*—Passim.

†See John xvii. 17, and v. 39, and xx. 31; Luke i. 3, 4, and xvi. 29; Rom. i. 16, and xv. 4; 1 Cor. ii. 5, and x. 11, and xvi. 3; 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16; Heb. i. 1—3, compared with ii. 1—4; 1 James i. 21; 2 Peter i. 19—21, &c. &c.

‡Eph. ii. 8—10. §1 Cor. i. 23, 24. ||Acts iv. 12. ¶Gal. v. 22. **John i. 13, 14.

††Gal. i. 8, 9, and 2 Tim. iii. 15—17.

‡‡John xiv. 26, and xvi. 13—15.

ple, than that of Augsburg, which is the creed of the Lutheran body; than the Helvetic Confession, which exhibits the faith of the Swiss churches; than the French Confession, which contains the faith of the glorious Huguenots; than the Belgic Confession, which is that of the Reformed church of the Netherlands; and finally, amongst others, than those of the Bohemian, the English, and the Scottish nations.* So that the boasted antiquity of the faith of Rome, and her derision of the novelty of that of Christ's Church, are but tricks to blind the simple. Our summaries of faith are more ancient than her own, as well as more pure. And if she will go behind her present standards to some more ancient, and thereby confess her faith has varied, and so give up her boasted infallibility, on which all her other claims repose; why then we will prove the sin of schism on her. For all the Reformed churches have always believed and openly professed the ancient creeds of Nice, of Chalcedon, of Constantinople the first, of Ephesus, as well as those commonly called of Irenæus and Athanasius; and yet holding these, are curst and cast out by Rome; although Rome herself, in this very Council of Trent, and until the Council had made the matter for a new creed, had none to use, whereby to show her public but long-forsaken faith, but one of these.† Or if she will go behind them all, up to the pure light of God shining directly from his eternal word, then will we see in her deformed and monstrous state, the true secret of her mortal hatred of that light which makes her manifest; and the full force of that confession, extorted in the very front of this creed of Pius IV., that it is the symbol, not of the *Christian*, but of the "*Roman church*."‡

What, then, is the rule of that faith, thus confessed and sworn to be of Rome, rather than of Christ?

1. Can you believe it, when you are told, that it is in part at least, the same as our own—the holy word of God? Can you credit it, that Rome with all her hatred of the Bible, teaches her subjects to say, "*I also admit the sacred Scriptures?*" It is even so. Rome admits that the Bible is *part* of her own rule of faith. Thus confessing that God has some right to speak to us, and we some capacity to understand him; that some parts of the Scripture are in theory at least, innocent and intelligible; and that the Christian rule of faith has some show of reason and some foundation in truth.

But here as every where, the agreement between Rome and us is only apparent. For while adopting the word of God, theoretically as a portion of the rule of her belief, she has carefully provided that all edifying, much less all common use of it, shall be impossible. For, in the first place, she has corrupted the written word of God, by adding to it whole books, and a number of them,

* Consult the *Corpus et Syntagma Confessionum*.

† *Historia del Concilio Tridentino*, Lib. ii. F. Paolo Sarpi. The English translation of this great work goes under the name of *Polano*—an anagram on the author's real name.

‡ The reader will find this Creed of Pius IV. at the end of every edition of the Decrees of the Council of Trent.—Also in *Labbius and Cossart*, vol. xiv. pp. 944—6. Also, in English and Latin, in *Cramp's Text Book of Popery*, p. 337, and p. 460. Also in English in the *Spirit of the XIX. Century* for February, 1842, p. 75. Also in Latin and English in the *Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine*, for February, 1835 p. 32.

as inspired, which have no seal of the Holy Ghost upon them: thus polluting the waters of life at the fountain head, and braving the terrible curse of God. In the next place, she has by a solemn and formal decree, made the ultimate appeal to that which is not scripture at all, in any proper sense; declaring the Latin version, instead of the Hebrew and Greek originals, to be "*authentic*;"† and handing over to damnation, every soul of man that will not take as the last answer to his enquiries for the mind of God, that voice of man, instead of this of God. In the third place, she has effectually closed her work, by prohibiting the free printing of the scriptures even in the dead tongue, the free translation of them into any vulgar tongue, and the free use of them or any version of them;‡ all which acts of insult to man, and audacity towards God, are backed by the common argument of Rome to gainsayers, "let him be accursed," who would ward off such strokes aimed at the very root of our salvation.

2. Having made her end sure against the form of God's word, under the pretext of receiving it, she next proceeds against its sense. "*I also admit the sacred Scriptures according to the sense which the holy mother church has held and does hold.*"§ Such is the first limitation. God shall be heard so often as he uses the mouth of "holy mother church." So much of his word as escapes the corruption of Apochryphal additions, so much as shines through an imperfect version in an unknown tongue, so much as eludes the prohibitions of spiritual tyrants; that much, if it will consent to array itself in the speech of Ashdod instead of that of Canaan, and to be superscribed, "thus saith Babylon the Great," instead of "thus saith God;" why then it shall be, so far, a rule of faith and practice. That is, it shall be if Rome shall ever condescend to give the world, what she has never yet done, an exposition of Scripture judged by herself to be infallible.

"According to the sense" of "holy mother church." Who is she? Where is she? How is her sense to be obtained? Is it the whole body of the faithful? Their sense has never yet been taken; nor did the thousandth part of those in the Roman communion ever read over the hundredth part of the Bible. The whole priesthood only? The prelates only? The General Councils? The Pope alone? Who is this holy church, "mother and mistress of all churches," that we should stop our ears to God and listen to her only? Is it Rome Arian, with Pope Liberius and the Councils of Sirmium, Selucia, and Ariminum, as her expositors? Or Rome Infidel, with Leo X. guiding her infallible interpretations? Or Rome Pelagian, cursing the evangelic faith of God's elect, by the mouth of Clement XI., in the constitution *Unigenitus*? Or Rome governed by strumpets for generations together, and so sunken into worse than heathen pollution while divinely illuminated to expound Christian morals, that her own

* Decrees of the Council of Trent, Sess. IV.

† Labbius and Cossart, Tom. xiv. p. 746—7.

‡ *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, Rome, 1819, pp. ix.—xiv.

§ Second Article added to the Creed of the first Council of Constantinople, by the Creed of Pius IV.

historians call fifty popes in succession apostatical rather than apostolical? Or Rome drunk with the blood of martyrs, and staggering under her load of murdered saints, that shall teach us lessons of charity and good will towards men? Or Rome, divided between two and three rival popes, and tearing out her own bowels in mutual rapine, that is to be our instructress in the great doctrines of the saints' communion, and the church's unity? Or Rome, even down to our own day, and to the reigning pontiff, leagued with tyrants and fulminating curses against the sacred and indefeasible rights of human nature, from whom we shall acquire, with all docility, lessons for good doing to our fellow men?

Alas! that we can no-where find this "holy mother church," to whom "it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures;"† who alone is "holy, Catholic, and Apostolical"—"the mother and mistress of all churches;"‡ who alone holds and teaches that "true, Catholic faith, out of which none can be saved;"§ who, though the Trent Council, by a strange and fatal oversight failed to define or even to describe her, yet if we should ever find her, will be infallible,—for whoever or wherever she may be, one thing is certain, she "cannot err in faith or morals."|| Infallible? That is a hard doctrine; and it is hard to say whether it be true or false, of one who can no-where be found. It is easy to show that the General Councils, the Popes, the saints, yea saints working miracles, the universities, the doctors, the prelates, and the priests of this church of Rome, have all erred, and that most egregiously, themselves being judges ¶ If all these can err in every thing, and yet their "holy mother" still remain the infallible expositor of Scripture, and her decisions the infallible rule of faith; then it is clear that both her rule and herself, even though infallible, are worse than useless; since her followers have fallen into the most fatal errors on every point of Christian doctrine, and in every part of Christian practice; and her hierarchy, for above twelve hundred years, has filled every land to which its power extended, with ignorance, misery, and crime.**

3. Next to this imaginary and undefined corporation, comes a monster with three crowns, two swords, and keys *ad-libitum*, before whom we are required to fall prostrate as we say, "I promise and swear true obedience to the Roman Bishop, the successor of Saint Peter, the prince of the Apostles and the vicar of Jesus Christ."†† The ultramontan faction in the papacy, which now wields all the spiritual power of the whole body, sustained by its most accredited doctors with Baronius and Bellarmin at their head, and backed by many Councils, in front of which stand those of Florence and Latran under Popes Eugenius and Leo, calls the Pope the "church virtual," and pronounces him infallible. And while they and all the rest differ as to the subject matter, and whole extent, of this infallibility, all admit that it extends to all his official and

* See Genebrard IV.—Platina, 123—Du Pin, 2, 156.

† Creed of Pius IV. ‡ Idem. § Idem. || Catechism of the Council of Trent, p. 102.

¶ Edgar's *Variations of Popery*, puts this part of the controversy to rest.

** For a very clear refutation of the pretended infallibility of the church of Rome, see Bayle's *Critique Generale de L'Histoire du Calvinisme, de Maimbourg, Lettre xxix.*

†† Thirteenth article added by the creed of Pius IV., to that of Constantinople the first.

authorised decisions touching the faith. The popes, therefore,—all popes, past, present, and to come, enter, in some form, into the Roman rule of faith; and that by virtue of a solemn oath. Whether as Roman Bishop, or universal pastor; whether alone, or with a General Council, or after universal consent of the faithful; whether personally, or only when speaking *ex cathedra*; whether in questions of fact and discipline, or those of morals and faith only; these are points for the faithful to decide, when their oracle has spoken, in order to ascertain whether his infallibility be then infallible or no. For us that are without, let the question come unto us in its simplest and strongest form—and so we meet it, with a flat denial, that Peter was ever Christ's vicar—that the bishops of Rome are Peter's successors or Christ's vicars—that any Christian man owes them any obedience on any of these grounds—or that any one of them was infallible in any thing whatever. And as these are all questions of fact, which before it is lawful to believe them must be proved, and which if true, are readily susceptible of being proved; we then join issue and demand the proof.*

And for further plea, we say, first, that no man knows, or ever can know, how many of the two hundred and fifty or sixty pretended bishops of Rome, have come in canonically, or been true popes, according even to the judgment of Rome herself. Therefore no man can ever know, how many of these so-called popes, were, in any sense, infallible. Moreover, that as there have been, according to the Jesuit Mainbourg, twenty-nine schisms in the bosom of the papacy, dividing that body between different heads; and as the mode of electing the pope has suffered fundamental changes, not less than thirty times;† it is wholly impossible for us to be assured, that any pope, from the time of the first schism and the first fundamental change in the mode of election—ever was truly bishop of Rome; just as at the Council of Constance, "it was morally impossible to decide who were true popes and who antipopes," as the same Jesuit tells us—and therefore the council rejected and deposed all three then exercising the functions of Christ's vicar; as we, for a like reason, may reject all. And, further still, admitting all who ever claimed the office, or any part of them, to have truly held it; still it is impossible for us to know what so many persons have said and written in so many centuries, as to the true Christian faith; and therefore their opinions, which in the nature of the case we can never know, cannot form any part of our rule of belief. Or even if we knew all their opinions, not one of them could be a rule of divine faith to us, without gross impiety, until its author was shown to have uttered it by divine inspiration; which cannot be shown without contradicting that Scripture, which Rome has already conceded to be a portion of the true rule.

This added plea we reinforce, by this second argument. Judging the holy Scriptures to be a divine rule, which Rome herself confesses; and knowing the illumination of the Holy Spirit to be

* The reader will find in Barrow's '*Treatise on the Pope's Supremacy*,' a learned and candid exposition of that whole branch of the controversy with Rome.

† *Histoire du Grand Schisme D'Occident*, pp. 2—15.

not only real, but indispensable; it follows, that as no man can know infallibly, that this divine illumination is ever, much less constantly bestowed upon another particular man; no man can ever be infallibly assured that any other man is qualified infallibly to guide his conscience. If any shall pretend that the Scripture guides his conscience for some other man, he makes himself above the Scripture, and usurps at once the office of the Holy Spirit and dominion over the human conscience. But a man may far more certainly know whether he himself understands the word of God, than whether another man doth; whether the Spirit illuminates his own mind, than whether it doth that of another man; whether his own conscience inwardly approves as good what his mind receives as true, or whether that of another man doth; and no man can know of any other, any thing more certain than this, viz.: that no other man can be so good a judge of his religion as he is himself. So that we are not only obliged, from certain knowledge about which it is impossible to err, to reject the claims of the Roman Pontiff; but it is because he assumes this infallibility over the word of God and the consciences of men, that Christians call him Antichrist; who, the Scripture tells us shall "sit in the temple of God"—as it were opposite to God, "exalting himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped."* "That is to say, not only above all judges and magistrates, who though they be called Gods, are far beneath infallible; but also above God himself, by giving law both to the Scripture, to the conscience, and to the Spirit of God within us."† It is God that gives the word, the Spirit that enforces it, the conscience that is sanctified by it; but if the meaning of the word is to be given infallibly by the Pope—then is he lord of all; and claiming this, then is he Antichrist.

And for a third argument, we say it is inconceivable that a pure, wise, and righteous God, ever selected as his vicars or the infallible expositors of his most holy will, such men as the great mass of these Roman pontiffs have always been. From John VIII. to Leo IX., a space of one hundred and fifty years, there were fifty popes, pronounced by their own historians to have been monsters of iniquity. John XII. was convicted, by a Roman Synod, of blasphemy, perjury, profanation, impiety, simony, sacrilege, adultery, incest, constupration and murder. Boniface VII. is called by Cardinal Baronius, a thief, a miscreant, and a murderer. Gregory VII. is pronounced by Cardinal Benno and by the Councils of Worms and Brescia, guilty of simony, sacrilege, magic, sorcery, treason, impiety, fornication, adultery, heresy, perjury and murder. Boniface VIII., to every other enormity added that sin for which Sodom perished. John XXIII. has come down to us, black with every crime and villany, proved upon him by the General Council of Constance. Sixtus IV. was an assassin and debauchee. Alexander VI., by the general consent of historians, made Rome the sink of filthiness, prostitution, rapine and blood—and was himself the horror and execration of Europe. Julius II., was a drunkard a Sodomite, and a man of blood. Leo X. was an unchaste sensu-

* 2 Thess. ii, 4.

† Milton's *Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes.*

alist, and most probably an Atheist and a Sodomite. Besides these, who are but specimens of most of these "servants of the servants of God"—many have been heretics, simonists, persecutors, corruptors of the earth, men of immoral lives, perjured persons, sinners exceedingly both against God and man. Indeed of all that have reigned since the apostacy began, that is to say for these twelve hundred years and more—the fewest number have been men of blameless lives, and almost none have exhibited the genuine marks of true Christians.*

Now upon this state of fact we demand, is it credible that God has chosen these men to be his vicars upon earth? That he has invested them with authority to decide what faith his children shall cherish? That he has set them up as models of that belief and practice, by which a guilty world is to be won back to him? Did he know them? Is he thus supremely indifferent to virtue and to faith? Does he select his chosen representatives, the predestinated vicars of his own thrice glorious, nay God-like presence amongst men—amongst the very outcasts of human filth and crime and beastliness?—When light and darkness are all one, when sin and virtue are twin-sisters, when the chaste spouse of Christ and the vile whore of Babylon become the same, when God and Mammon, Christ and Belial all sit down on one divided throne; then will that faith which stands in carnal wisdom, be fit for union with that which stands in the mighty power of God.

4. The next general limitation put by Rome around the word of God, hindering its free course, is the decrees of what she calls her General Councils; according to the sense of which, the voice of God is to be understood. For in her doctrine, those Councils which she admits to be œcumenical, are, as to all definitions of faith, guided immediately by the Holy Ghost, and therefore cannot err. And so she teaches her subjects to say, "*I profess and undoubtedly receive all things delivered, defined, and declared by the sacred Canons and General Councils.*"† What relates to the "sacred Canons" will be noticed separately. As to the Councils, it is obvious, the article in the creed is much broader than the mere subject of faith; and it is notorious, that the divisions in the Roman sect have been as fierce, as thorough, and as various, in regard to the infallibility of Councils, as to that of popes, or that of the church itself; about which some thing has been already said. But we need not here transcend the limits of the immediate subject, and as to that, every papist is sworn to receive with undoubting conviction, and as a portion of his rule of faith "all things delivered, defined, and declared, by the General Councils, and particularly by the holy Council of Trent."

How many ecclesiastical Councils may have met in the bosom of the nominally Christian church, since that first grand assemblage of "apostles and elders and brethren" at Jerusalem, whose decisions inspired by God and left on record in his holy word,‡ settled,

* See *Variations of Popery*, by Edgar, pp. 109—125, for a full citation of authorities and references, on this part of the subject. Consult also De Potter's *L'Esprit de L'Eglise*, Tom. iii. iv. v. and vi. Also Platina and Baronius.

† Creed of Pius IV., last article but one.

‡ Acts xv.

for us poor Gentiles, our enduring Christian liberty; it passes the knowledge of man to-tell. That many of these have done well and wisely, none will deny. That many have met only to establish their own sinful ends, who can doubt? As they have done well or ill—to their own master, they stand or fall. But that any, or all of them, since the Lord's apostles all fell on sleep, should be set up as rules of divine faith, without whose guidance we cannot understand that plain word of God now in our hands, and which itself guided them, so far as they went right; is an absurdity so monstrous, that even they who propound it seem scarcely to believe themselves. Are individual men infallible? Then surely each can guide himself. Is every priest, and every prophet, and minister of religion, inspired? If so, the Council cannot control the voice of God within them. If not, the union of a thousand fallible men cannot make an infallible council.

That councils, and they the largest and most ecclesiastical, may err, and that out of all bounds of reason, of pity, and of truth, will stand an eternal stigma upon our race, until the record of that great council of the entire then visible church of God,—that madly preferred a murderer to the Lord of life, and with wicked hands, by God's determinate counsel, took and slew the Prince of Peace, is blotted out from under heaven. And that the true successors, in spirit and in deed, of those bad counsellors, have often since assembled, even in the name of him their fathers did betray; none can truly gainsay, while the blood of whole nations butchered in the name of God cries to his throne for vengeance, and the memory of the confessors and martyrs of the Most High, abides the rich heritage of his struggling church. Away with your infallible-councils. We take our Master's cross, in preference to the judgment of his murderers; our brethren's bloody winding sheet and fiery bed, rather than guidance from hands goary with the warm currents of their life. Councils infallible! Councils in which the Holy Ghost did dwell! Beleaguered by strumpets, beset with fiddlers and buffoons, cursing God's truth, and leaving tracks strewed with bastards and dead men's bones! Councils, the very names, order, and number of which, papists themselves dispute; and know not which or how many to propound to us, as inspired. Holy Councils; and above all that of Trent!! Which by the amazing wrath of God, cursed with judicial blindness and seared consciences, did gather into one vast monument, those scattered proofs which covered the long track of ages, and those errors and corruptions bred in the slime and filth of the whole apostacy; and reared them up, with patient and laborious vice, through eighteen years of God's long-suffering, the final land-mark, the last limit of his endurance with this great, bloody and drunken Babylon. So that when Rome teaches her children to condemn, reject, and curse, as she makes them swear they do and will, all things contrary to her God-forsaken Councils, and chiefly that of Trent; she brands upon their foreheads the proof that she and they are alike apostatised from God; and establishes them in ways that lead to death.*

* For a very clear argument on the authority of Councils, see *Calvin's Institutes*, book iv. chap. ix. And for a short statement of the matter of fact as to the number, names and acts of the so-called General Councils, see *Papism in the XIX. Century*, pp. 44—56.

5. "The sacred Canons" too, as we have seen, as well as "all constitutions and observances"* of the holy Roman church, form an important part of that confused and heterogeneous mass, which she calls her rule of faith.

The *Canon Law*, is the system of authorised jurisprudence in the papal body. The Canons of the Greek church, appear to have been originally used by Rome, and to have formed the basis of her code. About the beginning of the sixth century, the code of *Denys le Petit* became the standard; and with the Decretals of the popes from Siricius to Anastasius, constituted the body of the Canon Law down to the eleventh century; and with the Capitularies of Charlemagne, was generally adopted in the Latin church. Upon the basis of this code repose what are called the Liberties of the Gallican church, which are known to be wholly inconsistent with many of the claims of the papal see—and which are sustained by rejecting every thing of a subsequent date, added to the canonical jurisprudence, and also all the Decretals of popes preceding Siricius; the former as no way binding, the latter as false and forged. But the Roman see adding the before unknown Decretals from St. Clement to Siricius, the confusion became so great as to render a new modelling indispensable, and in 1151, *Gratien* published his work entitled "*Concordance of Discordant Canons*," which became thenceforth the foundation of the code of Rome, and which professes to give the sense of the Bible, the Councils and the Fathers, upon all matters ecclesiastical. To *Gratien* the Benedictine, therefore, Rome assures us, all must go, who would go to heaven. The Decretals of popes from 1150 to Gregory IX. in 1229, form a kind of second part of the Canon Law. In 1297, Boniface VIII. continued this collection of Decretals to his own times. John XXII. added to it, under the name *Clementines*, the constitutions of Clement V., his predecessor, in five books; and subsequently twenty constitutions of John himself under the name of *Extravagants*, and some other constitutions of his successors, were added. All these things, viz., the dicta of Councils, the guesses of fathers, the rescripts of popes, the sophisms of ecclesiastics, the vagaries of popish doctors, and the Roman conjectures of the sense of scripture, unitedly form that mass of folly, cruelty, and chicanery which published in three folio volumes, goes under the title, '*Corpus Juris Canonici*;' which every papist swears he receives as a portion of his Christian faith, and by the light of which the Bible itself must be interpreted, in order to be understood.

The simplicity and excellence of this infallible portion of the Roman rule of faith, must be so manifest from the mere statement of its contents and of the manner of their being brought together; that nothing more need be said in commendation of it, unless it should be to add, that it has been no unusual thing for Protestants to edify themselves by large collations of multitudes of its provisions, flatly contradicting not only the word of God, but each other.†

* The first article and the last but one, added by Pius IV., to the Creed of the Council of Constantinople the first.

† At the end of the *Synopsis Papismi* of Andrew Willet, is generally printed his *Te-trastylon Papismi*, in the iv. Pillar, and 4th part of which, he gives 100 contradictions of the Canons against themselves.

A most important privilege of infallibility; and one which the Jesuits, the best subjects of the pope, have so used in their instructions touching practical morality—as to prove, that as one may believe contradictory propositions and still be consistent with an infallible rule of faith, so may he also perform opposite moral acts and be still under the guidance of an infallible religious authority.* So that the practical as well as the rational end of the matter is, that to him who is infallible, all faith and all practice, is the same; for being a guide unto himself, the truth of principles and the morality of acts, alter as he himself changes. Which, in the logic of protestants would be equivalent to this, that as we are all sinful and blinded creatures, and therefore certain to go astray when left to ourselves; any pretence of infallibility which renders all admission and correction of error impossible, forces us when once we get wrong to be wrong forever; and obliges us, every time our belief or conduct is inconsistent, to defend opposite things as equally true, and so to destroy all true faith and all sound morality; the result of our infallibility being that we must infallibly and incurably err. And so thoroughly does the fact agree with the reason of the case, that we may easily find in the infallible Canon Law—a positive provision or an implied rule, directly at variance with every leading duty and every practical truth of the Christian religion.

The existence and uses of this Canon Law, suggest one of the most palpable arguments against what is by sufferance called the church of Rome, but what is in reality far more a state than a religion. The Pope of Rome calling himself a vice-God, and his see the imperial, the sacred, and the eternal city—claims a dominion and authority extensive as the family of man. He parcels out the kingdoms and commonwealths of the earth amongst his lieutenants whom he calls patriarchs, primates, and bishops; and gives to them larger or smaller territories and powers as his own supreme will dictates. In these he establishes tribunals, erects prisons, collects taxes, distributes honours, inflicts punishments, administers justice; in short, reigns. This Canon Law, is his code of judicature, which supersedes alike the codes of God and of the nations—and reveals its authors and prime administrators, as at once audacious usurpers of the prerogatives of heaven and systematic oppressors of the human race.† Thanks be to God, who has allowed the interests and hopes of man, even in this world, to be so indissolubly connected with the glory and permanence of his own authority, that this accursed Antichrist cannot destroy us without dishonouring him; and that the same acts which vindicated his own eternal majesty, released a world sighing for deliverance.

6. The impiety of Rome, forms a regular climax. To the church, the Pope, the Councils and the Canons, she adds, as infallible expositors of the mind of the Spirit, and so infallible guides in matters of faith, those she calls "*the fathers*," of whom she teaches her children to say, that while they "*admit the sacred Scriptures*,"

* See Pascal's Provincial Letters; and De Pradt's *Jesuitisme Ancien et Modern*.

† The reader will find the argument glanced at in this paragraph developed with great eloquence and force by M. Jurien, in the "*Prejuges Legitimes Contre La Papisme, Pre miere Partie, chap. xii. and xiii.*"

they will never "take or interpret them otherwise, than according to the unanimous consent of the fathers."^{*}

Who "the fathers" are, in the sense of the Roman standards, is a question never yet settled. And it is probable no binding decision will ever be made on the subject; since the object of all these impious decrees is not to settle the substance of faith, but to establish the supremacy of Rome; and the more uncertain it is what men ought to believe, the more complete is the authority of that See, subjection to which is indispensable to salvation. What "the fathers" really wrote, how much of that which has come down to us under their names was really theirs, and how far it is possible for us to understand their mind truly, from those mutilated fragments which constitute all that is left of many of the most respectable of them; are questions of literary history and criticism, about which learned men are entirely divided, in regard to which the mass of mankind never can arrive at a solid conclusion, and which being supremely indifferent to the peace and welfare of our souls, cannot, without the grossest folly, be alleged to have any connexion with the true meaning or perfect obligation of God's holy word. The more ancient the fathers are, the fewer of them have escaped the wreck of time and chance, and the less do we know about their real sentiments; insomuch, that we have not the undoubted writings of more than seven or eight of those of the first three centuries, and even of some of these but fragments; and nothing at all, certainly known to be much, if any earlier than the middle of the second century. It is to be considered, also, that the Christian writers of those early ages, were engaged on topics so entirely different from those which now occupy our thoughts that their labors, even where they have been preserved, are of very little use in settling any dispute between us and Rome. For example, those of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and some others, against the religion and the gods of heathenism; those of Irenæus and of the same Tertullian against the Gnostics; and those of Cyprian, who discourses almost wholly upon the virtues of the church and its discipline. But as to transubstantiation and the adoration of the host, the supremacy of the pope, the worshipping of images, and the like; perhaps not a man in the whole church of Christ, for the first three centuries, ever spoke or wrote upon one of them.—Moreover, let us never forget, that if we had full and unquestionable proof that many persons, from the earliest times, held to every dogma of Rome, it would be no better presumption in favour of the truth of those errors, than now exists in favour of those which, as we know from the New Testament scriptures, prevailed not only under the Jewish dispensation, but were, from the very beginning, insinuated into the churches of the new; so that if Rome could prove by the fathers, which indeed she cannot, the antiquity of all her heresies—it would be perfectly easy to prove, and that by more unquestionable witnesses, that those of the Pharisees and

^{*} Creed of Pius IV., second additional article. Council of Trent, fourth session, *Decree on the Edition and Use of the Sacred Books*; there were present at this session only fifty-eight persons, who, in the name of the universal church, perpetrated this horrible impiety.

Sadducees, of the Nicolaitans and many others, were more ancient—and therefore, by her own argument, more respectable.

The truth, however, is, that no age of the church can be selected in which her doctors and pastors have *taken and interpreted the scriptures*, with any thing approaching to a *unanimous consent*; and that if, instead of confining our inquiries to the earliest ages, we are obliged to come down so low as to the twelfth century in order to embrace St. Bernard, whom the papists class with the most renowned names of the preceding centuries; we shall find a heterogeneous mass of folly, propagated by learned teachers and high ecclesiastics, as incapable of being reduced to a general consent, or even to sense itself, as the tongues of Babel. And even the earliest and most respectable of 'the fathers,' have erred, not only singly but in companies, and have strenuously contradicted each other upon points of the gravest importance; and what is more perfectly *ad rem* in our present discussion, they have been often and utterly disallowed by Rome herself, in points precisely held by the most and the ablest of them, and in some of which they were beyond all controversy, right, and Rome wrong. Thus, it is evident that the ancient fathers, with Augustine, Chrysostom, and Ambrose at their head, believed that the virgin Mary was conceived in original sin; which the Council of Trent denies. Again, Melito of Sardis, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen, St. Hilary, Epiphanius, Athanasius, Ruffinus, and St. Jerome, are not only wholly at variance with the same Council of Trent as to the Canon of Scripture, but with nearly all antiquity fall under its curse for their opinions on that subject. So, too, Bellarmin himself admits,* after Michael Medina who asserted it openly in the said Council of Trent,† that St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, Sedulius, Primasius, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Oecumenius, and Theophylact, had all fallen into what he calls the error of Aerius, viz., that the difference between a bishop and a priest was not of divine but only of ecclesiastical right.‡

But whoever or whatever the fathers may have been, whatever they may have held, and by what means soever we may now ascertain their thoughts; nothing concerning them can possibly be more evident, than this, that they could not speak with the clearness, the authority and the conviction of God, and therefore cannot be indispensable to us in finding out his will from his own word. It is not pretended that they were inspired: but the prophets and the apostles were. While we receive, therefore, with gratitude, all the aid they can give us, in our progress to the eternal world; we recognise in them all, sinful men like ourselves, no better instructed in divine things than hundreds, perhaps than thousands, now in the flesh; and reject their pretended unanimity as a shallow imposition, and the sanctity and authority attributed to their opinions as an insult to the majesty of God.

7. The cap-stone of this temple to papal infallibility, built out

* Bellarm. de Cler. l. 1, c. 15.

† *Historia del Con. Trid.*—F. Paolo, l. 7.

‡ Daillius de Usu Patrum.—Cave, *Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum*—Hist. Lit. Du Pin's *History of Eccl. Writers*. Sir Peter King's *Inquiry*. Taylor's *Ancient Christianity*; are sources of authentic information in regard to "the fathers"—so called.

of the defaced ruins of all divine ordinances and all human hopes, is laid with the confused noise of the rabble of apostate bishops, venal councils, and pretended saints—whose rescripts, dreams and rhapsodies they call "*apostolical and ecclesiastical traditions*," and not only oblige the subjects of the pope to say they "*most firmly admit and embrace*"* them all, but have decreed infallibly, that they "*are to be equally received and revered, as the books of the Old and New Testaments.*"†

A declaration like this can escape the charge of blasphemy, only by the clearest proof that there are *unwritten traditions*, which having been received from Christ by the apostles, have come down to us in clear and unbroken succession. Upon this we take issue, and expressly deny that there are any such traditions; that there is even any Catholic tradition that such traditions ever were or should be; and in particular, that the present church of Rome, which is the synagogue of Satan, ever had any unwritten traditions of any kind committed to her, by any authority binding on us. We expressly charge, moreover, that this Roman Papacy, if she ever had any traditions committed to her keeping, has proved herself to be utterly unworthy of trust, in regard to them; for by her own admission, she, being made the depository of the written word of God, has kept it so faithlessly, that as she declares, several entire books are lost, and the originals of all the rest have become corrupted; a testimony, which though it be false, is fatal to her. Still farther we say, that this pretext of *tradition* corrupted the Jewish church, and was expressly condemned by Christ; that it is a pretence, which if allowed, permits corrupt popes to manufacture scripture at pleasure; and finally, that if the doctrine were true and the *unwritten traditions* established, they could not control the *written word of God*, upon any rules of evidence or interpretation ever allowed in any well ordered tribunal; the one being a divine record which proves and interprets itself, the other, idle words standing in uncertain and suspicious human declarations of mere hearsay, for eighteen centuries.‡

If any one will but reflect upon the manner in which these traditions have been preserved, and consider for a moment, the present sources from which they must be drawn; he will perceive that the only use of them is to obscure the way of salvation, and so to increase the necessity of reliance on a corrupt and tyrannical priesthood. For where are we to look for these unwritten traditions which are as much entitled to our reverence as the written word of God? Is it to the parish priest? Then he is to me, in the place of God, and vile as he may be, I become his abject slave; or refusing to be so, risk the salvation of my soul. Or if I be sent to the bishop or the pope, the result is the very same; and they by becoming the infallible expositors of God's unwritten will, become in fact, Gods themselves. But as popes, bishops, and priests have

* Creed of Pius IV., first additional article.

† Council of Trent, IV. Session.

‡ Upon the general subject of tradition the reader will find important information in Tillotson's admirable Treatise on "*The Rule of Faith*?" in Title iv. and v. of the *Preservative against Popery*, especially chapter iii. of Title iv.—and in Du Pin, *Dis. Præ. sur la Bible*.

shown themselves, too often, to be cruel, false, and corrupt, this fearful authority can never be vested in any of them, without manifestly drawing after it the subjugation and degradation of the human race. Moreover, from the nature of the case, such an extraordinary investiture *from* God, can only be proved *by* God himself; seeing it is not possible for man, by himself, to prove to us, what happened between God and himself alone; and God has himself, provided beforehand the everlasting tests of these pretensions. Let the pope, the bishops and the priests, then, show us a plain declaration of God in his acknowledged word; or else let them work miracles in our presence. But, however the Roman church may attempt to prove the existence of this divine power in her priesthood, that proof, whether propounded in the form of miracle, of revelation, of argument, of evidence, or of force, must in the nature of the case, be submitted to the reason of every man in particular; and so we establish and sanctify the mother principle of Protestantism—the divine right of private judgment, to which Rome herself must take her final appeal. If she appeal to force, there is an end of religion, which to be true must be free. If she appeal to miracle, that is a resort to the bar of reason, and she must deposite her high pretensions, her blood basin, and her sacrificial knife—at the door of that sacred court. If she go to the word of God, behold it is our own glorious rule. Let the living hierarchy then stand aside; for they are not the depositories of these dread and mystical secrets.

Shall we resort next to buried generations, and seek amid the crumbling fragments and mouldering dust of unknown ages, for some glimmering light generated by the corruptions of the dead, to guide our footsteps along a path upon which the sun of righteousness sheds his own living rays? And whither shall we go? To the long line of pontiffs true and false, and grope amid their countless bulls and constitutions, their treaties of war and peace, their charters, laws, sermons, letters, and disquisitions; is it amid this mass through which no single mortal ever yet fully penetrated, that the child of God is to search until he finds the hidden and costly pearl? And lest there be some fragment still neglected, shall we then with patient toil hear one by one, the doctors, fathers, casuists, and schools, of ten or fifteen centuries; sifting and purging uncounted loads of chaff and blasted grains, to find one mustard seed buried and lost by chance? And then shall we go round the innumerable councils small and great, true and false, and with heavy hearts and weary limbs, like Isis searching for the mangled body of Osiris, seek amid these mitred tyrants, if perchance some fragment of the Lord's unwritten truth, neglected by his own blessed apostles, may not have been preserved by this priesthood of Antichrist? And lest we miss our end at last, shall we wake from their dread abodes, (like her of Endor pleasing a mad-man,) those crazed self torturers whom Rome calls saints, and listen to their howls, and moans, and maniac ravings, and idiot chattering, as if the sweet and ordered voice of heaven had ever mingled with sounds like these? Or, if not with popes, and fathers, and councils, and saints, and doctors—where, then, shall we find these lost messages of Christ?

Fathers and Brethren, God is not far from every one of us. His word is nigh unto us, even in our mouths and in our hearts. That word is his voice, speaking through his written law, and in his blessed gospel; and his promise is express, that if we will confess his Son, and believe his word, we shall be saved.* Away then with all the inventions of men, all the devices of a corrupt priesthood, and all the snares of the great enemy of souls. By the mercy of God, his Bible has been enfranchised from the chains in which an apostate church, fearing its light, had long bound it. We have found out a better way, than any Rome can show us. We have learned our Master's voice, and will not follow the voice of strangers. We know him and the power and blessedness of his most precious truth; and shame and wo be unto us, if we cast away Christ and embrace the pope; or forsaking his pure, free, and sweet service, sell our liberty, our birthright and our hopes, for the bondage of a polluted, irrational, unscriptural, empty and tawdry superstition.

IV. Fathers and Brethren of the General Assembly, this is not a question of abstract philosophy; nor of curious research into dangerous but exploded errors; nor of difficult practical duty, about which men may differ, and yet walk together in Christian harmony. It is a question of daily and hourly application, involving the instant duties of every rational creature, determining the personal and spiritual estate of every human being, the position and destiny of man in his associated condition, and the rights of God himself to and over us. As it is decided one way or the other, and the decision thus made is consistently carried out, man must be personally, mentally and morally free or a slave; civil society must be independent and enlightened, sovereign and vigorous, or reduced to a condition of imbecility and blindness, abject dependence, and galling servitude; and the church of God must be a pure, free, and glorious spiritual commonwealth, whose only King and Head is the Lord Jesus, or a subjugated, shorn, and oppressed appendage of a cruel and besotted despotism wielded by the pope.

Such are the issues involved in this enquiry. For there can be but two ultimate grounds upon one or other of which it must terminate, and with it the whole spiritual destiny of man. We may appeal to authority, or we may appeal to truth; there is nothing else to which we can appeal. There are but these two foundations of religion. Starting from them, the argument of the one is force, of the other, reason; the handmaid of the one is ignorance, of the other, knowledge; the proofs of the one are addressed to a slavish superstition, of the other, to an enlightened conscience; the influence of the one is manifested in carnal observances and self-righteousness, of the other in a holy heart and a holy life; the effect of the one, is to degrade and enslave all the nobler faculties of man and so to obstruct the personal and social development of the race, of the other to stimulate and enlarge every pure aspiration of our being, and so to extend and fortify the triumphs of civilization; the ultimate sanctions of the one cluster around a

*Acts xvii. 27—Rom. x. 8, 9—Deut. xxx. 10.

weak and sinful mortal like ourselves, whom they have invested with the authority of God, those of the other penetrate into the unsearchable bosom of eternity and rest upon the throne of the infinite majesty, at which every one must give an account of himself at last.

These are, respectively, the systems of Rome and of the Reformed churches, of God and of the Pope, of Christ and of Anti-Christ. For ages they have striven ceaselessly with each other. Behold them still face to face, in mortal conflict.

God has called us, in our day, to stand for his precious truth, for his adorable name, for his covenanted people. Let us gird ourselves with tried armour, and quit ourselves like men. So shall our faith be established like the everlasting hills, so shall our country be saved from impending danger, so shall our memory be precious to good men who come after us, so shall our end be peace and our reward certain and eternal.

[Continued from page 202.]

M O L I N I S M .

No. XVI.

XXIII. CONTINUED.—*The Account of the Bull Unigenitus continued*
—*Christian Morals—Prohibition of the Scriptures.*

THE disputes between the Society of Port Royal and the Jesuits upon the subject of Christian morals, embraced a great many particulars. The propositions condemned by this bull do not comprise them all, but they do extend to the great principles concerning the nature of true righteousness upon which true Christian morals depend. The Port Royalists maintained "that the keeping of the law—that righteousness and piety do not consist in the exterior—that they are not the effect of fear—that they reside in the heart and in the will, and from thence influence the entire exterior conduct—that true piety consists in charity or the love of God," and with such sentiments they maintained the orthodoxy of the 47th, 44th, and 61st propositions condemned by the Bull.

Prop. 47th. "Obedientia legis profluere debet ex fonte; et hic fons est charitas; Quando Dei amor est illius principium interius et Dei gloria ejus finis, tunc purum, est quod apparet exterius. Alioquin non est nisi hypocrisis aut falsa justitia." *Obs. on Matt.* xxiii. 26.

Obedience to the law must flow from a source, and that source is charity. When the love of God is the principle of it, and his glory the end, the exterior is pure. Otherwise it is nothing but hypocrisis and false righteousness.

Prop. 44th. "Non sunt nisi duo amores, unde volitiones et actiones nostræ nascuntur: amor Dei, qui omnia agit propter Deum quemque Deus remuneratur: et amor quò nos ipsos, ac mundum diligimus qui, quod ad Deum referendum est non refert, et propter hoc ipsum fit malus." *Obs. on John* v. 29. (This observation is said to have been extracted word by word from Saint Leo, *Serm. 3, de Jejun. Septimi mensis.*)