

**James Godkin**

**A Guide from the  
Church of Rome to the  
Church of Christ**

*By a Minister of the*

**Gospel**

*Formerly a  
Roman Catholic*

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"The history of the Church confirms and illustrates the teachings of the Bible, that yielding little by little leads to yielding more and more, until all is in danger; and the tempter is never satisfied until all is lost. – Matthias Loy, *The Story of My Life*

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# A GUIDE

FROM

## THE CHURCH OF ROME

TO THE

## CHURCH OF CHRIST.

BY A

### MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL,

FORMERLY A ROMAN CATHOLIC.

*Ὁ οἶδαμεν λαλοῦμεν, καὶ ὃ ἐώρακάμεν μαρτυροῦμεν.*

JOHN III. 11.

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## PREFACE.

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THOUGH the names of persons and places have been, for important reasons, suppressed, the reader is not to suppose that there is any thing fictitious in the following pages. They contain a faithful narrative of the Author's experience as a devout Roman Catholic—as a Sceptic in that communion—as a Convert, convinced of the truth of Protestantism, but not renewed in heart—and, finally, as a Believer in JESUS.

In the portraiture which he presents of the Papal system, and of the Irish Priesthood, he has endeavoured with scrupulous care to disclose the truth without exaggeration. He disclaims all intention of catering for party-spirit. The zeal which that spirit inspires, is seldom hallowed by love or chastened by meekness. The Protestant advocate in Ireland is unhappily too often confounded with the political partisan; hence, while with some of his brethren his pleading excites indignation, perhaps revenge, with

others it calls forth sympathy for the accused; and the Church of Rome, alive to every circumstance that can be turned to her advantage, assumes the tone of calumniated innocence—meekly deprecating the violence of her assailants, and not implausibly insinuating the impurity of their motives. The consequence is, that many who are unacquainted with her policy (the springs of which are, indeed, concealed from the majority of her own people) are betrayed into the vindication of her cause, and ultimately, perhaps, the profession of her creed.

It is, therefore, the duty of the friends of truth, and especially of converts, as they value the interests of the cause they have adopted, and the salvation of the people they have forsaken, to abstain, in their discussions on this subject, from political allusions and angry recrimination. They should strip the Romish system of all its adventitious appendages, and bring its essential and unchanging principles at once to the test of Reason and Scripture.

This the Author has endeavoured to accomplish. It has been his aim to present a faithful record of his own principles and feelings as a Roman Catholic—to point out the circumstances *that first awakened doubts in his mind—to trace the steps by which, with hesitation and trembling,*

he won his intricate way through the gloomy labyrinth of superstition—to describe the natural and facile transition from Romanism to Infidelity—to reveal the secrets of the Sceptic's heart—to recount the incidents, and state the arguments by which he was finally led to embrace the Protestant faith, and trust in a CRUCIFIED SAVIOUR.

The internal struggles of the convert—the perplexity of mind and laceration of heart with which he sacrifices on the altar of Truth all that endears social life, that sweetens memory or brightens hope—are here pourtrayed with candour and fidelity. The difficulties that beset the Inquirer's path—the fancied novelty of Protestantism, the immorality of the Reformers, and the abuses of private judgment, with all that might bewilder or distress, are also fully obviated, and the disenthralled spirit is safely conducted to the cross of Calvary and the throne of Grace; in one word, to the CHURCH OF CHRIST.

The Writer, therefore, trusts that, as an illustration of the *Force of Truth* under circumstances peculiarly trying, combined with a satisfactory defence of the common faith of Protestants, his little work will be found both useful and interesting; and that, as it is free from sectarianism, it will be kindly received by all denominations. *He now commends it in prayer to the blessing*

of GOD, and ventures to indulge the pleasing hope, that his humble labours will contribute in some small measure to promote the long sighed for illumination and tranquillity of his native land.

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# A GUIDE,

§c.

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## LETTER I.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE hours which we spent together conversing on religious subjects, I have often remembered with pleasure. They were seasons of refreshing to my own heart, and, I would hope, not wholly unprofitable to yourself. To me it was truly gratifying to meet a Roman Catholic who could enter calmly and dispassionately into the various questions at issue between the Roman hierarchy and the churches of the Reformation—one who impartially weighed every argument, honestly admitted the force of an adverse conclusion, and, above all, bowed with reverence to the authority of Scripture. I regret that it is a rare thing to see controversy conducted with candour and moderation. On the polemical arena, even good *men* sometimes forget themselves, and manifest,

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by the acrimony of their tempers, that their passion for victory is greater than their love of truth. They seem to struggle with an enemy, rather than to expostulate with a friend ; evincing a spirit which tends rather to wound the feelings than to convince the judgment. But such a course is more calculated to engender animosity and confirm hostility, than to enlighten the darkness of prejudice, or soothe the irritation of bigotry.

To us, dear Friend, it is consolatory to reflect, that we have, from time to time, travelled over all the debateable ground in this great controversy, never once falling out by the way. Whether in public discussions or in private conference, whether journeying on the road, sauntering in the fields, or seated by the fire, I found your temper ever the same. Always patient and gentle, you never turned from the argument to attack the advocate ; nor adduced the alleged crimes of Protestants as proofs of the errors of their religion.

I freely grant that you are a candid inquirer after truth. But while I have been frequently pleased to see you fully admitting certain important principles at variance, as I think, with the *tenets of your church*, there was yet manifest a *grievous want of courage* to follow them out to

their legitimate consequences. Circumstanced as you are, however, I cannot severely blame, though I must greatly lament your timidity and hesitation. I know too well, by experience, the nature of the difficulties with which you must contend—the influence of those attachments and the force of those ties by which you are bound—to be at all surprised that the claims of truth should, for a time at least, yield to the demands of interest and the solicitations of affection; or to expect that the clamours of honour, falsely so called, should be immediately silenced by the gentle whispers of a conscience but partially awakened.

A gracious Providence having cast my lot in a different and remote part of our native land, we are deprived of the privilege of speaking face to face on this most important subject. But the interest I feel in your everlasting welfare forbids me to let the matter drop, and therefore I shall communicate to you my thoughts in writing; and as mere dry controversy is not always interesting, might it not be useful to trace the progress of truth in my own mind—to notice the *difficulties* that occurred in my religious inquiries, pointing out the various processes by which I was led to certain conclusions, and referring occasionally to the feelings that agitated my mind



during my wearisome and doubtful voyage, tossed on the boisterous waves, till at length, through Divine mercy, I cast anchor "within the veil." Thus will I furnish a chart to guide you on a perilous ocean. I shall point out the sunken rocks, the powerful undercurrents, the adverse winds and treacherous calms to which you may be exposed ere you arrive at the haven of rest.

In the course of these remarks, I trust I shall say nothing indicative of unkind feeling towards my Roman Catholic countrymen. I will endeavour to "speak the truth in love." And you can bear me witness that, as far as truth would permit, I have always defended them, and advocated their just claims to equal civil privileges with their Protestant fellow-subjects. Sympathizing in their sufferings, and indignant at their wrongs, I have sometimes, perhaps, incurred suspicion by vindicating them from the aspersions of bigotry and the misrepresentations of ignorance. Proselytes are accused, and sometimes no doubt justly, of assailing with indiscriminating and implacable hatred the communities which they have forsaken. But the man whose arguments are sound and whose motives are pure—who is fortified by truth and armed with a good *conscience*, can afford to do justice to the most *ungenerous* adversaries, and, for denunciations

and railings, to return only supplications and blessings. I have had, like others, my share of obloquy and unjust reproach; but, I thank Him whose spirit, I trust, I have in some small measure imbibed, that I have not often been betrayed into bitterness of invective against those who impugned my motives and aspersed my character. But neither you nor your neighbours are amongst the number. You have known me too long and too well to doubt my integrity. I may have erred in judgment; but you will give me credit when I declare that I have never adopted the opinions of others, or suppressed my own, at the bidding of self-interest or the frown of authority.

Bear with me, then, while I retrace my steps along that perplexed and gloomy path on which for years I wandered and stumbled, until a light from Heaven shone upon my soul, and led me, like the star in the East, to Him, who is "the way, the truth, and the life."

Yours, &c. &c

## LETTER II.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IN writing to *you*, it is unnecessary to say any thing as to the devotedness of my attachment to the Church of Rome. You are aware of my scrupulous attention to all her requirements, and that my zeal often surpassed the strict letter of her commands. I went to confession for the most part monthly, and in such cases invariably received absolution. Whenever I had occasion to call on a Priest for a testimony to my character, the warmest expressions of esteem and friendship were elicited; and the latest, and one of the strongest of these testimonials, was obtained from the Parish Priest of T——, a brother to one of the Bishops. It is not with a view to the gratification of vanity, but the vindication of truth, that I thus refer to my own character; which, so far from being deemed reprehensible in the sight of man, excited among my acquaintance universal regard. According to my knowledge, indeed, none could be more sincerely *religious, or more scrupulously conscientious.*

*At the age of twelve years I received my first communion, having prepared for this important*

event by repeated confessions. It was a very solemn service. Three or four hundred children assembled in the parish chapel on the appointed day. The females were all dressed in white, and for the most part wore veils of the same colour; while the boys presented an appearance as neat as possible. Many a lad strutted in shoes and white stockings that day for the first time. But in the midst of the anxiety for external ornament, the state of the conscience was not forgotten. If an idle word had been uttered during the previous afternoon, or a naughty action inadvertently committed, we were ordered to step in to the vestry and tell the Priest before mass, to avoid a sacrilegious communion. I remember that, just as the mass was about to commence, I stepped up on the altar, and, with trembling anxiety, whispered the Priest that I had thoughtlessly said "faith" once since I received absolution:—his gracious nod of remission eased my conscience.

We were arranged in the following order:—The girls knelt in rows on the right side of the altar, and the boys on the left. Each communicant held in the right hand a large lighted candle, ornamented with artificial flowers. The chandelier was also on this occasion brilliantly lighted, and the effect was very imposing. Father S—

P.P., said mass, and, after the consecration, proceeded to distribute the wafer. I was then so ignorant, that I thought the figure of a lamb, visible on the transparent host elevated by the Priest for our adoration, was impressed by miraculous power; and I dare say there were some present who fancied that the said lamb was really living. As each row received with palpitating hearts what they regarded as the person of Christ, the candles were extinguished, and taken into the vestry for the use of the chapel. When we had received, the Priest delivered an exhortation suited to the occasion; and we departed, deeming ourselves the most innocent and the happiest creatures in the world.

The rite of confirmation, which occurred soon after, was administered with, if possible, still greater solemnity. About 500 children were arranged in the chapel yard to receive the Bishop. Dr. K., like all great men, kept us waiting long beyond the hour appointed. At length his arrival was announced; and, at a signal from the Priest, we all fell prostrate to do him homage, exclaiming, with one voice—"Your blessing, my Lord—your blessing, my Lord!"

The Bishop delivered a short address, and *then proceeded to communicate to each of us what our catechism called "the seven gifts of*

the Holy Ghost." These are as follows:—  
 "Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and the fear of the Lord." Our foreheads were rubbed with a bit of wool dipped in *chrism*, which was composed of holy oil and the ashes of consecrated palm; after which the Bishop gave us a gentle slap on the right cheek, to enable us "to profess Christ openly."

Thus endued with "power from on high," as we then imagined, we went forth, fearless of hell; and, in the buoyant consciousness of supernatural energy, rather ambitious of some skirmishing with the devil himself in his proper person.

In early youth, my experience of the restraining power of confession was similar to that of Marmontel. It engendered a sort of morbid conscientiousness, which, while it damped the ardour of youth, and checked the innocent play of the feelings, rendered me excessively scrupulous about things indifferent, and fastidiously observant of trifles. Thus, taking a drink of milk on the morning of Ash Wednesday, once threw me into the utmost distress of mind; and this *inadvertence*, for it was nothing more, formed the burden of my next confession. Indeed, such an *occurrence* is an important event in the diary of

a boy, whose confessions are made up of idle words or ceremonial omissions.

I was once, since my conversion, travelling with a Roman Catholic friend; and calling to see a Protestant clergyman on the way, we took some bread and meat for a lunch. My friend suddenly recollected that it was Friday; and the mingled expression of alarm, remorse, and shame painted on his countenance, would have furnished an admirable subject for the genius of Hogarth. He deemed himself more defiled by this single mistake, than if he had broken half the commands of the decalogue.

An oversight of a similar nature, committed by myself, was the first thing that occurred to set my mind a little adrift from the moorings of the confessional. The Rev. Mr. H——, a Priest "just let loose" from Maynooth, was, of course, very zealous. But he was one of those whose zeal lacked discretion. His Sunday evenings were spent, not explaining the Word of God to the ignorant, but riding from one side of the parish to the other, in order to scatter with his whip the groups of young people that sauntered for pleasure along the road. His approach was the signal for retreat, and it was amusing to see *the routed flock* flying in all directions to escape *the shepherd's vengeance*. This was acting fully

up to the letter of the present Pope's exhortation to his bishops, &c., "to *drive the flock.*" It was driving them, indeed, but alas! not into "wholesome pastures." They took shelter behind the hedges and in groves, or they concealed themselves in the cabins by the roadside—scenes less favourable to virtue than those from which they had been dispersed. The Priest seeks to govern by terror—an engine which, while it is present to the mind, may partially restrain the ebullitions of passion; but it is wholly inefficient as an instrument of moral reformation.

Father H—— commenced his labours in the confessional, by calling on all the penitents to make a general confession; that is, to repeat all past confessions from the beginning of the penitential course to the present time. Whether the object of this requirement was to free the penitents from the consequences of bad confessions, abortive absolutions, and unworthy communions; or to enlarge the casuistical experience of the Priest; or to gratify the prurient curiosity natural to young men on leaving such a college as Maynooth; or to acquire that sway over the mind which a knowledge of the heart, and the secret history of individuals, is calculated to impart—I will leave you to judge. Perhaps in



most cases all these motives conspire to recommend this course of proceeding.

However that may be, I was among the number of those who wished to make a general confession to so holy a man. He occupied a room in the house of the Parish Priest. I found him, as usual, seated near the fire, with a small table before him, on which was some silver with a considerable quantity of pence. There was a good deal of the dandy in his appearance, and he evidently paid much attention to his toilet. He contemplated, with apparent satisfaction, the whiteness of his hand, and the ring with which it was adorned. An anecdote, current through the parish, will throw some light on his character. His servant brought his boots one day, polished as brightly as "Warren's Jet" could make them. But he haughtily ordered them to be done over again, as, he said, they were not fit to be seen. The servant, despairing of making them better, showed them to the Parish Priest, who told him to lay them by for a few minutes, and then take them in, pretending they had been polished a second time. The joke pleased Tom exceedingly.

"Well, your reverence," said he, "I hope they'll do now?"

“Oh, admirably!” said the Priest, “now, indeed, they are decent; but before they were intolerable.”

Perhaps the good old father took the hint of this trick from that which POPE played on a great lord, who ventured to criticise one of his poems.

But we must return to the confessional. According to custom, I bowed down at Mr. H——’s knee. But he roughly ordered me to kneel at a chair beside him, where I related the long catalogue of my sins, for the most part venial indeed, but occasionally a mortal sin stood prominently out, like the large stone called the *decade* on the beads. When I returned again I advanced to the chair above mentioned; but in a very angry tone he commanded me to fall down at his knee. This manifestation of bad temper and caprice surprised me.

“You bid me kneel here, Sir,” I ventured to remark.

“Silence, Sir; do as I bid you *now*,” was his meek reply.

On this occasion I was enjoined to abstain from breakfast every morning till I came again. It was Christmas week; but I did not think the prohibition extended to the morning of that day of universal feasting. I was mistaken. When

I mentioned the fact to my ghostly father, in answer to the question, whether I had performed all the penance, he started from his seat in a fit of indignation, and declared he would have nothing more to do with a person who had dared to trifle with his commands. I apologised, promised, implored—but in vain. The haughty ecclesiastic ruthlessly spurned me from his feet! He mounted his horse to attend a sick call, and left me alone in despair. I sauntered a few paces down the avenue, and gave vent to my feelings in the following soliloquy; “Alas! what now shall I do? I have hitherto experienced from the Priest only kindness and parental tenderness; but I am now cast off without mercy from the tribunal of the Holy Ghost. There is no space for repentance. All refuge is closed against me, and even hope is extinguished. I am an outcast, an alien, a wretch devoted to destruction by the plenipotentiary of God.”

Pride urged me to revolt against an authority so unreasonable, so capricious, and so cruel. But conscience whispered, “can you fight against God?” I remembered the dreadful curses uttered some time before against a man and woman that *had got married against the laws of the church. They were compelled to do public penance, and to have the marriage dissolved.* I was present

when this was done. After mass, the guilty pair stood forth in the midst of the congregation. The Priest, commending them for submitting to the just authority of the church, pronounced the marriage null and void; ordered them to turn their backs to one another, and to march out through opposite doors. They were then legally united, having paid the accustomed fees. The horrors of an excommunication—to be cursed with bell, book, and candle in this life, and damned in that which is to come—was enough to alarm a person of stronger nerves than mine. I resolved, therefore, to make another effort for the salvation of my soul.

I went back, accordingly, to the parish Priest, and frankly told him all that had happened. Father S—— smiled at my simplicity, when he saw the tears in my eyes. He was a man of portly figure, with a rubicund countenance, which indicated that, notwithstanding the want of his breakfast occasionally till a late hour in the day, he was not inattentive to the suggestions of his stomach. He was reclining on the sofa, being confined in consequence of a fall from his horse.

“Do not mind it, my child,” said he, in a soothing tone, “kneel down and I will hear you myself.”

After a hasty confession, he gave me absolution

at once, imposing merely a nominal penance. Oh, what a burden was then removed from my heart! I seemed suddenly to emerge from a gloomy dungeon, and expatiate once more in

“The gay precincts of the cheerful day.”

Alas! my dear Friend, I then moved “in a vain shadow, and disquieted myself in vain.”

The events of the day, however, made too deep an impression on my mind to be soon obliterated. I had seen painted on the confessional in the parish chapel—

“Whose sins ye remit they are remitted them, and whose sins ye retain they are retained.”

I believed, therefore, that what the Priest did on earth was ratified in heaven. But here was one “representative of the Holy Ghost” binding my sins on my soul, and absolutely refusing to remit them; and another, in the same house, cheerfully pronouncing the words of absolution by the same infallible authority! Both could not be right. But which was in the wrong? Was I still a guilty reprobate, or a pardoned penitent? This question, so inexpressibly momentous, I felt myself incompetent to answer. Besides, other instances of discrepance in the *decisions of different Priests* now recurred to *my recollection*. Some imposed penance much

heavier than others for the same sin, committed in similar circumstances. And, in my own case, one Priest told me that a certain word which I sometimes employed was an oath, and a mortal sin, while his coadjutor bid me not confess it, as it was merely an idle word, and perfectly harmless. 'It was not then the *same* voice that issued from each of these tribunals. But could these discordant utterances proceed from the Oracle of Truth—from the SPIRIT of TRUTH himself? The question was very perplexing.

Additional interest was given to these meditations by the news that the Rev. Mr. Cousins, a Priest in the County Wexford, had gone over to the Church of England. He was then engaged in replying to the Sermons of Father Hayes, and I ventured to glance over some of his pamphlets as they lay in the bookseller's shop. I reflected that a "right intention," in the officiating Priest, was essential to the validity of a sacrament. If so, who can say that his sins are pardoned? for how can we answer for other men's *intentions*? Mr. Cousins might have been many months, or even years, a heretic before he avowed himself. What, then, became of the souls who were all that time resting for salvation on his *opus operatum*—his consecrations, absolutions, baptisms, and extreme unctions?

Difficulties were thus thickening, and becoming daily more formidable. Still, however, my faith remained inviolate.

These struggles between reason and credulity went on in secret. At length, however, I ventured to hint the state of my mind to a friend, with whom I had but recently formed an acquaintance. He resided in a district exclusively Roman Catholic, and which seemed also a favourite haunt of Superstition, equally dear to that queen of the spectral world as Cyprus to Venus, or Athens to Minerva. There, ghosts, charms, pilgrimages, and miracles were the order of the day. But if Superstition was the goddess that reigned over the trembling inhabitants during the night, animating every scene with the shadowy creations of her power, the kindred demon, Bigotry, was no less despotic and restless during the day. As the most abject slave becomes, where he has power, the most ruthless tyrant; so the timorous hares of superstition are suddenly transformed into the bloodhounds of bigotry, ever ready to track the reputed heretic to death, and ever insatiable amid the havoc of persecution. As might be expected, therefore, Protestants were regarded in this neighbourhood *with peculiar aversion*. As an instance of this *I may mention*, that at a time when the river

that flowed through the rich valley was flooded, I carried over a stranger who was passing on a horse which I happened to be riding by at the time. But no sooner had he reached the opposite bank than a person came running up in breathless haste, shouting that the stranger was a Protestant, and swearing that he would sooner see him floating a corpse down the river, than give him the least assistance! Such sentiments, I am happy to say, are for the most part peculiar to the "dark places" of our land; and even in the worst of these places are to be found individuals greatly superior to the fanatical multitude around them—men enlightened by extensive reading, and willing to concede to others the liberty of conscience which they claim for themselves.

Early on a Sunday morning, my young friend proposed a visit to a neighbouring chapel about five miles distant, to hear the Priest, who was regarded as a powerful preacher. The morning was fine, and we travelled over hills from which we had a commanding view of the surrounding country. The rich vales below were covered with cattle, and occasionally a flock of sheep was seen reposing on the luxuriant grass. The smoke was beginning to ascend from the low houses which seemed to grow up out of the large ditches.



and were for the most part unsheltered by trees. The inmates were opening the doors as we passed, aroused by the grunting of huge fat pigs, that in most cases enjoyed their *otium cum dignitate* in a comfortable corner of the kitchen ; so that the sounds and other influences that proceeded from them were not "by distance made more sweet." Painfully ascending an eminence on which the sun was shining in his strength, I called at a cabin door, and asked for a drink of water. The good housewife had no water, but she offered to run up the hill and milk the goat ! This hospitality, so characteristically Irish in its simplicity and its generosity, was of course declined. Of these goats we encountered numerous droves feeding on the heath. A number of grouse, reposing on their mossy nests, fluttered up from their coverts under our feet ; and various hares, alarmed at our approach, scampered away among the grey rocks, to find another resting-place, where they might digest the night's feeding on the neighbouring fields of corn. Our way was sometimes interrupted by a deep ravine, where the turbid waters of the winter torrent, impetuous and foaming, like a thwarted tyrant, burst a *passage* to the plain, among huge rocks, that *sometimes* hung threateningly over the channel *beneath*. In some places, the smoke of the

private still was visible, as it gracefully curled over a projecting bank by the side of a rippling stream. As you approached one of these, you might observe a scout advancing to reconnoitre—a surly-looking personage, with a large frieze coat, a slouched hat, and an eight-days' beard pendant from his chin. Woe to the stranger who would be found intruding on such a scene without a passport!

There was one individual who reigned with absolute sway over the peasantry of these secluded glens and valleys. He was called the *Rushy-man*, from the fact of his sleeping on bare rushes, and wearing them under his clothes next his skin. No one knew his name, and his history was wrapt up in impenetrable mystery. Various were the conjectures, and wonderful the stories that were propagated concerning him. That which gained most credit was, that he had been a Priest who distinguished himself in the Wexford Rebellion, and being, from the sanctity of his character, impervious to the bullets of the heretics, had found it necessary ever since to conceal himself. Others thought him a man of rank and property, outlawed by government, who sought in this disguise to revisit the green valleys of his fatherland. He was believed to *surpass the Priests* in learning; and it was said,

I think truly, that, in addition to the learned languages, he could speak the French and Italian. The people almost idolized him. He was a welcome guest at the tables of the wealthiest farmers, and he was not too proud to partake of the humble fare of the poorest cottager. He sometimes employed himself in teaching the children, as he went on his visits from house to house. He seemed to be well acquainted with all parts of the country. Sometimes he would suddenly disappear; but where he went, or how he travelled, no one could tell. Again, he would present himself at the breakfast table some morning, as if he dropped from the clouds. All were musing as to who or what he could be, but no man dared to question him on the subject. About himself he maintained the most profound silence, and he sternly rebuked all prying curiosity.

He was certainly a most extraordinary man. I had the pleasure of conversing with him one Sunday morning in the chapel yard, and again at the Pattern of T——n, where he chatted with me in the most agreeable and friendly manner. In his demeanour he possessed

—————“ All the ease,  
That speaks security to please.”

*Equally removed from constraint and negligence,  
his manners were as graceful as if he had moved*

all his life among the first ranks of society. His pronunciation was classically correct, and there was an air of dignity and independence about him that strangely contrasted with his apparently humble situation. His dress was peculiar, but he kept his person perfectly neat and clean. The magistrates summoned him on one occasion when the country was in a disturbed state, and insisted that as a stranger and a suspected character he should disclose his name. But he treated them haughtily, and defied their power. They were unable to remove the veil of mystery, and were ultimately obliged to dismiss him. And I am sorry that I am unable to gratify your curiosity, for I am still totally in the dark as to his history. But as I suppose you passing with me through the district which was the favourite retreat of so singular a character, I thought the account which I have given would be interesting. He was a small man, about fifty years of age, with a pale, expressive countenance, and eyes peculiarly lively and penetrating.

It is said, that a gentleman of large property; and ancient family, in W——, was detained in France for many years during the war, where he was compelled to labour for his bread as a blacksmith. But

*“He comes at last in sudden loneliness.”*

“ He lives, nor yet is past his manhood's prime,  
Though sear'd by toil, and something touch'd by time,  
His faults, whate'er they were, if scarce forgot,  
Might be untaught him by his varied lot.”

He suffered little change when he became the lord of ——— Abbey. The habits which had been formed remained. His simple manners, his parsimonious disposition, and negligent dress, but ill accorded with his new situation ; and he continued to pursue, in his laboratory, as a recreation, those mechanical employments at which he once toiled in the forge for a livelihood. But the greatest of men are subject to the vicissitudes of life ; and even royalty itself has, more than once during the present age, been compelled to travel as a mendicant, and seek an asylum in a strange land. Some dark dispensation of a similar nature may have compelled the courtly *Rushy-man* to sojourn among the mountain peasants of Ireland.

Even were he an outlaw, he might have trusted them with perfect security. The Irish are remarkable for their fidelity to the unfortunate. When Hamilton Rowan was making his escape to France, a paper was thrown into the boat in which he was rowed, from a vessel that *passed* by. It proved to be a government proclamation, offering a large reward for his appre-

hension. The men read the proclamation, and scrutinized their passenger; and when no more doubt remained of his identity, they were engaged in the most anxious deliberation as to the course to be pursued. They seemed about to yield to the temptation, when he exclaimed, "You are right, boys. I am wholly in your power; but you are *Irishmen!*" A blush of shame tinged for a moment their weather-beaten cheeks; they flung the paper overboard, and rowed away from the Irish shore with all their might.

The Scotch are not less chivalrous in this respect. The last prince of the house of Stuart was sheltered by a poor man, when he might have received £30,000 for betraying him. But he nobly resisted. With what painful interest, then, must we learn the fact that this very man was hung afterwards for stealing a cow!

But I am afraid your attention has been too long diverted from the object of our trip over the hills, which was, you will remember, to hear a popular preacher in the chapel of C——. This was a large building, occupying a picturesque situation on an eminence crowned by some young and flourishing trees. The chapel yard itself was adorned with evergreens, and kept in very neat order. As usual, the house was totally

destitute of seats. We endeavoured to get near the altar ; but the pressure of the dense mass of people behind rendered the position very uncomfortable. The Priest was rather a young man, tall and athletic, possessing a powerful voice, and a free and energetic manner of delivery. After the distribution of the consecrated wafer, he commenced his address to the people. It was not the exposition of a text, nor a comment on the Gospel of the day ; but a fierce harangue on the conduct of one of his parishioners.

“ I was,” said he, “ at the assizes the other day. I sat near the judge ; and there I saw one of my parishioners deliberately perjure himself, to save the horse-stealers that he had harboured in his house. But I will empty that abominable den of thieves. Could I avoid blushing, my friends, when the judge looked at me, and shook his head—as much as to say, ‘ Is this the sort of people you have in your parish ? ’ But that old perjurer ( I see him there below at the door )—that old perjurer shall feel the consequences of his crime. You may rest assured of that.”

At this moment, an old man with a deep sepulchral voice was heard uttering, in Irish, an indignant contradiction of the statement of the Priest, at the same time advancing from the front door towards the altar.

“Put him out,” exclaimed his reverence, in a voice of thunder, that seemed to strike terror into every heart. The people, however, did not obey, but mechanically opened a passage for the hoary sinner, who boldly advanced, and confronted his accuser at the steps of the altar.

“Put him out, I say,” reiterated Father M——, with increased vehemence, clenching his hand, and stamping furiously on the boards. Still no one interfered; and the accused, an old man of very repulsive physiognomy, continued to growl out his denial of the charge. The Priest eyed him with an undefinable expression of rage in his countenance. There was profound silence for a moment: it was a moment of terrible suspense, like that which precedes the spring of the tiger. His reverence grew suddenly pale, and his whole frame was convulsively agitated. But the internal struggle was soon over. He hastily pulled the purple vestment over his head, and flung it on the altar, and as he rushed down the steps, the dense mass of people gave way on every side, like a receding wave, and the hoary perjurer “stood alone in the midst.” Alas! how unlike the meek and lowly JESUS was his reverend accuser! This professed preacher of mercy and messenger of peace seized him by the neck, thrust him violently forward, and then gave him



one tremendous push, which sent him sprawling at several yards' distance from the door, which he slapped with such force that the walls trembled to their foundation. And as the noise thus created died away amid the awful stillness, it fell on my ear like the knell of damnation; and indeed it seemed to

“ Thrill the deepest notes of woe ”

in every breast in that vast assembly.

Meantime, Father M—— ascended the altar, resumed the sacred garment, and proceeded to utter the terrible curses of excommunication, which he prefaced by stating that he was not angry, and that his mind was perfectly composed.

“ Think you,” said I to my friend, as we journeyed home, “—think you that what the Priest has bound to-day is bound in heaven?”

“ Certainly,” was the reply.

“ But was there not too much anger and violence, and too little of the dignity that becomes the priestly office? Can CHRIST be supposed to sanction such proceedings, conducted in a spirit so opposite to his own? Are there not cases where the authority of a Priest may be lawfully *questioned*? Remember Father Cousins, and *others who have*, like him, apostatized from the

faith: was it safe to follow their guidance when they were acting hypocritically, and desecrating the altar of God?"

As I uttered these words, I looked at my companion, and found that the fashion of his countenance was changed. His bristling eyebrows darkened into an expression of savage fierceness, and his low forehead became ominously contracted, while his sharp grey eyes were fastened on me with a scrutinizing look of suspicion, that astonished and alarmed me. He stopped short, and, continuing his searching gaze, as if with a view to penetrate my very soul, he said, "Sir, no sound Catholic could talk as you have done; you must be a heretic in disguise."

My reply to this remark was a loud laugh.

"Come, come," said he, "it is no joke. I am determined to know whether you are a Catholic or not. Can you say the '*Act of Faith*'?"

I saw indeed that it was no joke, and that unless his suspicions were removed the issue might be fatal. I therefore assured him that he was quite mistaken, and distinctly repeated the "*Act of Faith*" as follows:—

"O my God! I firmly believe that thou art one only God, the creator and sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, infinitely great and infinitely good. I firmly believe that in thee, one only

God, there are three Divine persons, really distinct and equal in all things, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I firmly believe that Jesus Christ, God the Son, became man; that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and was born of the Virgin Mary; that he suffered and died on a cross, to redeem and save us; that he rose the third day from the dead; that he ascended into heaven; that he will come at the end of the world to judge mankind; and that he will reward the good with eternal happiness, and condemn the wicked to the everlasting pains of hell. I believe these and all other articles which the Holy Roman Catholic Church proposes to our belief, because thou, my God, hast revealed them; and thou hast commanded us to hear the Church, which is the pillar and ground of truth. In this faith, I am firmly resolved, by thy holy grace, to live and die."

But it is now time to conclude for the present.

I am, my dear Friend,

Very truly yours.

## LETTER III.

· MY DEAR FRIEND,

You will easily perceive, that the occurrences to which I referred in my last letter were fitted to awaken a spirit of inquiry, and there were now abundant opportunities of gratifying such a spirit, for even the newspapers were filled with religious discussions. Laymen vied with the clergy in the vindication of Catholicism. Barristers left the courts of law to figure on the platforms of Bible Meetings. The people eagerly heard and read whatever they could on this subject. They were delighted at the willingness of their Priests to enter the lists with the Bibleals. And oh, with what surprise and alarm they witnessed the effective play of the artillery of Scripture on the citadel of Romanism! They wondered where the Protestants got all the arguments they brought forward, and they were much amazed to find the Bible and the church so frequently at issue. The light began to break into their prison. They saw their chains, and felt the iron of spiritual despotism entering the soul. Many were aroused to shake off their trammels, and succeeded. *Their keepers were alarmed.* "The agitation

of thought is the beginning of knowledge." The Priests soon saw that their craft was in danger; that, in giving their countenance to discussion, they had taken a dangerous step which must be retraced. The alarm was sounded throughout the land; and in Cavan the hierarchy lifted up the ecclesiastical mace, and crushed, for a time, the infant spirit of religious liberty.—May we not hope that it is only for a time?

I read eagerly every thing I met on the subject of religion. My attention was particularly arrested by a correspondence in the newspapers on Transubstantiation, carried on between an eminent minister of the Church of England and a distinguished leader of the Catholic party. I remember this particularly, because of the effect which it produced on my mind. Notwithstanding my deep-rooted prejudice, I was obliged to admit that the clergyman had the best of the argument. I saw clearly that if the host were not God, it must be an idol, and that, consequently, *in that case*, its worshippers must be idolaters. If not, it would be impossible to bring the charge of idolatry home to the *heathen*; because they themselves *think* that the objects of their adoration are divine. Their mistake on that *point is no justification* of the act.


*So strongly did I feel the force of this reason:*

ing that, although I remained some years longer in the Roman communion, I *never* after adored the wafer. Not having made up my mind to reject the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and being yet doubtful of its truth, I worshipped the host *hypothetically*. I said, "O Lord Jesus, if thou art really present under the appearance of that wafer, or that wine, I adore thee," &c.

But this is not the sort of service which becomes a disciple of the Pope. In the Vatican School of theology, "to doubt is to be damned." He that cannot candidly say, "I believe what the church believes," has not imbibed the spirit which she wishes to inculcate. But for my own part, whenever I thought on some of the principal dogmas of the church, I found doubting inevitable. And, in order to avoid the anxiety of suspense, I was obliged entirely to dismiss such matters from my mind, that is, whenever I could.

This is the secret of that aversion to religious discussion manifested by many Roman Catholics. To maintain the infallibility of the church, is in effect, to acknowledge yourself, in the worst sense, a *slave*; and to defend Transubstantiation, is to outrage the dictates of common sense, and to do violence to the first principles of reason. *If this dogma be true, all other doctrines are*

false; all the luminaries of the intellectual world are at once extinguished, and "chaos is come again." Without the evidence of the senses, we could not prove the existence of God, nor the crucifixion or resurrection of Christ. Nor could we prove the fact, that a Revelation has been made, or that ever a messenger was sent from God, unless the testimony of the senses be valid. Did not our Lord appeal to the senses of the disciples in proof of his resurrection? And does not this great fundamental principle of our faith rest on what those men *saw*, and *heard*, and *felt*? If the senses are not to be trusted, then our faith is vain; it is a "baseless fabric." Wherefore did Jesus and his apostles work miracles to convince the people, and wherefore does the Church of Rome pretend to do the same, if we are not to believe the united testimony of taste, touch, sight and smell? How the people at Cana would have laughed at Jesus Christ, if he had sent them up wine with all the "accidents" of water! While I am now writing, an excellent test occurs to me, by which any honest Priest may learn whether or not there is any change made in the elements after consecration. Let him consecrate a bottle of wine or two; and *when he drinks it*, if it do not intoxicate him I *will give up the point*. But would the blood of



JESUS (with reverence I ask the question)—  
would the blood of JESUS make a man drunk?  
I speak as to a wise man: think of what I say.

What miserable quibbling is it to say, that because one of our senses may sometimes deceive us, that they, therefore, are never to be depended on? How then could you prove a single theorem in Mathematics? If the original impressions produced by *seeing* are not correct, what does that avail when under the correction of the other senses they become accurate after a little experience? Father Hayes and others have brought forward confidently the fact, that a straight pole seems crooked in water. But do not our senses tell us that water possesses a power of refracting light, and thus distorting the appearance of things? All we want is a little acquaintance with the laws of nature, of whose phenomena we can know nothing except through the medium of the senses. What was it that corrected the mistake of the eye? Was it not the *touch*? Did Father Hayes know the difference between a straight stick and a crooked one? Then he must have been bowing to that very evidence which he was so anxious to set aside. Shall we not believe our senses when they unanimously testify that we hold in our hands, or rather take upon our tongues, not human bodies, or



or rather, a human body multiplied into many, and yet remaining one—broken into parts, and yet each part being still a perfect man and equal to the whole;—shall we not believe our senses when they unequivocally and invariably testify that we are swallowing, not a living human body, with its blood and bones, but simply a bit of flower paste?

But does not the church herself, in the very assertion of her own prerogatives—in the very exercise of her dictatorial power—appeal to the authority of the senses? Do we not hear one voice issuing from every palace, college, altar, and confessional throughout her wide dominions,

“HEAR THE CHURCH!”

But wherefore should they hear if their treacherous ears deceive them?

I have thus given you a specimen, very brief indeed, of the deductions of reason, concerning this “enormous tax on human credulity.” I shall have another opportunity of bringing to bear on it the light of Scripture. I must now proceed to trace the progress of my own convictions.

Several circumstances conspired to prepare my mind for an independent examination of the *principles of my religion*. My reading had lately *been in a direction very different from that which*

supplied my mental aliment at an earlier age. The fabulous history of ancient Ireland, saintly legends, and the devotional treatises circulated among the people, were the subjects of my earliest studies. On these my imagination perpetually feasted. From these I extracted the stories, which, repeated in the family circle, excited the horror or kindled the devotion of my hearers. These were the "stuff of which my dreams were made." Such reading naturally cherished an unbounded credulity;—reason was altogether dormant, and fancy exercised a dominion the most capricious and despotic. There was not a lonely bridge, an aged tree, or a ruined building, which I did not think infested by demons, or haunted by reprobate spirits. If I passed them alone in the night, I blessed myself, uttered devoutly an *Ave Maria*, or *Salve Regina*, and hurried on as if Satan himself were pressing close behind. A solitary bush, or a gate-post, seen in the night, appeared to my bewildered view a gigantic spectre. The shadowy creations of superstition, under a thousand fantastic forms, hovered around me on every side. In the midst of this twilight of reason all was dim and visionary. Nothing was certainly known. The power of reading, misdirected as it was, seemed but to confirm the reign of prejudice. I read nothing

but what might be called the *Literature of Superstition*. Hence imagination was preternaturally developed, and conscience rendered morbidly scrupulous; while the reflecting powers of the mind were totally unexercised, being destitute of the materials of sound knowledge to work upon. But the prime object of education, the cultivation of proper feelings, and the formation of correct habits, was never "dreamed of in the philosophy" of my teachers. So long as theology is learned from the "Lives of the Saints," and political economy from such histories as the "Irish Rogues and Rapparees," we cannot expect to see right-minded Christians, or useful members of society. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

The first book that set me to think in earnest, and aroused all the energies of my mind, was a quarto, whose title I do not now remember, but the author of it, I think, was a person named Ramsay. It was a metaphysical treatise—and one of its objects, I recollect, was to prove the temporary character of the torments of hell, and the final salvation of all the damned. The writer laid down certain axioms, from which I found it difficult or impossible to withhold my assent, and *on this foundation* he reared a superstructure of *argument* which seemed to me quite convincing,

as it resembled Euclid's elements;—but which led to conclusions so startling, that the author seemed to conduct me to the very confines of heresy. His principles, however, seemed so reasonable, that I boldly defended them for some time, until a spiritual guide put into my hands "The four last things, Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven." In this little book the eternity of hell was so clearly established on the authority of Scripture, that I was compelled to relinquish my new opinions. It is worthy of remark, that the naked statements of the Word of God had more effect on my mind, than any of the reasonings advanced by the writer.—This circumstance, with others that might be mentioned, inclines me to hold with an able writer, that "there is something of omnipotence embodied in inspiration. Quotations from the Bible appeared as a clap of thunder, or a shaft of lightning, or as the clear and steady radiance of day, or as if the Almighty himself had broken silence, and delivered an utterance, intelligible, authentic, and decisive to all."\*

But various are the influences that operate on the heart of man. Convictions may be frequent,

\* *Rev. Dr. Urwick.*—*Essay on Popery in America.*

and pungent, and powerful, and yet exert very little practical influence. We seek an opiate for the conscience in the allurements of pleasure, the excitement of business, or in the day-dreams of the imagination. To the *last* of these I often fled for refuge from the anguish that secretly preyed on my spirit. I thought on eternity, and the thought was distressing in the extreme.

“ The wide, the unbounded prospect lay before,  
But storms, clouds, and darkness rested on it.”

Reflections of this kind communicated a sombrous hue to all the operations of my mind. I felt alone in the world. I felt no principle of attraction drawing me to the scenes of youthful pleasure, in which others around me so much delighted. Indeed, the laughter and joyousness of such scenes, whenever circumstances compelled me to witness them, occasioned me real pain. They seemed to mock the heaviness of my heart. I had sorrows which they knew not of, and with which they could not sympathize. “A wounded spirit who can bear?” I saw myself accountable to God, and guilty and mortal: I felt myself miserable in the present life, and I had no prospect but one of misery for that which is to come. *Oh, had I then heard of that redeeming blood, which cleanses an accusing conscience, it would*

have been balm to my spirit and gladness to my heart! But, alas! I knew not of it. I looked for consolation to my penances; but this was leaning on a broken reed that pierced my hand. If the sanctifying influence of the confessional were to be the evidence of the efficacy of my penitential performances, I saw there was no hope. The symptoms of my spiritual diseases, instead of abating, became daily more virulent. The gloom that had at first invested the confessional, gradually wore off, as I became familiar with its forms. My penances were light, and gave me little trouble. Five minutes spent in reading was the utmost required to atone for a mortal sin; and as the confession of venial faults was not deemed necessary by the church, and as the line of demarcation between these two classes of transgressions has never been, in fact, distinctly drawn, and as the discrimination is left entirely to the sinner's own mind, subject to the powerful and blinding influence of self-love, I saw that the whole business was so involved in uncertainty that it could not be a source of peace to a rational mind. Why leave a matter of such importance as the classification of sins, so deadly on the one hand, and so trifling on the other, to the private judgment of the sinner himself, prone as he must be to mitigate, to palliate, and to

overlook his own delinquencies? Suppose he has two departments in his memory—the one for mortal sins, and the other for venial offences; and supposing the distinction between these to be well founded, will he not be often tempted to rank the mortal with the venial? Will not the heart plead impertunately for the darling passion, and say, “Is it not a little one?” And may not a man thus cherish all his life an evil habit, “roll sin as a sweet morsel under the tongue,” and when the act of indulgence has passed by, wipe his lips as if nothing worth notice had happened?

I freely confess that considerations such as these greatly weakened my confidence in Priestly absolutions; and, when coupled with the instances of caprice and inconsistency to which I have already adverted, tended to render my visits to my “ghostly father” few and far between, compared with what they had been. Nature, say the old philosophers, abhors a *vacuum*: we may add, without indulging in speculation, that the human mind abhors *suspense*. It is painful to remain long in deliberation. Conflicting reasons draw the judgment in opposite directions, and while this state of things continues, the mind is on the rack. Hence the precipitance with which *men rush to conclusions* of the utmost importance. *Pride then stands up in arms to defend the posi-*

tion thus hastily taken. This accounts for the sudden changes of creed which we sometimes witness in the world, and the unmeasured abuse which is poured on the system so recently cherished, and so suddenly abandoned. There are some, however, who fear to commit themselves by a step, which, if repented of, could not be retraced without infamy; and, therefore, put off the decision as long as possible. They seek to beguile the anxiety of the mind, and the sadness of the heart, by amusements and occupations congenial to their dispositions. And I was led to the reading of novels, just as a heart-broken tradesman has recourse to the bottle, as an "oblivious antidote" to drown reflection. Many a precious hour I wasted, "wandering by the wild-wood side," or seated on a rock listening to the roar of a torrent, or reclining on the beach, while the setting sun threw his golden radiance over the distant sand-banks, and the blue wave broke with gentle murmurs at my feet; or, more frequently, "consuming the midnight oil," while "tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," visited with its invigorating influences the couches of all my companions;—many an hour I wasted (with sorrow I reflect on it), reading volumes almost innumerable of the flimsy trash that issued, like summer vermin, from the French



press ; or the more serious nonsense furnished to the English reader from the German school of novelists. But there are few evils from which some good may not be extracted. My time, it is true, was lost ; my mind left empty of all useful information ; an aversion to serious studies was acquired, as well as a sickly sensibility, which entailed on me much ignorance and misery ; yet, by the reading of novels, I was cured of my dread of ghosts, and imbibed a hatred of religious persecution ; which latter feeling has taken such deep root in my heart, as to operate now almost as an instinct. One of my German romances produced in my mind an unconquerable scepticism in regard to all supernatural appearances of ghosts and demons, which neither the experience of John Wesley nor the writings of Sir Walter Scott have been able to eradicate. And the gifted MATURIN'S Romance of the Albigenses threw such light on the policy of the Church of Rome, and excited in my mind such powerful sympathy for the persecuted, that I have ever since cordially hated all coercion of conscience, or rather coercion for conscience' sake ; for conscience cannot be forced.

This passion for novel reading, which converted *my life into a kind of dream, full of joys and sorrows, and vain aspirations*, marked the transition

state of my mind. Reason, so far as I had called it into exercise on some subjects of my religion—such as Transubstantiation and Penance—had given her verdict against them; or, at all events, hinted doubts that left me open to conviction. In this state of mind, I met with some works of the French philosophers, especially those of that “self-torturing sophist,” Rousseau; for whose crude speculations I was prepared by the milder scepticism of Marmontel. Other writers of the same class followed. Their reasoning gratified the understanding, and their eloquence delighted the imagination. They appealed to my judgment; they treated me as a rational creature—as a man; and I felt the proud response of new-born energies agitating my bosom. I soon began to regard Christianity as the offspring of ignorance, and the parent of persecution—as the foe of freedom, and the enemy of human improvement.

While the French philosophy was, like a powerful chemical agent, rapidly dissolving my religious principles, it happened that the Rev. Mr. D. lent me Fleury’s Ecclesiastical History. And there, to my astonishment, I found all that my infidel teachers had asserted abundantly confirmed by the testimony of a Roman Catholic historian, recommended by my own Parish Priest. I had read short histories of the church

before, such as Gahan's, but I could never have discovered from these cautious and flattering compilations, that the Church of Rome was any thing but a most immaculate virgin. I now learned from the reluctant admissions of one of her own reverend sons, that she was ambitious, cruel, persecuting, and licentious.

“*Les beaux jours de l' Eglise sont passes !*”\* was an ominous ejaculation to break from the lips of the writer, when he came to contemplate Christianity on the throne of the Cæsars. I was disgusted with the intrigues, the quarrels, and the persecuting wars, in which the clergy were perpetually engaged. I saw their sacerdotal robes foully spotted with the flesh, and deeply dyed in innocent blood : and I said, “*Can this religion—so irrational and so cruel—be from Heaven ? Is it an emanation from infinite benevolence ? Go, seek an answer in the dungeons of the Inquisition and the valleys of Piedmont !*”

The Priest soon discovered that Fleury was a dangerous author for me ; and so he deprived me of him, stating, that my time would be more usefully occupied reading something else. I was once spending the evening with Father D. and his Curate. The conversation turned on “*Cap-*

\* “*The happy days of the church are passed !*”

tain Book in London," a twopenny publication which came out weekly. The Curate denounced it in the strongest terms. "It was, said he, such trash that sapped the foundations of Christianity in France, and led to the French Revolution."

He did not know that this circumstance was to me its highest recommendation. I had always identified Christianity with Romanism. They were never separated in my mind, even in imagination. I had, indeed, read of various religious bodies which the Papacy persecuted; but I never thought they were any thing but what they were called by Dr. Doyle, "vile heretics." Therefore, my only alternative was, Romanism or Infidelity. I saw no Scriptural or rational ground between them, where I might find rest for the sole of my foot.

Reason, then, called for the renunciation of Christianity under the name of Catholicism. But though the passage over the narrow Rubicon that separated credulity from scepticism was but a step, and a short one, yet I trembled at the thought of taking it. I shrunk from the cheerless waste, and frigid atmosphere of infidelity, and unwilling to leave even the tottering edifice of superstition, I lingered on the threshold, and cast a look of reviving fondness on the household gods which I had loved and trusted so long.

Wishing, if possible, to regain that peace of mind in the bosom of the church which had been frequently disturbed and ultimately destroyed—like a tender plant which perishes by repeated removals—I was induced to try confession once more. I was determined freely to avow all my doubts and distress. I resembled a person, who, when forced by circumstances to bid a last farewell to all that once was dear, summons up all the energy of his mind to suppress resentment; and, prepared for a great sacrifice, veils the past in oblivion, and yields to the impulsive influence of returning tenderness, hoping that his overtures of reconciliation may be accepted and reciprocated; and, then, failing in this dernier resort, desperately takes the irrecoverable step.

It is a general opinion among the Roman Catholics, as you are aware, that the friars are more holy, and have generally more power with God, than the secular clergy. I had heard some of these gentlemen, as they came round on their annual itinerating circuits, preaching charity sermons, and collecting money and corn; and never did I hear discourses more calculated to arouse the feelings and terrify the conscience. They moved heaven, earth, and hell, apparently *with a view to operate on the purses and the barns of their hearers*, and sometimes with great

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success. But their object was too thinly veiled to escape the observation of their hearers. And, hence, it became a general remark, that *money* formed the conclusion of all their sermons.

Convents are very often houses of refuge to parish outlaws—to persons who have failed in paying their dues or quarrelled with their priests; and they are also the favourite resort of individuals, females especially, who profess singular devotion, and deal much in *Agnus Dei's*, and other charms and mysteries. I was resolved to try whether the friars could afford a cure for a wounded spirit—whether they could “pluck from the memory the rooted sorrow, or raze out the written troubles from the brain.” Accordingly I proceeded to the small convent at G——. It was a gloomy winter's day when I approached the sacred asylum—an old building seated on an eminence in the midst of a bleak district of country, and surrounded by a few bare, half-decayed fir-trees, which served but to add to the dreariness of the scene. I was conducted to a room where I found the reverend father seated in a large chair beside a turf fire. He would have reminded a spectator, in a mood less serious than mine, of the “knight of the rueful countenance”—so mournful was the aspect, so faded the apparel, and so spiritually poor the whole

appearance of the man. There lay in a recess a number of volumes of casuistical divinity—some fragments, I suppose, of Thomas Aquinas and Peter Dens; and, on a side table, I saw some bottles and glasses, and a few numbers of the *Weekly Register*. Every thing was in keeping. The doors were greatly worn; the painting on the walls had faded; and the furniture seemed to be the mouldering remnants of another generation. Although there was a female house-keeper—

“A pensive nun, devout and pure,  
Sober, steadfast, and demure,”

there was no talk—no noise. The dead silence was unbroken, except by the mournful cadence of the wind as it moaned fitfully through the chinks of the doors and windows, or murmured among the trees, or rushed round the unsheltered walls of this secluded habitation. The only thing connected with this establishment that looked modern, and wore the appearance of comfort, was a small chapel which stood within a few paces of the dwelling-house. The solemn silence within, contrasted with the no less saddening sounds from without, “the dim, religious *light*,” which was cast on the apartment, the *mortified appearance* of the priest—all conspired



to put the mind in a frame which might easily pass for an evidence of genuine repentance. And so, indeed, it was with me. I confessed again and again, and went through a course of painful mortification, and finally received absolution. But the good father had not answered Rousseau's arguments. He merely said they were the suggestions of the devil, and bid me dismiss them from my mind. I tried to do so, and succeeded for a time; but only for a time. I began again to feel that the foundation on which I was standing was insecure. In fact, the spell of the church was broken. I now fearlessly cast off the yoke; and rejoiced in my newly acquired liberty. I seemed to breathe more freely, and to step more lightly. The earth looked greener, and the sky looked brighter, than ever I saw them before. How delightful to be a *disinterested* spectator of the religious warfare which was now agitating the country! They might curse and denounce one another as they pleased: what was that to me?

Such is the spirit of infidelity. It is a selfish spirit, which leads us to ask with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" But though I now adopted the heartless creed of the Deist, it does not follow that I openly renounced the Church of Rome, or *forsook the chapel*. If this were a necessary



consequence of infidelity, I fear the ranks of Romanism would be thinned of many of its most eloquent and accomplished defenders. There still remained ties powerful enough to secure conformity. The bonds of social affection, the claims of honour, and the force of party-spirit, keep many a secret malcontent quiet in the ranks of Romanism. The mutinous disposition is repressed by prudence. The infidel that acts the bully with his God, is frequently a coward in the sight of man. He takes shelter under the forms of religion, from the tempest of indignation and the arrows of persecution, which an open apostacy might draw on his devoted head. With the friends of religion he wears the smile of friendship, but, assassin-like, he seeks all opportunities of stabbing her in the dark. The incredulous sneer—the dark insinuation—the bitter taunt, gilded with an expression of regret—these are the weapons which he carries about, concealed, like the stiletto of the Spaniard, under his mantle of hypocrisy.

I have said that I did not forsake the chapel. Had I done so, it would have brought a very inconvenient suspicion on my character, and would have turned against me the influence of *the clergy*, powerful when exerted for their *friends*, and still more so when directed against

their enemies. This is a striking, but unhappily not the only instance that could be pointed out in this country, of the force of political and other earthly considerations, in binding in close confederacy men of the most opposite religious sentiments. Two pieces of loadstone are found powerfully to attract each other when the opposite poles are placed in juxtaposition, while the influence is as powerfully repellent when similar poles are brought in contact. It must be on some such principle as this, that parties, whose distinguishing tenets are "wide as the poles asunder," are closely banded in secular pursuits, while with all the force of the strongest antipathy they shun the men whose faith and hope and religious experience are precisely the same as their own. Thus the most devout Roman Catholic, if a Conservative in politics, will be as obnoxious to the Priests of Ireland, as the most pious and enlightened Protestant, whose political creed is Radical, would be to the English bench of Bishops. Alas! that the love of the world should so far prevail, even among the clergy, as to produce anomalies so perplexing to the inquirer, and so revolting to common-sense and Christian feeling! Still, my dear Friend, we must make large allowance for the infirmities of *human nature*, the unconscious influence of in-

terest and prejudice, and the force of long-confirmed habits of thinking and acting. But I must now conclude, promising to give in my next some remarks on Infidelity. Meantime,

I am,

Sincerely yours.

## LETTER IV.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WHEN I secretly renounced the authority of religion, I felt some relief for a time from that distress of mind that had so afflicted me as a Romanist. I was glad that I was no longer under the necessity of defending a creed which I did not believe, and it gratified my pride to think that I could amuse myself at the expense of Protestant and Roman Catholic in turn, without being myself obnoxious to their retaliation. My feelings in these circumstances are well expressed in the following candid avowal of the celebrated infidel BAYLE, whom the Jesuits converted when very young, but who afterwards spurned their authority :—

“In truth, (says he to his correspondent, Minutoli,) it ought not to be thought strange that so many persons should have inclined to Pyrrhonism, (universal doubt,) for of all things in the world it is the most convenient. You may dispute, with impunity, against every body you meet, without any dread of that vexatious argument which is addressed *ad hominem*. You are never afraid of a retort ; for as you announce

no opinion of your own, you are always ready to abandon those of others to the attacks of sophists of every description. In a word, you may dispute and jest on all subjects, without incurring any danger from the *lex talionis*," (the law of reprisals.)

"It is amusing, (the celebrated Dugald Stewart judiciously remarks on this passage,) it is amusing to think, that the Pyrrhonism which Bayle himself here so ingeniously accounted for, from motives of conveniency and of literary cowardice, should have been mistaken by so many of his disciples for the sportive triumph of a superior intellect over the weaknesses and errors of human reason." But how detestable is the conduct of the individual who, to gratify his pride or his spleen, or to shield his licentious conduct from reproof, sports with the most sacred feelings and the dearest interests of man, and aims his poisoned arrows at prejudice or piety, not from a fortified enclosure which he has the manliness to defend, but from some secret lurking place whence he may slink away the moment he is detected!

"The fool says in his *heart*, there is no God." That is, he wishes it may be so. For the thought of a righteous Governor of the world, and of a future judgment, gives him indescribable pain.

Indeed, the state of the heart has more to do in this matter than some are willing to admit. All the tendencies of human depravity are most unfavourable to the truth. The mind is pre-occupied by worldly prejudices, or led captive by sinful passions. It is blinded by the perverting influences of "the sin that dwelleth in us." Like a mirror sullied by impure vapours, it reflects not the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Instead of that love of truth so necessary to give diligence and perseverance to the spirit of inquiry, and calmness and impartiality to the judgment, we find that the "carnal mind" is influenced by enmity against God, and revolts from the authority of his law. (Rom. viii. 7.) "It hates the light, neither will come to the light, that its deeds may be reprov'd." We view spiritual objects through the medium of self-love, by which they are grievously distorted. It diminishes the interests of eternity, in proportion as it magnifies those of time. Like the *Kaleidoscope* it exhibits, in forms of fascinating beauty, every thing calculated to gratify our selfish passions; but when the light of truth visits the understanding, it speedily dissipates those flattering illusions. It falls upon them like the beams of the sun on the machinery of a puppet-show. Can you wonder, then, that truth should be unwelcome to the human heart? That.

the enmity of our nature should seek, like the tiger, to prowl in darkness? Thus ignorance is denominated in Scripture the "blindness of the heart;" and the soul is said, in conversion, "to put off the works of darkness," and "to put on the armour of light."

The disappointed man—the man that has been mortified in his vanity, thwarted in his ambition; or baffled in his pursuit of unrighteous gain or unhallowed enjoyment, very naturally quarrels with the arrangements of Providence, as capricious and unjust, or denies a divine Government altogether, and attributes the events of life to a blind and iron-handed fatality. Thus he shakes off the sense of accountability, and abandons himself to his dark passions, and vile affections; without remorse. He is delivered up to a "strong delusion to believe a lie." This class of infidels will join the ranks of sedition and anarchy, "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." Restless and malevolent, they seek, like their master, only to disseminate vice and misery. There is another class that are wafted on the sea of life by prosperous gales, who seize the prize of ambition, feast on adulation, and riot in pleasure. But they "sacrifice to their own net, and offer incense to their drag." They ascribe all their success to their own merit, to

fortune, or chance. If they worship any divinity, it is *prudence*. If they bow to any law, it is *expediency*. Guided by these, they treat falsehood, perjury, hypocrisy, slander, treachery, injustice, and cruelty, as cardinal virtues, so long as they can be made subservient to the attainment of their selfish and unworthy objects. Such men scruple not to take the oaths of office, and to wear the mask of virtue in the high places of authority. They even intrude into the sacred ministry, and habitually violate the sanctity of the altar, in the hope of obtaining a parish, a stall, or a mitre. Were all the infidels of this class unmasked to the world, the laity would stand aghast at the startling disclosure. But prudence so shapes the features and seals the lips, and draws so close the curtains of secrecy, that comparatively few are detected. To lull suspicion, they are frequently loud in their professions of orthodoxy, and zealous as the abettors of persecution. Like the trumpeters, drummers, and baggage-bearers of the army, they keep up a noise while others are fighting, and endeavour to monopolise the spoil when the victory is won.

There is a tone of levity and an air of gaiety about prosperous infidelity, which seems to present a contrast to the darker hue with which she



shades the features of her less fortunate children. But this contrast is more apparent than real. The smiles that play on the infidel's countenance, are too often the result of an effort to seem what he is not. Indeed, inward distress, more or less aggravated, is an essential element in his character. The under-current of his feelings is bitter; and the gaiety and good humour that play on the surface, resemble the phosphor that illumines the bosom of the dark and troubled ocean. Let some blast of provocation or affliction sweep over it, and mark, a demon scowls where an angel seemed to smile!

I have not exhibited the picture of infidelity in its worst colours. With daring effrontery the gloating monster sometimes discloses his more hideous features. But the depravity of man is bad enough in its ordinary moods, without pursuing it in its onward career till, ceasing to be human, it becomes diabolical. There are degrees in infidelity, and it is susceptible of important modifications. There is sometimes a constitutional tendency to scepticism, where the dreams of the imagination, if not the sentiments of the heart, run counter to the decisions of the judgment. The understanding is right, unless *when the fancy soars away into the cloudy regions of speculation.* When a youthful, ardent,

and undisciplined mind gets a smattering of metaphysical or physical science, it is likely, in the former case, to be bewildered in a "mighty maze"—"without a plan." God and man, mind and matter, good and evil, are wrapt up in the darkest mystery. And in the latter case, the splendid prospects opened up by modern astronomy, chemistry, and geology, dazzle by their splendour, and overwhelm by their immensity, the feeble mind of the tyro in philosophy. These "shallow draughts intoxicate his brain," and he will not drink deep enough to become sober.

"The Bible," he exclaims, "reveals not this glorious system of the universe, but seems rather to oppose it; therefore, the Bible cannot be from God." Impelled by logic like this, he precipitately abandons the stronghold of faith, and plunges headlong into a sea of doubts.

I have hinted that many persons who outwardly conform to Romanism are really Deists. This is a fact which I can testify from my own experience. But even if it were not sustained by such evidence, we might infer it as a matter of course from our knowledge of the mental and moral constitution of man. The truth is, infidelity is *forced* upon every Roman Catholic who dares to think for himself. He is taught that *unless he receives* implicitly every dogma of his

church, however repugnant to the dictates of common sense, he is totally destitute of saving faith. The language which the apostle James applies to the precepts of the moral law, is transferred by Papal writers to *matters of faith*. They tell you that "he that offends in one point is guilty of all;" that he that doubts is damned! It matters not that he firmly holds the essential doctrines of Christianity: if he withholds his assent from any article which the church has thought proper to propose, he is branded as a heretic, and shut out of the pale of salvation. Within the horns of this dreadful dilemma the Church of Rome encloses all her followers. Blind, unthinking credulity, or unqualified infidelity, are the only alternatives which she allows them. Oh, how many thoughtful and honourable minds has she thus compelled to shake off the restraints of religion, and urged forward to the dark abyss of Atheism! To impose a *veto* on inquiry is to force reason into rebellion against religion, and to place the claims of the Author of the human mind, and those of the Author of Christianity, in a condition of mutual and irreconcilable hostility. But this is putting Christianity in "a false position," and one which must *certainly prove fatal* to its interests.

*I remember well the time when all Protestant*

books were to me an abomination. Even the writings of ADDISON I have regarded with suspicion. But when I had at last ventured to read the Spectator, the Guardian, the Rambler, and other works of this class, which operated like magic in opening my mind and expanding my faculties, I felt indignant that I had been hoodwinked so long. I was, also, as you know, passionately fond of poetry, which I found to exert a wonderful influence in charming the demon of bigotry from my heart. Guided by the judgment of Dryden, I admired Milton above all modern poets. How must I then have felt when I found the illustrious bard, whose sublime numbers had often wrapt my mind in a species of enchantment, placed by my church in the *Index Expurgatorius* ?

How invaluable is the art of reading ! Had I never been taught to read, I would, in all probability, never have known the way of salvation. This is the art which *couches* the mental eye. And although we may at first see objects but very indistinctly, and are even liable to be led astray by many a false light,

“ Which leads to bewilder, and dazzles to blind,”

yet it is by this art that we are led forth from the gloomy dungeon of ignorance, where the

*beads* and the *crucifix*, which the church so appropriately designates, "the books of the ignorant," are the only manuals of instruction on which the wretched slave may fix his vacant mind.

We may then walk unfettered in the light of human knowledge, and cultivate those habits of close thinking and correct reasoning—that reflective disposition of mind, to which the Bible is addressed, and by which we are enabled rightly to appreciate the cogency of its arguments, and the pungency of its appeals. I am acquainted with many men, now successfully labouring in the cause of Christ, whose power of reading was the means of their emancipation from what I must call the errors of your church; but I do not remember more than one or two cases of conversion, where the parties were previously ignorant of reading; and in one of these cases, it was while learning at an advanced period of life to read the Bible that the light of truth insinuated itself into the mind. Therefore, as a friend to true religion, I would strenuously advocate the unlimited and unconditional diffusion of the power of reading. But I must observe that this power is not education: it is merely an instrument. And the great object of a sound education is, to teach us how this *mighty instrument* may be most effectually employed in strengthening the faculties, regulating

the affections, and directing the conduct for time and eternity.

Instead, therefore, of endeavouring to impede the progress of this art, the friends of truth should endeavour to render religious knowledge co-extensive with it. When my own eyes were opened to the delusions of Romanism, I took up the writings of infidels, because, unhappily, no better guides were at hand. Had I some friend to direct my studies, to put into my hands such books as were calculated to enlighten my mind as to the nature of genuine religion, my passage from the Church of Rome to the Church of Christ might have been short and pleasant. But, like a mariner, ignorant of the art of navigation, whose frail bark has been drifted out on the pathless ocean, where bouy or land-mark is no longer visible, I felt perplexed as to the course I should pursue, and therefore cast anchor where I was, endeavouring to sleep amidst the agitation of the billows.

If the infidel could not administer some opiate to the mind, if he did not sink into a state of indifference and apathy on religious subjects, his lot would be miserable indeed. It is sometimes asked, how can persons of superior minds and extensive knowledge hold errors so absurd and *doctrines so pernicious*? But the simple answer

to this inquiry is, they do not *think* about the matter! Satan finds other occupation for their minds. They are engaged in the toilsome pursuits of science, or the elegant recreations of literature;—they are distracted with the cares of business, or whirled in the vortex of pleasure or of politics; and it is only in the brief pauses of the varying tumult, that the voice of conscience can be heard, and then the unhappy man addresses the faithful monitor, as King Ahab did the Prophet Elijah:—“Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?”

Yes, sooner or later, conscience will find us alone. We carry the enemy with us go where we may. A certain writer has well remarked—that God is able, without touching in the slightest degree a man’s health, or character, or property, to stir up such an agony in his soul as will render life itself almost insupportable. This I experienced, to a certain degree, myself. I thank God that I was restrained, by those powerful influences which he has appointed to control the conduct of those that spurn his authority, from running into excesses that bring disgrace on the character. But if my life was irreproachable in the sight of men, this was not owing to *any regard* which I paid to the will or the glory of God, of whose true character, indeed, I was

profoundly ignorant, but to the force of circumstances and the counterpoise of pride. Yet was I perpetually harassed with a keen sense of responsibility, and a self-loathing consciousness of depravity. Often did I go forth at the midnight hour, when the bright stars "rained influence;" and, as I contemplated the immensity of space, and endeavoured to take in the vast conception of innumerable worlds governed by the omnipresent energy of one Almighty BEING, I felt overwhelmed with a sense of my own littleness and vileness. Frequently as the "cold round moon shone deeply down," and shed her pale melancholy light on the dewy meadows, or the sombrous groves, did I fall prostrate on my knees, and lifting up my eyes to the starry throne of the eternal Creator, give utterance to those undefineable aspirations—those longings after bliss and glory, which indicate an "aching void" in the heart that the world can never fill.

"Oh, happiness, our being's end and aim,  
 Good, pleasure, ease, content, what'er thy name;—  
 That *something still* which prompts the eternal sigh;  
 For which we bear to live or dare to die!"


Where shall we find thee? No where but in GOD as he is revealed in JESUS CHRIST! But I knew *not how to approach him.* I did not understand



the atonement, and the notion of spiritual influence I treated with contempt and ridicule.

Alas ! how inconsistent—what a compound of contradictions is man ! While I strenuously defended the flattering theory of the dignity and perfectibility of human nature, I was doomed to experience the most humiliating and agonising proofs of my moral impotency and degradation. Borne aloft by an inflated imagination, beyond the region of the clouds by which our globe is encircled, I might feel for a time, like the aëronaut, enraptured at the elevation to which I had attained ; but I very soon found myself again helplessly struggling in the mire. So powerful are the attractions that draw us down to earth !—“ I saw and approved the best, but still the worst pursued.” This painful contrariety, in my nature, sometimes occasioned me such distress that I wished myself dead. Remorse preyed on my spirit, embittered my feelings, and shed a dark hue over all the arrangements of Providence. I dared to accuse the blessed God of injustice, in placing so many human beings in a world where the conflict between reason and passion could be terminated only by the blindness of *conscience*, or the extinction of *hope*.

But had I attended to the dictates of reason *and experience*, I would have cherished very



different sentiments—sentiments which are so ably stated by the celebrated Dr. Adam Smith,\* (*Theory of Moral Sentiments, part 2d., sect. 2d.*) who must be regarded as an unprejudiced witness in a matter of this kind, that I shall give them to you in his own words:—

“ Man, when about to appear before a Being of infinite perfection, can feel but little confidence in his own merit, or in the imperfect propriety of his own conduct. In the presence of his fellow-creatures, he may even justly elevate himself, and may often have reason to think highly of his own character and conduct, compared to the still greater imperfection of theirs. But the case is quite different when about to appear before his infinite Creator. To such a Being, he fears, that his littleness and weakness can scarce ever appear the proper object, either of esteem or of reward.

“ But he can easily conceive how the numberless violations of duty of which he has been guilty should render him the proper object of aversion and punishment; and he thinks he can see no reason why the Divine indignation should not be let loose, without any restraint, upon so

\* This passage was cancelled in subsequent editions, at the suggestion, it is said, of Hume.

vile an insect as he himself must appear to be. If he should still hope for happiness, he suspects that he cannot demand it from the justice, but that he must entreat it from the mercy, of God. Repentance, sorrow, humiliation, contrition at the thought of his past conduct, seem, upon this account, the sentiments which become him, and to be the only means which he has left of appeasing that wrath which he has justly provoked. He even distrusts the efficacy of all these, and naturally fears lest the wisdom of God should not, like the weakness of man, be prevailed upon to spare the crime, by the most importunate lamentations of the criminal. Some other intercession, some other sacrifice, some other atonement, he imagines must be made for him, beyond what he himself is capable of making, before the purity of the Divine justice can be reconciled to his manifold offences. The doctrines of revelation coincide, in every respect, with these original anticipations of nature; and, as they teach us how little we can depend upon the imperfection of our own virtue, so they show us, at the same time, that the most powerful intercession has been made, and that the most dreadful atonement has been paid, for our manifold transgressions and iniquities."

*Wherever we turn our eyes—"to the myriads*

of beings animate and inanimate, which surround us—to the world beyond our ken, to which the imagination makes its excursions—to the world within, whence our soberest and deepest thoughts are sometimes drawn;—above, about, and underneath, we behold, with an evidence that stifles all doubt, that GOD exists—exists to *rule*, and hence to be *obeyed*;—exists to *bless*, and therefore to be *loved*. Lord Herbert, a Deist, could infer that there is no man well, and entirely in his senses, that doth not worship some Deity; and that a rational beast is a thing less absurd than an irreligious man !”\*

Infidelity is, therefore, as irrational in its principles, as it is demoralizing and pernicious in its influence. But you may think that I have overcharged the gloomy picture of an unbeliever’s life. You may perhaps allege that my experience is tinged with a morbid melancholy; and that, like an Alpine peasant, dwelling in a dreary valley, which the sun has never gladdened with his beams, I hastily infer that the lot of all sceptics has been equally wretched with my own. Were that the case, you might fairly question the correctness of my conclusion. But, my dear Friend, you will find that the sounds of disap-

\* DR. OLINTHUS GREGORY.

pointment and lamentation that issue from the vale of life, where the sunny spots are, alas! few, and evanescent, are but the echoes of those bitter complaints that are heard on the brightest elevations of opulence and grandeur. Of this fact innumerable proofs might be adduced. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit," says Solomon, after pursuing the phantom of human happiness with all the advantages of absolute power, unbounded wealth, and unrivalled wisdom. Wooed by the syren song of hope, he entered many a hall consecrated to glory, many a chamber and many a bower devoted to pleasure, but as he passed out over the threshold of each, he mournfully reiterated—"All is vanity and vexation of spirit!"

Nor is this experience peculiar to the monarch of Israel. His complaint has found a response in the hearts of "the great" in every age. Take as a specimen the candid avowal of a noble sceptic of modern times. From this one you may judge of the whole tribe.

"I have run," says the celebrated Lord Chesterfield, "I have run the silly rounds of business and pleasure, and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and, consequently, know their futility and do not regret *their loss*. I apprize them at their real

value, which is, in truth, very low; whereas those that have not experienced them always overrate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare. But I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machines; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decoration to the astonishment and admiration of an ignorant audience. When I reflect back on what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself that the frivolous hurry, and bustle, and pleasure of the world had any reality; but I look upon all that has passed as one of those romantic dreams that opium commonly occasions, and I do by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose, for I am sick of the fugitive dream. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that constancy and resignation which most people boast of? No; for I really cannot help it. I bear it because I must bear it, whether I will or no. I think of nothing but of killing time the best way I can, now that it is become mine enemy. It is my resolution to sleep in the carriage the remainder of the journey."

*Unhappy man! how much wiser would it*

have been to reflect on what might happen at the *end* of the journey ;—to escape “the wrath to come” by flying for refuge to a crucified Redeemer. But I must now conclude this letter.

I am, &c.

## LETTER V.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

ONE of my companions during the sceptical state of my mind, was retarded in his progress to the priesthood by want of money.

“Haud facile emergunt quorum virtutibus obstat.  
Res augusta domi. Sed Romæ durior illis  
Canatus.”

Often did he utter these words of Juvenal with a melancholy emphasis, which showed that he spoke from the heart. “Alas!” he would say, “the effort to rise is no less difficult in the modern Church than it was in the ancient city of Rome. ‘Chill penury,’ the fatal ‘*res augusta domi*,’ represses our energies, and effectually bars the road to eminence. The gods sold every thing for labour, but the Priests will not dispense their favours without money.”

My friend had been very superstitious. He blessed himself before and after meals; and even drew the sacred sign over the sheets when retiring to rest, lest any Satanic influence should chance to linger within their folds. He wore *many rings* and charms, and was, of course, re-



garded as a very holy person. He occupied himself incessantly in painting what he called "the sacred heart of Jesus," which was the picture of a heart radiating with love, and streaming with expiatory blood. This he frequently kissed with the utmost fervour. He was, moreover, a leader of the choir, and sang the matins and vespers parently with great devotion. But, notwithstanding all his "charms," he fell into very gross sin, and the Priests "gave him up;" and, as is usual in such cases, he was ultimately hurried down the stream of depravity into a "horrible pit."

"Ne croyez jamais rien de bon de cieux qui outrent la vertu"—"Believe nothing good of those who are righteous overmuch." Such is the advice of the celebrated BOSSUET, and it is not without force. But this disposition to push matters to extremes, belongs to what Shakespeare calls the "similar of virtue." A likeness, it is true, is preserved; but, as Dr. Campbell well remarks, what is beautiful in the original is hideous in the copy.

With this person I had frequent disputes on metaphysical theology. Often by the wild wood side, we sat apart

—"*In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high  
Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate;*

Fired fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute ;  
And found no end in wandering mazes lost."

I remember I was, for argument sake, Augustinian, and strenuously defended predestination. My friend appealed, by agreement, to a learned divine, in a neighbouring town, for a decision of the controversy. His reply was, that these matters were too high for us, and that such discussions should be abandoned for something more practical and profitable. He was not, however, a believer in "foreknowledge absolute." "God," said he, "cannot see the future actions of men otherwise than as they really are in themselves. But future actions are contingent and possible ; therefore, God sees them only as contingent or possible." That argument, I was wont to remark, takes for granted a very important step in the process—namely, that the actions of men are contingent in reference to the Divine arrangements. And, moreover, that conditional foreknowledge is little better than absolute ignorance. For, from the unknown volitions of men, new events will be incessantly darting up, like bubbles, on the stream of life. The OMNISCIENT must, therefore, be daily acquiring fresh stores of knowledge, and must, also, frequently alter his purposes and proceedings to meet the unexpected emergencies that

from time to time arise. Does not this view of the subject represent the Deity as anxiously watching the "wheel of fortune," that he may shape his course according to the new appearances that are perpetually exhibited by the operations of chance? And is it not, therefore, inconsistent with all correct notions of God? \*

The great body of the Irish Priests, I conceive, take the Arminian side of this controversy; but there are not a few who hold the sentiments of St. Augustine.\* These speculative questions, however, were interesting to me rather as a student of nature than of theology; for I had come to regard Christianity itself only as one among the phenomena which the great *panorama* of superstition had been from age to age exhibiting to the world. I had discarded the mysteries of religion for those of nature, and adored the Divinity of philosophy instead of the God of revelation. But prudence demanded that opinions so obviously heterodox should be cautiously concealed; for though there were some of my acquaintance who went nearly as far as myself, they yet found it convenient to suppress their sentiments, and conform to the reigning system.

Among these was a gentleman of great talent

\* The Rhemish annotators were decidedly predestinarian.

and considerable learning, who kept a preparatory school for young men destined to the priesthood. Three of his brothers were among the regular clergy, and he was himself educated as a Priest; but having been engaged in a love affair that obtained some notoriety, he was not permitted to enter college, and he betook himself to teaching as a means of living.

Once I heard him allude to this subject: "You knew," said he, "that when a boy is set apart for the sacred office, he is a pet with the whole neighbourhood. The embryo Priest is looked on with reverence already, and is supposed to be invested with some degree of sanctity. He is especially flattered by pious females. His solemn designation to the service of the altar obviates the modest delicacy, and liability to misrepresentation, which, in other cases, influence their conduct. Towards the young "collegian," the current of affection may flow without control, as there is no room to impute a selfish motive. I need not say that the fond familiarity with which he is constantly beset, is peculiarly dangerous. Never does love operate with an influence more fatal to virtue and happiness, than when he borrows the mask of religion. This fact I was doomed to verify in my own *experience*.

true, but destitute of those higher attributes of talent and sensibility, which had acted with too fatal an influence on my heart.

“On more mature reflection, however, I am inclined to think that Miss S. required no exercise of pastoral authority, to induce her to take the step I have just alluded to. The attraction of wealth exerts a very powerful influence on the female mind, so powerful, indeed, as to overcome the repulsive operations of many things, which would otherwise be quite intolerable. But, besides this, she naturally shrunk from sharing the destiny of one whom she must regard as devoted to disgrace and misery in the present life, and probable perdition in the next. The apostate candidate for the priesthood, is looked on by the Irish peasantry as the most degraded of the children of wretchedness. Their belief on the subject, and the very comparison they employ, may be given in the words of a noble poet:—

‘ They melted like snow in the glance of the Lord !’

It is thought that a curse attends them, and all that concerns them. This conviction prevailing among the people, and operating on the mind of *the individual himself*, tends naturally to produce *the wretchedness* in which the characters in ques-

sion are too often involved. Shunned by the respectable portion of society, and regarded with suspicion by all; their energies are relaxed, their hopes are blighted, and they seek in the intoxicating draught a refuge from those corroding cares and dark forebodings, that unnerve the mind and break the heart. Hence it is, that nine out of ten of these unhappy men, become confirmed sots and parish nuisances.

“Two causes,” continued my friend, “have contributed to keep me from falling into the slough of despond. I was sustained by the interest of my brothers, who are Priests, and I have had the courage to shake off the yoke of superstition, which is, indeed, a cleaving curse. But let it be once removed, and you can laugh at the thunders of the church. Superstition is the conductor of the Papal lightning; it cannot injure him who is clothed in the armour of truth.

“Thus have you learned the circumstances that led to my present occupation. I have not the power of converting wafers into God; but I am engaged, Sir, in the very important work of furnishing the rough materials for the fabrication of god-making Priests.”

I found my new friend many degrees farther advanced in infidelity than myself. He had acquired a tone of levity on religious subjects,

which showed that conscience had long been overborne and reduced to silence. He was greatly strengthened in his sceptical habits by a gentleman from Trinity College, who had been in the neighbourhood as a tutor; a man of commanding talents, but one of the most cold-hearted and calculating profligates that ever insinuated poison into the unsuspecting ear of youth.

I was glad to meet one with whom I could speak my mind freely, and the feeling was fully reciprocated by my new friend. We amused ourselves much in secret with the follies that passed under the name of religion, and felt compassion for the multitudes whom superstition had enslaved. He was intimately and extensively acquainted with the clergy. He knew the abilities, the foibles and faults of each, and he spoke of one and all with supreme contempt. He had an inexhaustible fund of anecdote about their pride, arrogance, selfishness, and avarice—their flattery of the rich and contempt of the poor—their extortion and their prodigality. These he illustrated by facts, with some of which I was well acquainted myself. For instance, is the Priest called on in the night to visit a person dying? If the party be rich, he starts up at *midnight*, mounts the horse that has been brought *for him*, and dashes off in the midst of rain or

now, bidding defiance to the tempest. But if the patient be poor, he draws the bed clothes closer round him, and tells the messenger that he may expect him in the morning.

I was once conversing with a very respectable Parish Priest, and as we walked up and down near his house, a poor woman came up and humbly addressed him in the following words:—

“May it please your Reverence, it's now three o'clock, and I'm waitin' here since nine this mornin,' hopin' your Reverence would hear my confession; and I lives four miles away, and I came out without my breakfast; and besides there's no one mindin' the childher; and I'm afeard a villian of a sow I have will break in and ate the little one. May be, then, your Reverence would hear me now, and I'll be for ever obliged to you?”

“Begone, woman!” replied the Priest, in a voice of thunder, “Don't you see I am engaged at present?” The poor creature was petrified. She shrunk away with a sigh and a look of resignation that powerfully touched my heart; and must, indeed, have touched any heart not steeled with ecclesiastical pride. My indignation was mingled with contempt, when he instantly resumed the conversation in a tone as mild, and *with a smile as bland, as if nothing had happened!*



truth of their religion, and are persuaded of the efficacy of their sacraments and other rites. I think the influence of an education whose tendency is to foster the roots of depravity, and to weaken or pervert the rational principle, has not been sufficiently adverted to. It should be borne in mind, that the whole course of instruction is opposed to any healthful exercise of the powers of the understanding, or the feelings of the heart. From childhood, the consecrated boy is isolated from the common herd around him. Most of his enjoyments are like "stolen waters," sweet to the taste, but bitter in their results. His pleasures are enjoyed in spite of the remonstrances of conscience. But conscience repeatedly violated, loses its sensibility, and finally relinquishes the ineffectual strife maintained against the increasing power and turbulence of passion. Heathen classics, uncounteracted by Christian instruction, imbue the mind with Pagan vices, especially with the spirit of pride and self-dependence. "The Lives of the Saints" is an appropriate sequel to the ancient Mythology, appealing to the same dispositions of our fallen nature, and inculcating the same principles of virtue. Alban Butler, the Plutarch of Popery, engrafts the *religion of Papal* on the *virtue of Pagan Rome*; and it must be confessed, that the scion and the

stock are equally congenial with the soil on which they grow. Taught to cherish the most extravagant notions of sacerdotal power, the sanctity of the clerical office serves, in the mind of the young Priest, to cover a multitude of sins. He knows that in former times the clergy were not amenable to human tribunals, and he believes that, were society in a proper state, it would be so still. Accustomed from infancy to rely on the form of godliness without the power—to rest upon the overt act, apart from the inward feeling—to attribute a mysterious virtue to the *opus operatum* of the church; exulting in the possession of prerogatives on which so many are implicitly depending for everlasting life, it is natural that he should cherish an overweening self-conceit, and an overbearing arrogance—that he should assume a tone of authority and dogmatism, which are most unfriendly to the impartial examination of evidence, especially of evidence militating against this intoxicating power. In Maynooth he has seen nothing of Protestantism but its hideous caricature, the impure and bloody phantom of a monkish imagination. Against this phantom he has been wielding for years his logical weapons. When let loose from college, he desists from the Quixotic warfare, not from satiety of bigotry, but from mere lass-

tade of mind. Thus, the light which is in him is darkness, and how great must be that darkness! Learning has exerted all its ingenuity to blind and bar the inlets of knowledge. Superstition has long possessed the fortress of the soul, and sophistry has been daily thickening the texture and multiplying the folds of that net in which the captive, Reason, has fruitlessly struggled.

When the Priest commences his official duties, a new scene opens. He is excited by the novelty, the piquant curiosity, and the powerful interest that encircle the confessional. The secrets which are there, in loneliness and silence, whispered into his ear, become the subjects of his daily lucubrations and his nocturnal visions. Were he at liberty to divulge them, even to a confidential companion, they would not haunt him so perpetually, nor stimulate his imagination so injuriously. But there is incessantly passing through his mind a stream of impurity, which is retained, fetid and foul as it is, in the reservoir of memory; which is, alas, but too tenacious of evil! and from this reservoir imagination draws its food, and re-produces, with many additions, the delectable banquet!

He is, besides, occupied with a perpetual round of confessions, masses, marriages, christenings, anointings, visiting, feasting, office and

newspaper reading, so that there is scarcely any time for serious reflection. And even if there were, does not a slight knowledge of human nature teach us that man eagerly catches at any excuse for avoiding painful reflection, especially when conscience seizes the opportunity to urge the renunciation of interest, pleasure, or power! Thus we see that every thing from within conspires to keep the Priests in error.

And the most superficial observation will show, that the causes that operate from without are all of a similar tendency. Shunned by Protestants, as the enemy of truth; violently assailed, and sometimes grossly misrepresented by political partizans and religious zealots, he fiercely retaliates, and throws back the missiles of abuse with a degree of energy which shews he is not to be put down. He is thrown on his defence. He deems himself the champion of a degraded people and a persecuted church. And the keen sense of neglect, of contempt and insult, with which he is almost universally treated by his Protestant neighbours, infuses no small portion of bitterness into his opposition to the Established Church. It is natural to us to hate those by whom we are despised. In all the attempts to reclaim the Roman Catholic people, the Priests are strangely overlooked. No efforts to conciliate them have ever

been put forth by the religious portion of the Protestant community. They have been treated rather as demons than as men. We have forgotten that they are possessed of like passions with ourselves; that while they are alienated and exasperated by harsh and violent attacks on their faith and their moral character, they may be won by Christian courtesy, friendly intercourse, and the cordial expression of kind and charitable feelings. Should we not make allowance for the influence of circumstances? Could they be expected, in the nature of things, to cherish towards Protestants other sentiments than those by which they are actuated? Clergymen of the Church of England almost invariably shrink from contact with a Priest, and if compelled to transact public business in connexion with him, they eye him with an air of superiority and supercilious jealousy, which must be exceedingly irritating, and is often, in fact, strongly resented. They never meet him at the social board. This would be deemed a dereliction of principle; it would be thought a "bidding him Godspeed," and giving their sanction to his ministerial character. Were an evangelical minister seen walking in the street, leaning on the arm of *a Priest*, though endeavouring to convince him *of his errors*, his character would be ruined.

Now, if religion be allowed to operate as a barrier in the way of *properly regulated* social intercourse, much of its power of propagation is thereby destroyed. An early apologist for Christianity declared, that its converts were found in vast numbers in all departments of the empire; and that they abounded even in the army. They must then have mingled freely with the Pagan population; and, indeed, it was by thus carrying the principles and the spirit of the Gospel into the intimacies of social life, that they were enabled so effectually to leaven the whole mass. How else can example, the most intelligible and powerful of teachers, be brought to bear on the world in which we move? It is in vain that our light shines under the bushel of sectarianism, or within those high frowning walls of exclusiveness which we have reared up around us.

Nothing, I am persuaded, more powerfully dissipates prejudice, than the light of a holy example. Of this I had ample proofs in my own experience. Circumstances brought me acquainted with two or three clergymen of the Church of England, whose domestic habits and family arrangements I had an opportunity of observing; and I can truly affirm, that the picture of peace, and order, and purity, which they presented, did

more to remove my dislike of Protestantism, than volumes of arguments could have accomplished. This, however, by the way.

Is it not manifest, therefore, that the Irish Priests are, from their education, their position in society, their political bias, their official avocations and social habits, so perfectly the creatures of their own system, so fully imbued with its despotic spirit, so effectually impelled and controlled by its dark energies, that instead of wondering at their credulity, we should rather admire the power of that saving grace by which so many of them are emancipated? I grant that there may be among them, as well as among the laity, men of bold and independent minds, who secretly despise the system which they are constrained by a sense of honour to administer. But the number of these is, I apprehend, comparatively small; and I think they will, for the most part be found absorbed in literary pursuits; or hurried along amid the bustle of political agitation, while the routine of official duty is gone through mechanically, and the mind has fallen into a state of religious apathy, deep as the slumber of death.

## LETTER VI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IN the arrangements between Mr. F—— and myself, relative to the publication of a poem on the Priesthood, which we had jointly composed, it devolved on me to call on some neighbouring gentlemen for their names as subscribers; among these were several clergymen of the Established Church. The first was Curate of the parish, who, without at all entering on the question of religion, warmly encouraged the publication of the satire. The Rector was a man of a different stamp—learned, cautious, judicious, and in politics a Whig. He was a most benevolent individual, and greatly beloved by his parishioners of both denominations. He carefully avoided any allusion to the differences between the two Churches, and did all he could to conciliate the Priests. But one of them was a feeble old man, who went very little about, and the other was a flaming bigot, whom no kindness could tame. The good Rector complained to me that his friendly offices were not reciprocated, and that the young Priest seemed to regard his advances with jealousy. The truth



is, the younger part of the Priesthood are very anxious about their reputation. They are looking forward to parishes, and they are afraid that any appearances of liberality which they might exhibit, would be represented to the Bishop as treachery to the cause. There is an *esprit du corps* sustained in full operation by the *conferences*; which effectually counteracts every tendency to irregularity, and keeps every man pressed into his proper groove in the system. The older Priests, however, may take liberties, and sometimes do. I knew one of them to dine frequently, even on Sunday, with a neighbouring Rector, but religious conversation was totally excluded from the social circle. Is it not an unhappy circumstance that the Roman clergy seldom or never come into friendly contact with really pious Protestants?

The Rector of —— desired to read my MS. When I called again, he looked very grave. "It was a severe satire against the Catholic clergy; and, besides, it was in some cases unjust. For instance," said he, "it is made a ground of accusation against them, that they lay by fortunes for their nieces. I think that is quite right, for St. Paul says, if a man does not provide for those of his own household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

I do not exactly remember what was my reply. I dare say I remarked, that providing food and raiment for a family was a very different thing from laying up a large fortune for some favourite member of it. That, at all events, it could not be right to oppress the poor in order to enrich our own relations, and raise them above their proper standing in society; that, strictly speaking, a Priest had no family—had none to take care of but “number one;” and, therefore, that his love of money could be regarded as nothing better than avarice.

“But how is it,” he inquired, “that you, a professed Roman Catholic, can think of publishing such an attack on your own clergy?”

This was an unpleasant question. I blushed and hesitated; and, after a pause, replied, that as an enemy to all priestcraft and oppression, I felt it my duty to expose their conduct whenever it was reprehensible; and that an attack on religion, and one on its unworthy ministers, were things totally distinct.

“Young man,” said he, regarding me with an expression of benevolent anxiety, “I fear, like too many in your church, you have imbibed infidel sentiments. I hope, however, you have not gone beyond the reach of reason and truth. *I cannot subscribe for this poem, because I do*

not approve of the spirit in which it is written—a spirit of scepticism and bitterness which is, in a reflecting mind, almost the natural result of the system in which you have been educated. Take,” he continued, “as an illustration of that system, the shocking occurrence which has recently disgraced our country. A Priest enters the house of one of his parishioners, and is requested to sit down in a room where there is a bed on which a child about two years old is sleeping. He demands a drink, and while the mother is absent procuring it, the infant stirs, whereupon the Priest starts up, and declares that it is possessed by the devil, and must be exorcised. The mother believes the statement, and shudders with horror. The neighbourhood is alarmed—crowds of people collect round the house to witness the miracle. A large tub of water is procured, into which the Priest pours a bowl of salt which he has blessed. The helpless babe is then raised from its sleep, and stretched upon the floor. The infatuated exorcist turns over the tub of water on the body of the child, and then jumping on the upturned bottom, tramples it with all the fury of the wildest fanaticism, until the hapless infant is strangled by the edge of the vessel pressing on its neck! The father and mother beheld all this without daring

to interfere. The cries of the innocent victim did not touch their hearts, and its little hands were stretched out towards them for help in vain.

“Now, granting that this man was mad, which we must charitably believe, what can we think of the people—of the parents—that could passively behold a deed so horrifying? Indeed, so blinded were they by their notions of sacerdotal power, that they believed the deluded creature, when he promised that he would return and bring the child to life again!\* Must not such pretensions to miracles—succeeding through well-sustained fraud, or failing through clumsy mismanagement—have the effect of disgusting the rational and educated portion of the community, and leading them to look with suspicion on all religion? Thus genuine piety is smothered by the weeds of superstition, which flourish so rankly on every side, and spread abroad so rife their baleful influence; or it is blighted by the more subtle and secret influence of an infidelity which penetrates to the very root,

\* The facts of this heart-rending case were all established by the evidence on the trial of the Priest, who was acquitted on the ground of insanity. His name was Carroll, and the occurrence took place in Bargo, a barony that has produced ten times as many Priests as any other in *Ireland*.

leaving little that is really good to cheer the philanthropist or the patriot. 'That which the locust hath left, hath the canker-worm eaten.'

I confessed that the pretensions and practices to which he alluded, were calculated to have the effect attributed to them, and that they did exert it to a considerable extent on my own mind. He then put a book into my hand, stating that he hoped I would study it, and that he would be glad to hear from me again.

I found that the book was Dr. Beattie's "Evidences." I read it, but not with much profit, although it brought to my mind some new and important views of the Gospel, nor much interest, except what was awakened by the beauty of the style.

I called on two other ministers, to both of whom I had been previously known, and who had shewn me great kindness. They were men of talent, the one being imaginative in the cast of his mind, and the other scientific; but, unhappily, neither of them was *pious*. I do not mean to say that they were immoral; on the contrary, more amiable, kind-hearted and honourable men do not exist; but they were not "born again;" they did not rightly understand the Gospel, nor *feel it to be the power of God to their own salvation*. They preached not from an anxiety

to win souls to Christ, but because the "duty" must be done. Their sermons, as pieces of composition, were beautiful; but, as expositions of Christian doctrine and experience, meagre in the extreme, and utterly worthless. No conscience was alarmed; no sinner aroused from the sleep of death. If they reached the conscience at all, it was with the touch of a feather, and not with the piercing energy of the sword of the Spirit. It is not, my dear friend, from such preachers as these, that you can learn what Protestant doctrines are, and the effects which they produce.

In alluding to one of these clergymen, I am reminded of a circumstance on which I sometimes reflect with melancholy interest. He had some near relatives, that possessed large property in the West Indies, from one of whom he received an appointment for me as *overseer* on one of his plantations. But I was providentially withheld from availing myself of it. Had I gone out, instead of addressing you as a minister of the Gospel in Ireland, I would, in all probability, be holding the lash over the wretched slave, among the cruelist of the cruel, and the vilest of the vile, in that region of abominations. But, perhaps not. I might have heard the Gospel, and been converted through the instrumentality of the missionaries, and become a preacher of

that faith which I once destroyed. Or, like the saintly Newton, I might, after a course of iniquity and wretchedness, have returned to my native land, a living monument of omnipotent grace, destined to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ to the chief of sinners. How often does our heavenly Father lead us by a way which we know not, and how foolish to murmur at his appointments!

“The ways of heaven are dark and intricate,  
Puzzled in mazes and perplexed with windings;  
The imagination traces them in vain,  
Lost and bewildered in the fruitless search,  
Nor sees with how much art the windings run,  
Nor where the regular confusion ends.”

Therefore, submission to the Divine will is not only a duty, it is our highest interest.

These gentlemen promised to take several copies each, but refused to have their names announced, as they lived on good terms with the Priests, and were unwilling to give them offence.

The next clergyman I visited, was manifestly a different character from any of the others. He was clever, intelligent, fluent, exceedingly active, and entirely devoted to the interests of the church.

*He hastily glanced over my manuscript, and*

perceived that the mind of the writer, not being enslaved to human authority, nor bewildered with superstition, was in a proper state to canvass freely and independently the doctrines of religion. He entered *at once* into the discussion of the questions at issue between the Church of Rome and England. From this course of proceeding, many Protestants are restrained by a delicacy of feeling, very amiable, indeed, but very injurious to the cause of truth.

“You are studying, Sir,” said a Methodist minister to me once, as I sauntered along the road to school, conning a lesson in my French grammar.

“Yes, Sir, I am doing a little that way.”

“Right, my young friend, nothing like acquiring knowledge. It is the food of the mind, which requires to be nourished as well as the body.”

After a few remarks to this effect, he shook hands with me and rode on. Now, he should not have stopped there. He should have told me of the *spiritual* wants of the soul; of the bread of heaven that came down for the life of the world, and of kindred subjects. In four cases out of five, I think the *judicious* introduction of religious topics would be well received by Roman Catholics, and a single conversation of *this description*, might ultimately issue in the



conversion of an immortal soul. Indeed, I have heard you complain yourself, that the preacher who comes to —— shuns, rather than seeks your conversation. Now this must arise not from an unwillingness to meet your arguments, but from ignorance of the real state of your mind.

A word spoken in season, how good it is! How mighty may be the influence of one precious truth on the mind, even where it seemed to fall to the ground! A pilgrim once entered our house after nightfall, and took his seat by the fire. He seemed to have been a man of finished education, judging from his accent and pronunciation. But he had been

“Crazed with care or crossed with hopeless love.”

During the evening, he repeatedly uttered with great solemnity the following sentence:—“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”—*Luke xiii. 3.*

The oracular words sank deep in my mind; and to the force of that one statement, authenticated by the chapter and verse, I attribute much of those troubles of conscience which haunted me so long, and issued at length in my conversion. Various are the ways in which the truth may find its way to the heart; and to the inattentive or the forgetful, those glimmerings of light that

sometimes arise in the mind where religious instruction had not been enjoyed, may seem to spring from the collision of the natural powers of the soul, but they are in reality sparks of revealed truth that had remained lodged unobserved in the understanding; like the seeds of the forest tree borne by migratory birds to a distant land, where the plants which they produce may be regarded as the spontaneous production of the soil.

The Waldenses became itinerant dealers, that they might have an opportunity of disseminating the Scripture truths which they had committed to memory, in places to which they could not otherwise gain access. I wish we had more of their zeal and their prudence; and that we were habitually disposed to husband better the facilities we enjoy for advancing the kingdom of God in the world.

This gentleman urged principally the absurdity of praying to saints, which, as a nominal member of the Church of Rome, I thought it my duty to defend as well as I could. I was struck with the view in which he exhibited the question, and the consequences which he deduced logically from the Roman doctrine. He said it led directly to *Polytheism*, and his conclusion I felt it impossible to set aside. *But I shall have a more favourable opportunity*

of referring to that hereafter. I shall now go on with my narrative.

Mr. N—— proposed, at parting, that I should call again in a few days, and requested that I would take the loan of a Bible, that I might, in the mean time, consult the passages he had brought forward in the course of the argument. He was so kind, and seemed to feel so warm an interest in my case, that I could not well refuse; but I took the book with very great reluctance. I became so uneasy, as I passed along the road, that I was tempted to return and give it back to the owner. But this would have been a proof of weakness, such as I did not like to avow. Were the book my own property, I would certainly have thrown it over the hedge, and thus got rid of the disagreeable burden. But I had only received the loan of it, and I was bound in honour to return it safe, and I was also expected to give my opinion of some of its contents. Never did I feel so perplexed. It was a thick volume, and made so great a bulk in my pocket as almost necessarily to attract observation. And were a Protestant Bible discovered in my possession, I knew it would bring an infamy on my character that would be indelible. However, I resolved to conceal my dangerous companion as *carefully as possible*.

I succeeded for a day. I was sitting with my friend, the schoolmaster, in the summer-house, to which we were accustomed in fine weather to retire, to pursue our own studies after school hours, as I had engaged to teach him French in exchange for his Latin. The declining sun darted down his golden beams through the openings of the green canopy above us, and illuminated the gilt edges of my Bible, a corner of which was conspicuous in my pocket. We were at that moment warmly disputing about the grammatical construction of a particular passage, when his eye was suddenly arrested by the corner of the Bible. He was silent—blushed—looked at my face, then at the Bible, and then at my face again.

“What is that in your pocket?” he inquired, with a look that spoke surprise and anger.

“The question,” I replied “is one that I might be excused from answering; but I have no hesitation in avowing that it is a Bible,” and so saying, I handed it to him.

“Where did you get this,” said he, glancing at the title page.

“Mr. N—— persuaded me to take it. I was very unwilling to do so, but as he promised to take so many copies of the poem, I thought it hard to refuse, and so brought it with me merely

to please him. But were it otherwise," said I, "may I ask, why I am not at liberty to read what book I please?"

"Oh, of course," said he drily; "but in taking that book from such a man, you countenance the calumny that Catholics have no Bibles themselves."

"That is a fact, and not a calumny, so far as we and our neighbours are concerned; for I do not know a single person that has one, with the exception of Mr. P——, who seems to keep his two folio volumes, with their notes and comments, more for ornament than use."

"Use!" said he, with a sneer, "I hope you are not among the number of those who deem the Bible a useful book. I hope there are few in the nineteenth century that entertain such an obsolete notion, at least, beyond those little coteries that fatten on the property of the public."

"Still, my dear Friend, it seems not quite just to pass such a sweeping censure on the Bible without examining it. It might turn out after all not so worthless or so pernicious a book as we are willing to think. We are condemning it, you know, unheard; and that is unjust as regards the Bible, and foolish as regards ourselves. What if this book should be found to

be indeed the Word of God! I confess that this reflection gives me considerable uneasiness. This may be weakness, and such I am sure it appears to you; but it may more probably be the beginning of wisdom. However," I continued, with an air of cheerfulness, "you need not fear that I am about to do any thing injurious to my character. I shall return this book because it is dangerous to keep it; but I cannot but lament the tyranny of public opinion, to which even you and I, free-thinkers as we are, are compelled to bow."

My friend, of course, did not betray my secret, and it extended no farther until I had an opportunity of restoring the Bible.

"Well, I was ashamed of this blessed book! I was disconcerted and confused when it was discovered in my possession! Alas! how blind—how foolish is man! Here was a book which revealed the will of my Creator—which unfolded the character of GOD, the condition of man, the awful doom that awaits the sinner, and the means by which that doom may be averted; but instead of joyfully receiving this glorious Revelation—instead of studying with avidity this charter of salvation, and earnestly appropriating its blessings, I was actually ashamed of it, and wished to cast it from me, as the viper was flung

from the hand of Paul. "O God, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost consider him!"

When I had stated to my reverend friend, on my next visit, that I found it impossible to conceal the Bible, and that were it generally known that I had such a thing, without the sanction of the Priest, my character would be ruined, I thought that, as a matter of course, I should get free from the presence of my troublesome companion. But, No! Mr. — had a nice little pocket Testament, with a silver clasp, which might be carried about with perfect secrecy. It was a keepsake, and I must take care of it, and return it again in the course of some months; and it was further interesting, as containing some remarks by the owner in the margin, the more important passages, being, moreover, under-lined with the pencil, so as to strike the attention more readily! I must, therefore, take this as a token of his friendship; and he prayed that God might bless it to my soul.

Oh how important to me, in its consequences, was the kind importunity of this zealous clergyman! Were it not for him I might have wandered in ways of darkness all my life, and gone *down to the blackness of darkness for ever.* He *put into my reluctant hand the Lamp of Truth,*

“ a light to shine upon the road that leads me to the Lamb.” May he escape all the curses, and enjoy all the blessings recorded in that book ! Yet he was but an instrument, and had he swerved from his duty, another would be found.

“ God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform——”

“ Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill,  
He treasures up his bright designs,  
And works his sovereign will.”

He is not dependent on this instrument or the other, for he can raise up suitable means at his pleasure. He that sent Philip to the Eunuch, and Peter to Cornelius, will not be wanting in a proper agency when he designs to bring a soul from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. This fact, however, should not abate any thing of our gratitude towards those devoted individuals who may have laboured for the salvation of our souls.

I took the Testament cheerfully, and read it attentively. Many an hour I spent poring over its pages, as I wandered on the beach, or walked along a lonely road, or reclined under the shade of some spreading tree, or sat on a bank, where *the evening sun still lingered on the clover-bloss-*



soms, and the stillness of the scene would woo the mind to solemn meditations. I studied the passages that were marked. The more I read, the more I was interested. A new light seemed to emanate from the pages of a book so long despised. I was convinced that it was inspired by God—that it condemned the peculiarities of Romanism—and that it inculcated a religion that was rational and spiritual. My heart was now relieved from much anxiety. I felt a resting-place for my faith. In answer to the question, “What is Truth?” I could now appeal to this blessed volume, and exclaim, with all the joy of the ancient philosopher, “I have found it!”

I now eagerly embarked on the sea of controversy. I read in succession Ousely’s “Old Christianity,” M’Gavin’s “Protestant,” (a work which excited such intense interest, that I allowed myself little sleep until I had got through it,) Blanco White’s “Evidence against Catholicism,” and a great number of smaller works.

The Vicar of B., who had taken so much trouble with me, gave me a Prayer-book. I examined it with care; and when I saw him again I gave him my opinion of it very candidly. I told him I had no objection to the Thirty-nine Articles. I thought they were Scriptural as far as they were then capable of judging. But I said

there were several things in the book that did not rest on the authority of God's Word. It retained, for instance, the Romish feasts, vigils, and days of fasting and abstinence throughout the year. The feast days are thirty in number, besides Sundays; the vigils are some sixteen; and the days of fasting, or *abstinence*, are

1. The forty days of Lent;
2. The ember days;
3. The three rogation days;
4. All *Fridays* in the year except Christmas day!

Now, Sir, I remarked, are not these authoritative appointments inconsistent with the scriptural arguments usually advanced by Protestants against the Roman Catholic system? Does not Paul, (1 Tim. iv. 3,) represent the command to abstain from meats as a mark of the apostacy of the latter days? Does he not say, (Rom. xiv. 3,) "Let not him which eateth not judge him which eateth; for God hath received him"? And, again, (verse 17,) "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And, again, (1 Cor. viii. 8,) "But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not are we the worse." These prohibitions, the same Apostle, (Col. ii. 20—23,)

calls the "rudiments of the world"—"the commandments and doctrines of *men*"—things having "a *shew* of wisdom in will-worship and humility, and neglecting of the body."

"Now," I continued, "passages like these have, in my opinion, been most triumphantly urged by you and others against the Church of Rome. Allow me to ask why they do not apply with equal force to these 'ordinances' of the Church of England?"

To these remarks the Vicar replied in nearly the following terms:—"Certainly," said he, "the passages you quote do apply to the observances pointed out in the Book of Common Prayer; and if these observances were enforced by the church, we could not find fault with the Roman Church without condemning ourselves. But these ordinances, if such they may be called, are, in fact, a *dead letter*. We do not regard them. They were admitted into the Prayer-book under peculiar circumstances. At the time of the Reformation, certain of the ceremonial observances of Romanism were still popular with a large portion of the people, who, nevertheless, received the leading doctrines of Protestantism, and joined in repudiating the usurped authority *of the Pope*. It was deemed desirable to meet *their prejudices*, and conciliate their weak minds

as far as possible. Therefore, the compilers of the Liturgy, avoiding the extremes of Popery on the one hand, and Puritanism on the other, steered a middle course, which was wisely adapted to the circumstances of the times. But as the people became more enlightened, holidays and fasting days were gradually neglected; and we have followed the Bible rather than the Prayer-book as our guide in the performance of religious duties."

"If so," I observed, "why did you not expunge from the Prayer-book whatever could not be fairly established from Scripture. Do not these admitted discrepancies between the Common Prayer and the Bible place you in an awkward position, when you attack the unscriptural tenets of the Papal system? The causes that checked the progress of reformation have, of course, long ago ceased to operate. Why, then, did the authorities not make the necessary alterations?"

"Because," replied the Vicar, "the spirit of innovation had carried some of the other churches of the Reformation into excesses that were very injurious to the cause of truth; and as the human mind is prone to be dissatisfied with present good, and to seek in repeated changes advantages that can never be realized, and which are

pursued at the risk of unsettling all things; it was thought better to suffer a few blemishes on the fair form of the church, than to remove them by measures that might organically affect her constitution, and perhaps terminate ultimately in her total dissolution."

I believe these statements satisfied me *at the time*. I do not recollect whether I objected then to the form of absolution in the service for the sick. To this, however, the same remarks will in some measure apply. In the morning service the words are merely *declarative; announcing* pardon and remission of sins to God's people, *being penitent*; but referring the authoritative act to HIM alone as his exclusive prerogative. But it must be confessed that the form of expression in the service for the sick is far more objectionable, being essentially the same as that employed by the Priest in the confessional. In addition to what has been already advanced in apology for these remnants of Romanism, I need only remark, that this also is generally regarded as a dead letter; and that the pious clergy very seldom make use of the Prayer-book in their visitation of the sick.\*

\* Note A.

## LETTER VII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOU will perceive that I began now to feel very favourably disposed towards the Church of England, the only form of Protestantism with which I had then any knowledge. I cordially approved of her doctrines, I saw little to find fault with in her ceremonies, and her ministers were, with a few exceptions with which I was acquainted, men whose characters I could not but highly esteem and love; but her *establishment* occasioned in my mind difficulties which, for a time, seemed almost insuperable. I have often heard you state your conviction that the Church of England could not stand but for her connexion with the State, and the wealth and honour with which she is thereby enabled to secure the attachment of her interested adherents. This I know is the general opinion of the members of your church; and at the time to which I am now referring, the converts from Romanism, announced in great numbers in the newspapers, were loudly charged by the liberal journals with acting from interested motives—with being bribed into con-

formity—and with sacrificing conscience for filthy lucre. I had often echoed those charges myself, I had called them unprincipled renegades and vile apostates, or, at best, men of feeble and crazy minds.

There was one young man, who was most highly esteemed, and deservedly so, by all that knew him. He was a person of finely cultivated mind, and had written poetry which was greatly admired. His moral character was every way amiable and entirely unblemished. He went over to the Methodists. When the news of his conversion arrived, I was conversing with the Rev. Mr. F., who was his particular friend, and whom I had often heard speaking of him in terms of the warmest praise. He seemed thunderstruck with the intelligence.

“Mr. B.,” said I, “is a person of sound judgment, and extensive information, and irreproachable character; how unaccountable, therefore, is this proceeding!”

The Priest shook his head, and after a thoughtful pause, merely ejaculated—“Infatuated young man!” and then diverted the conversation to some more grateful subject.

But this young man was brutally assaulted by a mob, and compelled to fly for his life from his

lodgings; and was also treated with the most virulent abuse by his former friends. A similar storm, I foresaw, would burst on my own head; but this was nothing compared to the *infamy* that would attach to my name, the moment my desertion from the ranks of the church would be known. But wherefore this infamy? I am aware that there is always some disgrace incurred by a change of religion; but it is peculiarly aggravated in Ireland; and this, I think, is owing in a great measure to the establishment, which gives a secular character to the Church of England, that is very revolting to the feelings of Roman Catholics. Her political position has, in fact, been fatal to her success. It has arrayed against her, not only the religious prejudices of a superstitious—but the national antipathy and vindictive hostility of a *conquered* and *degraded* people. The man who goes over to Protestantism, is regarded not only as an apostate from his religion, but as a traitor to his country. Were I asked what obstacle I felt most difficulty in surmounting, in the public avowal of my change of principles—what objection rose up with most power in my mind—what prejudice was most painfully eradicated—I would answer at once, those which arose from the fact, that I was forsaking a *depressed*, in order to join an ascendant church;



that I was relinquishing a religion, which had long been a badge of infamy, and a bar to political preferment, in order to adopt one, in whose right hand were earthly riches and worldly honours, and in her left the blood-stained instruments of death. I merely state the impressions which were then in my mind, and against which all sincere inquirers have to struggle in adopting the course which I adopted. I know how Roman Catholics feel on this subject; and I give expression to their feelings, not to record my approval of them, but to show that, though they are natural, and may be in some measure excused, yet they are foolish and pernicious, and should therefore be strenuously resisted. And I would also willingly give to the friends of truth in the Established Church the testimony of an impartial and competent witness, as to the real source of the weakness of their cause in Ireland.

But to return. Having made an effort to relinquish my early prepossessions, I ventured in a strange town to saunter about the church door, at the time of public worship. I saw the congregation coming out, gorgeous with the trappings of wealth, and glittering with the decorations of vanity; and then appeared the Rector *himself*, walking through the streets in his can-

onicals, and attended to his house with a guard of corporation officers.

...“And is this,” said I, “the self-denying religion which exhibits most the spirit of the lowly Redeemer!” I confess I felt disappointed, and, if I may so express it, *repulsed*, by this specimen of the reformed religion, presenting on the Lord’s day such an ostentatious display of the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. Learning that there was service every morning for the accommodation of the pious portion of the community, I thought this would afford a more favourable opportunity of ascertaining the amount of devotion in the congregation. Accordingly, I went next morning, and for the first time, with agitated frame, crossed the threshold of a Protestant place of worship. It was a splendid edifice; the pews all richly painted and cushioned, and every thing, indeed, finished off in the first style of beauty. But great was my surprise to see only about half a dozen persons present—the clerk, the sexton, and a few old women. I observed on the church-door the amount of the parish cess for the current year, with the purposes to which it was applied. The sum seemed enormously large; and the items for bread and wine, for washing the minister’s surplices, and

for music, appeared peculiarly objectionable—not only exorbitant in amount, but unrighteous in principle. What injustice, I could not avoid exclaiming, to compel Roman Catholics to pay for the sacramental elements, and for the mere luxuries of public worship.

My thoughts were now carried to the collection of this fund, taken for the most part from the poorest of the people, to build and decorate temples for the wealthy minority. Next, in the train of my meditations appeared the unprincipled tithe-proctor, robbing, by an unjust valuation, the poor dupes who had treated and bribed him in vain. I saw him rising from servile indigence to insolent affluence—the iron-hearted instrument of oppression, and yet the favoured representative of the church, by law established, and the accredited agent and confidential adviser of the minister of peace—the ambassador of Christ! Thus was the Protestant religion so firmly linked in my mind with oppression, extortion, proctors, bailiffs, auctioneers, and petty-sessions, that a current of indignation set in, and nearly overwhelmed all my previous convictions.

You see then that the very things which Roman Catholics suppose to operate as inducements to conformity, present the greatest obsta-

cles which the convert has to encounter. . Were the Church of England not the Church of the State, her converts would be vastly more numerous than they are.

A friend, who was aware of my state of mind, and who feared I was about to go over to the enemy, deepened still more these unfavourable impressions, by strongly contrasting the wealth, and pride, and pageantry of the established clergy, with the poverty, humility, and simplicity of the primitive pastors of the church, and even of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Ireland.

“ Mark,” said he, “ the hauteur, the blustering importance of those lordly shepherds. Can that be the true religion, which not only wears the livery, but breathes the very spirit of the world? Does it exert any influence but what is secular? Does it wield any weapons but what are carnal? Can a Roman Catholic be sincere in embracing that religion? How can he prove the purity of his motives? How can he, or why should he escape that infamy which is justly the portion of the renegade? It is in vain that he professes sincerity. Were he to exhaust the vocabulary of the hypocrite, in protestations of innocence, still appearances and facts are all against him. He has chosen the faith which *self-interest* or *ambition* would select; a faith which wars

neither with the world nor the flesh—whose hand-maids are power and pleasure, and which deals out preferments to its friends, and penal laws to its foes.”

There was nothing new in these arguments. I had heard them a thousand times, with many more of the same kind. I had discarded them from my mind, convinced that the truth of any religion rested not on the character of men, but the testimony of Scripture. I remembered that the Church of Rome had always been, when she could, an Established Church—that her ministers were ever the most lordly and pompous of human beings—that their oppressions and persecutions were unparalleled in the history of the world, and that they cried out for toleration and liberty of conscience only when they themselves were coerced. You know, my dear friend, that an establishment is a mere accident of religion, which, however it may incidentally interfere with the efficiency of its ministrations, or the extent and purity of its influence, does not affect the nature of its doctrines; or the evidence on which they rest. The disagreeable accompaniments, more or less involved in a State-connexion, you may modify or totally remove, and yet leave the *religion with all its doctrines, sacraments, and ceremonies essentially the same.* In what does

Catholicism in Ireland differ from Catholicism in those countries where the host is borne in public procession, and where even Protestant soldiers are compelled to do homage to it by firing a salute? Why, in the one the priesthood are rioting in the power and luxury of an establishment; in the other, they live more modestly on voluntary contributions, and are, therefore, compelled to pay more attention to public opinion.

Besides, it is delightful to know that churchness no longer exists in Ireland; and that the proctor system, with all its injustice and corruption, is also at an end. And it is hoped that the tithe laws will soon be so modified as to remove the burden from the occupying tenant, and thus dry up that fruitful source of most unhappy contention between the Protestant clergy and the Roman Catholic people.

However, the remarks of my friend on the occasion alluded to, produced a considerable effect on my mind, and threw me back into a state of very painful suspense. I shall never forget that night, when retiring alone to my room, my heart was torn with the most violent conflicting feelings.

“Would to God,” I cried, “that the Protestants were poor and persecuted! Then I

could avow my principles without dishonour—I could put my sincerity to the test. But now, though I expect no earthly advantage, and must encounter certain misery by my change of creed, yet my friends, the companions of my youth, the partners of my joys and sorrows, whose suspicion or contempt would be agony to my soul—they will ascribe to my conduct the basest of motives! But it shall not be.—(And here I cast myself on my knees in a state of almost phrensy excitement.)—It shall not be so! I solemnly vow that I never will stain my character by apostacy! No—rather let me continue in communion with a fallen church, and worship my Creator *in secret*.”

Pride having thus abruptly and sternly silenced the remonstrances of conscience, I endeavoured to dismiss the distressing subject from my mind.

Now, I know well that many intelligent members of the Church of Rome come to this point, and are stopped there by the considerations to which I have adverted, settling down into a state of lifeless indifference on religious subjects, from which a few, like myself, are happily delivered by sovereign and omnipotent grace. The rest are held back by a sense of *honour* from joining *an ascendant* establishment, because they would *thus seem to wear*, for selfish purposes, the


odious mask of hypocrisy, standing before the world in an attitude the most distressing to a generous mind. But for the one that advances thus far, there are ten prevented from giving any thing like a candid or patient attention to the arguments against the Romish Church. The antagonist system is connected in their minds with so many revolting associations, that they thrust away the subject from them with feelings of anger or hatred. The political attitude and coercive character of the church must, in the nature of things, repel and irritate, and urge the people into a state of rancorous hostility.

Nothing stings so cruelly a generous mind as the imputation of base motives, in passing from one religious body to another. To such a person, the wealth and power which he may find associated with the truth, will present a hindrance which is frequently felt to be invincible.

But really, dear Sir, your people make great mistakes on this subject. You say that the Protestants are actuated by a proselytising spirit, and that they give bribes to those that come over to their church. I never knew a case of this description. They are neither bribed to come, nor provided for when they do come. Unless a man have property of his own, on which he can



live independent of the public, he is subject to very great privations. Whatever be the nature of his employment, he immediately loses it. If he be dependent on father or brother, they cast him out with indignation, and pursue him with obloquy and hatred. Even a mother's blessings are converted into curses! And, strange as it may appear, Protestants, with few exceptions, treat him with coldness and suspicion. They think him an intruder on their privileges, and sometimes openly question his sincerity. There are many Protestants leaning so strongly to the Papal creed, possessing minds so stupid, and hearts so selfish, that they think it impossible for such a man to die in the new faith, or to adopt it, from any other than interested motives. They measure others by themselves. They paint from the vile original which they carry in their own bosoms. Their own religion is a worldly speculation; an earthly mixture of covetousness and party-spirit. Its motives are drawn from time and not from eternity; its practice is regulated, not by a regard to the divine will, but by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." What conscience can have to do with a man's creed, they are unable to comprehend. Religion is with them an heirloom, handed down with their title-deeds from



generation to generation. If you want to discover traces of its influence, you must be referred to their pews in the parish church, where, in all probability, you will find them on Christmas-day and Easter-Sunday, when they, very devoutly, take the Lord's Supper on an empty stomach. They damn Pope and Popery most loyally, and are very obstreperous in their support of penal laws. But had they lived at the period of the Reformation, they would have fought to maintain inviolate the prerogatives of his Holiness. They idolize the name of Martin Luther; but had that great man been their cotemporary, they would have denounced him as an apostate, and sworn that he had learned his new doctrines in secret conferences with the devil. With Protestantism for ever on their lips, the rankest Popery predominates in their hearts. They "build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous; and say, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." But they show by their treatment of those who walk in the footsteps of the Reformers, that they are, indeed, the children of them that killed the prophets.

From this class of persons, it is manifest, that the convert has nothing to expect but distrust

and coldness, unless, indeed, he can conciliate their favour, by echoing their watch-words, and becoming the degraded medium through which they may spirt their virulent animosity on the party he has forsaken.

There is, my dear Sir, another class of Protestants very different from these—the truly enlightened and pious advocates of the right of private judgment, who would gladly shield the victims of intolerance, that are compelled to suffer for conscience' sake. But they are very frequently withheld from doing so, by a delicacy which, however amiable, is false and pernicious. They are afraid that their kindness to a convert would countenance the calumnies of Roman Catholics, and, therefore, to obviate their censures, they magnanimously leave him to starve ! How cruel is this policy ! and it is no less fruitless than cruel. In such cases, no efforts of conciliation can silence the tongue of slander ; while, by demanding too much from human nature, the spirit of inquiry is silently quenched.

Before the change takes place, there should be no tampering with the conscience by the application of temporal motives ; but when a man has shewn himself capable of suffering for *the truth*, and willing to do so, he should be *kindly taken by the hand*, and an opportunity

should be given him to earn for himself an honourable support. Of course this is a business which requires much discrimination and prudence. During what has been called the "Second Reformation," the proper caution was not perhaps always exercised. Converts destitute of education, and but partially enlightened, were sometimes received too hastily. There was too much party triumph evinced in parading them before the public. The recantations might have been advantageously dispensed with. These things served but to stir up to greater violence the spirit of persecution, and to open all the eyes of the sacerdotal Argus. It must be admitted, too, that the Protestant zeal of that period seemed to be more political than spiritual. It was not of ethereal temper, and, therefore, it soon lost its edge, and was then suddenly abandoned altogether. The energy put forth seemed to be the result of feverish excitement, rather than of healthful principle. Hence the Roman Catholic controversy suddenly lost its interest in the public mind. The lectures were given up; books written on this subject lay piled in sheets in the printer's store-rooms; the converts were neglected, and left to the alternative of backsliding or starvation. The more ignorant and unstable *relapsed*; but the vast majority maintained their

noble course, through evil report and good report, and the greater part remain till this day, while some are fallen asleep in JESUS.

Very different from this is the policy of your church. The Priests work for proselytes with incessant activity, but silently and unobtrusively. By intermarriages they link many a weak Protestant into their system, and many more they beguile into conformity by false miracles. Every Roman Catholic is an unwearied missionary, who perpetually harasses the ignorant Protestant, who happens to be his companion, with clap-traps about Henry VIII. and Martin Luther—with invitations to attend a high mass, or some other pompous ceremonial of his church—with reports of priestly miracles, positively asserted to be facts, until, at length, he is inveigled to the chapel and the confessional. The latter is to *ignorant* Protestants like the lion's-den: many foot-steps may be traced to its entrance, but none returning. The converts are watched over with great attention, and are uniformly treated both by Priests and people with especial kindness. They are the most violent bigots of the party, and are ever readiest to perform their dirty work.

This cautious silence, however, is sometimes broken, when the Papal net has drawn up some

great fish, whose capture may be turned to account. There is then a shout of triumph raised throughout Europe, and echoed back from the walls of the Vatican. It is hard to say which party boasts loudest—the Unitarian about Ram-singh Roy, or the Roman Catholic about the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Spencer.


These attractive *takes* are converted into baits, and by these means a great number of small fry is brought within reach of the modern Peter, the fisher of men.

I well remember reading in one of the provincial newspapers shortly before I left the Church of Rome, a flaming editorial article to the following effect:—

“A young gentleman of most interesting appearance, and splendid talents, rushed into the presence of the Right Rev. Dr. ———, and having fallen on his knees, he lifted up his hands, and earnestly implored the Bishop to receive him back into the bosom of the church from which he had been unhappily seduced, since which he had enjoyed no peace of mind day or night. The Bishop graciously gave him his hand, and commanded him to rise. He was at once received into favour, and congratulated on his deliverance ‘from walking in ways of difficulty.’”

*I afterwards was made acquainted with all the*

particulars of this person's history, and a most curious one it is. A volume might be filled with an account of the tricks he played on both parties alternately, for he was one of the cleverest of imposters—the Bamfield More Carew of the religious world. He was certainly a very interesting little person, had a smattering of all sorts of knowledge, and was also a correct and an eloquent speaker. He went over to the Protestants when very young, and they made some use of him at public meetings, where his harangues were popular and effective. He fancied, however, that his services were not properly appreciated, and with the fickleness which belonged to his capricious nature, he went suddenly back to the Roman Church, as above stated. He was then placed in the College of ———, where anxious attention was paid to his education, and he was treated with all possible tenderness. He could not apply himself to study, and his negligence was passed over with unexampled indulgence; and while others were punished he was petted. They brought him forth to the Bible meetings, which were held in the neighbourhood, where with consummate impudence he abused and misrepresented those clergymen of whose generous *hospitality* he had partaken, until one of them *confronted* him by producing his own letters to



prove that his statements deserved no attention. Nevertheless, he was borne back in triumph on the shoulders of the people as their favoured champion, and also warmly congratulated by the Bishop, who remained behind the scenes and laughed at the sport.

Our young hero, however, soon got weary of a college life. He was fond of change, and display, and excitement. Accordingly, the cherished little bird fled one morning from his cage, and perched among Protestants once more. He now, however, selected Scotland for the field of his experiments, and actually persuaded the rigid Presbyterians to let him exhibit in their pulpits, which are closed against their ministerial brethren in Ulster. I cannot, however, follow him through all his turnings and doublings. I was introduced to him by a gentleman who had been his fellow-student at College. I found him in a small room, where was a press-bed, out of which he had just crept, leaving the little spot which he had occupied open under the clothes, so as to give you the idea of a fox's hole. With a black handkerchief round his aching head, he sat at a round table, so diminutive, as to be in perfect keeping with the rest of the picture. The *tout ensemble* was truly amusing. I went, feeling a deep interest in so extraordinary a character, who had



been alternately the champion of Popery and Prelacy, and had the art of winning the confidence of those whom he had deceived and slandered. An air of the most imperturbable assurance rested on his countenance, which was handsome, but care-worn. His language flowed gracefully—the periods harmoniously turned—the words accurately pronounced, and each dropping quietly and deliberately into its proper place. He spoke of his grievances; of his temptations from poverty; of the cruelty of the church clergy in judging of the occasional indiscretions of a young man of genius, by the rigid maxims of *puritanic* morality. The excessive pride which he manifested in vindicating every step of his wayward career—the tone of bitterness in which he alluded to the piety of the Evangelical clergy, told you at once of the *unrenewed* character, and excited very painful feelings in the mind. But his first appearance prepared me for unfavourable impressions: I had seen the man before. I had heard him in a public reading-room spouting infidelity for the amusement of a knot of sceptics—and when I saw him now putting forth his claims on Protestants as a religious character, and imposing on a benevolent clergyman, by whom he was supported, I was filled with indignation and disgust.

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Soon after, a sum of money was procured by the clergyman just mentioned, with a view to send him out to America. He received it with warm professions of gratitude and penitence. But when it was thought that he was on his way to the Western world, he was found one night in the street in a state of intoxication, and not in the most reputable company. Like another SAVAGE or DERMODY, he buried himself in some haunt of vice till his money was all squandered, and then he emerged into the light of day, feeble and squalid. Behold the *protégé* of Dr. —, the favoured *alumnus* of — college!

From a being so depraved and so wretched, let us turn to one who was his fellow-student in that institution. Mr. — is the son of a respectable farmer in —, who spent more than four years in this college, passing through a course of preparation for the Priesthood. But while he sat under the divinity lectures, he began to imbibe doubts of the truth of his religion. These doubts were shared by others, who would have been glad of some means of honourable retreat from their prison. Our young friend obtained leave of absence to visit his parents, whose anger and sorrow knew no bounds when he informed them firmly that he *would not* return to college again, and was de-

terminated never to enter the priesthood. Finding the feelings of his relatives so greatly excited, and seeing that he was hourly assailed with importunities and threats, he left abruptly the paternal roof, and proceeded to London, where he had a wealthy uncle retired from business. The latter received him with great cordiality, thinking that he was already in holy orders. But when informed of his mistake, and of his nephew's determination to abandon the priesthood altogether, his manner became suddenly cold and repulsive, and, without offering the slightest assistance, he bowed him out of the room.

This resource failing, and his scanty means exhausted, he returned to Dublin, and found himself in the streets of this great metropolis without a shilling in his pocket. What could he do? Where was he to turn? There were Priests in town who knew him well, and would have hailed his return to the church with delight, but he carefully shunned them—he was prepared to suffer for conscience' sake.

In this state of extreme destitution, he providentially met in the street the unhappy creature whose weather-cock movements I have *described* above. After exchanging their *congratulations* and reminiscences, they proceeded

to the house of the Rev. Mr. —, a gentleman who has done more, in the true spirit of Christian zeal, to assist converts from Romanism, than any other man in Ireland, though deriving scarcely any emolument from the church. With a nobleness of mind, and a delicacy of sentiment very rarely exhibited, he respects the lacerated feelings of those much-trying individuals, and endeavours so to minister to their necessities, as to leave inviolate

“ The glorious privilege of being independent.”

It was *he* first noticed and fostered the talent of one of these converts—a gentleman who has since distinguished himself as one of the ablest writers his country ever produced; whose portraits of Irish character are unrivalled, except by the inimitable “*Sketches*” of the generous friend, *by whom* he was taught to chisel into symmetry, and polish into beauty, the first rude but vigorous essays of his own genius.

The writer of these pages is also much, very much indebted to the same excellent clergyman; but he may not touch farther on this grateful theme, lest he should dwell on it too long.

Let us return to the fugitive collegian.—Mr. — received him with his usual kindness, and finding on inquiry that all his statements

were strictly correct—that his character was unimpeachable—that he was talented, and every way respectable—he felt towards him an unusual interest. Anxious as well for his spiritual as his temporal advantage, he sent for me, and having introduced us, requested that I might give him as much of my company as possible, in order more fully to instruct him in the way of salvation. I had, therefore, abundant opportunities of knowing him intimately; and I can confidently affirm, that a young man less contaminated by the world, more pure in feeling or upright in principle, I never knew. When passing through ——— about this time, I visited the college. After some conversation with one of the Professors, now a Bishop, I was conducted through the establishment by one of the senior students. I mentioned the name of my friend, and learned that my guide had been his class-fellow. He spoke highly of his character and attainments, and lamented what he called his melancholy aberration from the path of truth, which he accounted for by his superficial acquaintance with the principles of religion. Less than this could not be said in such a quarter.

Now here was a real acquisition to the *Protestant cause*. How eagerly would the *Roman Catholics* have received such a person! He

would have sat at the Bishop's table; he would have been honoured and applauded, and put prominently forward to battle in the cause of the Papacy, while fresh laurels would adorn his brow after every contest. But how was he actually treated by the Protestant party? Oh, what a melancholy contrast! After weeks and months of the most agonising suspense—after having his feeling of independence wounded almost beyond endurance, notwithstanding the studious delicacy of his benefactor—he obtained, with much difficulty, some trifling tuitions. He lived for eight or nine months at the table of this clergyman, whose earnest exertions failed to enlist the sympathies of bishops or dignitaries in his favour. The Established Church had no room for him: there was no opening, no school of theology, no situation, no religious employment for any but the legal clergy. Thus the want of adaptation to the circumstances of the times—the unwieldiness of her machinery—the necessity of receiving and retaining agencies that are feeble, and of excluding those which are vigorous and effective, whose forces are thereby thrown off, and left to work in other systems;—this is one of the chief sources of weakness to the Episcopal body in this country. My young

friend, with all his talent and his learning, is now working for his bread in an ironmonger's warehouse! But, so far as this world is concerned, he is better provided for than some that are engaged in preaching the Gospel.

Behold, my dear Friend, the sort of encouragements held out by the Protestant party to persons leaving the Church of Rome! Do you think the prospect very inviting? Would you incur the hatred of your father and mother, brothers and sisters, and neighbours; would you renounce all your friends, and relinquish all the delights of home; would you sacrifice your character, and suffer yourself, "by sudden wrench," to be torn away from all those hearts that once beat in unison with your own;—would you do all this for such a reward? Away, then, with those malignant charges and base insinuations thrown out against the character of those who leave the Church of Rome! Their conduct evinces a self-immolation—a heroism, which all but the blinded bigot must admire.

As to myself, though exposed to the vulgar slander like others, I can truly say, that I never got any thing among Protestants which I did not earn honestly. With much trouble, a Reverend *Friend* obtained for me a poor situation, which I

was compelled to relinquish by an anonymous notice which threatened my life if I did not; and this notice, I can assure you, came from a **Churchman!**



## LETTER VIII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

HAVING thus disposed of the charge of cupidity and hypocrisy usually brought against the converts from the Roman Catholic Church, I now return to my narrative. You will remember I stated in a former letter that I made a solemn vow that I would remain in the Church of Rome, in order to escape the disgrace and the persecution consequent on separation. But I soon repented of this vow as foolish, and, in fact, unlawful. It seemed mean and dastardly to go from Sunday to Sunday to chapel, hypocritically kneeling before an altar, which desecrated, instead of sanctifying, the gifts that were placed on it. Why not manfully avow my opinions? Was not my duty to God tantamount to every other consideration? These reflections had their weight. But then, how was I to begin to be openly a Protestant?

There are two things which Roman Catholics, you are aware, regard as the most infamous and unexpiable of all crimes—eating meat on Friday *and joining* in Protestant worship. These *constitute the Rubicon of Romanism: pass it,*

and you are a rebel, a wretch, a slave to your appetite, an execrable renegade. How I shuddered when I stood on its banks! I was at the house of a Protestant when I summoned up sufficient courage to say I would take meat on Friday. It was placed before me. I hesitated; my hand trembled: I laid down the knife and fork; I blushed, because the Roman Catholics present would misrepresent my motives; and then blushed again at my own weakness. At last the spell was broken, and I wondered how I could have been swayed by a prejudice so palpable and vulgar. No one but a Romish convert can truly estimate the force of early prepossession, confirmed by a long habit of ceremonial observance, which it is deemed impious to violate; and none but such a person can fully sympathize with Peter and the other Jewish converts, in the strong reluctance and painful struggles with which they departed from the customs of their fathers. I can assure you it requires a strong mind, well fortified by reason and Scripture, to make this visible and outward transition from one system to another, without a misgiving of conscience and a disagreeable sense of defilement. Thus you perceive that man, with all his boasted reason, is very much the *creature of instinct*.

In the Autumn of 18—, one Sunday morning, I met in the street of E—— an intimate Roman Catholic friend. We had been companions long, had read the same books, and been engaged in the same occupation. Our conversation now turned on religious topics. I candidly avowed the new doctrines I had embraced. He warmly impugned them; and we had an animated discussion. At length, he gave me up as lost—deeply lamented my heresy—said I would certainly become a Protestant minister, and promised in that case to make an effort to hear me preach. Just at this moment a gentleman passed by whom I did not know. “That gentleman,” said he, “would agree with your arguments: he is the Protestant Curate; he is going now to church.”

I secretly resolved to go too, deeming it better to pass the ordeal at once; although I did so not without sad and trembling emotion, knowing that the moment I crossed the threshold of the church-door I would become a marked man; for ever after isolated from all I held most dear; and that this very act would, like the shears of Atropos, cut in sunder at once all those tender ties of friendship that constituted the happiness of my *life*. My resolution, however, was taken. Having bid farewell to my friend, I directed my

course to the church. When I came to the gate I stopped, looked about fearfully on every side, lest some acquaintance would observe me. I had entered this church-yard once before, when I was a boy, attracted by the white surplice of the minister, who was engaged reading the burial service. I was not then aware of the criminality of this, as I did not enter the church. Having learned, however, that the thing was forbidden, I mentioned it in confession. The Priest looked surprised and angry; and having expressed his indignation at the liberty I had taken, commanded me to rise, and go to the Bishop for absolution of this crime, without which he refused to hear me any more. I was therefore obliged to travel to Dr. ———, to whom I acknowledged my fault in most humble terms. After looking very serious, and warning me against a repetition of such conduct, he merely wrote his name on a small slip of paper; and having presented it to the Priest, he heard my confession, imposing, however, penance far more severe than I should have borne for a dozen violations of the commands of God.

The slip of paper reminds me of the practice of a Parish Priest whom you know. All the parishioners are compelled to go to himself with their *dues* at Christmas and Easter; and when

each has paid his account, he receives a ticket of admission to one of the Curates, with the word "*accedat*"\* and the Parish Priest's initials appended. This plan secures punctuality in the payment of the dues, and takes away from the Curate a temptation to which his cupidity might sometimes compel him to yield. But this is a digression.

I entered the church. The congregation was large and respectable; and the services were conducted not in the irreverent manner in which your clergy too frequently hurry through the mass, but with much gravity and solemnity. For a few minutes I felt very uncomfortable in my seat. I thought all eyes were fixed on me. I doubt not that my awkward manner proved that I was no Church of England man; for when a Prayer-book was handed to me I did not know what to do with it, and could no more follow the minister, as he jumped from one part of it to the other, than I could determine the course of Halley's Comet.

I was much pleased with the forms of worship. I felt like one that had just come forth from the "long-drawn aisles" of some Gothic cathedral, where the small, painted windows, casting "a *dim religious light*" on the scene, rendered the

\* He may approach.

reigning gloom more solemn. I was conscious of moving in an atmosphere of light and liberty. What a contrast to the mass—where the glimmering candle-light at noon-day, the mimic tabernacle, and all the paraphernalia of the altar—the robing, the bowing, the muttering, the turning, and kissing, and ringing—appear nothing better than “dumb show”—a pantomime, which neither instructs the mind nor moves the heart! What man has been the wiser for all the masses he ever heard? Where are the consciences that have been awakened and purified by attendance on this pretended sacrifice? I never could hear of any. The Priest speaks in an unknown tongue—he communicates no ideas, because the terms he employs are unintelligible to his hearers. The same unmeaning cuckoo note is repeated perpetually, and the same scenic representation takes place, in every particular unvaried, which he has beheld perhaps a thousand times. And though this sameness obtains also in the Protestant liturgy, yet every thing is intelligible. You understand what is said and done; and the services are, with some exceptions, arranged with a view to produce moral impression.

It was so in the Roman Church in ancient times. The Latin language was for many ages

the vulgar tongue—the vernacular speech of the people. When it became a dead language, the public services of religion should have been transferred to the new dialects. But this did not suit the purposes of an ambitious clergy. The dark age of ignorance and mystery had set in, and it promoted the designs of a lordly hierarchy to wrap up the form of godliness (the power had vanished) like an embalmed corpse, in the multiplied folds of a pompous ceremonial; and, in the room of the potent, renovating *moral influence* of the Gospel, to substitute the imaginary *physical energy* of the clerical *opus operatum*. The people were no longer treated as rational creatures. The only sentiment which their teachers, or rather their leaders, were anxious to cultivate, was profound awe of the sacerdotal order. Thus the religion of JESUS, so spiritual and heavenly in its nature, was buried under a heap of ritual rubbish. Instead of the true worship of the Father, there was a round of mechanical duties—an endless routine of “bodily exercises.”

The Curate that I had seen pass was the preacher. He delivered what appeared to me an eloquent and impressive discourse on these words: “And they marvelled, and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.”

It was the first sermon I had ever heard from the lips of a Protestant minister. I was delighted; I understood what was said, and I felt in some degree its power.

I was now completely emancipated. The last link of my fetter was struck off. Having visited a clergyman who had long been my friend, the son of a man who stands foremost in the rank of Irish authors, and possessing talents worthy of such a father, and a heart fraught with benevolence, and animated with a noble generosity, I laid before him the state of my mind, which gave him very great pleasure. He congratulated me on the escape I had made from a system of strong delusion. "But," said he, "if you take my advice, you will not publish your poem. It will greatly irritate the Roman Catholics, and can do little or no good to the cause in which you are now embarked. I will tell you how you may employ your pen to better advantage. Write a pamphlet setting forth the reasons which induced you to change your principles, and it will I hope do good."

I took his advice, which also met the approval of the Vicar of B——, and wrote a number of letters to my friend, the Schoolmaster. The gentleman at whose request the work was undertaken read the MS., and passed on it a eulogium



too warm for me to repeat. It also met the decided approbation of the Vicar.

“My only objection,” said he, “is that it is too good to come from you; you will hardly get credit for such a production.”

This was rather an equivocal compliment, you will say, but it turned out to be the fact. This juvenile performance, the first-fruits of my studies in the Romish controversy, was attributed by many to one of the clergy, the respected Curate of G——, who read the MS. as it was written, but had nothing whatever to do with the composition or the arguments.

The truth is, dear Friend, the Protestants are very slow to give Roman Catholics credit for those habits of study, and that unquenchable love of knowledge, which many of them possess in a very eminent degree. Oh, how my heart grieves for the multitudes of young men of genius in Ireland, whose fine powers are wasted—lost in obscurity for want of the means of developement!

“ Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

Never was this beautiful stanza, hacknied though *it be*, more truly applied than when quoted to

illustrate the fate of talent among the Roman Catholics of Ireland. Scotland, with two millions of people, has four Universities in which the poorest young man of talent may obtain his degree. But Ireland, with its eight millions of inhabitants, has but one; and that is practically closed to all but the gentry.

The moralists and the politicians that censure the people of Ireland for their want of social order and their immorality, are hard masters, Sir; they would reap where they have scattered no seed.

The Vicar of B—— gave me an introduction to the Bishop. When I called at the palace, he received me kindly, and was pleased to read my MS. and approve of it. I was astonished at the extent of his library, of which he made a good use; for he was a man of immense learning, and great logical acumen. Though he rose from the lower walks of life to this eminent station, he seemed to me, so far as I could then judge, “to bear his honours meekly.” Indeed, he evinced towards me a degree of condescension and affability, which I have never seen surpassed by any gentleman whatever.

On new-year’s day, 18—, I read my recantation in G—— church. This public renunciation of the errors of the Church of Rome was then

the order of the day. But I am now convinced that it was a bad plan, and contributed to defeat the end proposed to be accomplished by its advocates. Still, it was not such a horrible proceeding as Roman Catholics imagine. They think it consists of abuse of the Virgin Mary, and various other matters of a blasphemous nature. But this is a great mistake. The convert simply expresses his disbelief of the leading peculiarities of the Roman system, according to the words of a printed form, which the minister reads before him, after which the Lord's Supper is administered. Great interest was excited by this service. But it cost me a good deal to go through it. One of my nearest relatives accused me of being actuated by sinister motives, and selling my soul for filthy lucre. Another dear female friend, whom I highly esteemed for her amiable qualities and her unfeigned piety, told me plainly that I resembled Judas, who dipped his hand in the dish with his Divine Master, and then basely betrayed him. Another lifted up her hands, and prayed, as I advanced to the church, that God might strike me dead, before such a deed of impiety was consummated!

You know, my dear Sir, that I have very little of the Stoic in my nature; these circumstances must, therefore, have been painfully felt.

But though my views of the Gospel were still indistinct, my spirit was supported by the consciousness that I was doing my duty; and it also consoled me to remember that the Son of God himself was pursued with maledictions to the cross.

Having thus publicly enrolled myself as a member of a Protestant Church, you may reasonably ask me by what process of argument I was led to prefer a reformed creed to that of the Church of Rome. I have thought it better not to interrupt the narrative up to the present time by any formal discussion of the Romish tenets. But before I proceed to the subsequent stages of my experience, I will pause to throw together some of the reasons that induced me to leave the Church of Rome; and I shall endeavour to study perspicuity and brevity as far as possible, while, in my next letter, I bring before you the subject of the Mass.

## LETTER IX.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE Creed of Pope Pius IV., which is received by your church as an infallibly correct summary of the faith, thus speaks of the Mass:—

“ I profess, likewise, that in the Mass there is offered to God a proper and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead. And that, in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, there are truly, really and substantially, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ: and that there is made a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood: which conversion the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation. I also confess that under either kind alone, Christ is received whole and entire, and a true sacrament.”

This is in exact accordance with the decrees of the Council of Trent, and is *now* the universally received doctrine of the Church of Rome. Deferring the question of transubstantiation for examination in a subsequent letter, I shall now apply myself to what is termed the sacrifice of *the Mass*.

I trust you will consider my arguments with the candour which the importance of the subject demands—that you will prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. If it be your duty to *prove* all things, then it is manifest there must be a *judging faculty* to be exercised, and a *standard* with which it compares the doctrinal and moral subjects that are brought before it. These things are necessary to our accountability. Where there is no law, there is no transgression; and where there is no conscience, transgressions are not imputed. We shall refer, then, “to the law and the testimony.”

A person who had learned his theology only from the Bible, would be sadly puzzled on meeting the word *Mass*. What can it mean? And why should we look in vain for a word so important in a book which is said to contain the mystery which it denotes? The *name* is no where to be found; but it is contended that the thing is contained in the institution of the Lord's Supper. Who could have thought that? In the *Douay Catechism*, and in the *Grounds of the Catholic Doctrine*, it is stated that CHRIST said the first Mass!—and we are referred to the Last Supper for proof. Now, have the goodness to turn to Matth. xxvi. 26, Luke xxiv. 30, and 1 Cor. xi. 23—25, and tell me, candidly, do

these passages contain any thing *like* the Mass. When you go next to chapel, observe attentively every thing the Priest does, and if you can discover a similitude, I think you must draw largely on your imagination. He took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take, eat." In like manner he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, "Drink ye all of this." Is this saying Mass? Did the Redeemer hereby "offer himself to God as a true propitiatory sacrifice"? It might be a eucharistic, or thanksgiving offering; but an atoning sacrifice it could not be. There was *no bloodshed*, and the shedding of blood both Jews and Gentiles regarded as essential to a propitiatory sacrifice. Indeed, this is the doctrine taught us by the Holy Spirit—*"Without shedding of blood there is no remission,"* Heb. ix. 22. Cain confessed no sin, and obtained no pardon by offering "of the fruits of the ground"—while Abel offered by faith "a more excellent sacrifice," "of the firstlings of his flock."

But a sacrifice must be offered *to God*; the bread and wine, however, were offered to the disciples. "Take, eat," was said to *them*.—*"Do this in remembrance of me."* The *memorial of a sacrifice* is not a sacrifice. Besides, if

Christ offered himself at the Last Supper, it is admitted that he offered himself again on the *Cross*; therefore, he offered himself *twice*. If so, St. Paul must have been greatly mistaken, when he said, "Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many;"—"We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*," Heb. ix. 28, and x. 10. Here is a contradiction. Which shall we believe, the church or the Apostle? If Jesus offered himself on the *table*, why should he offer himself on the *cross*? If a true, proper and propitiatory sacrifice was offered in an upper room, what need of another on Calvary?

But the Apostle argues that, if he were "offered often, then must he *often* have *suffered*," Heb. ix. 26. Does not this set aside your church's distinction, between a bloody and an *unbloody* sacrifice? "A sacrifice unbloody and yet propitiatory! Who ever heard of such a thing? What Jew?—what Pagan? A sacrifice for atonement cannot be unbloody, for "without shedding of blood there is no remission." Could sin be pardoned by mere *doing* without *suffering*? by mere *action* without *passion*? Is it not a truth written, as it were, with the finger of God on the heart of man—that the *pardon of sin* requires the death of a victim?



If a sacrifice may be unbloody and yet propitiatory, wherefore did the blood of animals stream for ages on Jewish altars, according to Divine appointment? But, above all, why did the Son of God die a death so cruel, if an unbloody offering would have sufficed to save the souls of men? If the doctrine of an unbloody atonement were true, would it not then have been possible for the bitter cup to pass from the Redeemer? I entreat your impartial and earnest attention to these questions.

I have carefully examined the Bible, and I find not the slightest mention of any offering of Christ but *one* as an atonement or propitiation for sin. I have also examined the writings of your own divines, and I have never met a proof of any such offering, either before or after the crucifixion. Was it not my duty, therefore, to reject the Mass as a doctrine of man's invention? But I have more to say on this dogma of your Church.

Where there is a sacrifice there must be a *Priest*; and your clergymen profess to be priests in the strict sense of the word. Now what do you say to the fact, that the *ministers* of the Gospel are never once called Priests in the New Testament? Jewish ministers had bloody sacrifices to offer, and are therefore called Priests.

The same may be said of the Pagans. In allusion to the Jewish Priesthood, Christians, *as such* (including the laity, of course), are figuratively called Priests. Thus Peter (1 Peter ii. 5, 9) calls *believers* a "holy Priesthood"—"a royal Priesthood"—"to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." See also, Rev. i. 6 and v. 10, where all the redeemed in heaven are said to be made "kings and Priests unto God." But it is a remarkable fact, which members of your Church should weigh deliberately, that the word *Priest* is never applied in Scripture to any one of the apostles, evangelists, prophets, or pastors of the New Testament. In the present Dispensation, *there is no Priest but JESUS CHRIST.*

I know you will reply that Melchisedek is called the Priest of the most High God, though he offered only bread and wine. But to whom did he offer these? Manifestly not to God as a sacrifice, but to Abraham as refreshment, when he had returned from the slaughter of the kings; or if to God on Abraham's account, it must have been to give thanks for his victory, and not to atone for his sins. (Gen. xiv. 18—20.) He blessed Abraham, and received as a gift the tenth of the spoils, because he was a Priest of *the most High God*, and a remarkable type of

Christ. It is not to this transaction we are to look in order to discover him performing the peculiar functions of the Priest's office. Like all the patriarchs—such, for instance, as Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, &c.—he offered bloody sacrifices, which the heads of families and tribes were accustomed to do before the appointment of the Aaronic Priesthood. Melchizedek, then, was strictly a Priest—"a Priest on his throne;" and as such a most eminent type of Immanuel.

You will also, perhaps, attempt to set aside my argument by simply denying the fact on which I build it. You will assert that the ministers of the Gospel are frequently styled Priests, and appeal to the Rhemish Testament for proof. If so, I must repeat again the assertion, that the proper Greek word for Priest (*ιερευς*) is never applied to a Christian minister; although I am aware that the English translation of it is found several times in that Testament; but in these cases it is employed as the rendering of "elder" (*πρεσβυτερος*). The Greek word just mentioned occurs sixty-five times in the New Testament, and is for the most part translated "ancient" in your Bible; while in six places of its occurrence, they call it "Priest." These places are the following:—Acts xiv. 23 and xv. 2; 1 Tim. v. 17. 19; Titus i. 5; James v. 14.

I do not know whether you are aware of the fact, that the English versions of the Bible in your Church have been made not from the Greek and Hebrew originals, but from the Vulgate; and are thus the translations of a translation.

But it is curious to remark that the translators have often departed from their copy, and especially in the six places above referred to. To justify the translation of the Rhemish Testament, the Latin word *sacerdos* (the proper rendering of *ιερευς*), a Priest, should have been found in all the passages above mentioned. But it does not occur in any of them. I could not discover a single passage (and I believe nobody can do it) in your standard Latin Bible in which *sacerdos*, a Priest, is applied to a New Testament minister.

Not one! It gives "presbyterus" and "senior" for the Greek *πρεσβυτερος*, *elder*; but restricts *sacerdos* to its proper signification, a *sacrificing Priest*, never applying it to any of the ambassadors or ministers of Christ under the present Dispensation. It does, however, apply it to Jesus Christ, who is our great and only Priest.

Again I repeat the assertion, and I challenge all the scholars in Ireland to contradict it, that there is under the Christian Economy, NO PRIEST BUT JESUS CHRIST!

If you ask me, why the Rhemish translators

did not keep to their copy in these particulars, I am afraid the true answer cannot be given without impeaching the motives of these reverend gentlemen. They wished to stand by their order. They professed to offer daily a true, proper, and expiatory sacrifice; and, therefore, they must be, in the strict sense, Priests; but as the word was not found connected with the ministerial office in the Sacred Record, not even in their own version of it—a version of which a canonised saint was the author, which a general Council sanctioned, and of which two successive Popes were the editors—they were determined to insert it at all hazards! But surely these guides might have been safely followed. Why, then, were they not followed? There was, it seems, a reason.

The Jesuits of Bourdeaux published a French New Testament in 1686, full of gross interpolations. For instance: Acts xiii. 2, “Now as they offered unto the Lord *the sacrifice of the Mass.*”

When Monsieur Vernon was asked why he had thus wrested the passage from its proper meaning, he replied, “Because I have been often asked by the Calvinists what Scripture affirmed *that the Apostles said Mass.*”

*If texts are to be coined in this manner, no*

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man can be at a loss for Scriptural arguments ! It is distressing to remark that the grave and reverend Fathers of the Council of Trent were actuated by similar considerations in compiling their canons. It was not so much a question what God had taught, and the primitive church believed, as what would most pointedly condemn the doctrines of Luther. Yet it is to this "pressure from without," my dear Friend, that you are indebted for a Roman Catholic Bible in English—a fact confessed by the Rhemish translators themselves. Innumerable and most important are the advantages that have thus indirectly resulted from religious discussion. Truth must be a gainer by free inquiry ; but popular ignorance is like the Dead Sea—a curse broods over it, and its pestiferous exhalations diffuse a moral desolation around.

It appears evidently, then, that there is nothing in Scripture to countenance the Mass. Our blessed Lord offered no expiatory sacrifice at the Last Supper. There cannot be remission of sins without the shedding of blood ; and, therefore, the Mass cannot be an atoning sacrifice. Jesus was offered but once. Were he still to be offered according to your creed, then must he still, according to St. Paul, be subject to suffering ; the idea of offering or immolation apart

from suffering, being a palpable absurdity. It has also been demonstrated, even on the authority of the *Latina Vulgate*, that there is no Priest under the New Testament but JESUS CHRIST.

“ Now, of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: we have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”—“ For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.”—“ Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is *passed into the heavens*, JESUS, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”

The question of the Priesthood is discussed at large in the Epistle to the Hebrews; see particularly chapters 2, 4, 5, 7, 9 and 10. In the whole of the Apostle's reasoning on this subject, there is not a hint about the *supreme pontiff* at Rome, or about the inferior tribes of the sacerdotal order.

Closely connected with the Priesthood is the question of Atonement, or the ground of the sinner's justification before God, and to this your attention will be directed in my next letter.

## LETTER X.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

OUR Creator has given us a law which we are, of course, bound to obey; and which, being holy and just and good, contributes directly and invariably to the happiness of those who yield to its requirements. The summary of that law, given by JESUS himself, is at once simple, rational and sublime. It demands that we should love GOD above all things, with *all* our powers, and our neighbour as ourselves. Here, in one brief, intelligible sentence, which commends itself to every conscience, we have the whole duty of man.

But, alas! man is not *disposed* to do his duty. He comes into the world with a nature prone to evil and averse to good. His mind is ignorant, his heart is depraved, and his life, so soon as he begins to exert his faculties, becomes polluted and guilty. Various are the symptoms, Sir, which characterise this radical disease of the human soul. They may be modified by an endless variety of circumstances, and may exhibit themselves with greater or less malignity in different persons. But the one diagnostic by which



a man's spiritual state may be clearly ascertained is this—In the midst of all that is benevolent in his feelings, amiable in his manners, and generous in his conduct, his *heart* is alienated from GOD; and the claims of his CREATOR—the first, the most sacred of all claims—are disregarded. He may be, to a certain extent, “sober,” and in a certain sense, “righteous,” but he is *not* “godly;” and this essential feature of his case marks him as polluted, guilty, selfish, ungrateful, hopeless.

He wants two things—to be pardoned and renewed. But how are these to be accomplished? God's justice demands satisfaction for sin; and the honour of his government, and the well-being of his boundless empire, require that these demands should be rigidly insisted on. “The soul that sinneth shall die.”—“The wages of sin is death.” May this doom be averted? Can the sinner render satisfaction for his offences? Let us look narrowly at these questions, for they are vitally important.

Now, were the case of a sinner like that of a day-labourer, who hires a certain portion of his time, but when that portion is expired is perfectly independent of his employer, he could very easily settle his accounts with God. For if the *labourer in question* should absent himself from *the work* for a number of days, he might satisfy

his master by working up the lost time at a future period, or he could get a friend to do it for him, or he could remit an equivalent amount of wages.

But this is manifestly not the relation which we bear to our Creator and Preserver. We owe him *perfect love*, from the moment we are capable of appreciating his goodness, till the pulse ceases its vibrations in the cold grasp of death. We are not independent creatures. We cannot, without injustice, withhold from him our service for a single hour. "Will a man rob God?"

Our condition, in *this* respect, may be more fitly illustrated by that of the modern slave. He is not his own; he is bought with a price. He is his master's property. When he forsakes the plantation, and amuses himself a few days hunting or fishing in the woods, it will not do for the truant to say,

"Massa, me pay de days dat me lost."

How can he?—*All* his days belong to his master; and if payment be rendered to him, it must be from his own property, which is absurd. Can the poor man derive any assistance from his fellow-bondsmen? No; for they are exactly in the *same* circumstances, and not one of them

could give him a day without robbing his own master. Thus, neither from his own efforts, nor from those of his friends, can he derive the slightest hope. He must cast himself on the compassion of his master.

Behold an exact illustration of the state of all guilty creatures under the government of God.\* "None can, by any means, redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him," Psalm xlix. 7. Our Lord tells us, that when we have done all that is required, we should still count ourselves unprofitable servants, having done only what it was our duty to do. Now God's requirement of us is limited only by *our ability*. Every talent received must be improved to the utmost. The highest archangel is bound to put forth all his mighty energies to glorify "Him that sits upon the throne." And if even *he* does not accomplish all that he *can*, he is guilty.

Therefore, WORKS OF SUPEREROGATION ARE IMPOSSIBLE. No creature can exceed his duty in rendering to God acceptable obedience. Let him "come short," for a moment, and he is a transgressor, and requires an atonement! And he might range through the universe without finding a single created being, who could transfer

\* But the service of Jehovah is not slavery. The slave-holder usurps the prerogative of God.

to him any portion of his obedience, or boast of even the slightest imaginable measure of what is properly called *merit*.

The sinner, however, is not merely a debtor; he is a criminal. He owes, indeed, ten thousand talents, and has nothing whatever to pay the debt. But were he able to liquidate the whole—to lay down the last farthing; he would not, therefore, be acquitted. Neither the forger nor the robber escapes the sentence of the law, by refunding back the unjustly acquired property. They are dealt with, not as debtors, but as criminals. Now, if sin be regarded as a debt, the righteousness of CHRIST is accepted on our behalf; and if it be regarded as a crime, the blood of JESUS washes it away. His obedience is imputed or reckoned to us; our disobedience is imputed to Him.

If the principle illustrated above be sound, and I think it both rational and Scriptural, then it follows, that right notions of the *law* of God—a correct apprehension of the relations sustained by intelligent creatures towards their Creator—out up by the roots the leading errors both of CATHOLICISM and UNITARIANISM. If no creature can perform works of supererogation, then no creature can be a saviour! It follows, of course,—*First*, that Christ is not a creature;

and, Second, that saints or angels can in no sense be saviours. Widely as these two systems seem to diverge from one another, they really spring from the same source, namely, the pride of human nature—which tries to bend the law of God to its own selfish and tortuous course, and to atone for aberrations, where they have been extensive and glaring, by its own self-dependent efforts. They both alike offer the sacrifice of Cain.

There is not a being in existence qualified to save a sinner but *Jesus Christ*. His deity stamps an infinite value on his obedience and death, while his humanity rendered the one and the other practicable, and communicates to them a moral influence, the most attractive, constraining, and sanctifying, that could possibly have been devised. In the plenitude of his divine power, he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him—and by the overpowering tenderness of his human sympathies, the most timorous of the guilty are encouraged to fly to the embraces of his love.

That our blessed Redeemer suffered vicariously (that is, as a substitute), will be evident from the following texts, selected from a great multitude of similar import; and they will also show *you that his sufferings are completely effectual*

to the salvation of believers, without any supplemental additions on our part, or any assistance from saints or angels :—

Isaiah liii. 4—6, “ Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. The LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Can any language teach more clearly than this that Jesus bore in his own person the penalty of human guilt?

“ We are redeemed,” says the apostle Peter, 1 Peter i. 18, 19, “ not with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” This language, which expresses the import of all the sacrificial types, and gives us the reason why the victims were selected with so much scrupulosity from animals that were clean and perfect in their kind, very forcibly asserts the innocence of that glorious Being who devoted himself to the death of the cross for the salvation of men. He suffered not for his own sins; for he was holy, harmless, and undefiled.

This is again distinctly asserted by the same Apostle. (1 Peter iii. 18), “ For Christ also

hath once suffered for sins, the *just* for the *unjust*, that he might bring us to God."

This then was the great object of his suffering—to bring the unjust *to God*, not merely by the remission of their sins, but by the influence of his grace. For pardon would avail but little, unless there was an accompanying provision made for the obedience of those whom sovereign mercy has acquitted. This provision is the regeneration and sanctification of the soul.

But how, it may be asked, are these blessings made available to the sinner? If neither the tears of repentance, nor the austerities of penance can atone for past offences—if what we complaisantly call our *good works*, are (so far as they deserve the name), required by the terms of the law; and if, *necessary* to the day is the obedience thereof, *supposing* that the obedience were perfect;—and if we must, therefore, appeal for the remission of *punishment* to the blood, and for possession of *privileges* to the *righteousness* of Christ, then the question comes, *how* are the one and the other to be obtained? Hear the Apostle Paul on this subject:

“Now to him that *worketh* is the reward not reckoned of *grace*, but of *debt*. But to him that *worketh not*, but *believeth* on him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Even as David, also, describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God IMPUTETH RIGHTEOUSNESS *without works*, saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the *Lord will not impute sin.*" Rom. iv. 48. I might crowd whole pages with passages of similar import, were it necessary. Let me request your attention to a few remarks. You will perceive, my dear Friend, First, That the Apostle speaks of a *reciprocal imputation*—of sin to the Saviour, and righteousness to the sinner. The innocent Redeemer bears the *punishment*, the natural consequence of transgression; and the "*ungodly*" receives the *reward*, the natural consequence of obedience. Second, This "reward," springing out of merit not his own, is not of debt, but of grace—not legally due, but gratuitously conferred in its meritorious cause, the righteousness of Christ. Hence you may learn the evangelical meaning of *reward*, so greatly misunderstood in your Church, and, also, by not a few in the Church of England. *It is not of debt, but of grace.* This removal of guilt and appropriation of righteousness are effected by faith. Now, faith means such a *trust* in the testimony concerning Christ as leads us to *act* on it. If it is *inoperative*, it cannot justify. The faith which



unites to Jesus works by *love*, and is accompanied in its commencement by regeneration, and in its progress by sanctification. "For with the *heart* man believeth *unto righteousness*. Faith engrafts us in the true vine; faith builds us up as living stones on Christ, the foundation of the temple; faith makes us members of the mystical body of Jesus, and constitutes us heirs of an everlasting inheritance. It is by it the heart is purified; by it the world is vanquished.

Therefore, dear Friend, the charge of a licentious tendency, so often made against the doctrine of justification "by faith alone," a charge as old as the Gospel itself, is utterly without foundation. But you will, perhaps, urge the testimony of James in opposition to that of Paul on this subject. There is no difference between them. James is speaking of a "dead faith," (a thing very common in the world,) and he asks, Can "*that* faith" save him? Certainly it can not! The force of this question of James is lost in the English version, and the effect of this mistranslation is, that the two Apostles are brought into direct collision on a most vital point.

James ii. 14—"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man *say* he hath faith, and have *not works*? Can *that* faith ( $\eta\ \pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ ) save

him?" The stress of the question rests on *ἡ*, which is not translated. He says, moreover, that faith without works is dead, "being alone;" and this is the very doctrine which is constantly and strenuously inculcated by the Apostle Paul. But then it is added, (verse 24,) "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." I grant that if Paul and James are speaking of the *same thing*, viewed in the same light, it is impossible that their testimony can be reconciled. The former, in the most peremptory terms, again and again excludes the works of the law (springing from whatever source,) from the cause of our justification, declaring, most emphatically, that "by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified," Rom. iii. 20. What shall we say to these things? Look at the illustration which James brings forward. Exercise your common sense on the passage just as you would in studying any uninspired book. In *what sense* was Abraham justified by works, when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Was it by the merit of that transaction that his guilty soul was pardoned and accepted by God? By no means. If you read the history you will find that this proceeding was required by Jehovah not for the justification of his soul, but the *trial of his faith*. His justification had taken

place many years before, when he was called out of his country, and obeyed—not knowing whither he went. Even when God appointed circumcision, twenty-five years before the offering of Isaac, he received in this rite “a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had *yet being uncircumcised*, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that *righteousness might be imputed to them also*,” Rom. iv. 11. Thus Abraham had been long justified, and that by a righteousness not *personal*, but *imputed*—the “righteousness of God”—which is by faith. What, then, is the meaning of the Apostle James? Why, if he speaks of justification as in the sight of God, as a change of *state*, a change from condemnation to reconciliation, in that case he teaches that this change is not effected by the sort of faith of which the Antinomians of his day boasted—a faith cold, inactive, inoperative, dead—a faith which was “alone,” *unaccompanied* by works, naked as a barren tree, and motionless as a corpse—neither arousing the feelings, nor stimulating the conduct, nor transforming the character—by *such* a faith no man ever has been, and no man ever will be justified.

*But, as it was the faith of Abraham that was put to the test on the interesting occasion alluded*

to by James, and as his ready obedience furnished an illustration and justification of his *character* as a *believer*—not to enlighten the infinite mind of God, of course, but to edify his people in all ages—so, in this sense, before his fellow-men, no person is justified by *saying* he has faith, while he can exhibit no fruit on the tree, no vital motion in the body, no stream issuing from the fountain. For how can he meet the challenge of the Apostle, and show his faith without his works? As well might he think of shewing the sun without its light.

Thus, my dear Friend, I trust you see that the two Apostles are in harmony. Truth is one. There is no discordance in the principles of revelation. For holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and that blessed teacher cannot contradict himself. You also perceive that genuine faith works by love—love to God and man. “We are not our own,” says the sacred writer, “we are bought with a price; therefore, let us glorify God in our bodies and our spirits which are his.” “The love of Christ constraineth us, for we thus judge, that if ONE died for all, then were *all* dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto *themselves*, but unto him that died and rose again.” It is by drawing down on

the soul from the cross of Christ this sacred, self-mortifying and sanctifying influence, that faith "purifieth the heart" and "overcometh the world." May I not, now, confidently put the triumphant question of the Apostle. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law," Rom iii. 31.

## LETTER XI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IF the brief, and necessarily imperfect, illustrations of the Atonement and Justification given in my last letter be correct, then the Roman Catholic doctrine of Penance must be false; and the practices which it enforces must be not only useless to the sinner, but highly offensive to God. Thus have I been striking the tree of Human Merit at the root. If I have succeeded in felling it, as I trust I have, then all its various wide-spreading branches, and the unclean birds that nestled in them, must come down, crashing and screaming, to the ground.

For what purpose does a man perform penance? Is it not to atone for his sins? You say not for his mortal sins, but for venial; and for the temporal punishment which remains due for mortal sins, after the eternal punishment is remitted at the confessional.

You will permit me to refer you to your Catechism on this subject :

Q. What is the fifth thing necessary for the sacrament of Penance?

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A. It is to *satisfy* God and our neighbour for the injury done them.

Q. How is satisfaction made to God?

A. By fulfilling our penance, by fasting, prayers, and alms-deeds, and by bearing patiently whatever crosses come in our way.—*Dr. Butler's Catechism, page 23.*

It is here taught to the youth of our land that the sinner can by his own performances make satisfaction to God for the injury done him! Oh, how light a matter must sin be in the estimation of your spiritual guides! Our fastings, prayers, and alms atone for our sins! These things restore the soul to life after mortal sin has killed it! The guilty soul regenerated by these bodily exercises, upon every approach to the tribunal of confession! But when one mortal sin has extinguished the vital spark in the soul, how can it be said to be killed by the next and the next? The devil, it seems, becomes an Alexander in this business:

“And thrice he slew the slain.”

May I ask, is there a new-birth produced, a new-life communicated, by every penitential incubation? The Council of Trent, in substantial agreement with the Catechism just quoted, gives three conditions as essential to *Penance*; namely, “contrition, confession, and *satisfaction*.” Now, if satisfaction to God be an

essential part of Penance, it follows, that the validity of the absolution is conditional on the proper performance of "the prayers, fasting, alms-deeds," &c. ; so that no man can be sure that he is actually absolved ; that is, that the Priest's words have taken effect, until he is certain that all the penance imposed has been perfectly fulfilled, and that the punishment has been proportioned to the guilt ! A very nice inquiry, and onewhich, if properly attended to, would damp that light-heartedness which is often experienced on rising from the knee of the Priest. \* It is too soon to rejoice, my dear Friend. The grand essential point on which pardon is suspended—namely, satisfaction for sin—the paying of the penalty—is still pending, and may, after all, never be secured.

Now is it not strange, that throughout the whole Bible, "praying, fasting, and alms-deeds" are never once mentioned as the conditions of pardon, or as modes of satisfying for sin ? and is it not passing strange, that there is not even a distant allusion to the blood of Jesus, when your Church authoritatively lays down the plan by which the sinner's conscience is to be cleared of guilt ? Among the laws of association, which Aristotle has adverted to as helps to the memory, are *likeness* and *contrast*. Now, Sir, if the



doctrines taught by the *soi-disant* successor of Peter should suggest to the mind those which were proclaimed to the world by that venerable apostle, it cannot be by their *resemblance*, but their *opposition*. Take, as an illustration of this statement, Acts x. 43, where Peter declares, "To him (Jesus) give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." Listen, also, to Paul. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Rom. iii. 24, 25. And again, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Heb. ix. 14. Hear another apostle, the venerable John. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins."

Again, I ask, is it not singular, that in the *Roman doctrine* of remission of sins there is no *mention of the blood of Christ applied to the*

heart by faith, although these things are almost perpetually coupled together in Scripture? And is it not equally singular, that the apostles in their preaching always urge the sinner simply to believe on Christ for the pardon of his sins, but never to go to confession? How is it that we have no instance of auricular confession in the New Testament; that none ever kneeled down to the apostles, except through superstitious reverence, before they understood the Christian doctrine, when they were always promptly rebuked?

But, then, I am reminded of the power conferred on the apostles concerning the keys; binding and loosing, remitting and retaining sin, and so forth. These allusions are figurative. Keys are intended for a door; and Christ is the door by which we enter into the spiritual kingdom. To receive the keys of the kingdom is to receive authority to preach Christ—an authority conferred on all real ministers as well as the apostles; and this authority Peter was the first to exercise on the day of Pentecost; and he was afterwards privileged to throw open the door to the Gentiles, against whom his Jewish prejudices would keep it perpetually locked. This is the simple meaning of this figurative language, so familiar to the sacred writers. The Scribes and

Pharisees had the "key of knowledge," which they took from the people, refusing to enter themselves and hindering others. Now what was this key? Something that opened the kingdom of heaven; namely, the Word of Truth, of which they had robbed the people! Does not this passage clear up the mystery about Peter's keys?

There is, however, another sense in which pastors of churches may bind and loose, and to this the terms above referred to may be understood to apply; that is, in the exercise of discipline. Take, as an illustration, 2 Cor. ii. 10: "To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also." The apostle is referring to a case of church discipline. A member had acted unworthily, and had been punished by excision, which was the act of the "many;" that is, of the assembled church. The apostle now urges them to remit the punishment—to "forgive;" and he forgives, in the sight of Christ, in the very same manner that they do. Thus you perceive the manifest application of the language to church discipline. The case is perfectly in point.

Let us now refer to Matt. xviii. 15—18, a passage which we shall find, if possible, still *more* decisive. If your offending brother-member cannot be gained by private remonstrance

“between him and thee alone,” you are to take one or two more; and if he is still obstinate, what are you to do? Why, to tell the church. The church! How can you tell the Universal Church? Must you call a general council to examine the case? Or must you travel to Rome, to get an audience of his holiness? What then? You will tell the Priest. And so the Priest is the church!

“Ah!” methinks you exclaim, “you misunderstand the passage altogether.”

“Indeed! why what does it mean?”

“It means that if we do not receive the doctrines of the church, we are heathens and publicans.”

Not at all, my dear Friend; there is nothing in it about doctrines. “If thy brother *offend thee.*” What can be plainer? If it were a matter of doctrine, how could it be settled between him and thee alone? This would not only be vindicating for yourself the right of private judgment, but even claiming the attribute of infallibility. On your principles, all matters of faith must be referred to the authority of the church; whereas, according to the church’s interpretation of this text (which stares us in almost every publication that bears her *imprimatur*, from the tract to the folio), articles of

belief are settled by the decisions of private individuals; and the church is appealed to only in case of disagreement. In truth, when she ventures to employ her collective wisdom on Biblical criticism, and condescends to explain a passage of Scripture, she palpably betrays her fallibility. This is the *experimentum crucis*, the decisive test, by which every scholar—nay, every man of sound sense—may know what manner of spirit she is of.

The church to be told in this case is the congregation (or that portion of it in full communion) with which the individual is connected, and whose character as a Christian society would be compromised by his misconduct. If he will not hear this church—that is, if he will not submit to Christian discipline—to the punishment inflicted by “the many,” by publicly confessing his fault, or enduring suspension from the Lord’s Table—then let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican. Let him be disannexed by the church, and no longer regarded as a brother. The wicked person must be put away.

Such is the indisputable meaning of the passage. No other sense can possibly be attached to it, unless you contend that the word *church* signifies the clergy, which it never does throughout the whole Bible; or, that doctrinal disputes

can be settled by private judgment, which your Church vehemently denies. Now, mark, my dear Friend (it is worthy of your special attention); it is in connexion with this act of discipline—the act of a religious assembly, meeting for worship in a particular place, and united together in church-fellowship—it is in connexion with their act, as pastor and flock, that our gracious Lord added the following words:—

“ Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

That these words were not addressed to the apostles, or to ministers, as such, is manifest from what follows: “ Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father, who is in heaven; for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Matt. xviii. 19, 20. Here is a promise plainly addressed to the laity to encourage social prayer. The statement in the eighteenth verse is as plainly addressed to the same class of persons, to authorize their acts of church discipline.

But this view of the subject is still further confirmed, if confirmation were needed, by the

question of Peter in the next verse—a question arising immediately out of our Lord's words relative to hearing the church. "Then came Peter to him and said, Lord how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?—till seven times?"

"Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times; but until seventy times seven."

The appeal to the church, then, is not concerning doctrine, but personal differences between brethren; which, if not amicably settled in private, are referred to the congregation, as the ultimate tribunal; to which if the offender refuse to bow, he must be excluded from church fellowship, without appeal to any earthly authority. This is what is meant by *binding*. And when the church censure is "remitted," when the party is "forgiven," as in the Corinthian church, you have an illustration of *loosing*.

A cursory examination of the history of the primitive church, would evince, in the most satisfactory manner, the conclusiveness of this reasoning. For more than four centuries after Christ, the *public* confession of sin was strictly enjoined. The church member who disgraced his profession, was compelled openly to acknowledge his *faults* in the presence of the congregation, and to pass through a certain course of humiliation

before he was restored again to communion. But, as the process of corruption advanced, this was found to be very painful to persons of wealth and respectability, who sought to commute for their transgressions in a manner more agreeable to their feelings. To accommodate persons of this class, Leo the Great, in the fifth century, first allowed secret confession to a Priest. Thus auricular confession was unknown to the Christian church for nearly 500 years! What say you to that? The practice, however, did not prevail for 200 years more, when Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, published what was called a *Penitential*, in which he laid down particular rules for the guidance of Priests in the confessional. This was the germ of the casuistical system of the school men, a system which was matured by Thomas Aquinas and expounded by Peter Dens. The work of Theodore soon became popular among the English clergy, and was ultimately adopted, very generally, on the Continent. A practice so well calculated to confer power and wealth on the clergy, was, of course, eagerly encouraged by that body, as soon as the people had become ignorant and foolish enough to submit to it. Thus was the ancient discipline gradually superseded by an institution more eminently adapted to produce and to per-



petuate intellectual slavery, than any that was ever devised by man. The Roman Priesthood have surpassed in policy all that the hierarchies of heathenism ever dreamed of in their mysteries.

Although this ceremony was extensively submitted to, it never became obligatory on the members of the church, until it was enforced by the authority of the Lateran Council, in the thirteenth century. So that, in fact, this "law of the church" (a church which boasts itself infallible and immutable!) was not enacted until within two centuries of the Reformation. What became of the people in that long tract of ages, during which no Priest flourished his hand over the head of the kneeling penitent? Had Roman Catholics access to the authentic history of their own church, I am persuaded that the study of it would soon lead to another Reformation.

Confession of our sins *to God* is a most important duty, without which none can expect pardon. Cain made no confession of guilt in the sacrifices which he offered, and therefore sin lay at his door. The Pharisee in the temple was a disciple of the same school. He thanked God for all his fancied goodness; but, believing himself rich and having need of nothing, he asked *no forgiveness*—he did not humble himself before

God. Not so the Publican. He stood afar off, and smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" It is the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit that is most precious in the sight of God. Accordingly, the apostle John declares (John i. 7—9) that "if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins HE is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness!"

In Romans x. 10 it is said, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." This confession refers to the public avowal of faith in the Redeemer, at times when persecution rages against his people. Hence those who suffered for his sake in the primitive ages were called *confessors*. This passage, of course, gives no countenance to *private* or *secret* confession.

There is, however, another passage (James v. 16) which has been confidently appealed to on this subject, but without success, as you will presently see. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another that ye may be healed." Now what is there about confessing to a Priest here? Do you not perceive that the duty here enjoined is reciprocal? We are to confess to one another. The precept relates to offences

among brethren, and it inculcates a spirit of humility and mutual forgiveness. Confession is a powerful moral engine to reform the heart, but then it must be made to the offended party. If that party be God, and if he only be cognizant of the deed, let it be confessed and lamented before him in secret. If the fault has been committed against our neighbour, we must not be too proud to own it; for it is the open and candid avowal of our sins that humbles and purifies the heart. Now, what is secret confession to a Priest but an expedient for pacifying the conscience, without any mortification of our pride, or reparation for the injuries we have inflicted? I admit that money is sometimes restored at the confessional, and is made the occasion of much contemptible puffing on the part of the Priests and their friends. On such occasions, there is a tacit, but most unwarranted, insinuation that Protestants never restore stolen property, and that even the Roman Catholics would not do it were it not for confession. Now, I think it would not be difficult to show, that this very practice of making restitution through the Priest, is really one of the most powerful causes of dishonesty. Many a man, placed in a scene of *temptation*, flatters himself with the hope of *restoring the property*, or its equivalent, at some

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future time, which he knows he can do without any disgrace. This hope operates as an opiate to the conscience. Thus with a fatal facility he swerves from his integrity, and even pleases himself with the thought, that in the act of restitution he will be doing God service, by magnifying the virtue of the confessional. Is it not true that Roman Catholics are more given to petty theft than other people? This is fully accounted for by the secrecy of confession, and the doctrine of venial sins.\* In Protestant countries, such as the United States of America, the inhabitants scarcely ever use locks except in the large towns, and yet their property is perfectly secure. There are no restitutions trumpeted through the press of that country. Why? Because no thefts are committed. They are guided by a principle of integrity, and restrained by the infamy which attaches to dishonesty.

But suppose all stolen property was fully restored by Roman Catholics through the medium of confession, why that would be no more than a farthing in the pound of the injury that may be done to our neighbours. Are unjust bargains nothing? Are false weights and measures

\* For theft is a mortal sin only "when the thing stolen is of considerable value." What a convenient standard of *morality!*

nothing? Are contempt and insult nothing? Is it nothing to blight, with the foul breath of slander, the tender flower of a neighbour's character? "He that steals my purse steals trash; but he that filches from me my good name, takes that which not enriches him, and makes me poor indeed." Can he make restitution for *that*? Such a restitution, of all others most important to the injured party, can never be made through the medium of confession, where names are suppressed, and murdered characters entombed.

I am constrained to state, as the result of my experience and reading, that the institution of auricular confession is wholly inefficient as an instrument of moral improvement; that it benefits neither the individual nor the community; that its natural tendency is to harden the sinner's heart, and to turn away his attention from the "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," to "a broken cistern that can hold no water." Or if it hold any (unlike the water which the Redeemer gives), whosoever drinks of it "shall thirst again." It may deaden the sense of guilt and damp the energy of passion for a moment, but it is only to enhance their power. The absolution of the Priest is not a well of water *springing* up into everlasting life. Like the *fetid contents* of the stagnant pool, it serves but

to increase the defilement it was intended to remove. Indeed, the attempt to cancel our guilt in any other way than by faith in the blood of Jesus—by any penance or Priestly absolutions—is the most perilous enterprize to which an accusing conscience can instigate the sinner. The confessional, instead of affording protection, will ensure destruction to him who has fled to it for refuge.

“The umbrageous oak, with pomp outspread,  
When storms the welkin rend,  
Draws down the lightning on the head  
It promised to defend !”



## LETTER XII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IN discussing what has been called the *sacrifice* of the mass, I was led to advert to the *Priesthood* of Christ in connexion with the atonement. Of course my limits permitted only a very brief examination of this important subject, and the interesting doctrines that emanate from it, like sunbeams from the fountain of light. On satisfaction for sin, justification by faith, confession and pardon, I have slightly touched already. Permit me now to claim your attention, while I offer a few remarks on the intercession of Christ, which is an important part of his priestly office.

We Protestants believe that, according to the language of the apostle Paul (1 Tim. ii. 5), "There is but one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." We feel assured, moreover, that no other being is qualified to sustain the office of advocate before God the Father. His *deity* gives him the power of prevailing with him that sits upon the throne. His interest in the court of heaven is unlimited. The *Father* heareth him always. He is God over all, *blessed for ever*; and to him is committed

all power in heaven and earth. He therefore knows all our wants, and his means of removing them are inexhaustible.

But, perhaps, while admitting all this, you will argue that the Redeemer is too great, too highly exalted in glory, to attend to the sublunary scene on which we act our little parts, and pass away, like summer insects, to oblivion. To justify the reasoning of your manuals of controversy, you must assert that the Saviour is so absorbed in the contemplation of his own excellence—that he has so faint a perception of the various cases of his people, and is so inattentive to their interests, as to require his repose to be broken, and his sensibilities awakened, by the importunity of saints and angels more intimately conversant with the affairs of the church which He redeemed with his own blood, and for which we are told “He ever liveth to make intercession!” This, it is said, is reasonable, and is favoured by analogies in human life. A tenant in danger of being ejected from his farm, is greatly distressed. His wife, however, bethinks of an expedient to relieve him. Her particular friend was nurse to the clerk in the agent’s office. This same clerk has the agent’s ear continually, and from his practical knowledge of the *affairs of the estate*, he is entrusted with the



settlement of many cases with which the agent is too indolent to trouble himself. It has been found, too, that he will work for a bribe, if prudently conveyed to his wife, whose influence, it is said, goes far in the management of the property since the noble owner became an absentee. Now, if arrears are cancelled, and leases are obtained on terms so easy as these, who would be so foolish as to go at once to the agent himself?

Again, if you want a favour from a lord, would it not be well to speak to the coachman, or the steward, or the housekeeper?

Once more, if a post or a pension be sought from the Government, would not the most successful plan be to commence with some subordinate officer, and thus let the influence ascend the chain of authority, link by link, until it touches the throne itself?

My dear Friend, you seem to think "that God is altogether such a one as thyself." He is pleased, in condescension to our ignorance, to set forth his own inconceivable majesty by allusions to the courts of earthly monarchs. But to infer from this accommodation to our weakness any real analogy, would be as unreasonable as to attribute to the great *omnipresent Spirit*, hands, and eyes, and ears, because these things are ascribed to him figuratively in the Bible. Has he

not told us that his ways are not as our ways, nor our ways as his ways? And if ever this truth was applicable to any case, it is to those to which we have been just now alluding. If the "agent" were honest and did his duty—if the "lord" were just and affable—if the "Government" were righteously administered—there would be no need of those selfish intrigues to which reference has been made. All influence operating through secret and corrupt channels, would be firmly resisted and indignantly repelled. What shall we say of the religious practices which seek support from such analogies? How unworthy of God! how dishonourable to the character of the Redeemer!

But what if all appeals to *intermediate advocates were strictly prohibited* under the severest penalties? Would it then be proper or prudent to apply to them? If it were ordained that every candidate for favour should bring his case personally before the individual by whom, and through whom, that favour was to be conferred; then every application to a third party, would not only be a slight and an insult to him, but it would be a violation of law, involving serious guilt, and ending in utter disappointment.

*This, dear Sir, is the true state of the question between the sinner and his God. That blessed*

Being is so "glorious in holiness," the splendour of his throne is so overpowering, the thunder of his voice so terrific, the lightning of his eye so appalling to the guilty heart, that no sinner could dare to approach him without a *Mediator*. Therefore, God was manifested in the flesh—his glory was shaded and softened by the veil of humanity, so that we may come near and look upon it without being consumed. The convicted sinner needs encouragement; he is prone to shrink from the Divine presence. However powerful, therefore, the Redeemer might be, were he destitute of compassion and human sympathy, he would not be qualified for the work of *bringing us to God*. He could not enter into our case; he would not be alive to our wants. But look at the character of Jesus—reflect on the whole tenor of his life, his discourses and actions, and his social habits. Do they not all breathe the tenderest compassion, the liveliest sensibility, the most encouraging condescension?

The objections of Roman Catholics on this point are entirely obviated by the language of Scripture. Take, for instance, the passage referred to at the commencement of this letter. "*There is but one Mediator between God and men, the MAN Christ Jesus.*" He is a man,

and nothing that concerns humanity is foreign to him!\* “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For, in that *he himself hath suffered, being tempted*, he is able to succour them that are tempted. For we have not an High Priest which *cannot be touched* with a feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, *therefore*, come *boldly* to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need,” Heb. ii. 17, 18 and iv. 15, 16.

What can be more encouraging than this language? Does it leave room for a single cavil? What more can the sinner want? Is Jesus not able to deliver? Is he not willing? Is he not always present, attentive to our wants, our dangers, our desires, our sighs and tears? How cheering to the broken spirit are the gracious words which proceed out of his mouth!—“If any man thirst, let him come unto ME and drink.” “Come unto ME all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

\* How appropriately might HE adopt the words of the poet, and say—“*Homo sum, humani nil a me alienum puto!*”

same time. This is in effect, to attribute omnipresence and omniscience to these personages; and as these are essential attributes of deity, it follows that the saints must be gods; and thus the Church of Rome is convicted of teaching Polytheism, or a plurality of Gods, which is nothing less than the old system of Heathenism baptized, and decked out in the drapery of Christianity. This change, so slight as scarcely to deserve the name of *metamorphosis*, is fitly symbolised by what occurred to the statue of Jupiter in Rome. The thunderbolt was removed from his hands, and the keys placed in their stead, and then his godship was dubbed St. Peter.

Have angels and saints an intuitive perception of every change of heart that takes place on earth? If so, they are gods. They "search the hearts and try the reins of the children of men." Grant this, and one of the most conclusive arguments by which JEHOVAH establishes his own exclusive deity loses all its force. He can no longer say, "I am HE that searcheth the heart." This prerogative is not divine: it is shared by all the host of heaven! Such are the awful consequences resulting, of necessity, from the logic of Roman Catholic divines. If you *ask, how then* do they become acquainted with *individual cases of conversion?* I answer, that

the intelligence is borne to the courts above by those heavenly messengers that God sends forth, from to time, to minister to the heirs of salvation (Heb. i. 14); or it is communicated to the adoring throng by God himself. This mode of accounting for the knowledge attributed to angels is perfectly satisfactory. To ascribe it to a faculty which is tantamount to omniscience is, therefore, a gratuitous assumption, leading to consequences not only blasphemous, but atheistical.

It is asserted that the angels are always amongst us, and therefore cannot be ignorant of our requests. But there is no proof that the angels are *always* amongst us. Nor is there any reason to believe that the saints are *ever* amongst us. If one of the former happened to be present, he might indeed hear our prayers; but as that is a bare possibility, the practice of supplicating angels, even were it lawful, would be merely "beating the air;" while, in reference to the latter, it is manifest, that as the saints are in heaven, and we on the earth, they cannot be "amongst us," and therefore cannot hear us.

As to the "prayers of the saints" mentioned in the book of Revelation, v. 8 and viii. 4, a few remarks will, I hope, satisfy your mind on that point. You have read Bishop Walmaly's cele-

brated book *Pastorini*, and you have also read Dr. Doyle's remarks on it addressed to the Roman Catholics of this country, when they were agitated about the fulfilment of its prophecies in the destruction of the Protestant "locusts." From both writers you have learned that the whole book of the Apocalypse, excepting the first three chapters, is a continued series of *symbols*, in which are darkly shadowed forth the varying vicissitudes of the church militant on earth. You are not, therefore, to regard these symbols as realities in heaven, but as emblematical of certain occurrences taking place in this transitory world. The vials and the odours, in beautiful allusion to the incense in the Temple, represent the prayers of the people of God here below, offered up directly to him while passing through the trials of the present life.

It is true that saints on earth have known many things done in secret by a *special revelation from God*. It is also true that the capacities of believers will be greatly enlarged after death, and that the circle of their knowledge will be expanding through eternity. And it is true that Satan, from his vast intellectual powers, and incessant vigilance, has a deep knowledge of *human nature*, and of the motives and conduct of the "*Litany of the Blessed Virgin of Loretto*," in

individuals. But does it therefore follow, that angels and departed spirits are acquainted with the human heart? When Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," he expressed his belief in his Godhead; for of none but God can universal knowledge be predicated. Therefore, I again assert, that the invocation of saints and angels leads directly to *Polytheism*.

Another argument is drawn from the assumption, that the hearing of saints and angels "is independent on sound, and, consequently, independent on distance."

It was a question debated among the schoolmen, how many angels could stand on the point of a needle; and many other matters relative to the modes of angelic existence, too ludicrous to be mentioned here, occupied the attention of those learned triflers. But they doated about questions that admitted of no solution, and perplexed themselves with strifes that were interminable, "intruding into those things which they had not seen, vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds." Of the modes of spiritual existence we, in fact, know nothing; and, in regard to things not revealed, we should not dogmatise. But

"Fools will rush, where angels fear to tread."



We have certainly no warrant to conclude that angels acquire knowledge without intellectual organs, although they may be vastly more subtle and powerful than those possessed by man.

Certain animals have wonderful powers of hearing; and some individuals and tribes of the human race vastly surpass others in this respect. The American Indians could perceive the approach of an enemy at an immense distance, by applying the ear to the earth, which is a better conductor of sound than the air itself, especially amid the profound silence of those primeval forests which overshadow the almost boundless plains of the new world.—Granting, then, to the heavenly beings that dwell in some world of light, from which our globe appears as a bright speck in the blue firmament—granting them organs of sensation the most exquisite that can be imagined, it seems utterly impossible that they could hear our prayers, even though, like Simon Stylites, we bawled them out from the top of a pillar or the summit of a mountain!

But the nature of prayer has been strangely overlooked in this controversy.

*“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire  
Unutter’d or expressed ;*

The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the breathing of a sigh—  
The falling of a tear—

The upward glancing of an eye,  
When none but God is near."

A man may mutter or vociferate *Pater-nosters* and *Ave-Marias*, from Ash Wednesday til Easter Sunday without addressing to God a single petition that deserves the name of prayer. The Pharisees parroted their vain repetitions before the public as loud and long as lungs permitted; and the heathens, too, fancied that they would be heard for their "much speaking." But the Christian is commanded to retire to his closet and shut the door; and he is assured that "*God who seeth in secret will reward him openly.*" He is therefore emphatically styled the *Hea-er of prayer*; and this title, like that of the "Searcher of hearts," is the exclusive prerogative of deity. Hence we rightly infer the divinity of Christ, from the fact that prayer is addressed to him on the authority of Scripture. But if the Papal notions of saints and angels were correct, it would be impossible to prove that JESUS is any thing more than chief among the "gods many and lords many" that crowd the Roman calendar. Indeed, perhaps, it would not be difficult

to show that Mary wears a brighter crown. On the beads, and in the Rosary, you are aware that there are ten "Hail Mary's!" said for one "Lord's Prayer." Would it not thence appear to the uninitiated that she receives ten times the amount of homage that is rendered to the Saviour?

I have recently seen a letter from the Rev. Mr. Woods, Chaplain to Archbishop Murray, stating that *he* teaches the people that Christ is the *only Mediator*, and that Catholics do not trust to the intercession of the Virgin. I am glad to see such statements coming from so high a quarter, because I trust they will have a good effect on the people. But I am afraid the decrees of an unchangeable church, the popular catechisms and manuals of devotion, will not countenance Mr. Woods in his lukewarmness towards the "Mother of God."

That Roman Catholics do really worship the Virgin, cannot, I believe, be successfully denied. If the titles which they are taught to apply to her in the prayers which they daily use be at all appropriate, they are bound to render her divine honours of the highest kind. Indeed she has usurped some of the most glorious titles of the *Redeemer*. For proof, let me refer, not to any *obscure document* unknown to the people, but

Archbishop Reilly's catechism. She is there styled, "Holy Mother of *God*"—Mother of our *Creator*!—titles the most absurd, contradictory and blasphemous that ever the mind of man conceived.

"Mother of Divine Justice"—"*Cause* of our Joy"—"Mystical Rose"—"Tower of David"—"Ark of the Covenant"—"Morning Star"—"Health of the Weak"—"Refuge of Sinners"—"Comfortress of the Afflicted"—(this is not the comforter Jesus promised to send to his people) "Help of Christians"—"Queen of Angels—of Patriarchs—of Prophets—of Apostles," &c. Such is the language addressed by the Irish Roman Catholics to the Virgin Mary. They are not fond of making fine metaphysical distinctions; and my own conviction is, that the bulk of the people render to her the same sort of honour that they do to God; and that in moments of danger, the thought of *her* protection occurs more frequently than that of the Almighty. I have no doubt whatever, that it would be considered greater profanity to swear by *her* name than by that of JESUS. And are they not justified in this by the language which their teachers put into their mouths?\*

\* Note B.

Since the Reformation, the clergy have never met in council, and I dare say they never will so meet again, unless forced to it by the laity. The "living, speaking authority of the church," whose utility has been so much vaunted, must be looked for in the Vatican. We must take the Priest or the Pope as our infallible guide. Now, I think the Rev. Mr. Woods, and Gregory the XVth, are at issue about the power of "the Mother of our Creator." Remember that this Gregory has been lately toasted by the Bishop and Clergy of Cork as the "Father of the Christian world," and "Representative of the Majesty of God." As he is the head of the church, the depository of traditional revelation and supererogatory merit, his sentence must be, of course, decisive as to the saving power of the Virgin. Turn we then to his *Encyclical Letter*, dated 15th August, 1832. The following passage occurs near the end:—"Now that all these events may come to pass happily and successfully, let us lift up our eyes and hands to the most holy Virgin Mary, *who alone has destroyed all heresies*, and is our GREATEST CONFIDENCE, even the **WHOLE FOUNDATION OF OUR HOPE!**"\*

\* *Sed ut omnia haec prospere ac feliciter eveniant, evemus oculos manusque ad sanctissimam, Virginiam*

...Then comes a prayer to Peter and Paul ; and last of all JESUS CHRIST is coldly named, and a hope is faintly expressed that HE will—not deliver him out of his troubles—but “console” him under them. Thus does the head of the Roman Catholic Church in the nineteenth century most unblushingly exalt the creature above the Creator, and place the crown of Immanuel on the head of a woman !

In the next sentence, this head of the infallible church exhorts the hierarchy to resist the laying of *any other foundation* ! If this be not *anti-christian*, I ask you what is ? The man that asserts that any being but Christ is the “whole foundation” of the sinner’s hope, is certainly *against* Christ—that is, he is an Antichrist. Nay, he is equally an enemy to God and man. For “if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do ?” Psalm xi. 3. There is no security for the believer if you remove “the chief corner-stone, elect, precious,” which God himself has laid in Zion. This is the *living stone* spoken of by Peter (1 Epistle 20), on which is built a *spiritual house*, an holy Priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

*Mariam, quæ sola universas hæreses interemit, non  
:traque maxima fiducia, imo tota ratio est spæ nostræ.*

I beseech you, turn to 1 Cor. iii. 11, and read the language of the apostle Paul, (the very apostle whom Gregory supplicates to prevent the laying of any foundation but the Virgin !!) and contrast the words of the Holy Ghost with the words of the Pope! "For *other* foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST." The Church of Rome has dared to lay another: let her abide the consequences! Read also, the language of St. Peter, and compare it with that of his *soi-disant* successor: "This is the stone which was set at nought by the builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation *in any other*, for there is *none other name* under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 11, 12. Alas, the Church of Rome has invented many other names, to whose influence she teaches her votaries to appeal. But how tremendous is the responsibility which she has thereby incurred!

If the Virgin Mary were permitted to meddle in the Redeemer's mediatorial kingdom—if she were exalted as a sort of queen-regent, to whom all power was given in heaven and on earth; how can you account for the fact that *nobody ever prayed to her during her life-time?* When Mary is announced to our Lord as his mother, "Matt.

xii. 48, 42 ; Luke viii. 21," why does he seem to disclaim the relationship, and intimate so plainly, that thenceforth no one should "know him after the flesh," but that, as the Saviour of sinners, all believers were equally bound to him by the ties of kindred—that all were brethren? On *your* principles, should there not have been an exception in favour of her who is designated "mother of God?" Yet it is with pointed reference to *her* that the solemn statement is made by the REDEEMER himself! How do you account for that?

Why is it that no person ever supplicated Mary to exert her authority, as mother, over Jesus, in order to obtain remission of sins? How is it that her name never appears in the Sacred Narrative in connexion with any of the deeds of mercy performed by the Saviour, except at the wedding at Cana, when she was rebuked for her interference? For, that the language employed on that occasion, although not disrespectful in its terms, was intended as a gentle rebuke, and as a check to such interference in future, will be evident to any body that consults the parallel passages in the Greek, or even in the Roman Catholic versions of the Bible. Can you give any reason for the profound, and *seemingly studied*, silence, in reference to Mary.



observed by the sacred writers after our Lord's crucifixion? John took her home to his house as his adopted mother. Is it not strange, that we have no account of the multitudes that, on your principles, must have besieged her lodgings that she might intercede for them with her Son? These facts are perfectly unaccountable; indeed, they never could have existed, if the mother of our Lord's humanity sustained such an office, and possessed such power, as your Church assigns her.

We are referred by Roman Catholic writers to examples of saints on earth praying to angels. To this test we are willing to appeal. It is quite natural that a man should ask questions, and make requests, of an angel sent to him from God when present and visible. But even in such cases, any thing approaching to divine homage would be highly reprehensible, and would be promptly rebuked by the heavenly visitants themselves. Witness Apocalypse xix. 10 and xxii. 9, where we read, that when John fell down before the angel to do him homage, he restrained him, saying, "worship God." It is with grief I remark, that these very passages have been quoted on your side of the question *with a view to countenance creature-worship, omitting, however, the prohibitory clause and*

the command to worship God alone! This is one of the most flagrant instances on record of "handling the Word of God deceitfully." And I regret that the late Dr. Doyle was guilty of it in his edition of the "Grounds of the Catholic Doctrine."

A passage, however, in Gen. xlviii. 16 is appealed to with more confidence. There Jacob prays, "The angel that delivered me from all evils bless these boys." And again, Hosea xii. 4, it is said that the same Jacob "wept and made supplication to an angel."

Other passages of similar import might be quoted from the Old Testament, but the same answer will apply to them all. The angel mentioned in these places is no less a person than the ANGEL of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus himself, who is the author of all spiritual blessings. The transaction referred to by Hosea is recorded in Gen. xxxii., and the name of the place where it occurred is called by the patriarch *Peniel*, "because," said he, "I have seen *God face to face*." Verse 30. This is the Angel with whom Abraham, Gen. xviii. 1. 13. 22, pleaded concerning the destruction of Sodom; who conducted Israel through the wilderness, Exod. xxiii. 20, 21; who appeared to Manoah, Judges xiii. 15—22, where his name is said to be "Wonderful;"

one of the titles of the Redeemer, Isaiah ix. 6, and where he is expressly called GOD. Even the very passage quoted from Hosea establishes the identity of this wonderful Angel, proving him to be JEHOVAH, the second person of the blessed Trinity—a fact which must be obvious to any one who consults it with honest intentions. “He wept and made supplication unto him (the angel): he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us; even the Lord God of Hosts: JEHOVAH is his memorial.” Hosea xii. 4, 5. This is the Angel of whom Protestants are accustomed to implore the blessings of salvation.

So anxious is the Roman Church to maintain the saving power of other names besides Christ, that she is not satisfied with examples occurring on earth or in heaven, but she explores the gloomy mansions of hell itself to find a case in point! “We find,” says the “Grounds of the Catholic doctrine,” “we find, Luke xvi. 27, 28, “the rich glutton in hell petitioning in favour of his five brethren here upon earth: how much more are we to believe, that the saints in heaven intercede for their brethren here?” p. 42.

Hardly bestead, indeed, must that cause be which seeks support from such a quarter! *Straitened for arguments* must be the advocate, who *essays to fetch them from the bottomless pit!*

Few and inapplicable are the precedents for invocation of saints, when they are sought among the records of the damned! But is there not great reason to question the orthodoxy of this "rich glutton?" Was he successful in his supplications? Did Abraham think it proper to send St. Lazarus to persuade his five brethren to repent? No; they had "Moses and the Prophets;" they had the written word of God; and "if they hear not Moses and the Prophets," saith Abraham, "neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Mark well these words, my dear Friend! The written word is our guide; by it we shall be judged. If we hear it not, we perish! Jesus, the great predicted Prophet of the Church, has come and spoken. His apostles have written, for our instruction, the "Word of Life." The true light is now shining; and if you turn away from it, and give heed to the traditions and inventions of dark ages; if you trust in other names and build on other foundations than that given in the Volume of Inspiration, it is no breach of charity to say that you shall die in your sins! May this affectionate warning be taken by you in kindness, and be blessed to the salvation of your immortal soul.

## LETTER XIII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I GAVE you, in my last letter, the reasons which induced me to discontinue the practice of praying to saints and angels. I dwelt upon it the more at length, because it is a subject of the utmost importance; and because I believe the principles which I oppose to be fraught with danger to the eternal interests of mankind. I now proceed to examine briefly the doctrine of *Purgatory*.

If the views advocated in these letters relative to the atonement and justification be correct, the notion of a Purgatorial fire in the next world must be false. If sin cannot be expiated by human actions or human sufferings, of course this region of woes can exist only in the imagination. Its reality would argue a defect in the death of Christ, and would falsify the language of inspiration. The blood of Christ is represented as a "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," Zech. xiii. 1. Are there any stains which it cannot wash away? or is there any imperfection in its purifying virtue? We are taught *not*. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," John i. 29. "He

is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1 John i. 9. "This is the covenant that I will make with them in those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin," Heb. x. 16—18. May I not add, where remission of these is, there is no more suffering for sin? For, as the apostle argues in the 2d verse of the chapter just quoted, "the worshippers once purged should have had no more consciousness of sins"—"having," as he expresses it in the 22d verse—"having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience," by the peace-giving blood of Immanuel. It has often occurred to me, that the doctrine of Purgatory, whatever temporal advantages it may bring to the clergy, strikingly demonstrates the weakness of those foundations on which the Latin church teaches the sinner to build, and the delusiveness of the hope which she sets before him. What sort of refuge is that which cannot shelter the sinner from ages of "wrath to come?" What "consolation" can there be "in Christ," when almost every dying believer is agitated with a "fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation?" How can

a Roman Priest consistently administer comfort to a dying sinner? How can he appeal to his sorrowing survivors to pay for Masses at the funeral, at the "month's mind," the "twelve months' mind," and to contribute annually to the "pious list?"

May not the poor dying man argue thus:— Sir, you claim the power of remitting sin at the confessional: I have disclosed to you all my offences, I have performed the penance enjoined; and if the sacrament of Penance be worth any thing, should not this proceeding have freed my soul from guilt? But, in addition to this, you have given me what you call the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, my Creator and Redeemer. I carry him at this moment with me. Will not his presence remove any guilt or defilement that may remain after your absolution? May I ask, will Jesus leave me at the hour of death? If the Saviour forsake me on the brink of eternity, where is the advantage of the Eucharist to a dying man? But if this sacrament has contributed to the cleansing of the soul, what need of anointing? And if all these together—absolution, the consecrated host, and extreme unction—if all have been of any avail *to fit the soul for eternity*, why am I yet doomed *to spend years, or ages, or centuries, in the*

unutterable agonies, the excruciating torments of Purgatory? Alas! those things which you call "rites of the church" can bring me no substantial comfort. According to your own account, they can but convert a hell which is eternal into one of limited duration. The duration of Purgatory, though limited, may be vast; for you teach us to pray for the souls of our great grand-fathers, and you would take money for dead Masses to the third and fourth generation."

And, my friend, may I not ask, what is the use of those Masses? You say that the sacrifice of the Mass is equal in value and atoning efficacy to the sacrifice on the cross—that its merit is infinite. If so, it requires only one offering of it to atone for all your sins, and not only to liberate your soul, but all that ever entered Purgatory! Must not Priests, therefore, if sincere on this point, be possessed of hearts exceedingly hard? A benevolent man would not see a beast enduring protracted agony, without seeking to relieve it. And can a Priest stand on the borders of the burning lake and behold the souls of his neighbours—of his own flock, too, tossed upon the weltering surges of divine wrath? Can he listen to the groaning, and wailing, and shrieking of men, and women, and children—cries of misery, *that have continued for years, and may last for*



years to come? Though he could terminate all in half an hour—could translate myriads of souls from torment to glory by saying a *single Mass*; yet he refuses to do it till he is paid! Like the fabled Charon, he stands, unmoved by the importunity of tortured ghosts, and will not stir till he gets the ferry-money! Verily, if these gentlemen have any faith in their own system, they are the most obdurate of the sons of men!

This language may appear too severe; but I think the reasoning will prove well-founded. Why are not an equal number of Masses said for the souls of the poor as for those of the rich? Why have the former no “MINDS” set apart for their benefit? A society exists, or did exist, in Dublin, for the purpose of collecting funds to have Masses offered for the souls of those who had no surviving friends to interest the clergy on their behalf! But are their feelings so callous as to require such a stimulus? Can no sound but that of money excite in their bosoms the emotions of sympathy?

Year after year, it was my lot to listen to a Priest appealing to his congregation on behalf of the “suffering souls in Purgatory.” On “all Saints’ day,” their woes were painted in colours *so dark and dismal*; the case of a recently departed father, mother, brother or child, was

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brought out and dwelt upon in terms so pathetic and soul-harrowing, that the people wept aloud. The peroration of the discourse was always an appeal to the purse; it would be barbarous to resist it; and so most of them gave their names as subscribers to the "pious list."

A misapplication of Scripture occurring on these occasions, deserves to be noticed. The souls in Purgatory are represented as exclaiming, "*Miseremini mei, miseremini mei, saltem vos amici mei!*" "Have pity on me—at least you, my friends, have pity on me!" Roman Catholics think that the Holy Spirit puts these plaintive words in the mouth of each tortured soul in Purgatory—not knowing that they were uttered by a living man (Job xix. 21) while suffering under bodily afflictions. In the same manner the 130th Psalm, called the *De Profundis*, is chaunted over the dead, although it has no reference whatever to departed souls.

When listening to the moving descriptions of Purgatorial torments given by the Priest, the question often occurred to me and others:—If the case of these souls be as bad as it is represented, and if the Mass be such a sovereign remedy for all their miseries, why is it not offered for them without money and without price? While the wailing and lamentation of immortal souls are ring-

ing in the ears of the minister of peace, imploring the speedy interposition of the "dreadful sacrifice" to terminate their anguish, how can he eat, and drink, and be merry—how can his slumbers be peaceful—knowing as he does, if he be sincere, that those spirits are detained in prison, and in torment, till he receives the money! Is it not awful to think that the Lamb of God should be thus valued at so many pieces of silver; that the Saviour of mankind should be offered up or not, as suits the interest of a Priest; that the Bread of Life should be degraded into a money-making commodity; that the most tremendous of all events, the immolation of the Son of God, should be prostituted to subserve the purposes of filthy lucre! I do not wish to write strongly; but it is impossible that the mind should come in contact with this subject, without kindling with righteous indignation. But I forbear.

Before I proceed farther, however, let me entreat your attention to a single question. The fires of Purgatory, you are aware, are not intended to atone for mortal sins, but for venial offences, and also to make up for those temporal punishments that remain due after the eternal are remitted. There are merely some trivial *debts to be paid*, some slight stains to be washed away. Now, Roman Catholics admit that the

sacrifice of Christ is of infinite value, that there are no limits to its efficacy; and they contend that the same is true in regard to the Mass. If so, it will follow that one Mass is incalculably more than sufficient to redeem a soul from Purgatory. My question, then, is this:—Why is there more than one Mass said for the same soul? If the departed soul has gone to hell, the offering is made in vain; if it has entered Purgatory, the first Mass should, as a matter of course, release it; and then every subsequent offering of the Son of God is “a vain oblation.”

Is not, therefore, the repetition of the service a tacit confession of its weakness? Does it not betray the secret distrust of the Priest in reference to that whose saving virtue he lauds so highly; and for the application of which he presses for your money? The reasoning of the apostle Paul, on the repetition of sacrifices, is quite in point: “For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For, then, would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins,” Heb. x. 1, 2.

*Here the inefficiency of the Jewish sacrifices*

is inferred from the fact of their being repeated year by year continually ; and it is laid down as an incontrovertible principle, that a sacrifice which is truly and properly expiatory, is not offered again after the atonement has been once made. " So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto those that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation," Heb. ix. 2. From these last words, it is clear that Paul knew nothing about the Mass. Had the apostles said Mass, he could not truly assert that Christ had been offered only once, for he would have been offered daily. Neither could he have called his coming to judgment his appearing the " second time ;" for, in that case, he must have appeared on the altar a thousand times, living, and visible, and tangible. For when the priest holds up the wafer, he says to the adoring congregation, "*Ecce Agnus Dei*" — " Behold the Lamb of God !" Not only would he have thus appeared many times, but by myriads his flesh and bones would have been drank in a little consecrated wine ; and his blood would have been eaten in a white transparent wafer ! If there be a solecism, in the last sentence, it is not my fault ; for, I can assure you, *that the language is theologically correct ; the body and blood of Christ being received, accord-*

ing to the Council of Trent, whole and entire under either species.

But to return from this digression. Does not the Church of Rome seem to acquiesce in the reasoning of St. Paul; and by offering up the Mass so often for the same soul in Purgatory, plainly confess, that, as a sacrifice, it possesses no atoning virtue whatever?

Against the existence of a middle place in the next world, the testimony of Scripture is clear and decisive. It is in vain that we advance our reasonings on this subject: we can know nothing of the state of the soul after death, but what is revealed to us in the Word of God. Roman Catholics argue, that, as the slightest defilement would exclude the soul from heaven, and as it would be unjust to banish it to hell for venial offences, therefore there must be a third place of purgation, where the faithful are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

It is here assumed that some transgressions of God's law are trifling and do not merit perdition; and that the blood of Jesus does not cleanse from all unrighteousness, does not remove all the believer's stains—assumptions which I have already shown to be utterly groundless. But But how stands the question of fact as stated in *the "Scriptures of Truth?"* We shall see. A

shall place in juxtaposition the testimony of the Bible and that of the Roman Church on this point, that the true state of the question may be perceived at a glance.

*Word of God.* Isa. lvii. 1, 2, "None considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace."

*Church of Rome.* "The righteous is taken away to the fires of Purgatory. He enters into torment."

Phil. i. 21. 23, "For me to live is CHRIST, and to die *is gain*. Having a desire to depart and to be with CHRIST, which is far better."

*Church of Rome.* "To die in the Lord is not to gain happiness, but to be plunged into unutterable misery. To depart in the faith is not to be with Christ, but in the doleful prison of Purgatory."

2 Cor. v. 8, "We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."

*Church of Rome.* "To be absent from the body is not to be present with the Lord; but to endure the agony of a temporary hell."

Rev. xiv. 13, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the *Spirit*, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

*Church of Rome.* "No, but their works go before them to earn heaven; and if not of sufficient value, instead of resting from their labours, they enter on a course of suffering to which nothing comparable has ever been inflicted in the present world."

1 Thess. iv. 13, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope."

*Church of Rome.* "Alas! there is much cause for sorrow; for, if there be hope, it is hope deferred which maketh the heart sick." And if believers are asleep in Christ, it is a sleep troubled with dreams full of agony and horror! There is room for sorrow and sympathy; for, behold! your departed friends are lifting up their eyes and hands in the midst of intolerable stench,\* and smoke, and flames, most mournfully exclaiming, "Have pity on us, have pity on us, at least, ye, our friends, have pity on us!"

I might fill many pages with this instructive parallel; but enough has been advanced to show that the HOLY SPIRIT and the Roman Catholic Church are directly at issue as to the state of believers after death.

\* See Life of St. Theresa.



There is scarcely any doctrine of the Church of Rome more manifestly at variance with Holy Scripture than this. Two states after death, and two alone, are set forth constantly in the living oracles—the place of torment, and the place of glory—eternal death, or life everlasting. There are a few texts, however, that have been pressed into the service by the advocates of Romanism, which it may be well to examine. The first of these is

Matt. v. 25, 26, “Be at agreement with the adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him, lest, perhaps, the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing.” This prison is said to be Purgatory. But St. Augustine and St. Jerome were of a different opinion. These ancient saints, so highly renowned by your church, understood the prison to be hell, and the punishment everlasting. The learned and venerable Bede represents the word *until*, in this passage, as signifying endless duration; and this is clearly the meaning of the term.

In Psalm cx. 1, we read the following words :  
“*The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy foot-*

stool." This passage is quoted by Paul (Heb. i. 13) as referring to Christ. Now when the enemies of the Redeemer are subdued, will he *cease* to sit at the right hand of the Father? Surely not: he will sit there enthroned in glory for ever; and so the criminal will remain in prison for ever. In Gen. viii. 7, we read that Noah sent forth a raven from the ark, "which went forth to and fro till the waters were dried." But it did not then return, nor ever afterwards. Hence some of the most eminent theologians in your church admit, that if the agreement do not take place on earth, if the sinner is not reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus, he never can be reconciled. If he "die in his sins" he must perish eternally. Wherefore the Holy Spirit saith, "To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation." There is no day of salvation beyond the grave. Search the Bible from beginning to end, and you will not find a single promise of pardon in eternity. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still."

But, perhaps, you will reply that there is one passage at least that speaks of forgiveness in the world to come. This is in Matt. xii. 32, where *it is said that the sin against the Holy Ghost*

shall be forgiven neither in this world, nor in that which is to come." It is hence argued, that though this particular sin be irremissible, there is an implication that some transgressions are forgiven in the world to come. As this passage is regarded as the main pillar of purgatory, let us give it a candid and careful examination.

Certainly no forgiveness takes place in heaven, for no guilt enters there; nor in hell, for out of it there is no redemption. Hence, if there be pardon at all after death, it must be in a third place. But Purgatory is not a place of *pardon*, but of *punishment*. The persons who go there are those who have not "fully satisfied the justice of God" for their sins, whether venial or mortal, and they go there to endure the torment due to them. If the last farthing of a debt must be paid, it evidently cannot be forgiven. But it is forgiveness that is spoken of in the text, which cannot therefore refer to Purgatory. In the parallel passages in Mark iii. 29, and Luke xii. 10, it is simply said that the sin against the Holy Spirit shall never be forgiven. And that these two passages are explanatory of the disputed text in Matthew, has been maintained by the most eminent of the Fathers, *including Augustine, Jerome, and Chrysostom.* The word *αιων*, translated "world," means age or

*dispensation.* With the Jews the present age was the dispensation of Moses ; the future that of the Messiah ; and our Lord seems to have quoted a proverb current among them to denote that which was to happen never.

The next passage that claims our attention is 1 Cor. iii. 12—17. Roman Catholics contend that the apostle here teaches that 'we are saved "by fire," and this they say must be the fire of Purgatory. But "so as" is a term of comparison denoting only a similitude of mode. To be saved so as by fire, is to be saved with great difficulty, like a person escaping from a conflagration. Hence such persons are in Scripture compared to "a brand plucked out of the fire." And the same idea occurs in Jude, verse 23, "Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire," as the angel pulled Lot out of Sodom. This mode of expressing deliverance from imminent danger, was familiar to the best writers among the ancient heathen.

Now, my dear Friend, you will observe that this fire is not penal but probatory ; it is intended not to expiate sin ; but to prove the work. "Every man's work shall be made manifest : " "it shall be revealed by fire ; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is : " "if any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss ;

but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." It is natural that we should enquire, what is it that is here said to be revealed, tried, and burned?

Some say, the bad works of the Christian are here intended. But what is the meaning of building bad works on Christ? And how can the fire of Purgatory "reveal" and "try" every man's work? For every man does not go there, but only such as build wood, hay and stubble. And how can this fire try any man's work, what sort it is, seeing that the state of his soul, and the precise amount of his guilt must be ascertained and decided on, before he goes there at all? He goes there, not that his true character may be made manifest, but that his sins may be punished. This interpretation is inconsistent with itself, and derives no countenance from the context to which we shall presently refer.

Others assert that the work to be burned up, and which is represented by wood &c., is the false doctrines which men mix up with the truths of the Gospel; and that the fire that tries and burns them up, is persecution and affliction in the present life. But it is very questionable whether persecution has a tendency to destroy errors in religion. I think the reverse is the *fact*.

*Both these interpretations are inconsistent*

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with the imagery employed by the apostle, a right apprehension of which, and of the nature of a Christian Church, would shew at once the clearness and beauty of his language. The sort of institutions that have obtained in the world, under the name of churches, is so different from that which the word of God describes, and there is such a total absence of Scriptural discipline in those churches, that I am afraid I shall have some difficulty in getting you to understand the explanation of this much litigated passage which I am about to offer.

Take up your Bible now, and read from the 9th to the 17th verse inclusive. You perceive from the beginning of the chapter, that the Corinthians were divided into parties or factions. Some were for Paul, and some for Apollos. Whence Paul takes occasion to remark, that ministers are God's fellow-labourers, *i. e.* fellow-labourers employed by God; and he calls the people who are the object of their labours, "God's husbandry;" and then immediately after (verse 9), "God's building." This last idea he takes up, and pursues to the end of the 17th verse. Now, observe it is the people of God that constitute the building; it is not works nor doctrines, but the people themselves. And it is not Christians as such, *but ministers that are the builders; the apostle*

ceive them into church-fellowship, and admit them to the enjoyment of all the privileges that belong to the "household of God." The faithful and vigilant steward of the household will take care that no alien, or enemy, shall intrude into this hallowed family-circle, or place himself at a feast intended only for "the children"—a feast which at once betokens our reconciliation with God through the death of his Son, and our communion with one another through the indwelling of the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father!"

But there are many ministers who, either through ignorance, or weakness, or indolence, or mistaken charity, admit all classes indiscriminately to the privileges of the sanctuary, giving the hand of fellowship to men of the world—men totally destitute of the Christian spirit, whose views of the Gospel are radically erroneous, and whose lives are in every sense ungodly. In churches of this description, the discipline is so lax, if discipline it may be called, that they scarcely ever put away a "wicked person." Indeed, some of these ministers admit, that were they to remove all the unworthy members, they would have no members remaining; *and that such a step would be tantamount to a dissolution of their societies, and would lead, in*

nine cases out of ten, to their own expulsion from office. What must become of those buildings that are mere piles of rubbish, consisting almost entirely of wood, hay, and stubble? "For the time will come when judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Peter iv. 17, 18. When tribulation and persecution arise because of the Word, then all those combustible materials shall be consumed; and only those which are fire-proof—the gold, silver, and precious stone—will remain; and these will pass the ordeal, freed from their dross, and fused into more intimate communion.

Such, dear Friend, is the meaning of this passage. There are many of a similar nature, to which I could refer you did my space permit. I entreat your attention to one concluding remark, bearing on the doctrine of Purgatory. From the analysis of the text which I have just submitted to your attention, it is quite clear, that the apostle means persons, and not their principles or their actions, when he speaks of *that which is built on the foundation*. Unworthy *members* are represented by the wood, hay, and



stubble. Now these materials, in passing through the fire, are utterly destroyed—reduced to a heap of ashes. They are not cleansed, purified, or in any way improved, but totally consumed! But the Purgatorial fire is not destructive, but corrective: its tendency is not to dissolve, but to purify—not to ruin, but to renovate. Therefore, the fire spoken of by Paul is not the fire of Purgatory.

One other assumed authority remains to be considered. This is 1 Peter iii. 19, 20: “By which he went and preached to the spirits in prison.” This prison, it is confidently alleged, is Purgatory. But this interpretation is, according to the learned EDGAR, “entirely modern, and was utterly unknown to the ancients. The exposition is not to be found in all the ponderous tomes of the Fathers.”

“The prison is hell, in which those who, in the days of Noah, were incredulous, were, in the time of Peter, incarcerated for their unbelief. These spirits were, prior to the flood, in the body and on earth; but in the apostolic age were consigned to the place of endless punishment. To these Jesus before his death preached, not in his humanity, but in his divinity: not by his *own*, but by Noah’s ministry. He inspired the *ante-deluvian* patriarch to preach righteousness

to a degenerate people. He officiated, says CALMET, not in person, but by his Spirit, which he communicated to Noah. Augustine among the ancients, and Aquinas among the school-men, were the great patrons of this interpretation; and the African saint and the angelic Doctor have been followed by Beza, Hessel, Calmet, and many other commentators both in the Romish and Reformed communions.”\*

If the prison here spoken of mean Purgatory, then these spirits must have been tortured 2,500 years! But one should think that it only required a glance to see that this text gives no countenance to a middle place of punishment. The disobedient spirits, that were not led to repentance by the long-suffering of God, and the preaching of Noah, but in the midst of their enormous guilt and iron-hearted impenitence were swept from the earth by the Deluge—surely these spirits did not go to Purgatory! They died in mortal sin, and must have gone to hell, of course; for if they escaped the place of the damned, for what class of sinners was it intended?

These remarks also apply to the quotation from Maccabees. A contribution was made to

\* *Edgar's Variations of Popery*, page 450.

have prayers offered for the Jews who fell in battle; in connexion with which it is said to be "a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." But these men died under the unrepented guilt of idolatry, which is a damning sin.

"Invenerunt autem sub tunicis interfectorum de denariis idolorum, quæ apud Jamniam fuerunt:—omnibus ergo manifestum factum est, ob hanc causam eos corruisse," 2 Mac. xii. 40. "They found under the garments of the slain, gifts consecrated to the idols of Jamnia:—it was therefore evident to all, that this was the cause of their destruction." Surely, persons smitten by God for the crime of idolatry do not go to Purgatory! But if not, this passage cannot be alleged in support of any such place, even were the book from which it is taken possessed of any authority, which I deny; but my reasons I must defer till another opportunity.

During the first 200 years of the Christian era, many of the Fathers wrote on the state of the dead, and while they speak at large on the bliss of heaven and the woes of hell, they never mention an intermediate state of punishment. Prayers for the dead were, indeed, in use long *before the modern Purgatory was thought of.* *But these prayers were offered for the most*

eminent saints, for prophets, apostles, evangelists, and martyrs, and even for the blessed Virgin herself, as appears from the ancient liturgies. The object of these prayers was not to deliver them from the pains of a fancied Purgatory, but to increase their enjoyment in the bowers of the celestial paradise. No Roman Catholic will say that Mary, the mother of Jesus, went to Purgatory, she being, according to them, immaculate and sinless. Yet for many centuries her soul was regularly prayed for. It follows, that the practice of praying for the dead does not prove the belief of the early Christians in the existence of a Purgatory.

The gradual introduction of superstition into the Christian Church was marked by the custom of praying, not only for the redeemed in heaven, but for the damned in hell: that the joys of the former might be augmented, and the tortures of the latter alleviated. But they had no notion that the sufferer could ever be released from his prison.

Something like the Papal Purgatory may be traced among the ancient heathens—in the philosophy of Plato, the oratory of Cicero, and the poetry of Virgil.\* But until the days of Origen,

\* See particularly the 6th Book of Virgil's *Æneid*.

who flourished in the fourth century, it was unknown to the Church of Christ. And the visionary speculations of this erratic Father, differed very much indeed from the dogmas on this point which the modern Church of Rome deems orthodox. He fancied that all, saints and sinners alike, not excepting "the mother of God" herself, would be compelled to pass through the general conflagration at the last day. Thus his fiery ordeal would not commence till the time when the modern purgatory is supposed to terminate; and he fancied it would try and purify all the human family, with the single exception of the Son of God! Many of the most distinguished Fathers and school-men adopted this theory; but is it not palpably unjust to quote their reveries on such a subject, in favour of the Romish Purgatory? Does not the merest tyro at once perceive that such reasoning is grossly illogical. What think you, then, of the author of "Travels of an Irish Gentleman in search of a Religion," who concludes his authorities on this point by the following sentence:—  
"With similar views it was maintained by St. Hilary (and Origen seems to have been of the same opinion), that after the day of judgment, *all—even the blessed VIRGIN HERSELF—must alike pass through this fire, to purify them from*

their sins!" What an admirable finishing argument in favour of Roman Catholic Purgatory!! And so the blessed Virgin herself is, according to St. Hilary,\* to pass through Purgatory after the day of judgment, in order to be purified from her sins! Verily, this is new doctrine for the "Catholics of Ireland!" I tremble for the orthodoxy of the "Bard of Erin." But poets do not make the best theologians; and there is, in the Edinburgh Review, an article on the ancient Fathers, ascribed to Mr. Moore, which shows that that gentleman has no more reverence for those personages than

Your faithful Friend.

\* Such is the unanimous consent of the Fathers! An Irish peasant must hunt for this unanimous consent—an *ignis fatuus*!—before he can receive any meaning from such language as this. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all sin*," 1 John i. 7. He must compare hundreds of folios in Greek and Latin, before he can understand this simple sentence!



## LETTER XIV.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I PROPOSE, in this letter, to offer a very brief abstract of arguments which led me to reject the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, and which induce me still to persevere in that rejection. In a former letter, I made some passing allusion to the evidence of the senses, which the advocates of this tenet are compelled to impugn. I must now beg you to look at the subject more closely. The illustrious Catholic, PASCAL, that "prodigy of parts," whose name I often heard you pronounce with reverence, and whose "Thoughts" are eagerly read by many Roman Catholics, remarks, with his accustomed oracular wisdom, that "the dogmatist is confounded by reason, and the sceptic by nature."\* Sound logic will detect and refute the most subtle fallacies of the sophist, and expose to contempt the presumptuous ignorance of the dogmatic; while the irresistible evidence of the senses, the voice of nature, or rather the voice of GOD, equally intelligible to the savage and the sage, will "rebuke, with all

\* "La Raison confond les Dogmatistes, et la Nature les Sceptiques."

authority," the puerility and the petulance of scepticism.

It is a melancholy fact, in the history of the human mind, that the dictates of common sense have been as little regarded in science as in religion; and that the philosopher, no less than the fanatic, has sought to extinguish "the candle of the Lord" in the soul of man, as a necessary preliminary to the successful establishment of his favourite theory.

"To build religion upon scepticism, is the most extravagant of all attempts; for it destroys the proofs of a divine mission, and leaves no natural means of distinguishing between revelation and imposture. The Abbe Lamennais represents authority as the sole ground of belief. Why? If any reason can be given the proposition must be false. If none, it is obviously a mere groundless assertion."\*

It was the fashion of the ancient sceptics to discard the evidence of the senses, and to contend that there was no certainty in human knowledge. Actuated by similar principles, the celebrated DESCARTES, when he undertook to build up a new system of philosophy, determined to take nothing for granted—not even his own existence! With

\* Sir James Mackintosh, Enc. Brit. Prelim. Dis. Note Q.



him, this fact was a matter of logical deduction. His only assumption was an act of the mind, *cogito, ergo sum*. "I think," said he, "therefore I exist." A notable discovery! But, after all his care, this was a palpable begging of the question. However, he went on from this point, proving that he had a body, that there was a universe, and a God. And when he had thus ascertained the existence of God, he was satisfied, from the known goodness of his Creator, that his senses were not given to deceive him; and, therefore, that their evidence is to be relied on. Mr. LOCKE, the great reformer of mental philosophy, exerted his powerful talents to evince that the ideas in our minds, and not the things which they represent, are the objects of knowledge. Then came Bishop BERKLEY, and taking up the same theory about ideas, clearly proved that there is no such thing as matter; that our bodies, our friends, houses, lands, the earth, the luminaries of heaven, are nothing but ideas in the mind!

After him arose DAVID HUME, and boldly pushed the ideal system to its legitimate conclusion, demonstrating, that as there is no matter, neither is there any mind—that there is neither *body nor soul*, neither heaven nor hell, neither *God nor devil*. Such a conclusion, fairly de-

duced from the orthodox philosophy of the day, astounded all sober-minded men, and aroused the energies of the illustrious REID, who attacked the atheistical system at the foundation, and demolished it completely. He appealed to the common sense of mankind; established the authority of the senses; proved that they were given us by our gracious Creator, not to deceive and mislead us, but to be our infallible guides; and that we are so constituted by GOD, that the existence of those things which are the objects of our senses, irresistibly forces itself on our minds as a first principle, which none can question but idiots or maniacs. Thus the mental bondage of centuries was broken—a mighty strong-hold was recovered from the enemy—a powerful obstacle to human improvement rolled out of the way. What Bacon achieved for the physical sciences, Reid accomplished for intellectual and moral philosophy—furnishing a noble illustration of the maxim of Pascal, already quoted;—By force of reasoning he confounded the dogmatists, and the sceptics he silenced by appealing to nature.

I am happy, my dear Sir, to be able to adduce the authority of Pascal on the present occasion. I hope it will have due weight on your candid mind. I shall quote another of his maxims:—

“If we shock the principles of *reason*, our religion will be absurd and ridiculous.” Again: “Faith speaks clearly where the senses are silent, but never contradicts them. It is above them, but not opposed to them.”\*

Now, this is the very distinction that Protestants are so anxious to establish. There are many things quite beyond our comprehension, of whose existence, nevertheless, we have not the slightest doubt. Such, for instance, is the union of body and mind in our own persons. Who has ever explained the nature of this mysterious connexion? or disclosed the secrets of volition and bodily motion? Yet these things we know as matters of fact, from consciousness and experience. Thus there is an impenetrable veil drawn over many of the works of God, whose results are most familiar to us. They are beyond the reach of reason; but they do not contradict it. Their hidden springs we cannot trace; but could we follow them in their subtle operations, they would at once commend themselves to the understanding as displays of consummate wisdom.

\* “Si on choque les principes de la raison, notre religion sera absurde et ridicule.” “La foi dit bien ce què les sens ne disent pas, mais jamais le contraire. Elle est au dessus et non pas contre.” Pensées de M. Pascal. ch. 5.

Roman Catholics and Unitarians contend that Protestants are inconsistent in believing the doctrine of the Trinity, and rejecting Transubstantiation;—and, I am sorry to observe, that several Romish advocates are ready to abandon the Scriptural evidence of a plurality of persons in the Deity, conceding that it is contrary to reason, and unfounded in revelation, and supported solely by the authority of the Church—thus undermining the main pillars of Christianity, in order to establish their own peculiar dogmas. This is a base and treacherous proceeding, which demands the loudest reprobation. The Bible clearly teaches the fact, that there is a Trinity of persons in GOD; but it does not explain the mode of the Divine subsistence, because we have not faculties to comprehend it. “Can a man, by searching, find out God?” Man is a riddle to himself, and how can he understand the nature of a Being who is infinite in all his attributes? It is impossible for the human mind to believe what is plainly a contradiction. But there are things which seem to be contradictions, but are not so in fact. Man is mortal and immortal. But not in the same sense. He is mortal as to his body, and immortal as to his soul. Christ is equal and also inferior to the Father; equal in *his original and immutable nature, and inferior*

in his assumed condition as Man and Mediator. God is *one*, and God is *three*; but not in the *same sense*. This would be a contradiction, and no evidence whatever could bring a rational creature to receive it. The divine Being exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and these three—otherwise perfectly distinct, are one God—and each of them viewed apart is God. This account of the Deity is revealed as matter of fact; and as such we receive it, without presuming to inquire “how these things can be;” for if we are told of “earthly things,” and we understand them not, how can we understand when we are told of “heavenly things?” It is said, indeed, that it is impossible to believe what we do not know; but this is sheer absurdity. Unless we reject the Bible, we must believe that the human soul exists after the death of the body; but in what manner no man can pretend to tell. Shall we reject matters of fact, established on the most unquestionable evidence, because we cannot comprehend their causes? A principle of this kind, reduced to practice, would break, “with one fell swoop,” the springs of human action, dissolve into atoms the frame-work of society, and suddenly extinguish all the luminaries of the *intellectual world*.

*Thus do we give our cheerful assent to those*

truths which are taught us with sufficient evidence, although they may be above our limited comprehension. As children must learn and believe many things before they can understand their principles, even so must the wisest of men; for here we see through a glass darkly, and know only in part. But it does not hence follow that we are called on to receive evident contradictions, or to reject the testimony of our senses. Without the testimony of the senses there can be no testimony whatever! All evidence rests ultimately on the accuracy of our sensations. If these be delusive and lead us astray, it is impossible that we can be set right. God gave the senses to be our guides through life. Were they false and treacherous, when diligently and honestly employed, God himself would be the deceiver of his creatures, which is impossible. As he cannot contradict himself, so he does not require us to believe what the senses reject. The author of the Bible is the Creator of the human mind, to whose faculties and principles there is a constant appeal in the volume of inspiration. By those faculties we know that God exists—that he has made the world—that he has spoken to man. What were all the miracles which his messengers were enabled to perform, but appeals to the senses of mankind for the proof of their

mission? The man that tries to subvert the authority of the senses, is endeavouring, though unwillingly, to undermine the very "pillar and ground of the truth." Let no one deceive you, then, with a "voluntary humility," in impugning the evidence of the senses. It is a false humility, neither sanctioned by the teaching nor the example of JESUS.

There are certain principles of the understanding by which we perceive self-evident truths or axioms. We know intuitively that two and two are not five. Even God himself could not make us believe that two and two are five, without changing our nature. The same remark applies to all first principles. The denial of them shocks the human mind, and does violence to our constitution. Now, Sir, as Transubstantiation spurns the testimony of the senses, outrages all the principles of reason, and mocks the common-sense of mankind, it cannot be from God. If the dogma were really in the Bible, it would utterly destroy its claim to be a revelation from him. Archbishop Tillotson truly said, that an absurdity so monstrous, were it evidently contained in Scripture, would sink Christianity itself. Bring what arguments you may in favour of the Bible—appeal to all the evidences, external and internal, that support it—still, if it teach

that a wafer is a living man, it thereby furnishes against itself evidence a hundred-fold more powerful than any that can be brought in its favour. Were we to receive the Bible with this mill-stone about it, we should, in order to be Christian, cease to be rational; and our faith in the God of revelation would involve a renunciation of the God of nature. We must believe that our eyes are deceivers, and see nothing that is before them. The touch at once verifies their testimony, but it still is an illusion. The smell interposes, and corroborates the evidence of its fellows; and last comes the taste, and at once pronounces them all in the right. Hearing cannot interfere in this question. It can only testify as to the utterance of certain sounds by the Priest; but as to their meaning or transforming power, it can say nothing for or against. Here, then, are four competent witnesses that have been our faithful friends and unerring guides through life—that have never in a single instance deceived us, except perhaps when disordered by sickness—whose testimony is not confronted by any conflicting evidence of the same kind on the opposite side; for even the Roman Catholics that swallow the wafer can perceive nothing more in it than their opponents. *Shall we not believe these witnesses? The*



man that rejected their testimony in any other case but this, would require the care of his friends, being fit only for a lunatic asylum.

I once saw a woman receiving the Eucharist. She held out her tongue, as usual, but it happened that the wafer caught fast on a large projecting tooth, on which it remained suspended for a considerable time, to the great horror of the Priest, whose ejaculations of "miserable woman!" "unhappy wretch!" filled our minds with alarm for the fate of the poor communicant. The good Father was afraid that JESUS CHRIST, supposed to be then and there dangling on the top of a dirty tooth, should fall down on the boards, and that his glorified person would thereby be dishonoured. So he devoutly came to the rescue; and taking his helpless god gently between the forefinger and thumb, safely lodged him on the woman's tongue, that he might go the way of all food!

My dear Friend, I do not wish to hurt your feelings by turning your faith into ridicule, although it is very difficult to treat this subject with gravity; and one seems not only justified in taking up the weapons of satire where men are inaccessible to reason, but almost impelled *to the disagreeable task by a sense of duty, in order, if possible, to arouse our beloved country-*

men from their fatal lethargy. But I trust you, at least, are accessible to reason. Let us attend then, to the following considerations.

If Transubstantiation be true, the following contradictions must be admitted:—

1. A thing may exist without its essential attributes. Christ is divested of these in the wafer, which has neither thought, feeling, nor motion.

2. The attributes or “accidents” of a body may exist without the substance in which they naturally inhere. The Eucharist presents all the attributes without the substance of bread and wine.

3. A body bounded in space may be in ten thousand places at the same time. Thus the human body of Christ may be on all the altars on earth at the same moment, and, also, in hundreds of millions of stomachs!

4. A part is equal to the whole. The Host when elevated by the Priest is the body of Christ; and the Council of Trent decreed (Canon 9) “That the body of Jesus Christ is entirely contained in the Sacramental Eucharist under either species; and, after separation, under every part of these species!” Hence, if one of the communicants divided the portion of the wafer given to him into a thousand parts, and

then swallowed them, he would have a thousand human bodies in his stomach! And these all made out of one body! And, after all, there is but one body of Christ! Amazing infatuation!

5. That which exists already may begin to be. Jesus has existed in his human nature for more than eighteen centuries, but the Priest gives him existence—forms him out of bread and wine—every time he says Mass. “The Son of God is formed in the species without creation, generation, or motion; and exists without locality, quantity, or extension.”

These may serve as a specimen of the numerous contradictions which flow from this teeming fountain of absurdity and monstrosities. We are told, by Roman Catholics, that in opposing this tenet we call in question the power of God. But we do no such thing. We know that with God all things are possible that do not involve a contradiction. He cannot deny himself—cannot lie—cannot be unjust or ignorant—cannot cease to be in any particular place—cannot change. He can create innumerable worlds with a word, but cannot make a thing to be and not to be at the same time. He might change a mouse into an elephant; but then the elephant *so formed* would not be a mouse. When the *rod cast from the hand of Moses* (Exod. iv. 3)

became a serpent, it was not a rod. God never required any one to believe in an exercise of his power producing a change not evident to the senses. To them, Moses in his miracles appealed, and so did our Lord himself.

He appeared to the disciples, "to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs," Acts i. 3. Now what were these, "many infallible proofs," by which his resurrection was demonstrated to his followers? You will find them recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke. "And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my *hands and my feet* that it is I myself: *handle me and see*; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me to have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet."

Now, dear Friend, mark well this passage. Jesus submitted his person to the examination of the senses, to prove that he was really their Lord and Master. "Handle me and see." —

“ A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me to have.” It seems, then, Jesus has flesh and bones ; so your Church teaches. But flesh and bones can be handled and seen ; and if, when we make the experiment in this way, we cannot find flesh and bones in the wafer, we must be excused if we affirm that it certainly is not Jesus himself. The apostles were the witnesses of what they felt, and saw, and heard ; and on the testimony of their senses rests the whole superstructure of Christianity ! If they be found false witnesses—that is, if the senses are not to be relied on—the Church’s faith is vain ; she is yet in her sins.

But then we are told that Thomas was incredulous, and that a blessing is pronounced on those who believe without seeing. Yes, *without* but not *against* seeing. Thomas is not censured for not believing against the senses, but for not believing on testimony. The churches of God have ever since rested on the evidence which Thomas rejected ; namely, the assertion of the apostles as to what they saw, and felt, and heard. A chosen few were selected to bear this testimony to an unbelieving world ; a testimony perfectly unexceptionable, and so abundantly *corroborated* by a vast accumulation of other evi-

dence, that no man that honestly weighs it, can turn away from it without being convinced. But if, instead of the living, well-known person of Christ, with its "human face divine," the other apostles had presented Thomas with a loaf of bread, would he have been bound to believe that this was the risen Saviour? Most certainly not. And if the disciples had pointed to the bread and wine used at the Lord's Supper, and said, "Here lies Jesus of Nazareth, the very person who hung on the cross, and rose from the grave," they would have been laughed at by every man of common sense, as the most pitiable fanatics; and Christianity itself would have perished from the earth, forgotten among those innumerable abortions of superstition which mark an age of ignorance and religious enthusiasm.

I have said, that were this dogma contained in the Bible, it could not be received as a book inspired by God. It is incumbent on me, therefore, to prove that it is not in the Bible; and to this point I now request your earnest attention. I may first remark, that the most celebrated divines of your church admit that it is not a Scriptural doctrine. This concession is very important from such men as Scotus, Erasmus, Cardinal Cajetan, Bellarmine, and Bishop Fisher.

*I will first advert to the 6th chapter of the*

Gospel by John, which modern writers quote with very great confidence ; but which I shall prove to be wholly inapplicable. For if eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ be taken as referring to the Lord's Supper, it would confine salvation to those who partake of the Eucharist, thus excluding infants, and the whole Jewish church for many ages, as well as others who, from various circumstances, could not communicate. " Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." v. 53. These are the words ; from which it would follow, on Papal principles, that none but communicants are in a state of salvation. And from the following words it appears, with equal clearness, that no one that swallows the wafer can ever be lost ! " Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Can this language refer to the sacrament ? No, my Friend, it is a strongly figurative mode of expressing (in the Oriental style) the act of believing on the Son of God. The same thing is frequently called coming to Christ ; of which we have an instance in this very chapter, verse 35, which is perfectly synonymous with the one *already quoted* : " He that cometh unto me shall *never hunger* ; and he that believeth on me shall

never thirst." The Jews, understanding our Lord's words literally, he condescended to explain them, saying, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are life." What can be more satisfactory?

The ancient fathers did not agree with your divines on this point. Origen says the letter of this passage kills. Augustine lays it down as a principle of interpretation, that if any passage of Scripture seem to command a "heinous wickedness," it must not be understood literally; and he selects the sixth of John as an illustration. Eating human flesh and drinking human blood, is most "heinous wickedness" indeed, of which, according to this great father, the modern Roman Catholics are guilty. But it is unnecessary to dwell on this passage, for three general councils have conceded that the language does not apply to the Eucharist at all, and that it must be understood figuratively and spiritually; even the Council of Trent, eager as they were for arguments, gave up this text to the enemy.\*

Turn we now to the words of institution, Matth. xxvi. 26—29. You say this language must be understood according to the letter, as

\* See Note C.



asserting a real substantial change. Be it so: let us analyse it according to the letter. "Jesus took bread and blessed it, and gave it (the bread which is the only antecedent in the sentence) to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body." Now, mark it was bread he gave them; which they held in their hands, when he uttered the supposed magical words of consecration, *hoc est corpus meum*. Does the Priest say, Take, eat; before he consecrates? Then he does not act according to the letter! Again, according to the strict letter, his words can apply only to the identical piece of bread which he then held in his hand. Supposing that to be really changed into his body, how can it be thence inferred that every piece of bread that a Priest chooses to take into his fingers may be thus transformed? Is not this drawing a general conclusion from a particular premise? But is it right to call a wafer "bread?" The people ask for bread; and the Priest gives them—not a serpent, indeed—but a wafer! And this is acting according to the letter! But why not give the cup? Jesus gave it, and said, "Drink ye all of this." This is plain enough. But your church does not give the cup at all, and yet she acts according to the *letter*! This is marvellous! But this is not *all*:—Our Lord says (speaking according to the

letter) that the cup and not the wine is his blood. Is the vessel transubstantiated into blood? It must be so, since the words are to be understood literally! Once more; this same blood thus made out of a cup, is afterwards called the "fruit of the vine." Now, every body knows that the fruit of the vine is the grape. So, then, we have a cup turned into the blood of a living man, which blood was at that moment flowing in his veins! And this blood suddenly becomes grapes, and they all drink the grapes! There is literal interpretation! Into what a mass of absurdities should we convert the Bible, were we to interpret its luminous pages on this principle! Is this taking the Word of God in "its plain, obvious, and natural meaning?" If so, the Redeemer is literally a door, a vine, a rock, a way, foundation, a lamb, a lion, a rose, a lily, a star, a sun, &c. In all these cases, the verb *to be*, naturally and obviously means to signify, or to represent. And this is the meaning assigned to it by Roman Catholics themselves, in such places as the following, where the form of expression is precisely the same as that used by our Lord at the institution of the supper:—"The seven good kine are (represent) seven years"—"The seven empty ears, shall be seven years of famine," *Gen. xli. 26, 27.*—"The seven stars are the

angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." Rev. i. 20. Let me ask, do these words prove that a minister is a star, or that a candlestick is a church? And how can you answer in the negative, without, at the same time, rejecting the only shadow of evidence in favour of Transubstantiation? David's friends brought him water to drink at the risk of their lives, passing through the host of the Philistines from the well at Bethlehem. But he cast it on the ground, saying, "Shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy?" 1 Chron. xi. 19. Was this water really blood because David called it so? How, then, can you believe the wine of the Eucharist blood, merely because it was said to represent blood? But wherefore multiply examples, when, according to the current phraseology of the Bible, the substantive verb *to be*, is employed to signify betoken, represent; and when the writers of your church so understand it throughout the Sacred Volume, the words at the Lord's supper alone excepted? Here, then, is a dogma denied by the senses, and denounced by the common-sense of mankind as revolting to the principles of reason, supported *only by a forced explanation of a single passage of Scripture, interpreted on principles that con-*

vert the most perspicuous language into nonsense! Can you any longer believe it? Christians are said by Paul (Eph. v. 30.) "to be members of Christ's body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Apply the transubstantiation principle of interpretation to this passage, and what will you make of it? Mark, we are not merely members of his body—that might be mystically understood; "but of his flesh and of his bones." How literal! How cautiously worded—as if to obviate the possibility of a figurative explanation! Take the words "in their plain, obvious, and natural meaning." All the believers that ever lived are literally parts of the body of Christ that hung on the cross, entered the grave, and is now seated on the throne of God! Do you startle at this? "Well, but suppose the inspired Apostle intended to teach *this*, how could he do it more plainly than he has done it?" "Members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Was ever truth expressed in clearer terms?

Do you shrink, my Friend, from this literal interpretation on account of the monstrous consequences it involves? Let me tell you that they are not half so monstrous as those involved in the doctrine of Transubstantiation. And I fearlessly assert, that the reasoning from this text *to show that every believer constitutes part, not*

of the mystical, but of the *physical* body of Christ, is by far more forcible than any that can be employed in favour of the conversion of the whole substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of the Son of God.\*

I am, &c.

\* And, therefore, on Romish principles, every communicant must swallow the *whole Church* of Christ!!

## LETTER XV.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

CARDINAL BELLARMINE argues that because no opposition was made to Transubstantiation during the first six centuries of the Christian era, it must have been received by the church from the beginning. But any man acquainted with the history of the church, would draw from this important fact a conclusion diametrically opposite. What! Transubstantiation remain six hundred years in the church without being opposed! The thing is impossible. Is there a single doctrine of the Gospel that was not assaulted fiercely by heretics and heathens? And think you that this dogma is so rational, so agreeable to common sense, that no body—no malicious heretic or persecuting heathen—would have ventured to expose the God-creating and God-eating practices of the sect every where spoken against? Is it credible that ARIUS and his followers, who flourished in the fourth century, would have made no mention of a tenet so obnoxious to the shafts of ridicule?

We are, however, able to tell when the doctrine obtained a footing in the church. We learn

from Justin Martyr, Origen, and Tertullian, that during the first three hundred years the Lord's Supper was administered, with some slight variations, in different churches, in the following manner:—First, the Word of God was read. Then the congregation sang the praises of God. After which followed a general prayer, consisting of petitions for divine mercy, and thanksgiving offered over the bread and wine, and other things offered by the faithful as first fruits unto God, of which they partook in commemoration of the dying love of Jesus. At the conclusion of the prayer, all the people said, Amen. None but communicants were present on these occasions, and they assembled generally at supper-time. The bread was broken and the wine poured out by the minister, and handed round by the deacons to the people, who received it sometimes standing and sometimes sitting. Thus it was for the first three hundred years—the time of the church's purity and glory.\*

We are tauntingly asked, where was our religion before Luther? Our reply is, that its

\* See Lord King's Inquiry into the Constitution, &c., of the Primitive Churches, where the authorities are quoted at length. And Mosheim, De rebus Christian. ante Constantinum.

doctrines were always in the Word of God, to which we confidently appeal, and that they were professed by the church of Christ, wherever it prevailed, during the best ages of its history. Well may we retort the question, and ask, where was the present system of the Church of Rome during 1200 years of the Christian era? We challenge all your learned men to produce the word *Transubstantiation* in any book written before the year 1215, when Innocent III. invented the name and established the doctrine in the 4th Lateran council! Thus you perceive it is a novelty, "both name and thing."

PASCASIUS, who flourished more than eight hundred years after Christ, was the first author that wrote a formal defence of this doctrine. The idea, indeed, had been started before, incidentally, in the controversy about the worship of images. The Synod of Constantinople had argued that there was no image of Christ allowed by Scripture but the elements in the Eucharist, to which the second Council of Nice, assembled in 787, replied, that the sacrament was not the *image* of Christ's body, but the body itself. The monk Pascasius Radbertus, published his defence, already mentioned, in the year 818. Even Bellarmine admits that "he was the first, who, in an express and copious manner, wrote



on the truth of the Lord's body and blood." What! one of the principal doctrines of the Bible—a doctrine of which the faithful were reminded weekly by the elements of the Eucharist—was never taken up and formally expounded for eight hundred years, until, after the long lapse of ages, a monk in his cell bethought him of the praiseworthy undertaking! None of the "Fathers," prolific as were their pens, numerous and ponderous as were the tomes they left behind, ever wrote a single tract upon this most wonderful of all the mysteries of the Christian system! And, notwithstanding, this unaccountable silence, the doctrine of Transubstantiation has been firmly believed by the Church of Christ in all ages! You may believe this if you please; but if you do, you will "believe it because it is impossible!"

The arguments of Pascasius were soon refuted by the learned and accomplished RABANUS MAURUS, archbishop of Mentz, who was accounted the glory of Germany. "Some, of late," said he, "not having a right opinion concerning the body of Christ, which was born, suffered, and rose from the dead, have asserted that it is received in the Eucharist; which error we *have opposed with all our might!*"

*He stood not alone in his opposition to the*

monstrous novelty. All the great theologians of the age rose up in arms against it, among whom it is sufficient to mention SCOTUS and BERTRAM, whose works circulated for many ages throughout the Christian world without any censure for heresy.\* The controversy was again revived by BERENGARIUS, an archdeacon, in 1050, after it had slept for about two hundred years, during which the tenet silently gained ground among the ignorant clergy, whose privileges and power it was so well fitted to enhance. Berengarius, therefore, received worse treatment than his predecessors, having been several times compelled to recant. But he no sooner obtained his liberty each time, than his recantation was recanted. He was, nevertheless, very leniently dealt with by Pope Gregory VII., whose conduct, on this occasion, is both amusing and instructive. He appointed a fast of thirty days, with a view to obtain a divine revelation as to the truth or falsehood of this doctrine. Does this show that the head of the church then firmly believed this dogma? Does it not betray his ignorance and doubts on this vital question? Just think of the present Pope Gregory XVI. proclaiming a fast in order to ascertain the truth

\* Du Pin, ii. 81, 87.

of Transubstantiation—the test of orthodoxy—the great “burning article” of the church!!

Well, Gregory had a conference with the blessed Virgin, (“who alone destroys all heresies,”\*) and she gave him a gracious answer! Now, what think you, my dear Friend, was the purport of this answer? Why, that they should leave the matter just as the Scriptures had left it! “Nothing,” said she, “should be acknowledged on this subject, but what is contained in authentic Scripture, against which Berengarius has no objection.”† Here we have the Virgin Mary a convicted heretic. But the truth is, the Pope invented this answer himself, that he might, by a pious fraud, rescue the champion of truth from the fangs of persecution. A council assembled at the Lateran, over which Pope Nicholas presided, compelled Berengarius to declare that “the body of Christ is in a sensible manner broken by the hands of the Priest, and ground or bruised by the teeth of the faithful.” Wo to the man that would dare to grind the body of Christ (*i. e.* the wafer) with his teeth at the present day! He would be cast from the altar as a fiend incarnate. “*Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis!*” Even the Church of Rome

\* Gregory XVI.

† Mabillon, 5. 140.

changes with the changing times! A subsequent council, with Gregory at its head, set aside this declaration for a statement less gross and revolting. It was this Gregory that first ordered a bell to be rung at the Mass. I have consulted several authorities, with a view to learn when the Host was first elevated to be adored by the people. This point I have not yet precisely ascertained. I think that it soon followed the ringing of the bell; for it is not at all probable that Gregory, with his views of the matter, would have encouraged the worship of the elements.

“ Transubstantiation, after the death of Berengarius, advanced by slow and gradual steps to maturity. Some continued to resist its inroads on the simplicity, truth, and beauty of Christian theology. But the majority of the clergy and laity, in the spirit of perversity, and the phrensy of superstition, adopted the deformity. Its patrons, however, found great difficulty in moulding it into form. Many editions of the novelty were circulated through Christendom; and all exhibiting the changes of correction and the charms of variety. The council of Lateran, in 1215, enrolled it among the canons of the Romish communion; and the Lateran decision was con-

firmed at Constance, and finally established at Trent."\*

Thus, after struggling for 300 years with the little light of reason and Scripture that remained in the Roman Church during those iron ages of ignorance and mental degradation, this extraordinary doctrine—this pyramid of absurdity, destined, it would seem, to remain as an enduring monument of the imbecility and fatuity of the human mind, was established at length, twelve centuries after the introduction of Christianity, and one or two before the Reformation! Auricular confession was also established at the same time. Surely, dear Sir, you will never again have the face to ask any Protestant where his religion was before Luther! You see we can turn upon you the *argumentum ad hominem* with great effect. But this is a point which I must resume on another occasion.

The unsettled state of Europe, the towering ambition of the clergy, the gross ignorance of the people from the lowest to the highest (for in these times, according to Dr. Johnson, noblemen were ashamed to know how to write their names), and, above all, the total neglect of the

\* Edgar, p. 390.

Word of God, will easily account for the steady progress and ultimate sway of this monstrous tenet. The way had been paved for it by the exaggerated eulogiums, and the extravagantly figurative language, employed by the Fathers in reference to the Lord's Supper. Add to this, the strong propensity of the human mind to worship a visible and tangible divinity—a propensity universally manifested by heathen nations, and too often betrayed by God's peculiar people—and you have an account of the introduction and prevalence of the dogma, which is perfectly satisfactory.

The Gospel, moreover, was at an early age corrupted by the intermixture of "science falsely so called," with its simple and saving truths. The philosophic jargon of Aristotle, with its "substances and accidents," invested as a suit of armour, the semi-pagan form of Christianity that prevailed in the dark ages; and thus logically equipped, it was called the *SCHOOL DIVINITY*. Never could Transubstantiation have obtained a footing in the Church, were it not that the minds of men were bewitched by those subtle distinctions, and unintelligible definitions, which, bearing the semblance of exalted wisdom, at once excited the admiration of the vulgar, and concealed the *ignorance* of the learned; while the "Key &

knowledge" was taken away from the people, and common sense itself was placed under the ban of excommunication.

But suppose the Church were not sufficiently attentive to mark the early growth of this "unnatural wen," which has in its full and monstrous development so grievously disfigured the Christian system; is that any reason that we should not earnestly seek its excision, when its revolting deformity is obtruded on every eye? It was while the husbandman slept that the enemy sowed tares. How foolish would that husbandman have appeared, had he contended that the tares were really wheat, because he did not detect the enemy in the mischievous act? What is the defence set up for this doctrine? Why, the whole Christian world did not rise up to denounce it at its first appearance, and, therefore, it cannot be a novelty. This is pretty much like the reasoning of an Irishman, when accused of sheep-stealing. Two or three respectable witnesses deposed that they saw him stealing the sheep.

"That may be, Gentlemen of the jury," said *the* accused, "but I can produce fifty men who *will swear* that they did not see me doing it."

*We can adduce the unequivocal testimony of the ablest ecclesiastics of their time—the orna-*

ments of the Roman Church—most strenuously put forth against this dogma, as soon as it appeared before the world in a tangible form ; and if our opponents can bring forward a hundred authors who say nothing on the subject, what is that to the purpose ?

I am, &c. .



## LETTER XVI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOU are asked, in the "Grounds of the Catholic Doctrine," "Do you not pray to images?" And you are taught to answer, "No, we do not; because, as both our catechism and common-sense teach us, they can neither see, nor hear, nor help us."

So your church is ready to appeal to common-sense when she fancies its evidence favourable to her claims; but she scruples not to thrust it out of court when it ventures to lift up its voice against her. This is not fair. If a witness be entitled to a hearing on one side, why not on the other? If common-sense teaches you that a picture can neither see, nor hear, nor help you, the same common sense teaches that the Host can "neither see, nor hear, nor help you." Your church admits the authority of the senses, and pleads it in her favour in some cases; with what show of consistency, then, can she place her interdict on their exercise in other cases *which come immediately within their proper sphere?*

*The Greek Church, in the eighth century,*

strongly opposed the introduction of images as objects of religious veneration in the churches. But the superstitious Latins were determined, at all hazards, to decorate the sanctuary with those "helps to devotion." If the devotion be genuine, images can perform towards it only the part of the parasite, consuming the vitality of that which they are expected to cherish. But, indeed, they can help that devotion only of which the *alma mater*—the fruitful mother—is ignorance. This is frankly avowed, or at least implied, in the Roman Catholic apologies for their use. "They are the books of the ignorant." Truly they are; and none but a grossly ignorant people could rely on their assistance.\*

I have already adverted to the tendency of the human mind to frame for itself a palpable divinity. The thought of an INFINITE SPIRIT overpowers our feeble minds, and, immersed as we are in the pollutions of the world, we cannot, without a painful effort, rise to the contemplation of excellence in the abstract. Hence the children of fallen Adam "did not like to retain God in their knowledge." They "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." (Rom. i. 23.) To this weakness of our nature, so prone to run

out into criminal excess, God has graciously condescended in the gift of his Son. He is "the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person," but the effulgence of that glory is so softened and shaded by the veil of humanity, that, without dazzling the mind, it enlightens and cheers the heart. In the person of Christ, as GOD manifested in the flesh, we have a living illustration of the attributes and character of the Deity. In him God descends from his "topless throne," and divesting himself of the "form" of his eternal Majesty assumes the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, humbles himself unto death, even the death of the cross. Here, then, is an impersonation of all that is lovely and excellent, on which the mind may dwell with never-ending delight! "Whom," says Peter, "having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Peter i. 8. Do you want an image—an "express image" of the invisible God? Behold the man Christ Jesus! Do you want a memorial of the crucified Redeemer—a remembrancer of the triumphant but absent Mediator? Go to the table of the Lord, *and consider* what that meaneth. The bread *broken* and the wine poured out will affectingly

remind you of the dying compassion of him whom having not seen you love. Here is the only picture of Christ! How simple, yet how sublime is this monument of redemption! More durable than brass, it can neither be corroded by time nor destroyed by power. The pyramids of Egypt have ceased to tell the story of their birth, or the fame of their founder; the ingenuity of the learned cannot extort the meaning of their hieroglyphic inscriptions. But this ordinance is established for perpetuity; and so long as the sun and the moon endure, its motto, "THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME," so simple in form, so pregnant in meaning, will be intelligible to every kindred, and tribe, and tongue of the human family.

"This do in *remembrance* of me." Memory, my Friend, refers to the absent and the past. To talk of remembering the present is absurd. You have just read that Peter speaks of Jesus as *unseen*. He cannot, therefore, be visible on the altar, as your church contends. The Priest offers up Christ to commemorate the offering of Christ! A father murders his son in remembrance of the murder of his son! What superlative absurdity! No, my dear Sir; we walk by faith and not by sight. We know that Jesus

is in heaven, crowned with glory; but his memorials are with us here below. By the senses we perceive bread and wine: there is no other substance; no human body concealed under their "accidents." But we look through these shadows to the glorious Reality, "whom the heavens must receive till the restitution of all things." By faith we *discern* the Lord's body in this ordinance. We recognize its object, enter into its spirit, feel its sacredness, and realize the blessings so beautifully portrayed in its expressive emblems. If by discerning the Lord's body be meant a literal perception of it by the senses, no such thing takes place. Roman Catholics do not pretend to see, or feel, or taste any thing but a mixture of flour and water. These they discern, but nothing more. There is no *real* presence of the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper; *that* is in no sense or form any where present but in heaven. Some Protestants write vaguely on this subject; but if they attended more to Scripture than to old treatises on divinity, they would be more cautious in speaking of a "real presence." To discern the Lord's body is religiously to bear in mind the sacred commemorative character of the institution. The disorderly Corinthians failed to do

this: they seem to have used the sanctified elements as a common meal, and were, therefore, strongly censured by the apostle.

Let Roman Catholics, then, abandon the untenable dogma of Transubstantiation; let them return to the primitive custom, and give bread and wine to the people; let them regard the ordinance as a remembrancer of the death of Christ—a remembrancer impressively significant of his atoning sufferings, and the effects which flow from them—reconciliation with God and the communion of saints: let them do this, and they will require no other image of Christ.

Your church, Sir, is very inconsistent. At one time the senses are all naught—vile and treacherous deceivers: at another, they are the most excellent helps of devotion—the wings of the soul, by which she soars in her seraphic contemplations to the very gates of heaven. “The sight of a good picture or image, for example, of Christ upon the cross—helps to enkindle devotion in our hearts.” So says the “Grounds of the Catholic Doctrine.” But where are the good pictures of Christ? You know the sort of miserable daubs that adorn the bed-rooms of the ignorant peasantry. But suppose the picture ever so well executed, is it a likeness? *The artist never saw the original.* So that the

things to which you are to pay "due honour and veneration"\* (how vague the language! how uncertain the standard!) are but the creations of the painter's fancy.

But do they enkindle devotion? I do not think so. I bowed before them a thousand times in "going round the stations" in the chapel, and I never found that they produced this effect. If I looked on the picture, my attention was diverted from my prayers; and through the roving of the eye, many thoughts foreign to the business in hand were suggested. Thus the mind is distracted, and saying prayers becomes a mere mechanical exercise, which might be performed as well by an automaton. If some monk, who labours at his vocation in the smoky laboratory of superstition, were fortunate enough to invent a *praying machine*, what an acquisition it would be to the church! The Pope would certainly grant his letters patent to secure the property: and if the rich were allowed to use it on paying license, it would add greatly to the temporal comfort of both clergy and laity, without at all lessening the sanctity of either.

The obtrusive and disturbing influence of the

\* Creed of Pope Pius IV.

senses during the exercises of devotion has, I dare say, been experienced by pious persons of all denominations. But the whole machinery of the Church of Rome is calculated to produce it. Her festive illuminations, her tragic mourning, her gorgeous drapery, her high masses, her solemn processions, her gaudy paintings, her varied music, from the cheerful violin down to the melancholy muffled drum—these theatrical exhibitions may, like other shows of a similar kind, excite the admiration of the vulgar, and stir up the feelings of the sensitive, beguiling the vain and the thoughtless into the delusive notion that they are religious. But they never can inspire genuine devotion. They form no part of the means of grace under the Gospel dispensation, and we look in vain for any traces of them in the worship of the primitive church.

“The hour cometh,” saith our Lord, “when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him,” (John iv. 23.) Such worshippers may be *in* the Church of Rome, but most assuredly they are not *of* it. Yours, my dear Friend, is not the religion “to mortify pride, or to quell the strong enmity of nature, or to arrest the currency of the affections, or to turn the constitutional habits, or to pour a new



complexion over the moral history, or to stem the domineering influence of things seen and things sensible, or to invest faith with a practical supremacy, or to give its objects such a vivacity of influence as shall overpower the near and the hourly impressions that are ever emanating upon man from a seducing world." "The religion of taste is one thing, the religion of conscience is another."\* What ministers to the imagination does not always purify the heart. The eye and the ear may be charmed, and through them the feelings strongly excited; but the influence exerted is superficial and evanescent. It does not penetrate to the motives that lie deep in the bosom; it does not sanctify the will, nor move the springs of action, nor form anew the character, nor control the conduct. By their fruits ye shall know them. Look at France, where the most theatrical of people was gratified by an accommodating church with all sorts of pompous pageantry, till it "palled upon the sense." But all did not suffice to charm away the spirit of atheism, which suddenly changed these sentimental Christians into incarnate fiends.†

Great was my surprise when I first found the second commandment in the Douay Bible! A *controversy* in Waterford first led me to the dis-

\* Chalmers.

† Note D.

covery. But a Priest got out of the difficulty thus:—He argued that as adultery and theft are the objects of separate prohibitions, that, therefore, “by parity of reasoning,” the desires that lead to these crimes should be the subject of separate commands. But what is this but teaching logic and moral philosophy to God? Did not He know how to express his own commands? It is unfortunate for this argument that the word “wife” does not occur first in the enumeration of things not to be coveted, but is ranged with “the house,” the man-servant and the maid-servant, the ox and the ass, so as to teach us clearly that they are all represented as the objects of one simple state of the mind, expressed by the word *covetousness*. It is simply the desire of what belongs to another, viewed as such, that is condemned in this precept.

But why such pains to split one commandment into two? Why, one of the commandments being expunged from the decalogue, because it expressly condemns the religious use of images, it was necessary somehow or other to make up the number ten. How strong must be the infatuation of error, when men are led to alter and abridge a law communicated by God himself, under circumstances so tremendously awful!—*a law written for perpetuity on tables of stone!*

How can men who dare thus to trifle with the authority of JEHOVAH, hope to escape the curses that are written in that law? It is said, indeed, that this is done for the sake of brevity, and to ease the memory of the children! What nonsense! Did not God know the capacity of children as well as the modern compilers of Romish catechisms? And yet he commands these very words to be taught to children. Can any thing equal the assurance of men who shut out from the manuals of religious instruction a command which the JUDGE of all thought worthy of being engraved on stone, and that to make room for large quantities of trash of their own invention! My dear Friend, this is too bad!

Again, they say that what we call the second command is but a repetition of the first. And are these men, indeed, so chary of their words, so laconic in their style of praying and teaching, as to accuse the author of wisdom Himself of "vain repetitions," and idle prolixity!!

It is one thing to prefer Jupiter or Apollo to Jehovah; it is a totally different thing to worship the true God through the medium of images. The gods of the heathen might be adored without ever bowing down to an image, and images *might be worshipped* by those who abhorred the *gods of the heathen*. The things are totally dis-

tingent. But Jehovah, who searches the heart, knows that the worship of images, in any degree, rapidly leads to the adoration of false gods, and sinks its votaries in the pollutions of idolatry.

Once more, we are told that God himself ordered the religious use of images to his own peculiar people, and expressly commanded Moses to make certain representations for this purpose. This is an appeal to the law and the testimony, and such appeals deserve our serious attention. Two instances are produced:—First, Exod. 25, “where Moses is commanded to make two cherubims of beaten gold, and place them at the two ends of the mercy-seat, over the ark of the covenant, in the *very* sanctuary.” The other is Num. 21, where Moses, by the divine authority, made a serpent of brass.

Now as to the cherubim, it is very true, as the writer above quoted remarks, that they were placed in the “*very* sanctuary,” or rather in the “*holy of holies.*” But this circumstance, on which he seems anxious to lay stress, is fatal to his argument. For these figures, whatever they were intended to represent, were *never seen by the people*. They never bowed down before them, nor paid them any honour or veneration. Not even the Priests enjoyed the privilege of beholding these mysterious images, but the High

that "he removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces *the brazen serpent* that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it *Ne-hushtan*;" that is, a piece of brass.—2 Kings xviii. 4.

What an instructive lesson does the history of this piece of brass afford us? See the melancholy effect of will-worship—of departing from the law, even where some plausible apology might be made! What a monstrous brood of idolatrous practices grew up round the piece of brass thus superstitiously venerated! Thus was it found necessary that this serpent should be broken in pieces, type of Christ though it was, because the people converted it into an idol. Would that some Hezekiah would rise up in Ireland to purge your sanctuary, to destroy your images, and break in pieces your crucifixes! But let us wait with patience; and ere many years elapse, education and the Gospel will accomplish the work.

Before I conclude, I must notice a quibble about the Second Commandment. It is said, that if the words, "thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, or the likeness of any thing," be understood literally, we should "cast

down our sign-posts, and deface the king's coin." What then means the prohibition? Why, according to my opponents, that we should not make images our god, and adore them as such. But does it forbid nothing more than this? Does it not forbid the making of images or likenesses for religious uses? This is the thing interdicted by God. It is an unworthy sophism to extend the law so as to embrace images made for secular purposes. Who ever bowed down to a sign-post, unless, indeed, it bore the image of Peter or Patrick? Then, I admit it might have some drunken worshippers. Who ever sought to kindle his devotion over a king's image on a five-shilling piece? The Holy Scriptures indignantly denounce, and assail with the shafts of the most cutting irony, the making of images for any religious uses whatever. This is the point of the precept. I defy all the arts of sophistry to evade it. Thus have I beaten your church with her own weapons. I have shown you, that in taking away from the people one of the commands of Jehovah, she is convicted of wickedly suppressing the law of God in order to shelter her own delinquencies. It is vain that she contends that the Second Commandment is not against her. The fact that she has ex-

cluded it from her Catechisms is all the proof we want on the point. If a party in a court of justice has managed to put a witness out of the way, and when that fact is proved against him, pleads that the testimony of this witness is not unfavourable to his cause, who would believe him? If not unfavourable, why take so much trouble to remove him? To the Church of Rome we may say, Out of thine own mouth thou art condemned, thou wicked servant. Thou hast taken away from the people a statute confessedly written by the finger of God on a table of stone, because it pointedly condemned certain practices to which thou hast always, in the days of thy degeneracy, manifested a violent hankering. But now, that thy treacherous dealing has been exposed, and is likely to excite the jealous scrutiny of thine own children (for some of them are showing themselves men in understanding), I pray thee to confess thy guilt to that gracious Being from whom thou hast so grievously apostatized. Come to him with repentant feelings; and, deeply as thou hast offended him, "from all thy filthiness and all thine idols he will cleanse thee," and restore thee to that purity which thou hadst ere the sinister attentions and flattering *allurements* of CÆSAR seduced thee from thy

first love. Thou art now trying to paint thy faded and wrinkled features, but in vain. They still betray the ravages of unbridled appetite, and malignant passion. Thy smiles of liberality are hollow and forced, and evanescent as the sun-gleam that rests on the bosom of the tempest. Let me whisper into thine ear the fatal secret—thy beauty is withered, thy strength hath failed. Thou art not, indeed, bloated with intemperance. The “rotundity of thy configuration” hath disappeared. But thy constitution is broken down. Paralysis hath smitten several of thy most important members. Many of thy royal children are obstreperously disobedient. In short, *Ichabod* may be written on thy dwelling, for thy glory hath departed. How are the mighty fallen! In thy prime of life, when thou didst sit as a queen over tributary kingdoms, thou wert a woman of blood, and the appetite is still insatiable, whetted too by an irritating sense of impotence; yet while “passions corroding are rankling within,” thou triest to smile good humouredly, but believe me, ’tis a “ghastly smile!” Cease then to act the hypocrite. Confess thy fallibility and thy guilt, lest when the indignant nations are aroused by pondering on the wrongs thou hast inflicted, they should not have compassion on



thy hoary locks, but administer unto thee the dregs of that cup which erst the people of France compelled thee to taste !

I assure you, dear Sir, this advice is worthy of attention.

Your's truly.

## LETTER XVII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IT is a dictate of common sense, that our accountableness to God implies, First, an internal principle, by which we are enabled to distinguish between truth and error, and right and wrong. And, Secondly, a law or standard given by our Creator, to which we can confidently appeal in cases of doubt. If there be no *conscience* there can be no accountability. If there be no *law*, there can be no transgression. These are principles which no man of sound mind will dispute. They are repeatedly appealed to by the Holy Spirit in the Bible. For instance, our Lord asks, "Yea, and why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right," Luke xii. 57. How could they without a judging principle, and a standard of rectitude? "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves," 2 Cor. xiii. 5. This duty requires a principle that is capable of examining, and a *test*, to which it submits the character. "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good," 1 Thess. v. 21. How can this possibly be done without a discriminating faculty, and a *touchstone* by which we can distinguish

between the precious and the vile? We must be able to give a reason for rejecting some things and retaining others. Our reason is, that we have *tried* them. But a trial involves two things, a judge and a law.

As to the discriminating faculty, or conscience, (call it what you will,) there ought to be no dispute, as the Church of Rome appeals to it to prove her own exclusive authority to guide the human race in the affairs of salvation. To this point your earnest attention is requested. The Church appeals to *private judgment to establish* her authority. The question now is, *What* should we take for our guide in religion? *What* is the rule of faith or the standard of Truth? This question is referred to Private Judgment, before whose tribunal Roman Catholics plead on the one side, and Protestants on the other. The Romish Church is not now on the bench, but at the bar—is not the judge deciding, but the party pleading. The question *sub lite*—the matter at issue—is, whether the authority of the Church, or something else, shall be the *standard of truth* and the sole arbiter in religious disputes.

Suppose now that she succeeds in establishing her point—that the arguments of various kinds *which she advances* are held to be valid and *convincing* by the judge in this case—that as the

mother and mistress of all churches, she is invested with supreme authority in matters of religion. I ask, what is the basis of this authority? What, on her own showing, is the ground on which it rests? The answer is obvious; on the decision of Private Judgment! This is the Atlas that supports the heaven of Romanism. What a proud superstructure to be raised on such a foundation! Yet so it is, provided, be it observed, that she has sustained her claim. *This is a question which we must now examine.*

Protestants contend that the Bible, and the Bible *alone*, without note or comment, or any authoritative exposition whatever, is the Rule of Faith. This position the Roman Catholic Church denies, asserting that there are certain *unwritten traditions of equal authority* with the "Scriptures of truth;" and that God's Revelation to man is not a safe guide without her infallible interpretation. But let us hear her own deliberate assertions and solemn decisions:—

"All saving truth is *not* contained in the Holy Scripture, but partly in the Scripture, and partly in *unwritten traditions*, which, whosoever doth not receive, with like piety and reverence as he doth the Scriptures, is accursed! No one, confiding in his own judgment, *shall dare* to *wrest the sacred Scriptures* to his own sense of

them, contrary to that which hath been held, and is still held by holy mother Church, whose right it is to judge of the true meaning and interpretation of Holy Writ, or contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. If any disobey, let them be *denounced* by the ordinaries and *punished according to law.*" (Conc. Trid. Sess. 4.)

In the same Session a curse was uttered against all who refuse to receive the Apocrypha as part of the inspired canon. And in the *Index of Prohibited Books*, prepared by order of the same Council, we have the following passage:—

" Inasmuch as it is manifest from experience, that if the Holy Bible, translated into the vulgar tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to every one, the temerity of men will cause *more evil than good to arise from it*, it is on this point referred to the judgment of the bishops or *inquisitors*, who may, by the advice of the Priest or confessor, permit the reading of the Bible, translated into the vulgar tongue by Catholic authors, to those persons whose faith and piety they apprehend will be augmented and not injured by it; and this permission they must have *in writing*. *But if any one shall have the presumption to read or possess it, without such written per-*

mission, *he shall not receive absolution* until he have first delivered up such Bible to the ordinary. Booksellers who shall sell, or otherwise dispose of Bibles in the vulgar tongue, shall *forfeit the value of the books*, to be applied by the bishop to some pious use, and shall be subject to such other penalties as the bishop shall judge proper! (Index, Rule 4.)

So spake the Church of Rome in the celebrated Council of Trent. Does she speak now in a different tone? Has "the pressure from without" compelled her yet to grant to her subjects *liberty of conscience*? As well might she be expected to grant her heart's blood!

The letter of the present Pope, from which I have already quoted, is an authentic exposition of Romish principles at the present day. Gregory XVI. writes as follows:—

"This matter also occupied very much the attention of the Fathers of Trent, who applied a remedy to so great an evil, by publishing a most salutary decree for compiling an Index of Books in which improper doctrine was contained. 'For the matter of error will never be effectually removed, unless *the guilty elements of depravity be consumed in the flames.*'\*

\* In justification of this persecuting principle, he quotes *Acts xix. 19*, where, he says, the Apostle Paul burned a

“ So that by this continual solicitude, through all ages, with which this Holy Apostolic See has ever striven to condemn suspected and noxious books, and to *wrest them forcibly* out of men's hands (*et de hominum manibus extorquere*); it is most clear, how false, rash, and injurious to the said Apostolic See, and fruitful of enormous evils to the Christian public, is the doctrine of those who not only reject the censorship of books as too severe and burdensome, but even proceed to that length of wickedness, as to assert that it is contrary to the principles of equal justice, and dare deny to the Church the right of enacting and employing it.”

The freedom of the press, Gregory designates as “ that most vile, detestable, and never-to-be sufficiently execrated liberty of booksellers,\* namely, of publishing writings of whatever kind they please; a liberty which some persons (Mr. O'Connell, for instance) dare with such violence of language to demand and promote.”

Thus have you heard the Church of Rome herself putting forth her lofty claims—claims

great number of books. The Pope is either very ignorant or very disingenuous! for the people themselves *voluntarily* burned the books, when convinced of their errors.

\* “ *Deterrima illa et nunquam satis execranda libertas artis librariorum.*” *Sanctissimi Domini nostri Gregorii Episcopi Encyc.*

for the maintenance of which she has not scrupled to trample on all laws human and divine—imprisoning, torturing, burning, and slaughtering myriads of pious and upright members of society, simply because, in the spirit of Christian meekness, they contended for liberty of conscience!

Our Lord says, If a man bear witness of himself, his witness is not true. The Church of Rome bears witness of herself; and as she is so deeply interested in the controversy, are we not warranted to demand other evidence than her bare assertion? The Greeks, the Turks, and various Heathen nations, are equally confident in maintaining the authority of their respective churches. How shall we settle their claims? Suppose the Pope, the Mufti, and the Patriarch of Constantinople, were each to address a heathen with a view to convert him. The Bishop of Rome would loudly assert his supremacy and universal lordship, as the Vicar of Christ; the Patriarch would extol the ancient glory and purity of his church, and accuse his Roman brother of departing from the faith; while the successor of Mahomet would denounce them both as "Christian dogs," totally unenlightened and unsanctified. Then would burst forth from each of the parties a torrent of curses,



most orthodox, cordial, and bitter ! The poor heathen would have a task assigned him more delicate and difficult than fell to the lot of Paris, when called on by three goddesses to award the palm of beauty !

The Church of Rome pleads a Revelation in her favour ; so do the Greek, and the Mahomedan, and the Hindoo ; and they seem all equally worthy of credit.

Suppose the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer were trying to convert an infidel to the faith which he has adopted. He would say :

“ Let me first observe, that an infallible guide is a great blessing to the world, as it prevents variety of opinion among men.”

“ Nonsense, my dear Sir,” replies the infidel ; “ there is as great variety of opinion in the Church of Rome as any where else in the world. Doctrines the most heterogeneous and contradictory are cherished within her pale. But she cares not what errors and vices swarm within, provided she can extort outward submission to her authority. It is not for orthodoxy or morality, but for external uniformity she contends. For this, hecatombs innumerable have bled upon her altars. Prevent variety of opinion, indeed ! *As well* might she undertake to arrest the mo-

tion of the pulse without destroying life. To compel all the minds in the world, ignorant and educated, stupid and intelligent, gay and contemplative, to think alike! How Utopian! How preposterous! Charles V. could not make a few watches go together; remember how sagely the ex-emperor moralised thereon. The machinery of the human mind is more complicated and delicate than that of a watch! Your Inquisition, Sir, could not prevent the Reformation. Coercion may make hypocrites of knaves and cowards. The upright and honourable are its martyrs.

“ Well, Sir, as this is a mere subsidiary argument I will not stop to contest that point, but come to the main question at issue. The infallibility of our church is a doctrine of Revelation, as clearly established as any other truth of the Christian religion. I will first refer you to Matt.—”

“ Hold, Sir! not so fast,” remarks the Infidel. “ You are about to prove the infallibility of the Papal Church from the Bible. I am glad that your infallible mother condescends to appeal to my private judgment as to the meaning of the Bible, and especially on a point so important!—the very foundation on which she stands! But allow me to say that there is a preliminary

question—I do not believe in the Bible. I hold it to be a collection of fables, a mass of absurdity from beginning to end. You must demonstrate, first of all, that there is a God. Secondly, that he has spoken to man. Thirdly, you must settle the canon of Scripture, adducing such arguments as are calculated to satisfy a candid mind as to the authenticity and inspiration of the Bible. When you have done this, I will expect you to point out the portions of Scripture that teach the infallibility of the Church of Rome, and also to maintain the soundness of your private interpretation of those passages. A hard task !”

“ Oh, not at all, I assure you !” replies Mr. Spencer, “ we receive God’s word, written and unwritten, on the authority of the Church, without which we could not know what was Scripture, or what not. Here lies our immense advantage over all the Protestant sects.”

“ Ah ! Sir,” observes the Infidel, “ I did not think you were a gentleman of such extreme simplicity ! You undertake to prove the infallibility of your church. You refer to Scripture. I ask you to show me by solid arguments that your Scriptures and your traditions are not pure inventions—mere idle fictions ; and you quietly refer me to the authority of your church !—the *very thing* in dispute ! How soon you convert

the party on trial into the judge! Pretty logic, indeed! A gentleman comes into court asserting his right to an estate. His counsel makes a speech in his favour. The judge calls for proof of title. A will is handed in. The judge remarks, that if the will be indeed genuine, it is a matter of considerable doubt whether it would bear an interpretation favourable to the claimant; but that being a question for subsequent consideration, he calls, in the first instance, for proof of the genuineness of the document. My Lord, says the counsel, the document is certainly genuine. My client most positively asserts it—nay, is ready to swear it; and as the estate is worth only about £100,000 a year, surely you would not suspect so honourable a man of stating what is false for such a trifle! Would not this man be laughed out of court, or punished for forgery? Yet such is the predicament in which you have placed the Pope! Observe the vicious circle. Is the Pope *infallible*? Yes; for the Bible asserts it. Is the Bible *inspired*? Yes; for the Pope asserts it. Was there ever, in the annals of sophistry, a more palpable, clumsy, begging of the question than this? And yet it is upon this *assumption* that you are about to build the 'baseless fabric' of an infallible church! And this *assumption*, so glaringly unfounded, is her

sole authority for murdering Jews, Turks, and Protestants, whenever she has had the power.

“Suppose some usurper should, by force of arms, seize the sceptre of Britain; and, in order to vindicate his conduct, should allege that the country would otherwise be shamefully misgoverned. This plea of expediency being indignantly rejected by Parliament, he contends that the constitution has been violated; and that, under the circumstances of the case, he is justified by **MAGNA CHARTA** in ascending the throne. This, after much contention, intriguing, and corruption, is at length reluctantly admitted. But, in a very short time, the usurper begins to abuse his power, and tramples on the rights of the people—abolishing trial by jury, the privilege of petition, and the liberty of the press; espionage, proscriptions, confiscations, and executions being the order of the day. At length, a deputation from the House of Commons waits upon the tyrant. They recount their grievances, and appeal to Magna Charta, the great charter of their liberty, and the very document on which he had rested his right to the throne. ‘Insolent men!’ interrupts the usurper, frowning and stamping with fury, ‘know you not that the *document* you speak of possesses no authority *whatever* without my sign manual and interpre-

tation, as king of this country, and that none of my subjects must dare to read it without a written order from my Secretary, to be granted to those persons only of whose loyalty I entertain no suspicion ?'

“ ‘Sire,’ replies the deputation, ‘if Magna Charta possess no authority or meaning without your signature and interpretation as king, it follows, that you cannot be the legitimate sovereign of these realms, but a lawless usurper ; seeing that the only authority you pleaded in your favour was, by your own confession, no authority at all.’

“ ‘Soldiers !’ exclaims the despot, trembling with rage, ‘load these rebels with irons, and drag them to prison. Go, Secretary, and tell the Commons, that if they are not silent on the question of my authority, I will turn my artillery upon them, and blow them into atoms.’

“ ‘This crowned monster,’ continues the infidel, “is, *mutatis mutandis*, the Pope ; Magna Charta is the Bible ; and the Commons, the laity. The Pope claims to be the Vicar of Christ, resting his pretensions on the Bible ; and, in the same breath, he tells us we do not know what the Bible is, or what it says, till we are informed by him. Simple man ! does he think there is no common-sense in the world? Ha

calls a witness into court to prove his case; and, instead of allowing said witness to speak for himself, or proving that he is worthy of credit, he merely remarks: 'This witness, Gentlemen of the jury, clearly affirms that I am the supreme head of the Church of Christ on earth.' 'But, I beg,' says the opposite counsel, 'to cross-examine the witness, in order to ascertain—First, his credibility; and, Second, the real nature of his testimony.' 'As to his credibility,' remarks the Pope, with much candour, 'I freely admit that his oath did not deserve credit in any court in Europe till I gave him a character; nor even now does his evidence deserve the slightest attention, only when it is in my favour.'

'That is very singular,' adds the counsellor, 'but as you have brought him into court to prove your vicarship, I should like to examine him, to see what he says on that point.'

'You may, if you please,' quoth the Pope, but then it must be *through me*. For you must know that it is impossible to understand him in the vulgar tongue, and even in the "authentic Latin," he speaks so indistinctly, that without *my interpretation*, you could make nothing of his evidence. The truth is, he is almost dumb, *and nobody* but myself can tell infallibly what is *passing* in his mind.'

‘ And pray, how did you get this exclusive prerogative of telling what is passing in his mind? What proof have we that you possess it?’

‘ What proof have you? You have no proof—but *I* have, and that is enough!’”

I have, my dear Friend, dwelt thus long on this point, to show that your church has no foundation but *private judgment*—that her pretended infallibility rests on a mere *petio principii*, a begging of the question, as gross and as palpable as any that can be found in the category of sophisms! You perceive that, in order to convince the infidel, the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Spencer must produce the evidence in favour of the inspiration of the Bible—external and internal. Would that he were acquainted with the most powerful of all—the *experimental*! Would that he had found the “Gospel the power of God” to his own salvation! A young lady, lately converted in a French convent, told the Archbishop of Canterbury that she had not *changed* her religion—the Roman Catholic faith being the first that had been offered to her. She had been a *nominal* Protestant, but not a *real one*. Such, it is to be *hoped*, was the case with Mr. Spencer. This supposition must be made in order to save his intellect.

Now, if the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Spencer, in



to be every where received, and cursing all that would charge it with any errors. But Pope Clement VIII., his successor, not having the fear of these curses before his eyes, brought out a new edition in 1593. "The difference," says Mr. C. Butler, "between the two Papal editions is considerable. Dr. James, in his celebrated *Bellum Papale*, reckons 2,000 instances in which they differ; Father Henry de Bukentop a Recollet, made a similar collection."

Lucas Brugensis reckoned 4000 places in which, in his opinion, the Bible of Clement VIII. wants correction. "Cardinal Bellarmine, who had a principal part in the publication of the edition, praised his industry, and wrote to him that those concerned in the work *had not* corrected it with the utmost accuracy; and that, *intentionally*, they had passed over many mistakes."—"Scias velim Biblia Vulgata non esse a nobis accuratissime castigata: multa enim de industria, justis de causis, pertransivimus."—Bellarmine.)

Yet this is the Bible which, according to Mr. Butler, was declared by the Council of Trent to be "inerrant"—"where the dogmas of faith or morals are concerned." "In this decision," he adds, "every Roman Catholic must acquiesce, as he receives the Scriptures from the church,

under her authority, and with her interpretation."\*

A Bible with four thousand acknowledged blunders, is the best that the Council of Trent and the Pope could give to the church. Marvellous! And yet this Bible, with four thousand errors is inerrant! But who shall decide between these two infallible Vicars of Christ? They both bitterly cursed all that should make any alterations. Pope SIXTUS cursed Pope CLEMENT:

“When Greek fought Greek then was the tug of war.”

The fact is, however, that the Vulgate now extant never had the sanction of a general council, as that of Trent had broken up before it was issued. And, what more nearly concerns you and your fellow-worshippers, the English versions of the Bible have never been sanctioned by the whole church at all. Various editions have been issued under episcopal authority, nearly all differing from one another. The Douay was made from what has been called the “Authentic Latin.” Therefore, it is the translation of a translation. And that it was an inaccurate trans-

\* *Ibid*, page 121.

lation, is clear from the fact that your bishops have corrected it at various times.

You have heard of "Ward's Errata" of the English Bible. Those very "errata" have, in many cases, been adopted by Archbishop Murray as the true rendering. For instance:—

*Rhemish Testament*—(True English, according to Ward,)—Rom. viii. 18, "Not *condign* to the glory to come."

*Authorized or Protestant Bible*—"Not worthy to be compared with the glory," &c.

*Archbishop Murray's Bible*—"Not worthy to be compared with the glory," &c.

*Rhemish Testament*—Heb. ii. 9, "But him that was a little lessened under the angels, we see Jesus, because of the passion of death, crowned with glory and honour."

*Protestant Bible*—"But we see Jesus, *who was made a little lower* than the angels, for the suffering of death," &c.

*Archbishop Murray's Bible*—"But we see Jesus, *who was made a little lower* than the angels, for the suffering of death," &c.

*Rhemish Testament*—1 Pet. i. 25, "And this is the word which is evangelised among you."

*Protestant Bible*—And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

*Archbishop Murray's Bible*—"And this is the

word by which the Gospel *hath been preached* unto you.”

Thus while your clergy have been abusing our Bible as a false translation, and as a Gospel of the devil, they have actually been drawing on its pages for the correction of their own, and in many cases quoting its very words. But they must retouch their Bible again and again, for still many errors remain.

The words *μετανοεω* (repent) *μετανοια* (repentance) occur at least fifty-five times in the New Testament, in seven of which they are translated as in the Protestant version, while in two places the translation is omitted altogether, not being found in the Vulgate. In forty-six places they render them “*do penance*” and “*penance* ;” but (the remark is important) in seven places\* they follow the Protestant version, and depart from their principle because it would make nonsense of the passages. A clear proof that in forty-six instances they have perverted God’s word to favour their doctrine of penance.

A similar perversion of Scripture is observable in their translation of *πρεσβυτερος* (an elder) which occurs at least sixty-nine times in the

\* Mark i. 15; Luke xvii. 4; Acts iii. 19; v. 31; 2 Tim. ii. 25; Heb. xii. 17; Apoc. ii. 21.

**New Testament**, in six only of which it is rendered "Priest," to suit the purposes of the clergy.

"Although the word *μυστηριον* occurs in at least twenty-four places, we find that in one passage only (Eph. v. 32.) it is translated *sacrament*, in which place it was considered indispensable to support the doctrine of marriage being a sacrament; and the same may be observed respecting the expression *τι εμοι και σοι*, which occurs six times in the New Testament, and about four times in the Old Testament, and which, in every instance, is rendered, agreeably to the authorised version, "what have I to do with thee," with the solitary exception of John ii. 4, where it would affect the unscriptural honour given to the Virgin Mary."\*

*Your church has no authorised commentary on the Bible.*

A vast deal has been said about notes and comments, as necessary to prevent the Bible from doing mischief; and a stranger might suppose, from all this noise, that the Church of Rome, as the living, speaking, sovereign tribunal to which we are to look for an authoritative and

\* See an excellent little work, entitled "A brief History of the Versions of the Bible." Dublin: Curry & Co.

infallible exposition of God's Word, had furnished such an exposition for the guidance of her people. How greatly would he be surprised to find that she has never done any thing of the kind. There are notes, indeed; but they vary in number and signification, and sometimes ascribe several different meanings to the same passage. And, strange as it may seem, they possess no authority whatever. The late Right Rev. Dr. Doyle was asked by a Committee of the House of Lords, "You consider yourselves pledged to all matters contained in those notes?" "No: not by any means. On the contrary, there were notes affixed, I believe, to the Rhemish Testament, which were most objectionable. The notes carry, in our edition of the Bible, no weight, for we do not know the writers of many of them!"

So, my Friend, you have no authentic English Bible, no version bearing the *imprimatur* of the Church, that is, the Pope in Council, which alone is binding on the faithful. Neither has her infallibility been able to furnish you with an authorised commentary on Scripture. You may purchase various editions of the Bible, all differing from one another, and having notes affixed which "carry no weight." You are told by the *Council of Trent*, that you must interpret Scrip-

ture according to the "*unanimous* consent of the Fathers." What a boon! Pray, who are the Fathers? Can you repeat their names? How many of them are there? Have you read their works? They wrote in Greek and Latin; their works are most voluminous, and it would consume a man's life to read even a few of them. Now, how is it possible for you to ascertain whether they are unanimous on any single passage of the Word of God? What a hopeless task! you might as well sit down to interpret the Egyptian hieroglyphics. The fountain of life is streaming before your eyes, inviting your thirsty spirit to drink. But the Council of Trent tells you you must not taste it till you get the divining cup which *all* the Fathers used—an article that never existed! What a mockery, to talk to the laity about the unanimous consent of the Fathers. What do they know about the Fathers? Just as much as they do about the priests of China. Thus neither Pope nor Fathers, nor Prelates nor Priests, have been able to put life into the "dead letter" of Scripture. What will you do? Do as I have done. Abandon guides that point in so many different directions, which, after all their pretensions and their boasting, serve only to distract and bewilder, or to lead you on to deeper darkness. Renounce human authority,

and come back to common-sense and Scripture. The Word of God is plain. It is a well-spring of life, which clearly reflects the features of all that approach it; though it be unfathomable by the line of human wisdom. "As the Word of God contains mysteries capable of exercising the most discerning minds, so it includes truths fit to nourish the most simple and ignorant. It carries in its surface wherewithal to nourish its children, and keeps in its recesses that which may wrap up in admiration the most exalted minds; being like a river, broad and deep, in which a lamb may walk or an elephant can swim." (St. Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome, Letter to Leo, Archbishop of Seville.)

I might fill a long letter with similar extracts from the Fathers. Indeed, it is very questionable whether they were more unanimous on any single subject than they were on the right and duty of the laity to study the Word of God for themselves, and the unspeakable advantages that were thence to be derived.

But what is Scripture? All the sacred books received by Protestants are received also by your church. About these, therefore, there need be no dispute. But the Apocrypha, which forms part of your Bible, we reject on the following grounds: It was never extant in He-



brew—never formed any part of the Jewish Scriptures, not being reckoned among their canonical books (of whose purity and integrity they were remarkably jealous), either in ancient or modern times. Neither is it found in the *Septuagint* version of the Old Testament, made by Jews at Alexandria, for the use of their Hellenistic brethren. These books, moreover, were not referred to by our Lord or his apostles. They are not mentioned in the sacred canon by the learned Josephus or Philo, who flourished in the first century. During the first three centuries, they are not found in the catalogue of inspired books, drawn up by the Greek or Latin Fathers. In the list made by the Council of Laodicea, and acknowledged by the Universal Church (A.D. 364), they are not mentioned; and even St. Jerome, the translator of the *Latin Vulgate*, expressly omits them! And never were they acknowledged by any general council as inspired, till the Council of Trent, in the sixteenth century, foisted them into the canon, cursing, according to custom, all that would refuse to receive them. This was done in the Fourth Session, there being present at the time but forty-eight bishops and five cardinals. These infallible gentry decreed, that the books of *Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus* were written by Solomon,

whercas there is internal evidence most decisive, to prove that they were not written till long after the time of that monarch. The Apocryphal books contain fables and contradictory statements. They recommend immorality; such as lying, assassination, suicide, and magical incantations. Besides, the writers made no pretensions to inspiration. The author of the book of Ecclesiasticus entreats the reader to pardon any errors into which he may have fallen; and the writer of Second Maccabees concludes as follows: "If I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto." What words for a man speaking as he was moved by the Holy Ghost!

Your church pleads in her favour the authority of *tradition*. The Jews, by their traditions, corrupted their countrymen; and, accordingly, our Lord addresses them as follows: "Why do ye transgress the commandments of God by your tradition?" "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," Matt. xiii. 3. 6. 9. These are words to which your clergy would do well to take heed.\*

\* The Jews were accustomed to say, "The words of

The Jews, as well as the ancient heathens, pretended to certain mystical knowledge, unattainable by the profane and uninitiated. On account of these pretensions, their persons were held in admiration; this was what they sought, and they had their reward. The ambition of the Christian Fathers soon availed itself of so powerful an auxiliary. They also "gave out" with great industry and feigned humility, that they had secret intercourse with God, and received from him revelations of great importance, which were to be communicated only to a chosen few. The distinction conferred by these assumed privileges, was very flattering to spiritual pride—the most powerful, blinding, and indurating of all vices. When, in process of time, the bishop of Rome succeeded, because of his residence in the metropolis of the empire, in establishing his supremacy, these privileges were gradually regarded as resting in that See, which was esteemed the centre of spiritual authority in the Western church. This is the origin of what has been called apostolic tradition. All arch impostors, from NUMA to MAHOMET, had availed themselves of this artifice in order to

*the law are weighty and light, but the words of the Scribes are all weighty."* Such, also, is the sentiment inculcated by the Church of Rome.

dupe their followers. And the despots of Rome were too well versed in the arts of deception to neglect such a plan for building up their unhallowed power. The "mystery of iniquity" had long been working before the policy of the Papal court reduced it into a system. From this source has emanated, like pestilential vapour, all the erroneous doctrine that has disgraced the Christian name. Hence have sprung all those figments that have elevated the clergy into demigods, and degraded the people into slaves.\*

These traditions are decreed to be of equal authority with the written Word. But they are no where to be found. Suppose you are anxious to bow to their authority, how are you to ascertain what they direct? From the Priest? No; he is fallible and may deceive you. From the Pope? No; for he is not accessible to all; and, according to Bossuet's Exposition, lately recommended by Dr. Murray, he only enjoys a *primacy* in the church, and is also fallible. From the notes appended to the Bible? No; for according to Dr. Doyle, these "carry no weight."

\* We are exhorted to hold fast "traditions;" but from 2 Thes. ii. 15, we learn that these were *written*, as well as spoken; so that what was delivered orally to one church, was conveyed in letters to others, and thus the Scriptures contain the whole Word of God.

From the creed of Pope Pius, and the catechism of the Council of Trent? No; for these were compiled since the Council closed its deliberations; and though they have been received as authentic summaries of the Papal creed, yet they are mere modern compilations, unknown in the church for fifteen hundred years, and containing many dogmas of which we have no trace in Scripture, or in the apostles' creed, or the Nicene or Athanasian creed. Surely we cannot believe that these traditionary sparks would have floated, unextinguished, through the gloom of fifteen centuries, till collected into a focus by Pius IV. Besides, granting this creed to be infallibly true in Latin, how do you know that it has been faithfully translated, or that you perfectly understand it? Place twelve Roman Catholics in different apartments, and after due time allowed for deliberation, call on each for his explanation of the Creed of Pius, and I will venture to assert that no two of them will agree. Where, then, is the living, speaking, infallible tribunal? Where shall the people of Ireland find it? Where is the boasted standard, in accordance with which we must interpret every *passage* of the Word of God? Let it be *produced*. My Friend, there is no such thing.

*You hand me the creed of Pius. But, before*

I swallow it, you must answer these questions : How do you know that this is correctly translated, or correctly printed? How do you know that the Latin is genuine? May there not be omissions or interpolations? But, if genuine, who composed it?—The Pope, a fallible man. When?—In the sixteenth century, fifteen hundred years too late. By what authority?—His own. Where did he get that authority?—It is founded on Scripture. How do you know it is founded on Scripture?—By examining certain passages that establish it.\* .Yes; according to *your private judgment*. Well! I see we have come back to the main point again. I will now grant you the inspiration of the Bible, though I might call on you to prove it; and we shall see whether your opinion of these passages is sound, and, therefore, a fit foundation to build an infallible church upon. Mind, you cannot now avail yourself of notes, because they have no authority; nor can you trust your own translation, because it gives no certain sense to difficult passages. I speak this advisedly, and here is my authority :

“ Because this speech is subject to divers senses (could not the infallible authority tell which was the right one?), we keep the words

\* See a masterly analysis of the Rule of Faith in Dr. *Urwick's most valuable Centenary Sermons*, p. 51.

of our text, lest by turning it into any English phrase, we might straighten the Holy Ghost's intention to some certain sense, either not intended, or not only intended; and so take away the *choice* and *indifferencie* from the reader, whereof (in Holy Scripture specially) all translators must beware."—Note on John ii. 4, Rheimes Edition, 1582.

What! is it possible that the Roman Catholic reader has a choice and indifferency, as to the meaning he is to attribute to the Word of God! I thought he should interpret every passage according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. If there be such a thing, why did not the Annotators refer to it here? Alas! they had no such thing to refer to, and they tell you candidly they do not understand the passage; and that they leave it to your "choice and indifferencie," to take what meaning you please out of it. O infallible tribunal, where art thou? Why not come to the aid of the Rhemish Doctors in their sore perplexity, to lighten their darkness, and obviate the necessity of making this humiliating confession?

Well, Sir, if, in the exercise of private judgment, you may exercise your choice on difficult passages, you may surely exercise it on those which are plain. Let us, then, refer to Matt. xvi.

18, 19. Now, suppose I grant that these words confer a supremacy on Peter, what is that to the Bishop of Rome? There is no proof from Scripture, and very doubtful evidence from history, that Peter was Bishop at Rome. But if he were, the apostles had no successors, as such. We challenge proof on this point. Besides, the presence and teaching of Peter did not keep the church at Antioch from falling: the churches of Asia, planted by Paul, and even the mother church at Jerusalem, have long since perished. The Church of Christ has moved from place to place through the earth, like the pillar of fire in the wilderness; when persecuted in one city, fleeing to another; and, therefore, any promise of infallibility to *that* church cannot be pleaded in favour of any particular community. Can you produce any promise of infallibility to the Church of Rome? Not one in the whole Bible. But we can produce a threat of destruction. That church is exhorted, Rom. xi. 20—22, not to be “high-minded, but fear,” lest she should “be cut off.” She has been *high-minded* with a vengeance! We believe the curse has been upon her for ages, and that she is no longer a branch of the olive tree. “Boast not against the branches,” says the apostle, “but if thou *boast* thou bearest not the root, but the root



thee." She never was, therefore, the *mother* of all churches. She could not bear the root.

But we deny the supremacy or infallibility of Peter. I return to Matt. xvi. 18. I have not room for a lengthened exposition of this passage. But we may bring the matter to a short issue. These words cannot be so understood as to contradict other texts that are quite plain. For instances, in Matt. xx. 25–28, our Lord expressly *forbids* all assumption of authority on the part of any of the apostles. In Eph. ii. 20, the church is said to be built on the foundation of "the apostles and prophets,"\* no pre-eminence being assigned to Peter above the others. Peter was *sent* by the apostles to Antioch (Acts viii. 14); and, doubtless, the *greater* is not sent by the less. Paul says he was not a whit behind him; and on one occasion he withstood him to the face. (2 Cor. xi. 5, and Gal. ii. 11.) Jesus conferred on *all* the apostles, without any distinction, the power of the *keys*. John xx. 22, 23, "Receive *ye* the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted them," &c. This passage explains "I will give unto thee the keys," &c. This gift of the keys is the privilege of all faithful pastors, and, without a

\* See page 239.

figure, means simply authority (of which *keys* were anciently the emblem) to preach the Gospel, which is a proclamation of pardon to the penitent, and to administer discipline in the church.\* As to the Rock, it is sufficient to quote the explanation of St. Augustine. "Jesus," says he, "said not, thou art the Rock, but thou art Peter. The Rock was CHRIST, whom Simon confessed." This interpretation, and one substantially the same, or at least equally at variance with the sense ascribed to the passage by the modern Church of Rome, have been supported, according to the Roman Catholic authors Du Pin and Calmet, by fifteen Popes, thirteen Roman saints, thirty-seven Fathers and Doctors, and four Councils, besides many modern Roman Catholic writers.†

Here, then, is a powerful array of authorities against the modern Roman Catholic interpretation, which is urged with such confidence by

\* See pp. 185-190.

† This interpretation is sanctioned by the General Councils of Nice, Constantinople, Basil, and Trent. *Labbeus* viii. 770-1268, and x. 529, and xvii. 692, 821, and xx. 392. *Canisius* iv. 469. Among the authorities referred to in the text, I may mention, *Popes*—Celestin, Innocent, Pius, Felix, Gregory, John, Urban. *Saints*—Hilary, Ambrose, Cyril, Basil, Cyprian, Jerome, *Augustine*.

every superficial polemic. Now, dear Friend, you know that you are pledged by the creed of Pope Pius, Article 2, never to interpret Scripture "otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers." You perceive that a vast number of Popes and Fathers are on my side of this question. If you maintain from this passage, that Peter is the rock on which the Church of Christ is built, you trample on the creed of your church; for, on that interpretation the Fathers are NOT unanimous. But if you agree with me, that Christ, or faith in Christ, is the foundation on which the church is built; then, of course, you give up the point; and demonstrate, that the Church of Rome is, even on her own principles, incapable of defence; her boasted infallibility, resting on passages of Scripture, whose inspiration and exposition must be settled by private judgment, without her aid—passages which cannot be explained in her favour, without violating her own imperatively enforced principle of interpretation!

That this plain refutation of the principal tenets of your church, may prove the means of your emancipation from its power, is the earnest *prayer of*

Your Faithful Friend.

## LETTER XIX.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE preceding summary of the arguments against the Church of Rome, will give you some idea of the reasons that induced me to leave that communion. I now return to my religious experience. I am free to confess that, for nearly twelve months after my recantation, I was but a nominal Protestant; by which I mean, that though fully convinced of the sound and Scriptural character of the Reformed faith, I was not converted to God. This language, I am aware, is scarcely intelligible to a Roman Catholic. You think that Christians are regenerated, or born again in baptism. You fancy that this rite removes both the guilt and pollution of original sin, and that, after that event, the individual is in a situation to work out his own salvation, and earn for himself eternal redemption.

We do not believe that the baptismal ceremony regenerates the soul. In apostolic times, it was administered only when faith in Christ had been professed, and when, by consequence, the soul had been justified and born again; for this change

always accompanies saving faith. What, then, is the use of baptism as administered to infants?

It is intended to represent their being "born in sin, and the children of wrath," and to teach the necessity of their souls being washed in the blood of Jesus, "the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness;" and it is, also, *a rite of initiation*, by which Christian parents dedicate their children to Christ, as disciples in the school of the Gospel. If their being sprinkled with water implied that they were born of the Spirit, would there not be some indications of this change in the dispositions and conduct of children? But, alas! universal experience testifies that, notwithstanding the supposed grace of baptism and confirmation, they remain so powerfully influenced by the principles of depravity, by ignorance of God and aversion to his will, that the most vigilant parental oversight is too frequently incapable of preventing the outbreaking of evil. Pride, vanity, falsehood, obstinacy, impurity, selfishness, in a thousand forms, mark the character of the baptised youth of our land, with scarcely any exceptions. By a most mischievous *euphemism*, these things are indulgently denominated the harmless frailties of our nature; but *this apologetic phraseology betrays a grievous*

insensibility to the evil of sin, as an offence against the majesty of God.

Those who read their Bibles dare not glose over their pollutions and transgressions by language so fatally delusive. They know that "he that believeth not (though he were baptised), shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. Hence, the ministers of the Gospel preach to nominal Christians as they would preach to heathens—that they must be born again. Now, it is quite possible for a man to discard the Romish system, and receive the whole theory of Protestantism, honestly and firmly persuaded of its truth, without believing "with the heart unto righteousness," or undergoing the essential change to which I have adverted. A faith perfectly orthodox may be maintained with sincerity and zeal, and fail, notwithstanding, to exert any quickening and purifying power on the soul. So it was, for a considerable time, with your friend. My head was filled with controversial divinity, but my heart was still a stranger to the love of Christ. I earnestly contended for the faith once delivered to the saints, while enmity against the Author of that faith was the predominating principle in my mind. I was brought in a great measure from "darkness to light," but not from "the power of Satan to God." The truth had not

been made the power of God to my salvation. All that the efforts of my own mind, aided by the light of truth, could accomplish, I had already experienced. I had knowledge, indeed, but it was the knowledge that puffeth up. I had zéal, but it breathed the bitterness of party spirit. I had liberty, but there was a conscious danger of its degenerating into licentiousness. Though a mere novice in the things of God, I thought myself capable of teaching others. Swift to speak, impatient of contradiction, prone to dogmatism, and glorying in controversy, I manifested a spirit very different from that which the grace of God produces. Experimental religion I regarded as fanaticism. If any person hinted that I was still in the dark, my pride was aroused to repel the arrogant assumption of superior holiness. Instead of confessing and exploring my ignorance and guilt, I was exceedingly sensitive to the slightest imputation of either. When informed, on one occasion, that a Methodist gentleman, a class-leader, wished to speak to me, in order to teach me the way of salvation more perfectly, I was provoked that a man of "one book," standing behind his counter, should presume to instruct me. A pious female of the same communion hinted the necessity of a *greater change than I had yet experienced; and,*

referring to the third chapter of John, told me that I must be born again ; but this language I regarded as the cant of Methodism, and treated it with sovereign contempt. The pretensions of these zealous people to superior illumination, their fluency and fervour in prayer, their peculiar habits, and strict attention to religious duties, were frequently a source of irritation to my mind ; but they also disturbed my self-complacency, and awakened perplexing doubts and serious reflection.

I differ decidedly from the METHODISTS on some important points, but it would be injustice to deny that the cause of truth in Ireland has been greatly benefited by their devoted and persevering labours. Whatever may be the deficiencies or inconsistencies of their doctrinal system, or the evils resulting from some parts of their discipline, to them belongs the praise of rescuing the doctrine of REGENERATION from oblivion and odium, in many parts of this country, and of producing, under God, by their plain, energetic, and powerful appeals to the conscience, a large portion of the piety that is found to subsist, among the lower orders especially, in the Established Church. They have, moreover, indirectly, effected incalculable good, by stimulating the zeal of the clergy, and thus urging on *that spirit of revival which has recently operated*



with such power on the inert mass of formality that has for ages passed under the name of Protestantism in Ireland. The IRISH EVANGELICAL SOCIETY, and other bodies, have borne their share in this glorious work. But the Methodists were first in the field; and, whether it be owing to the suitableness of their machinery to the state of Irish society, political and religious, or to the conciliating spirit of their theology, or their systematic division of labour, or their frequent change of preachers, or their assiduous cultivation of the *social principle*, or their indomitable zeal, or the all-pervading, all-controlling *esprit du corps*, by which they are animated, or to all these causes combined, it is certain that their labours have been crowned with great success. May the Spirit be poured out upon their societies in a more abundant measure than ever, and may their ministers be increasingly fitted for their work!

At the period to which I refer, I was privileged to attend a conversation meeting in a family of Dissenters. The head of that family had been a preacher of the Gospel under the Evangelical Society. His wife and her sisters now kept a most respectable boarding school, *and were the means of converting a great number of the young ladies that were committed to their*

charge. Their piety struck me as more attractive and conciliating than that of the Methodists. What seemed chiefly to constitute its pre-eminence was its deep *humility*. It was not noisy, nor obtrusive, nor censorious; but rather meek and retiring. Their zeal was a perennial stream, "though deep, yet clear;" gentle, silent, and to be traced not by the loudness of its bubbling, but the greenness of its margin. But they, too, talked of a new birth and of spiritual influence, and seemed to go deeper into those mysteries than the Methodists themselves; besides holding other things still more repugnant to my feelings, such as sovereign grace, and election to eternal life. If I remember right, I attended this conversation meeting only twice. I had a strong aversion to religious "experience." I thought it was for the most part either fanaticism or hypocrisy.

In this state of mind I visited Dublin, where I heard the Church clergy frequently and the Methodists occasionally. It was Lent, and there were courses of controversial lectures in progress of delivery in several of the churches. The houses were generally crowded, and on some occasions a great impression was produced on the audience. Under these lectures my heart was gradually opened to understand the Scriptures in their

spiritual import. My convictions of sin, which had almost entirely forsaken me since I became a Protestant, now returned with great power. Often did I remain in the pew fixed in deep and agonizing reflection, till the whole congregation had retired; and then wandering alone by the light of some solitary lamp, gave vent to my feelings in sighs and broken ejaculations. I saw myself guilty and defiled. The leprosy of sin was cleaving to my soul. I felt its contamination, and my inmost spirit shrunk from the polluting contact. But in vain. The depravity was part of my very nature. While the HOLY SPIRIT was thus exhibiting to my view my own hateful condition, as I could bear the distressing disclosure of evil after evil bound up in my heart, I was assaulted by Satan with a violence which I scarcely ever experienced before. He stimulated every passion, and endeavoured, by setting on fire the whole course of nature, to plunge me into some abyss of vice, or urge me over some precipice of desperation. Blessed be the God of mercy! he did not succeed. "O to grace how great a debtor!"

I was in James' Church one Sabbath evening when the Rev. Mr. Hare preached. "God," *said he*, "*has a people in the world.*" And he *went on to speak* of the purposes and doings of

Jehovah, in reference to this people. The preacher's manner was very solemn and impressive, and the subject was to me one of awful and thrilling interest. I was affected in an unusual manner. Then, for the first time, my heart acquiesced in the *sovereignty* of God in the work of salyation, and probably this was the moment of my regeneration. I then eagerly sought those books that treated of the operations of grace in the soul. I now read the New Testament, the Epistles especially, with an interest altogether new. The books from which I derived most profit, were "Adam's Private Thoughts," Robinson's "Scripture Characters," the Works of THOMAS SCOTT, especially his Remarks on Bishop Tomline's "Refutation of Calvinism," a work equally distinguished by the force of its arguments and the meekness of its spirit. The Life of BRAINERD, by Edwards, filled me with great distress. It described a sort of self-renunciation which I felt to be utterly unattainable. There were parts of his experience with which I had no sympathy, and I said, "If this be the necessary evidence of a change of heart, I am yet in my sins!" Yet there were many things in which I agreed with Brainerd. I felt the pollution of my heart as deeply, and loathed it as strongly as he did; but there was in him a

high-toned spirituality of mind, which transcended my infantine experience in the divine life, far as the wisdom and strength of mature age surpass those of children. Christian character, like the human countenance, is marked by an endless variety in the features and expression : but there is also a striking similitude in the broad outline, which obtains under all changes and circumstances. Hence, believers of all climes and temperaments and ages, are drawn together by a mysterious sympathy, and own the attractive power of that sacred affinity which unites them in one, as Christ and the Father are one. Too frequently, alas, the iron hand of sectarianism seizes their susceptible hearts, and rudely rends them asunder ; and frequently, too, an error in doctrine runs, like a vein of lead, through the rich mine of experience, giving a shock to sympathy, and tending to disunion. Thus it was in the book in question. Neither the school of Edwards nor of Fenelon made the proper philosophical and Scriptural distinction between *self-love* and *selfishness*, and therefore none but an enthusiast can enter fully into the feelings of Madame Guion and David Brainerd.

The life of the learned, talented, and devoted *Henry Martyn* was also, in my case, greatly *blessed*. In him I saw piety the most exalted

tried to the utmost, and passing with purity and triumph from the reiterated ordeal. This book rekindled my desire for the work of the ministry, which had been first awakened by the warm recommendations of several clergymen, residing in different parts of the country. In another respect it exerted an influence on my mind similar to what was subsequently produced by the *Life of Spencer, of Liverpool*. I was awed by such seraphic zeal and heavenly purity, and like Job in the presence of Jehovah, I abhorred myself and repented in dust and ashes. Great, indeed, were the internal struggles which I experienced. The "flesh lusted against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these were contrary the one to the other. So that I could not do the things that I would." Gal. v. 17. Long and doubtful was the contest between light and darkness. Often did my heart sink in despondency, as I "entered the cloud" which wrapt up my spirit in impervious gloom, but as often would the Sun of Righteousness rise to dispel it; and oh, how gladdening were the beams which it shed upon my heart! At length I was privileged to exclaim:—

"The darkness of years and the night of repining,  
Now over the valleys have gloomily past!"

The day-spring from on high had risen in my

soul. I had laid hold on the covenant ordered in all things and sure, being ordained by Infinite Wisdom, and ratified by "blood divine."

Now, this change was wrought by the HOLY SPIRIT, without whose influence it could never have occurred. Remorse of conscience might have preyed upon my spirit; the light of truth might have shone painfully upon my mind; Providence might have maintained his controversy with me, perplexing and darkening my path through life, and stinging me with repeated disappointment; but all would have proved vain for my conversion, without the secret, softening influence of the Spirit, predisposing my heart to receive the truth in the love of it. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." It is this enmity, imbuing all our affections and faculties, that rejects the Saviour. When, at length, the heart is open to receive him, how is the fact to be accounted for? Has the enmity been conciliated, or has conscience obtained the mastery over it? It is not conciliated, for "it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. Its hostility to God is immitigable. Conscience has not overcome it; for though it possesses authority, it is destitute of power. It can warn, *remonstrate*, and pronounce its sentence when *the deed is done*; but it is not able to prevent

the repetition of it, nor to root out the principle from which the disobedience springs. Conscience is a part of the human constitution, and not a grace superinduced by the Holy Spirit. This is clear from the fact, that it is said in Scripture to be "defiled" and "seared." That it is often, to an awful extent, perverted, even among Christians, it needs no argument to prove; so that, in fact, this principle is itself depraved. It cannot, therefore, overcome a power by which it is controlled. And, besides, if the man that receives Christ differs from another, who, under similar circumstances, rejects him, merely in the uninfluenced exercise of some power within him, then he has ground for glorying over his neighbour. The cause of difference is in himself. And the pivot, on which the salvation of a soul turns, is supposed to be some thing which the Holy Ghost cannot effectually touch, without destroying human liberty; and he is thus represented, as turning away vanquished from the fruitless contest with the powers of darkness in the soul of man.

This is, I think, neither Scriptural, nor rational, nor reverential towards the blessed Agent of our salvation. "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." "Unless a man be born of water and of the



Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace ye are saved." "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Those who believe in Christ are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Now, if language like this mean any thing, it teaches, that the communication of spiritual life is the act of God, in the exercise of his sovereign and distinguishing mercy. And as to the Spirit striving in vain to implant this new life in the soul, like Julian attempting to rebuild Jerusalem, and repelled by the fiery rocks that issued from the foundation, is it not a hard saying? Will God go to war without comparing his forces with those of the enemy? Will he leave a building unfinished from want of resources to complete it?

I trust, my dear Friend, you will yet join with me in adoring this Divine Being, who, in connexion with the Gospel, works all spiritual good in the soul. He lays hold on the conscience, and convinces it of sin, and brings the broken *spirit to the cross of Christ, to be bound up and healed.* By him we have access to the Father,

and are invested with the privileges of adoption. For justification is not a mere *act* of pardon, which may to-morrow be reversed (poor consolation!)—it is a permanent state of acceptance. We are not merely pardoned rebels, or ransomed slaves: we are, also, adopted children; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. And having received the Spirit of adoption, we cry “Abba, Father,” and “walk in love as dear children.” Our security thus rests on his faithfulness and power, and our eternal glory is bound up with his own. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

Man is, nevertheless, accountable to God—is dealt with as a rational creature—has faculties to perform all that he is commanded by his Maker—is capable of believing in Christ, and is unobstructed in his pursuit of salvation by any extraneous hindrances, and held back solely by the love of sin that prevails in his heart. So that this scheme of mercy interferes not with his free agency or accountability. And, on the other hand, it secures the sanctification of all that submit to it. By connecting the blessing with the means—hearing with believing, believ-

ing with pardon, asking with receiving, diligence with progress, labour with reward, fighting with victory, and suffering with glory—it guards effectually against indolence and licentiousness, and tends most powerfully to stimulate the energies of the soul to all that is good and great. For Jesus “gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” Titus ii. 14.

I am, &c.

## LETTER XX.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

SUCH is the character of the Church of Christ, to which I would conduct you. The marks of this Church—marks which distinguish each of its members—are, repentance toward God, faith in Christ, and the fruits of the Spirit visible in the life and conversation. These fruits are “love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” The man that has not these has not the Spirit of Christ; “and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.” Gal. v. 22; Rom. viii. 9. Thus are we “come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God;” “to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.” This church is not confined to any country or clime. It is persecuted or despised by the world, scattered among the nations, and to be gathered at last by the angels from “the four winds of heaven.” It has existed since the fall of man, and will exist till the end of time. Sometimes its light has been scarcely visible amid the surrounding darkness; at other times, especially during the first and the last three cen-

turies of the Christian era, it has shone upon the kingdoms of the earth with peculiar brightness and glory. Sometimes it has flourished in cities, and shed its influence abroad in the palaces of kings and the halls of legislation. Again, this virgin spouse of Jesus has been banished to the wilderness, and compelled to offer her spiritual sacrifices in caverns, and to lift up her voice of praise amid the roar of the mountain torrent. For three hundred years her children continued to multiply in the Roman empire. They also spread through the nations of the East, where, removed from Papal domination, which they spurned, they continued, in various regions, to hold forth the word of life even in the dark ages. *Protestant Christianity* (the name is nothing) prevailed in BRITAIN from the age of the apostles till the Bishop of Rome sent over an insidious monk, to corrupt the simplicity of their faith, and rob them of their independence. In IRELAND,\* the land of Gospel light and literature, the asylum of learning and piety when the rest of Europe was overrun with barbarism, the doctrines of Protestantism were professed and propagated, with more or less purity, till the

\* "The Irish Church never acknowledged the supremacy of a foreigner."—*St. Ibur to St. Patrick in the fifth Century.*

twelfth century, when the Pope authorised Henry II. to *conquer* and *Papalise* our native land, on condition that the English should thenceforth pay him the tribute called Peter's-pence. Are communion with the Church of Rome and the Pope's supremacy, articles of the Christian faith? Then was St. Patrick no Christian, and our boasted island of saints was an island of Pagans! The ancient *Culdees*,\* who enlightened the darkness, and civilised the barbarity of the British isles, were, in all essential points, Protestants.†

The *Waldenses*, according to the reluctant testimony of Roman inquisitors and historians, maintained the doctrines of the Reformation, by the most eminent champions of which their confessions of faith were warmly approved. They separated from the Church of Rome during the reign of Constantine, from which period they dated the defection of that body. Thus existing as the representative of the primitive church,

\* "Worshippers of God."

† This subject is very ably handled in a discourse entitled, "The Religion of the ancient Britons and Irish no Popery," by the Rev. Dr. Brownlee, of New-York; for a copy of which I am indebted to the Rev. George Bourne, the eloquent champion of Protestantism in America, and author of "Lorette," a most interesting work which may be had of H. Rea, Belfast.

this community, says Rainerus, an Inquisitor in the thirteenth century, "were found in almost every country." Another writer of the same creed, confesses that they were "multiplied through all lands;" another that "they infested a thousand cities;" another, that "they spread not only through France, but also through nearly all the European coasts, and appeared in Gaul, Spain, England, Scotland, Italy, Germany, Bohemia, Saxony," &c. &c. A crusading army of 300,000 was raised to exterminate these simple shepherds of the Alps, whose numbers were so formidable as to threaten the very existence of the Papacy. These illustrious Protestants (they *protested* for twelve hundred years against the tyranny and superstition of Rome) sent out to the field 100,000 champions of religious liberty, to repel the aggressions of ecclesiastical despotism. Nobly did they guard the lamp of life during the long and dreary reign of darkness; nor could all the power of the "Beast," combined with the subtlety of the "False Prophet," extinguish that lamp, until the long suppressed light of the Reformation broke out simultaneously in various parts of Europe. It was caught by the son from the dying grasp of the martyred *father*, and there were never wanting Elishas to *receive the falling mantles* of those who, from

the burning stake and the gory battle-field, ascended to the mansions of eternal peace, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

“Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold,  
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,  
Forget not; in thy book record their groans,  
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold  
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled  
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow  
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway  
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow  
A hundred fold, who having learned thy way,  
Early may fly the Babylonian wo.—MILTON.

The Reformation occurred in a rude and barbarous age, when governments were despotic, the people vassals, and society broken up into clans. Both clergy and people were ignorant in the extreme; their manners were gross; and the ordinary language of even the respectable classes was coarse to a degree that would be absolutely intolerable at the present day. The artificial refinement—the conventional proprieties of speech, which gild over the offensiveness of an idea—the graceful euphemism, that decorates



deformity, and calls disgusting objects by mellifluous names—were totally unknown to the plain-spoken Reformers, and their no less indelicate opponents. But those who should compare their modes of expression with those that prevail at the present day, and thence infer that the fastidious moderns greatly surpass Luther and his cotemporaries in moral purity, would betray their ignorance of the progress of society, and the principles of our fallen nature. Had Luther and Knox been like those fine gentry, that, by the softness of their address and the pliancy of their manners, seem “to beg pardon of all flesh for being in the world,” they could never have roused by their eloquence the inert masses of society, nor torn up by the roots a despotism that had been the growth of centuries. Their rudeness of speech and their violence of manner were the faults of the age, and should not be judged by a modern standard. God over-ruled even their failings for good. They were fit instruments for the materials they had to work upon. The Gospel, with its two attendant luminaries, Literature and Civilization, were just beginning to move over the chaos of Bigotry and Barbarism; and some time must have elapsed *before* their commingling radiance could *penetrate* and purify the social system, especially

while the "prince of the powers of the air" was rolling to the illuminated regions dense masses of darkness, with a view to extinguish the rising light. During this conflict of principle—this earnest struggle between the hostile forces of truth and error—when tyranny put forth its fiercest energy, and corruption exerted its vilest influence, was it to be expected that the Reformers would be all gentleness and politeness? So much for the violence which your writers lay to the charge of the Reformation.

They also assert, that that great event originated in the vices of princes and priests, who were impatient of the restraints of religion; and by way of proof, we have been incessantly referred to Henry's divorce and Luther's marriage. The restraints of religion, indeed! Did you ever hear of the Bull of LEO X., and the preaching of Tetzal on the subject of indulgences? Did you ever read a history of the middle ages? I am almost tempted to turn over a few pages of that history, that you may see how truly your church, in her palmy state, has been styled the "mother of abominations." I might quote passages from your own accredited writers, describing the unblushing profligacy and shocking impurity that had corrupted all ranks of the clergy, and which were not only tolerated, but

encouraged, by the heads of the church; but I will not pollute these pages with such revolting records. If, however, you are incredulous or curious on this point, you may consult the last chapter of Mr. Edgar's "Variations of Popery," where you will find some well-authenticated illustrations of celibacy in the dark ages. If the Priests are prudent, they will "talk no more with such exceeding arrogancy" on this point.

It betrays great ignorance to ascribe the English Reformation to HENRY VIII. Reformation usually begins at the basis of society, and ascends gradually to the summit. The Lollards and the Wickliffites had sown the seeds long before. They were not sown in vain. The Word of God had taken deep root in the hearts of the people. The hardy seed outlived the winter of persecution, and only waited for the genial sunshine of liberty "to blossom at last." According to Mr. H. L. Bulwer, M.P., who is no bigot on our side of the question, the Reformation in England is to be ascribed to the *education* that had previously enlightened the middle ranks of society, through the medium of the Grammar Schools which were in great numbers established. But I beg to produce a *still more* unexceptionable witness on this subject—no less a personage than LADY MORGAN,

whom no body will suspect of too powerful a bias towards evangelical Protestantism. Speaking of HENRY, her Ladyship, with no less truth than beauty, remarks :—

“ The crowned and bloated monster, the pros-  
trator of all ties and sympathies, the English  
Nero and guardian defender of the Catholic  
faith, who took to himself the merit of reform,  
was but the *passive agent of events*, over which  
the fluctuation of his impulses exercised no per-  
manent control. He could cut off heads, but he  
could not obliterate ideas. The Reformation  
emanated not from his decrees, nor is it justly  
reproachable with his vices. It existed in the  
minds of the people long before it served the  
purposes of his brutal passions. It is the nature  
of Reform, as of flame, to ascend ; the wisest of  
sovereigns can but direct, the worst cannot ex-  
tinguish it.”\*

The people had learned to think ; the Bible  
had been translated into their own language ; and  
the translation of the Scriptures, observes DU-  
GALD STEWART, had the same influence on re-  
ligious discussion that the invention of gun-  
powder had on the art of war. As the private  
soldier is now a match for the armed knight, so

\* Athenæum, No. 368.

the peasant can enter the lists with the doctor of divinity, and not unfrequently shows himself better instructed than his teachers. Give to any people education and the Bible, and no human power or policy can long maintain the authority of the Pope. To these, in connexion with the preaching of the Gospel, we are indebted for instrumentally effecting the Reformation. To these, under the Divine blessing, we confidently look for its rapid progress and ultimate triumph. "It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." HE will consume the MAN OF SIN "with the breath of his mouth and with the brightness of his coming." Of this we have no doubt. The predicted apostacy is drawing to a close; the day of vengeance is fast approaching. O, my dear Friend, come out from the fore-doomed city where you dwell, that you be not partaker of its plagues!

A great deal has been said about the variety of sects that prevail among Protestants, but with very little truth or candour. Some years ago Dr. M'HALE rifled Bossuet, and ransacked our theological dictionaries, and then taxed his own ingenuity to the utmost to multiply and muster these varieties in the most imposing manner *before* the public. This declamatory writer (*who is rather too much lauded for the beauty*

of his style) recently made a speech, which you have doubtless read, in which he glorifies himself as an incomparably profound reader, and intimates that he has been diving into the phosphorescent gulf of the dark ages. I am afraid that he draws up a great deal that he would not wish to meet the eye of a heretic. But has he never, in his researches, met with varieties of doctrine and discipline in his church, which boasts so loudly of her unity? Let him pull the beam out of his own eye, before he attempts to draw the moat out of ours. Are there not schisms in the Church of Rome? Do not some contend that the Pope enjoys only a primacy; others that he is infallible? Do not some claim infallibility for a general council, and others limit this prerogative to the Pope and Council conjointly? Is it ascertained what constitutes a Council *general*? Is not the church divided into predestinarians and advocates of free-will? Is it not divided on the question of exclusive salvation? and on the question of persecution? and on the doctrine of penance—some holding, with Archbishop Fenelon, that our sorrow for sin must be disinterested, springing solely from a regard to the glory of God, while the majority contend that attrition, a mere selfish regret for *sin because of the suffering which follows it, is*

all that the sacrament requires? While the Jesuits hold the abominable doctrine that the sacraments themselves, by a physical energy, remove sin from the soul without any dependence whatever on the state of the feelings. To the Jesuits belong the honour of reconciling the practice of religion with the habit of vice! It is true, that since the Council of Trent, they have laboured to suppress any open dissent from its dogmas. But let Dr. M'Hale dip a little more deeply into ecclesiastical history; let him read MOSHEIM, or if he object to this able and honest writer as a Protestant, let him consult his own FLEURY or DU PIN, or let him turn over the folios of LABBEUS, the Jesuit historian of the councils, and he will find such variety of doctrine—such a mass of heterogeneous opinions, of extravagance and absurdity, issuing from the teeming womb of infallibility, that when compared with the Protestant variations, it will appear as a mountain to a mole hill.\* Besides, there is in the Church of Rome a great variety in point of discipline. Each order has its separate code. The Dominican, Franciscan, Capuchin, Jesuit, &c.,

\* Dr. M'Hale should consult on this subject Edgar's *Variations of Popery*, where he would learn that there are some, at least, "in the present age" not such superficial readers as he supposes.

have each its system of rules or laws; so that what is sin in one is not sin in another. The progeny of the Pope is diverse and motley as the armies which Xerxes led over the Hellespont. Each of the monastic tribes wears a garb, speaks a language, and ranks under a banner of its own. Unlike the Protestants, every name implies a peculiar system and a distinct standard of morality.\*

We are not so foolish as to think that a perfect uniformity of opinion is attainable. Nevertheless, there is a unity in our churches on all essential points that is really astonishing. If you compare the various confessions and creeds drawn up at the Reformation in different countries, you will find that, in matters of faith, they "all speak the same thing." There may be slight variations in the mode of expression, but the meaning is substantially the same in all. They agree in their views of the Trinity, the depravity of human nature, the atonement, justification by faith alone, the regenerating and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, and the state of the soul after death. And the doctrines they taught we still believe, because we find

\* Papal uniformity is like the hard and glittering surface of an ice-bound chaos, dazzling without, but imprisoning all within.



them in the Word of God. It is true, that there are different forms of church government prevailing amongst us. But though these, unhappily, have been made a ground of external separation between Christians, yet they are not deemed essential, nor do they prevent our mutual confidence and Christian fellowship.

You must, my dear Friend, make large deduction from the representations of your writers on this subject. Suppose our enemies are able to enumerate fifty names applied since the Reformation to Protestant sects. From this number you must subtract about thirty, as mere synonymes, different appellations, describing societies holding the same faith and discipline. Of the remainder, take from fifteen to twenty for those mushroom sects—those ephemeral productions of fanaticism—which spring up in a night, and live their little day, and perish. These are, for the most part, different manifestations of some exploded dogma, appearing in the church at distant intervals—a periodical resuscitation of some fanatical tenet, silently entombed by a by-gone generation; the name alone survives. The Church of Rome, which never comprehended more than one-fourth of *Christendom*, has given birth to a greater number of these monstrosities than all other

churches put together. The formidable number of denominations is now brought down to the following:—Episcopalians, Presbyterians; Independents, Baptists, Methodists, Moravians, and Quakers.

The Moravians are Episcopalians; so, also, are the majority of the Methodists: and the Baptists are Independents, differing with their brethren of that denomination only in the mode and subjects of baptism. Thus, then, the denominations, which comprehend the great body of orthodox Protestants throughout the world, are three—the EPISCOPALIAN, PRESBYTERIAN, and INDEPENDENT, or CONGREGATIONAL. Between these there is a clearly defined difference on the non-essential matter of church government or discipline. In the first, the governing authority rests with the bishops; in the second, with the assembly of elders; in the last, with the particular church or congregation. These three bodies are, by a simultaneous movement, both in Europe and America, verging closer to one another every year. The constitution of a Christian church, and the principles of religious liberty, and the terms of communion, are becoming daily better understood by all parties; and were it not for political causes, I believe the walls of separation between orthodox Christians would soon be

totally levelled. The doctrines of these three great sections of Reformed Christianity are the same.\* You will find them in a small work, entitled "Scriptural Unity of Protestant Churches," recently published by Robertson & Co., Dublin. The Episcopalian faith is contained in the Thirty-nine Articles, the Presbyterian in the Westminster Confession, and the Congregational in the Declaration of Faith and Church Order, published by the Congregational Union of England and Wales. These three Confessions of Faith are, on doctrinal points, in perfect harmony. They contain the principles which have been explained and defended in the preceding pages. We all believe the same truths, and walk by the same law; are conscious of the same experience, and inspired by the same hopes. We are redeemed by the same blood, justified by the same faith, regenerated by the same Spirit, impelled by the same motives, and looking forward to the same inheritance in heaven. We believe that all that are influenced by these principles are members of

\* We must, however, admit the prevalence of various shades of Arminianism, especially among the Methodists and a certain portion of the Establishment. Among the former it often brightens into Calvinism; among the latter it sometimes darkens down into Pelagianism.

the Church of Christ, in whatever sect or religion they may be found.

Having been myself much perplexed on the subject of church government, I deem it my duty to put it in the power of the unlearned reader, without much trouble or expense, to judge for himself on a subject which, though not essential to salvation, is yet of considerable importance. Converts often adopt the first scheme of church polity that presents itself; and when enlightened by more extensive information, they are mortified to discover that conscience demands a nearer approximation to the principles of the Bible, and that the recently adopted system must be superseded by one which is esteemed more Scriptural. The necessity of so many changes should be obviated if possible by cautious, deliberate, and prayerful examination. With a view to assist the conscientious inquirer in this interesting study, I beg to refer him to the "Scriptural Unity of Protestant Churches," above mentioned, where he will find the church order and discipline of each of the three great denominations set forth in their own authorised formularies. In addition to these, I would advise him to compare carefully the following ecclesiastical catechisms—*ASHE'S Catechism on Episcopacy*,

**BARNET'S Catechism on Presbyterianism, and ORME'S Catechism on Independency.** These compendiums contain an exposition and defence of the several systems respectively. The inquirer should take care to consult the Scripture references in the Bible, and look well to the *context*. It is right also to inform him, that, owing to the want of an authorised standard of their principles, the Independents have been sometimes misrepresented by the advocates of the rival systems. It is but fair, therefore, to compare their statements with the "Declaration" to which I have already adverted.

I am fully persuaded, that if the views of the Gospel which I have vindicated be rejected, there can be no salvation. We admit that persons may be saved in communion with the Papal Church. But we unhesitatingly deny, that any are saved *by* that church. We contend, that no consistent, thorough-going Roman Catholic—no man who adopts and acts on all the tenets of the Council of Trent, can be in a state of salvation. Why? Because he holds principles subversive of the atonement, puts his trust in the creature, and sins against the very means of Redemption. This must be abundantly manifest, if you have *duly* weighed the arguments which I have ad-

vanced. I earnestly pray that the Holy Spirit may incline your heart to receive the truth in the love of it.

If I have at any time employed expressions calculated to wound your feelings, I pray you to forgive me. I intended it for good. I would, if possible, avoid giving you pain; for in sparing your feelings I spare my own. But truth must not be sacrificed. It is not charity to countenance fatal delusion. None but a Cain—a misanthrope, with scowling brow, and sneering lip, and scoffing tongue—whose views and hopes centre in the present world—can deem religion a matter of trifling importance. On the religious state of our minds here, depends our everlasting destiny. This is a matter between God and the soul, with which no man can authoritatively meddle. But God has appointed means for the salvation of souls. He sends forth the messengers of his love, and they are commanded to declare the truth, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear; and urgently to press every argument and motive by which the heart can be brought to yield itself to its Maker. “Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” O, my dear Friend, abandon those false hopes that

have bewildered you so long, and fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the Gospel. Heed not the obstacles in your path. The claims of God and truth are paramount to every consideration. Shrink not from the severance of earthly ties. Christ is able to deliver you out of all your difficulties, and to recompense you a hundred fold. "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Heed not the voice of calumny, nor the rage of the adversary. God will be your "sun and shield: he will give you grace and glory," and ere long, he will make even your enemies to be at peace with you. Listen to his invitation: "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you. And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

I am, my dear Friend,

Your faithful Servant in Christ.

FAREWELL.

# NOTES.





## NOTES.

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### NOTE A, PAGE 116.

THE Book of Common Prayer being a human compilation, is, of course, not infallible, and may require emendation. To err is human; and to correct error when discovered, is the highest proof of wisdom. This becomes the more necessary in those formularies which are enforced on the conscience as terms of communion.

The most strenuous advocates, however, of the ancient forms of the Anglican Church, not only admit, but contend, that the absolution is not judicial but declarative, having no force whatever apart from the faith and repentance of the sinner, pre-requisites which would ensure pardon if there were not a Priest in existence. Consequently, instead of agreeing with the Council of Trent, they are subject to its curse. For in the fourth Canon, *De Penitentia*, it is decreed that, "If any shall say that the sacramental absolution of the Priest is not a *judicial* act, but a mere service of declaring and pronouncing that sins are forgiven to him that confesses, let him be accursed." Thus, according to the Council, the power of loosing and binding "is not a mere ministry, either of announcing the Gospel, or of declaring that sins are forgiven, but completely a *judicial act*, by which, by the Priest himself as by a judge,

sentence is pronounced." Conc. Trid. Sess. xiv. chap. 6. See Catechism of the Council of Trent, and the Histories of Paoli and Matthias.

NOTE B, PAGE 213.

IN further corroboration of the remarks which have been made as to the adoration of the Virgin, I would give the following specimens of popular devotion. The *Salve Regina* is a great favourite in Ireland:—"Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our *Life*, our *sweetness*, and our *Hope*; to thee we cry, poor banished sons of Eve; to thee we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears."—*Poor Man's Manual*. Here Mary occupies the place of the SAVIOUR.

"I reverence you, O Sacred Virgin Mary, the holy ark of the Covenant, and together with all the good thoughts of all the good men on earth, and all the blessed spirits in heaven, do bless and praise you *infinitely*, for that you are *the great Mediatrix between God and Man*, obtaining for sinners all they ever ask and demand of the blessed Trinity. Hail, Mary!

"I am the protectress of *my servants*, says the glorious Mother of God. Give me your heart, my dear child, and if it be as hard as flint, I will make it as soft as wax. My blessed servant Ignatius gave me one day power over his heart, and I did render it so chaste and strong, that he never after felt any motion of the flesh all his life. Give me your heart, my child, and tell me, in the sincerity of a *true son*, how much you love me your chaste Mother. Hail, Mary!

"O, my most dear Mother! I love you more than my

tongue can express, and more than my very soul can conceive. And I reverence you, O sacred Virgin Mary! and *together with the Holy Trinity, bless and praise you infinitely!* for that you are worthy of so many praises as none can, no not yourself, conceive the same," &c.—*The Key to Paradise, published Permissu Superiorum.*

This is one of the largest and most highly esteemed of Roman Catholic Prayer-books. It is used chiefly by the more respectable portion of the community. Now what higher terms of adoration could be addressed to the eternal God?

#### NOTE C, PAGE 267.

THE three Councils that give the weight of their authority to the spiritual meaning of the phrase, Eating the Lord's flesh and drinking his blood, are Constance, Basil, and Trent; not by any formal decision, but by authorising the exposition of certain orators, specially appointed to express their opinions on the subject. For this fact, I am indebted to the kindness of the learned author of the "Variations of Popery," who states it on the authority of Labbeus, the Jesuit historian of the Councils.—*Labbeus* xvi. 1141, and xvii. 930, and xx. 613.

The disputed passage in John vi. has been understood and explained in a *figurative* sense, as signifying spiritual eating and drinking, by the following Fathers: Ignatius, Cyril, Augustine, Chrysostom, Bede, and Theophylact.—*Ignatius ad Trall.* Cyril, 293. *Aug. de Doctrin.* 316, and Ser. 131. *Chrys. Hom.* 47. *Bede in Cor.* x. *Theoph. in John* vi.

"Albertin has enumerated thirty Roman Pontiffs, Cardinals, Bishops, or Commentators, who interpret this

part of John's Gospel in a spiritual sense, and reject the idea of its application to the sacrament. This was the explanation of the two Popes, Innocent and Pius. According to Innocent III., 'Our Lord in this passage speaks of spiritual manducation. His body is eaten spiritually—that is, in faith.' *Comeditur spiritualer, id est, in fide.*—*Innocent, De Myst. Miss.* iv. 14.

"Pius II. concurs, and, if possible, in still more explicit language, with Innocent. 'The Son of God,' says his infallibility, 'treats there not of sacramental, but spiritual drinking. The communion was not then instituted, and how, therefore, could they eat and drink Jesus but by faith? Those who believed in him were the persons who eat his flesh and drank his blood; for faith is the only means of such participation. Jesus on the occasion spoke in figurative language.'"—*In Lenfan.* ii. 211. 242.—*Edgar, 369.*

Mr. Edgar's *Variations of Popery*, from which I have just quoted, ably supplies a *desideratum* in theological literature. It is a work of immense labour and research. Very few, indeed, are capable of the patience and perseverance necessary to explore the mouldering records of distant generations, in order to collect the "scattered atoms of historical truth" into one vast mass of authenticated facts. As a book of reference, the work is invaluable. There is no part of the Papal system, and no period of its history, on which he has not thrown light, by his minute and accurate investigations, and his clear and triumphant reasoning. His labours deserve to be more generally appreciated. The style, however, though *spirited*, is rather monotonous. There is not a living principle of connexion pervading and animating the whole work, and, without even an index to guide it, the mind

is bewildered and wearied amid the endless recurrence of names and dates. There is, also, a tone of sarcasm—a strain of irony—a fondness for offensive epithets, which seem to betray a spirit that requires to be more deeply imbued with the love and humility of the Gospel. The book, likewise, contains offences against purity, which, however called for by the subject, cannot be tolerated in a Christian writer of the present day. He cannot commit with impunity the faults of a Bayle or a Gibbon. It is certainly desirable, that Protestants should have some notion of the shocking vices that were openly and unblushingly cherished in the Romish Church before the Reformation. But in exposing the delinquencies of the “mother of abominations,” we should not appear to dwell with complacency on her vile practices, nor linger too long in her “chambers of imagery,” nor pry too curiously among the curtained scenes of her systematic pollution. The motive may be good; but we must guard against throwing oil, instead of water, on the fire which we would extinguish. There are portions of Mr. Edgar's book which, if not condemned to some oblivious limbo, should certainly pass through Purgatory!

#### NOTE D, PAGE 292.

THE following account of the present state of Catholicism in France will illustrate what has been said on the religion of imagination:—

“However, we must not be deceived on the extent and depth of this religious movement. The progress of Catholicism exists more in appearance than in reality, more in its surface than in its roots. There are but few

persons who search the Roman dogma in Catholic churches. There would not be found one Frenchman in a hundred, nor, perhaps, one in a thousand, who believes in transubstantiation, or in the infallibility of the Pope. Most of those who attend Mass do so from imitation, from enticement; it is an affair of fashion and *bon ton*. Fashion is most powerful in France, but its reign is of short duration. Others frequent the old Gothic cathedrals, to behold the fumes of incense, to admire the pictures of the great masters, and to hear the majestic sounds of the organ. These are painters, poets, young men guided by a wandering and unruly imagination. They have formed a vague, fantastic, wavering religion, which submits to all the whims of imagination, feeds on empty emotions, grasps at shadows, and they give the name of Catholicism to those chimeras of their bewildered fancy.

“The Catholic clergy, it must be declared, do not take the trouble of undeceiving these young men from their fatal errors; they make no endeavours to warn them that they are directing their steps towards an abyss. On the contrary, they seem to favour, in their sermons and in their periodicals, the erroneous ideas, the extravagant chimeras, which compose the whole religion of the new generation. The Priests, no doubt, fear to lose many of their congregations, if they recalled and preached the austere doctrines of the Fathers of the church; but they will one day repent having so far yielded to the spirit of the age. Those pretended Christians are true idolaters, who worship the stones of their cathedrals, who worship Gothic chapels, coloured windows, and all the phantoms of their imagination.”—*Original Correspondence from France in the Evangelical Magazine for December, 1835.*

Such worshippers would not sympathise with the amiable Writer of the following mournful

## WISH.

Yes, I'll be placed with kindred clay,  
And borne from mourning friends away ;  
And in the silent mansion laid,  
Till flesh corrupt shall be decayed.

Oh, may I in that awful hour,  
When earthly scenes can charm no more,  
Adore my God for mercies past,  
And all my care on Jesus cast !

But while with life I'm favoured yet,  
Ere Nature has been paid her debt,  
I would express a wish to all  
Whom mine, by kindred ties, I call.

When this pale, lifeless frame of mine,  
Heedless of all your wo, supine,  
Shall rest above the opening earth,  
Oh, be it not a scene of mirth !

Let vulgar custom cease to sway,  
Let superstition's power give way ;  
Nor needless pains, nor tawdry pride  
Profane my corpes—my dust deride !

No washing of the clay-cold dead—  
No vainly ornamented bed—  
No ribbons, black or white, be found  
To mock me in my sleep profound.



No artificial lights by day,  
 Poor mimics of the sun's bright ray!  
 No sycophantic tribe be near—  
 None but a few of grief sincere.

My coffin plain—no glittering tin  
 Surmount the lifeless heap within;  
 For gaudy baubles such as these,  
 Cannot the greedy worms appease.

No plumes may nod above my head—  
 They flatter, but can't serve the dead;  
 No tolling bell, with pealing loud,  
 To congregate a meddling crowd.

But ere the busy hum of day  
 Shall chase the morning's calm away,  
 Then be the last sad tribute paid,  
 In silent grief, without parade!



Nor deck with with'ring flowers my grave,  
 But o'er it let the yew tree wave;  
 Prophetic Spring, alone, adorning  
 The green sod, till the Resurrection morning.

*Oakfield, New-street, Dublin.*

J. R.

These sweetly pathetic verses were communicated to the Author by a very dear Friend. They are calculated to awaken melancholy, if not painful reflections. May the event to which they relate be far remote; and may they lead the reader to reflect on the awful account that must shortly be rendered to the Searcher of hearts!