



A Brief  
**Confutation of  
the Errors of  
the Church of  
Rome**

Extracted from **Archbishop Secker's Five Sermons Against Popery**; and Published for the use of the Diocese of Chester, by the Rev. Beilby Porteus, D.D. Bishop of Chester.

*by*

**Beilby Porteus**

Doctor of Divinity, Bishop of Chester

**1785 Edition**

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Extracted from Archbishop Secker’s Five Sermons Against  
Popery; and Published for the use of the Diocese of Chester,  
by the Rev.Beilby Porteus, D.D. Bishop of Chester,” by Beilby  
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**Beilby Porteus**  
D.D., Bishop of Chester

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**PREFACE**  
to the Protestant Reprint of

“A Brief Confutation of the Errors of the Church of Rome Extracted from Archbishop Secker’s Five Sermons Against Popery; and Published for the use of the Diocese of Chester, by the Rev. Beilby Porteus, D.D. Bishop of Chester,” by Beilby Porteus, D.D., 1785 Edition.

by Hail & Fire

**PROTESTANT APOLOGETICS**

These works have been placed online so that those of a Protestant and Gospel faith might have these rare and historic resources readily available, and that those of a Catholic faith may have access to the same, that some might, by comparing and contrasting the traditions and dogmas of the Church to the Word originally preached, come thereby to choose the witness of Jesus Christ over all these. In the words of John Frith (Protestant Martyr, 1533), “I thought it expedient therein to write my mind, trusting, by that means, to bring again the blind hearts of many unto the right way, and I doubt not but that the elect and chosen of God that know their Shepherd’s voice, and have the spirit to judge all things, shall easily perceive whether this be conformable to their master’s voice, and shall hereby be admonished to leave their wandering in the dark and loathsome ways which lead unto death, and to walk without stumbling in the comfortable light.”

A  
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OF THE  
E R R O R S  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF ROME.

EXTRACTED FROM

Archbishop SECKER's five Sermons against  
P O P E R Y;

And published for the Use of the

DIOCESE OF CHESTER,

By the Right Rev. BEILBY PORTEUS, D.D.  
BISHOP OF THAT DIOCESE.

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M D C C L X X V .

1785

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OF THE  
HAIL & FIRE  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF ROME

BY THE  
REV. FATHER

OF THE  
BY THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP OF  
BISHOP OF THAT DIOCESE

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TO THE  
C L E R G Y,  
AND OTHER INHABITANTS OF THE  
DIOCESE OF CHESTER,  
MORE ESPECIALLY OF THOSE PARTS  
WHERE THE PAPISTS ARE MOST NUMEROUS,  
THE FOLLOWING  
S H O R T T R A C T  
AGAINST POPERY,  
DETACHED FROM THE WORKS  
OF A MOST PIOUS AND LEARNED PRELATE,  
AND A MOST ABLE DEFENDER  
OF THE PROTESTANT FAITH,  
IS  
WITH GREAT REGARD INSCRIBED,  
AND WITH MUCH EARNESTNESS RE-  
COMMENDED,  
BY THEIR FAITHFUL,  
AND AFFECTIONATE  
FRIEND AND SERVANT,  
B. CHESTER.

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## INTRODUCTION.

**T**HE happiness of all creatures depends intirely on their obedience to his will whose sovereign power created and rules the world. Now the will of God is made known to us in part by natural reason; and they who have no other law shall be judged by that alone. But as reason was unable to teach mankind a great number of things very important to be known, and in fact did teach most of them but a small part of what it might have done; God was mercifully pleased to superadd the light of revelation to it, and place us under the conduct of both jointly. Such an additional provision, it might have been hoped, had cleared up all doubts; but partly the weakness, partly the wickedness of men, hath turned even this light into darkness, and made it multiply disputes instead of ending them. Still we have no reason to be discouraged; for every upright and considerate person may, after all, with due care, very easily see his way before him, clearly enough to walk in it. But we have great reason to use this care, and make such enquiry amidst the different paths, which different persons point out to us, as

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will

will give us cause to be satisfied we chuse the right. Now of all the different opinions which have risen concerning the Christian religion, there have been few so remarkable as that which divides this part of the world into *Papish* and *Protestant*. Those of the former communion, it seems, think us of the latter quite out of the way to salvation, and accordingly are unwearied in persuading, as they have opportunity, the members of our church, especially the lower and more ignorant part of them, to quit it for theirs. The necessity of doing this, they insist upon some times with so much plausibility, and always with so much confidence, that I hope you will not think a few pages ill employed on a subject of such very great importance, both to our private satisfaction and public security, in refuting the arguments they usually bring against us, and *testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand* (a). To proceed regularly in this matter, I shall,

I. Enquire what is the rule of Christian faith and life: and

II. Examine by this rule the peculiar doctrines and practices of the *Romish* church.

(a) 1 Pet. v. 12.

## P A R T I.

*Concerning the Rule of Christian Faith and Life.*

## C H A P. I.

*Scripture shewn to be this Rule.*

**A**S Jesus Christ is the sole *Author of our Faith* (a), those things, and those alone, which he taught himself, and commissioned his disciples to teach, are parts of our faith. What his doctrine was we find in no less than four accounts of his life and preaching given in the Gospels. To what belief his disciples converted men, we find in the Acts. What they taught men after their conversion, we read in the Epistles. These several books, which make up the New Testament, all Christians allow to contain an original, and undoubtedly true account of our religion. The only possible question is, Whether they contain a full and clear account. Now such a one they without question intended to give, for what could induce them designedly to give any other? Besides, St. *Luke*, in the very beginning of his gospel, tells us, that *having a perfect understanding of those things which were believed among Christians, he had taken in hand to set forth a declaration of them, that those he wrote to might know the certainty of what they had been instructed in.* And St. *John*, in the conclusion of his, tells us, that though our Saviour *did*, and doubtless said also, *many things that were not written*

(a) Heb. xii. 2.

in that book; yet these, says he, are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name (b). This being then their intention, can we possibly think they failed of it? Two of the Eyangelists at least were constantly present at our Saviour's discourses; the other two heard them either from him, or his immediate followers, and they had the promise of his Spirit to bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them (c). Could they after all forget any part of this that was material and necessary? That any of them should do so is very strange; much more that they all should. That St. Luke, the companion of the Apostles, and the writer of their Acts, that he too, in relating what they taught their converts, should unhappily omit any thing essential, still adds to the wonder; and that no one of the many epistles written to instruct the churches in their faith and duty, should supply this defect, is beyond all belief.

## CHAP. II.

### *Scripture sufficiently intelligible.*

**B**UT supposing the Scripture ever so perfect in itself, yet the church of Rome objects that it is not clear to us: even to the learned many things are hard to be understood, which therefore to the unlearned must be impossible. Nay sometimes they tell us not one sentence of it hath a meaning, which, by our own private judgment we can be certain of. But surely the Apostles were not worse writers *with* a divine assistance, than others commonly are *without* it. What they spoke and

(b) John xx. 30, 31.

(c) John xiv. 26.

preached

preached was plain, else they spoke to no purpose, and why should not the same things be as plain when they were written down? Some passages indeed might to some persons be difficult, even at first; and more are doubtless become so by length of time. But that the main of the New Testament is intelligible enough, cannot be with any modesty denied. And for the rest, what at first sight is difficult, may, with due consideration of our own, and help of others, be made easy; what is obscurely expressed in one place, may be clearly expressed in another; and what is clearly expressed in no place, we may safely, for that very reason, conclude it is not necessary for us to understand or believe.

### CH A P. III.

*The Scriptures are delivered down to us uncorrupted.*

**B**UT allowing the Scriptures to have been at first sufficiently intelligible, how do we know they are come down to us uncorrupted? I answer, by all the same arguments which prove the incorruptness of any other ancient book in the world; and by this argument farther, that these books having many more copies of them, being much wider dispersed, and much more carefully read, and warmly disputed about, than any other whatever, it is in proportion more incredible, that either chance or design should alter them in any thing considerable, without discovery from some quarter, even were no particular Providence to watch over writings so worthy of its care. And accordingly, in fact, amidst all the various readings which such a number of copies must produce, there is not one that affects the least article of our religion. But if ever so faithfully preserved, still how shall

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the

the unlearned know when they are faithfully translated? Why, most passages all parties agree in, and on those they disagree about, common sense, comparison of other texts, consideration of what goes before and after, and consulting, as opportunity offers, judicious and honest persons of different persuasions, will enable any person to pass a sufficient judgment, so far as he is concerned to judge, which is right and which is wrong, which is clear and which is doubtful. Indeed there is in general but little danger of any gross impositions upon men being attempted, much less succeeding for any continuance, in a land of knowledge and freedom, whatever may be or hath been under popish tyranny and darkness. Since therefore the Scriptures contain a full and clear account of Christianity written by the very apostles and first disciples of our Lord himself, and honestly delivered down into our hands, we have plainly such a rule for our faith as all men in all cases are ever satisfied with, nor have we any need to look farther. And yet the farther we do look into other pretended rules, the better we shall be satisfied with that we have already. For, let what will be said against Scripture as not being a sufficient rule, it must be a sufficient one, unless there be some other; and upon a fair examination, it will evidently appear there is no other.

#### C H A P. IV.

##### *Tradition exploded.*

**T**HE *Romanists* tell us of a rule of faith which they speak of in very high terms; and that is the traditional doctrine of what they call the Catholic Church. The apostles, they say, instructed

instructed their converts very diligently in every article of faith. Those converts again, knowing it to be their indispensable duty, could not fail to instruct with the same diligence, ministers their flocks, parents their children, every Christian his neighbour. And thus, by a continued succession of teaching, all the doctrines of religion are handed down in their church, they tell us, uncorrupted to this day. Whoever either added, omitted, or changed any thing, must, they think, by every one round him, be immediately charged with a mistake; and, if he persisted in it, convicted of a heresy, whilst the rest were confirmed in the ancient truth. And therefore, to hold what the church holds, is a rule that can never mislead us. Now it must be owned indeed that our Saviour delivered his doctrine to the apostles, and they to all the world, by word of mouth; and this way of delivery at first was sufficient, and therefore St. Paul exhorts the *Thessalonians* to hold fast the traditions he had taught them, whether by word or by letter (d). But then, in the nature of things, how long could this last? Suppose but the easiest common story were to be told from one person to another, without being written down, for only 100 or 200 years, and let each person, as he received it, have never so strict a charge to tell it in the same manner; yet, long before the end of that time, what security could we possibly have that it was true at first, and unaltered still? And you cannot but see there is much less security, that a considerable number of doctrines, especially such as compose the *Papish* creed, should be brought down safe for 1700 years together, through so many millions of hands, that

(d) 2 Theff. ii. 13.

were

were all liable, through ignorance, forgetfulness, and superstition, to mistake them, or, through knavery and design, to alter them. But it will be said, in a case of such importance as religion, men would be more careful in delivering truth than in others. Undoubtedly they ought: but who can be secure that they would? It is of equal importance to be careful in practising it too; yet we all know how this hath been neglected in the world; and therefore have reason to think the other hath been no less so. But whoever made the first change, they say, must have been immediately discovered. Now so far from this, that persons make changes in what they relate, without discovering it themselves; alterations come in by insensible degrees: one man leaves out, or varies, or adds one little circumstance: the next, another, till it grow imperceptibly into a different thing. In one age a doctrine is delivered as a probable opinion; the following age speaks of it as certain truth; and the third advances it into an article of faith. Perhaps an opposition rises upon this, as many have done: some have said, such a doctrine *was* delivered to them, others that it was not; and who can tell, whether, at last, the right side or the wrong have prevailed? Only this is certain, that which soever prevails, though by a small majority at first, will use all means of art and power to make it appear an universal consent at last; and then plead uninterrupted tradition. But though such things as these may possibly be done in almost any age, yet they are easy to be done in such ages, as were five or six of those that preceded the reformation; when, by the confession of their own historians, both clergy and laity were so universally and so monstrously ignorant  
and

and vicious, that nothing was too bad for them to do, or too absurd for them to believe. But still they tell us, we Protestants receive it upon the authority of tradition, that Scripture is the word of God; and why can we not as well receive other things upon the same authority? I answer, we receive Scripture by no means upon the authority of tradition merely: much less the tradition of their present church; but partly on account of its own reasonableness, and the characters of divine wisdom in it; partly from the testimony which one part of it bears to the other; and lastly, upon the written evidence given us, chiefly indeed by the earliest Christians, but in some measure also by Jews and Heathens themselves, that the authors of these books were the disciples of our Lord, and the things said by them true. But then to tell us, that because we receive Scripture upon this evidence, we must therefore receive a long list of doctrines upon mere tradition, after seventeen ages, is to affirm, that the memory of things may be as well preserved for ever, by general rumour and hearsay, as by authentic records. But here they plead, that the tradition which they depend on, is not altogether unwritten, but partly recorded by the ancient Fathers of the church. To this we answer, that we acknowledge truly ancient writers, in matters where they all agree, to be a very valuable evidence of the faith, though at the same time a fallible one. And we can prove undeniably, that these writers, in proportion as they lived near the days of the Apostles, were of our faith, not theirs. But as this is a proof in our favour that few persons are capable of entering into, so we have happily a much shorter. For if antiquity be an argument the

the greater the antiquity the stronger the argument; and therefore the authority of the Bible, for this, as well as many other reasons, is the strongest of all. An original account is always to be depended on in the first place. Such others, as come a little after, in point of time, may be of considerable use to illustrate and confirm the former: but wherever they appear to contradict it, must be rejected without scruple. And those which come a great deal after, such as the church of *Rome* chiefly depends on; deserve little or no credit. The Spirit of God, therefore, seeing the need there would be of it, inspired the Apostles and Evangelists to deliver a full and clear rule of faith to all posterity in the New Testament: certainly not that this might be interpreted afterwards by tradition into whatever sense men pleased; (for then tradition alone had done as well or better without it) but that tradition, as often as it went wrong, might be rectified by this. Had not Christianity been committed in the earliest ages to writing, long before this time, in all probability, there had been scarce one doctrine of it left, which we could have been secure was genuine. And though tradition hath doubtless been preserved, by having some regard to Scripture, from degenerating and varying near so much as it would else; yet for want of having a sufficient regard to it, first needless, then uncertain, then false and pernicious articles of belief have crept in among Christians; the very steps of whose entry, for the most part, we can trace. The faith of the first ages changed by little and little every age after, and still for the worse; till at length the church of *Rome*, about 200 years ago, at the council of *Trent*, when they were called upon to reform

reform these abuses, most shamefully chose to establish them under the venerable name of primitive tradition, and condemn all who will not receive them with the same regard as Scripture itself. Just as in our Saviour's time it was among the Jews, who asked, *Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders? And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition (e).* And just as St. Paul had foretold it would happen among Christians. *Beware, lest any man spoil you through vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and not after Christ (f).* But here they reply, that, let this passage be designed against whom it will, it cannot possibly fall on them. For, however uncertain tradition might become of itself in process of time, and however difficult it may be for private persons to judge of doctrines by it, yet the judgment of the Catholic church in these points is infallible, and theirs is that Catholic church.

## C H A P. V.

*The pretended Infallibility of the Church of Rome confuted.*

**T**HAT their church is infallible, the papists sometimes attempt to prove from reason. Making it so was the only way to end disputes, and therefore God being wise and good, *must* have made it so. But certainly a much more effectual way of preventing disputes and errors had been to have made every single man infallible; and yet God hath not done this. It might therefore be more modest for them to let him show his wisdom and

(e) Mark vii. 5, 9.

(f) Col. ii. 8.

goodness

goodness in what way he pleases. The Jewish church we know, was not infallible. For they denied their Saviour, and it was by following tradition that they came to do it. How then does it appear that the Christian must be more infallible? Why, they have texts of Scripture to prove this. But if, as they commonly tell us, the scripture can neither be proved nor understood, but by the infallible authority of the church; how can the infallible authority of the church be proved or understood by Scripture? However, let us hear these texts. Our Saviour told his apostles, that the Comforter *should come and lead them into all truth* (g). But perhaps this was said only to the apostles: and, had it been said to them and their successors, or, which is still a different thing, to the whole church; yet so St. John (h) tells all believers, *they have an unction from the holy One, and know all things*; that is, things necessary: not that they were not capable of mistaking, but that, with due care, they might avoid it if they would. Again, he promised his disciples, that *he would be with them to the end of the world* (i). And so he hath promised every single Christian to be *with them and dwell in them* (k): yet this does not hinder but they may both misunderstand, and even renounce Christianity if they please. But he declares also, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church* (l). But *the gates of hell*, or, as it might be translated, *of the invisible world*, mean nothing else than *the power of death*, i. e. the terror of persecution, as the learned well know. And it can never follow, that because persecution shall not destroy the church, error shall not corrupt it. Or were this expression, *the gates*

(g) John xvi. 13.

(i) Matt. xxviii. 20.

(l) Matt. xvi. 18.

(h) 1 John ii. 20.

(k) 2 Cor. vi. 16.

of

of hell, to comprehend error, it must at least equally comprehend sin. And therefore, as this promise does not hinder the church universal from being more or less defiled by sin, so neither from being deformed by error. And the most our Saviour meant to promise, is, that neither shall totally abolish, though, through the faults of men, both may greatly pollute it. They plead farther, that St. Paul says, *the church of God is the pillar and ground of the truth* (m): but they know at the same time, that this passage of St. Paul is fairly capable of two (n) other translations, either of which turns it to a different sense. Or were this the only sense; we acknowledge the church was then, and ought always to be, and in some measure always is, a pillar and support of truth; and so in his proportion is every believer: and therefore of every single good Christian our Saviour says, in the Revelation (o), *I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God*. But then it does not follow from hence, that any one Christian, or the majority of Christians, so support the truth, as that they do and ever will profess it all, without any mixture of error: and unless this be done, there is no infallibility. But they argue farther, that our Saviour directs (p), *If a man neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican*. But what is he there speaking of? Let us read the context. *If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go,*

(m) 1 Tim. iii. 15.

(n) Some suppose that Timothy is here called *the pillar and ground of truth*, thus Gal. ii. 9. it is said of James, Peter, and John, that they seemed to be pillars, i. e. chief supporters of the Christian church. Others divide thus: *The pillar and ground of truth, and without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness*; making St. Paul assert, that the foundation on which the gospel rests, is the doctrine that God was manifest in the flesh, seen of angels, &c.

(o) Rev. iii. 12.

(p) Matt. xviii. 17.

C

and

and tell him his fault between him and thee alone. If he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more. If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. That is, if a man have done you an injury, first admonish him privately of it. If that avail not, tell the church: not the unive sal church sure throughout all the world, but the particular one you both belong to. And if he will not reform upon their reproof, look on him no longer as a true Christian, but an ill man. Here therefore is not one word said about disobeying the determination of the Catholic church concerning a disputed doctrine: but about slighting the admonition of a particular church concerning a known sin, and particular churches are owned to be fallible.

Again, they say it is an article of our Creed, that we believe in the Catholic church. But then they know the meaning of this is not that we believe whatever this church, or any who please to call themselves so, shall at any time assert. But, as believing in the resurrection of the body is only believing that such a resurrection shall be, so believing in the Catholic church, is only believing that such a church is: that Christ hath united his followers into one regular society or body, of which himself is the head: which society or church is therefore called Catholic, or universal, because it consists of all nations; whereas the Jewish church was not Catholic, but particular, consisting only of one nation. But whether this church be infallible or not, the creed says nothing. They that can lay a stress on such wretched arguments as these, how would they have triumphed, had the same thing been said of their church, that are said of the Jewish Church? If there arise a matter too hard  
for

for thee in judgment, says Moses, thou shalt come unto the Priests the Levites, that shall be in those days, and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they shall inform thee: thou shalt not decline from the sentence that they shall show thee: to the right hand nor to the left (q); for by their word shall every controversy be tried (r). The Scribes and Pharisees, says our Saviour, sit in Moses' seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do (s). Now if these very strong expressions did not prove that church infallible, (as certainly they do not; for then Christianity, which they rejected, would not be true) how can much weaker expressions prove any other to be so? But they who will needs have the church to be infallible, and the rule of our faith instead of Scripture, what part of it do they make the infallibility reside in? For unless that be clearly known, we are never the better of it; but instead of the same rule of faith, every different opinion about this matter will produce a different rule of faith. And it is a matter, in which the opinions of the *Romanists* differ greatly.

## C H A P. VI.

*Neither the Pope nor general councils infallible.*

**M**ANY of the Papists say the Pope is infallible, and he himself claims to be so. But then some think he is so in matters of faith only, some in matters of fact too. In most Popish countries it would be looked upon as heresy to deny him this prerogative; in others, as great weakness to ascribe it to him. For a large part of them say nothing is infallible under a general council, regularly called.

(q) Deut. xvii. 8, &c.

(r) Deut. xxi. 5.

(s) Matt. xxiii. 3.

But then they have so many different opinions about what makes a council general, and what call of one is regular, that some of them reckon at least eighteen general councils, and some at most but seven or eight: and indeed, they might very justly question whether, strictly speaking, there was ever one such in the world. But farther: Which of the decrees and canons of these councils, amongst the infinite forgeries there have been, are genuine, and which not, here again is an endless controversy; and another as endless, what the meaning of some of the most important ones of them is. In consequence of this they differ and dispute, and have done for ages, (as united as they would seem to be) not only about such silly questions, as whether the *Virgin Mary* was conceived in original sin or not, (and yet about this they were calling one another heretics for 300 years; and their general councils, with all their infallibility, have not dared to determine the matter to this day;) but they quarrel equally about things of the greatest moment. To give but one instance of many: whether a king may, for heresy or disobedience to the church, be deposed, and his subjects discharged of their allegiance, is a question of as much weight as can well be put. The popes, and great part of their church for 600 years, have held they might; and have practised accordingly, as most nations in their turns have felt. But what tradition hath taught, and general councils decreed on this point, is so various and contradictory, that it would take a man's life almost to enquire into it. So that some *popish* writers speak of the affirmative of this question as an article of faith; and some as a most impious error. One or the other must be impious undoubtedly. Which then are the heretics? And what is their infallibility

lity good for, that either cannot, or will not, decide questions of such Importance to human Society as this?

C H A P. VII.

*Infallibility does not reside in the whole body, either of the Roman or of the universal Church.*

SOME of the *Romanists* allow not even councils to be infallible, and account no doctrine fundamental, unless the whole body of the *Roman* church hath received it as such. And how shall the ignorant know with certainty when they have all received it, and in what sense they have received it? But why the whole body of the *Roman* church? What claim hath she of being always in the right more than the churches of *Greece*, of *Asia*, or *Athiopia*, who differ from her, as well as we, in many things and allow her no such privilege? Nor, which is more, did *St. Paul* know of any she had in the least; but in his Epistle to the church of *Rome* bids her *not to be high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the Jews, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them—severity; but towards thee, goodness: if thou continue in his goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.* Strange treatment, sure, of an infallible church! Some persons, therefore, have held infallibility, to reside not in the church of *Rome* particularly, but in the whole body of *Christians* considered as one, which indeed is the only true *Catholic* or *universal* church. But the whole body of *Christians*, in the nature of things, can never meet: and, were it as easy as it is difficult, to collect their several opinions, what one point should we find them, all in all ages agree in

as necessary, besides those general doctrines of Christianity, that are on every hand allowed to be clearly contained in Scripture? Which way soever then we seek for a rule of faith, to Scripture-doctrine we must return; and therefore the best way is, never to depart from it.

### C H A P. VIII.

*An infallible Judge in matters of Faith not necessary.*

**T**HERE are some of the *Romish* communion who will tell us, that in what has been said above we wrong them. They admit Scripture for the rule of faith. But do they admit it for the only one? This they dare not say. Or, if they did, will they allow us, when we have this rule, to know what it means? No; we must never understand the least part of it, though ever so plain, in any different sense from what the Church is pleased to appoint. What then is this but mocking mankind, and giving with one hand, what they immediately take away with the other? But we, they say, are in a pitiable condition, that, having only the dead letter of Scripture to go by, and no living guide or judge to direct us in the interpretation of it, as they have; controversies are always rising among us, and can never be decided. To this we answer, that controversies are what they themselves, even with persecution to help them, can neither prevent or end any more than we. And in matters of property indeed, some decision, right or wrong, must be made; society could not subsist without it: But what need of an infallible decision in matters of faith? Why is it not sufficient that every man determine for himself, as well as he can in this world; and that God, the only infallible judge, will

will determine with equity concerning us all in the next? But the generality of people, they say, are incapable of judging for themselves. Yet the New Testament supposes them both capable of it, and bound to it; and accordingly requires them not only to *try the spirits*, the pretences to infallibility, *whether they be of God (t)*, but to *prove all things, and hold fast that which is good (u)*. But were this otherwise; if they are incapable of judging, why do you persuade them to change their judgment? Let them alone in the way they are in. But if they have judgment enough to determine whether the Catholic church be infallible, whether the church of *Rome* be the Catholic church, whether this infallibility be in pope or council, which decrees of either are genuine, and what is the true meaning of those decrees; all which things they must determine before the infallibility of the church can be any guide to them: if, I say, every plain man hath ability enough for such points as these, why hath he not ability enough in other cases, to understand common sense and plain Scripture: to judge whether transubstantiation, for instance, be not contrary to the one, and image worship to the other? The *Romanists* themselves own, that men must use their eyes to find this guide: Why then must they afterwards put them out to follow him? Especially considering that the only rule, which above ninety-nine parts in a hundred of their communion have to follow, is not the doctrine of councils and popes, even were they infallible: (for of these it is infinitely harder to know any thing than of Scripture) but merely what a few priests and private writers tell them; and so at last, all the pretence to being directed by infallibility, ends

(t) 1 John iv. 1.

(u) 1 Theff. v. 21.

in being led blind-fold by men, confessedly as fallible as themselves. But all Christians are commanded, they say, to *obey them that have the rule over them in the Lord* (x). And it is true, the teaching of the ministers of the gospel ought to be attended upon: their doctrine followed in all clear cases, and their judgment respected even in doubtful ones. But still we are no more bound to follow our spiritual guides into opinions plainly false, or practices plainly sinful, than to follow a common guide down a precipice, or into the sea let our own knowledge of the way be ever so little, or the other's pretences to infallible skill in it ever so great.

#### C H A P. IX.

##### *General Rule for the lower People.*

**T**HE rule for the unlearned and ignorant in religion is this. Let each man improve his own judgment, and increase his own knowledge as much as he can: and be fully assured that God will expect no more. In matters, for which he must rely on authority, let him rely on the authority of that church which God's providence hath placed him under, rather than another which he hath nothing to do with; and trust those, who, by encouraging free inquiry, appear to love truth, rather than such as, by requiring all their doctrines to be implicitly obeyed, seem conscious that they will not bear to be fairly tried. But never let him prefer any authority before that which is the highest of all authority, the written word of God. This therefore let us all carefully study, and not doubt but that whatever things in it are necessary

(x) Heb. xiii. 17.

to be believed, are easy to be understood. This let us firmly rely on, and trust to its truth, when it declares itself *able to make us wise unto salvation, perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works* (y). Let others build on fathers and popes, on traditions and councils, what they will: let us continue firm, as we are, *on the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone* (z).

(y) 2 Tim. iii. 13—17

(z) Eph. ii. 20.

INTRO-

PART

## INTRODUCTION.

**T**HE general rule of conduct for men to go by is reason: contrary to what this plainly teaches, we neither can nor ought to believe; but beyond what it teaches, on sufficient authority, we justly may. Persuasion founded on authority is called faith; and that which is founded on the authority of our blessed Lord, Christian faith.

Now the rule of this faith, the only means by which we, who live so many ages after him, can learn with certainty what things he hath required as necessary, and what he hath forbidden as unlawful, I have proved to be the holy Scriptures. For these, which confessedly give us a true account of Christianity, do also, as I have shown to you, give us a full and sufficiently clear account of it: and there is none whatever besides, that can be equally depended on. Other antiquity compared with that of Scripture is modern: Tradition in its own nature soon grows uncertain: and infallibility is no where to be found upon earth. The only thing then we have to rely on in Christianity, is the written Word of God. Whatever this forbids in sinful: whatever it requires as a condition on salvation is necessary: whatever it does not so require, is not necessary. By these rules therefore of reason and Scripture let us now proceed, as was proposed in the second place, to try the chief of those doctrines which distinguish the church of *Rome* from ours.

PART

## P A R T II.

## C H A P. I.

*Saints and Angels not proper Objects of Worship.*

WE Protestants worship God, and pray to him through the mediation of Jesus Christ. This the *Romanists* acknowledge to be right. The saints in heaven we love and honour as members of the same mystical body with ourselves. The holy angels we reverence as the ministers of the Divine Will. But as for praying to either, here being no argument for it in reason, nor precept in Scripture, nor indeed example in antiquity for at least 300 years after Scripture, it surely cannot be a thing necessary. Letting it alone is undoubtedly safe; whether practising it be so, the church of *Rome* would do well to consider. They tell us, indeed, that they only beg the prayers of the saints in heaven, as we do those of good persons on earth. And were this true, (as I shall prove it is not) we desire our Fellow-christians on earth to pray for us, because we know they hear our desires; and surely it is reason enough not to ask those in heaven to do it, because we do not know they hear us, nor have the least cause to think they do. For Scripture, which alone could tell us so, hath told us no such thing. But besides, if we can at all understand Scripture, it hath expressly forbidden all applications to the inhabitants of the invisible world, excepting the Supreme Being. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, says Moses, and him only shalt thou serve.*

serve (a). *There is one God and one Mediator, says St. Paul, between God and man, the man Christ Jesus* (b). Accordingly we find, that the angel which appeared to St. John in the Revelation, forbids any religious honour to be paid him, even when present. *See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant: worship God* (c). And when some amongst the Colossians had affected unjustifiable practices of this kind, St. Paul censures them as being in a very dangerous error. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen* (d). Yet does the church of Rome intrude so much farther as to pay undue worship to beings far below angels; not only to the saints in heaven, but to some who were so wicked on earth, that there is great reason to fear they are in hell; and to others that are mere fictions of their own imaginations, and never were at all. For the sake of these and through their merits, they desire in their public and authorized prayers, God's mercy, sometimes quite omitting to mention the merits of Christ, and sometimes joining his and theirs together. Farther than this, they directly pray to them in the house of God, and in the same posture in which they pray to God; and that not only intercede with him for them, but, in so many words, that they themselves *would bestow grace and mercy upon them, would forgive the guilt of their sins, deliver them from hell, and grant them a place in heaven.* What pretence is there now in Christianity for such things as these? And what doth this tend to, but making the ignorant, especially, think their favourite saint can do every thing for them, right or wrong? To him therefore they recommend themselves, not by a religious life, but by flattering addresses and costly

(a) Matt. iv. 10.

(b) 1 Tim. ii. 5.

(c) Rev. xix. 10. xxii. 29.

(d) Col. ii. 18.

presents :

presents: on his intercession they often depend much more than on our blessed Saviour's; and being secure, as they think, of the favour of these courtiers of heaven, pay little regard to the king of it. Thus is the intent of religion destroyed, and the heathen multitude of deities brought silently back into Christianity.

## CHAP. II.

### *Against the Worship of the Virgin Mary.*

THE adoration paid by the Papists to the Virgin Mary is very remarkable. We honour her memory as a person whom *He that is mighty hath peculiarly magnified*, and whom *all generations shall call blessed (e)*. But they address her in such terms as follow: *Empress of heaven; queen of angels and men; through whom, after God, the whole earth liveth; mother of mercy; the fountain of grace and salvation; the only hope of sinners: Who ever trusted in thee, and was confounded? To thee I commit all my hope, and all my comfort: under thy defence is my refuge; make haste to help me in all things which I shall either do or think every moment of my life; loose the bonds of the guilty, enlighten the eyes of the blind, free us from all sin, and drive away from us all evil; Grant us to escape eternal damnation, and cause the glory of paradise to be bestowed on us.* What authority or what excuse is there now for such expressions as these? And yet every one of them I have myself collected, partly out of their public offices, partly from others of their authorized and approved books of devotion. Formerly in their very mass book they went yet farther, and

(e) Luke i. 48, 49.

begged her, by virtue of her parental authority, to command of her Son what they wanted. But to this very day, in another office, they intimate the same thing, by exhorting her that *she would shew herself to be his mother*. And the better to make sure of her doing so, they apply to St. *Joachim*, who, they say, was her father, though indeed it is not certainly known at all who her father was; much less whether he was saint or sinner; However, they apply to St. *Joachim*, and tell him, that *as his daughter can possibly deny him nothing, it is in his power to every thing he will for them*. This, you see, is being very artful in making interest: only it is more art than is necessary. For since we are both permitted and appointed to approach God through Christ directly, who, we are certain, both doth hear and will help us, we shall prejudice, instead of benefiting our cause, by making underhand applications to other persons, who perhaps never come to know of our petitions, and if they do, are displeas'd at them; or, if they were not, can be in comparison of little use to us.

Yet, to judge by the practice of the *Romish* church, who would not think that the whole New-Testament were fill'd with precepts for the worship of the saints, especially the blessed Virgin? Whereas, even in the *Gospels* she is but seldom and occasionally mentioned; our Saviour seeming on purpose to take less notice of her, as if he foresaw what advantages taking more would give to the extravagancies of after times. In the *Acts* she is just mentioned once. In the *Epistles* and *Revelation* not at all. Yet these are not half the monstrous things that the *Romanists* are guilty of about her. They have invented a fable of her body being taken up into heaven, and appointed a solemn festival

festival in honour of it. They have instituted a form of devotion called the *Rosary*, in which ten addresses are made to her, for one to God; and successive popes have granted large indulgences and blessings to all that say it. Then their private writers about her have gone incredible lengths. One of their cardinals, *Bonaventure*, by putting her name instead of God's, and some other necessary alterations, hath applied the whole book of *Psalms* to her. In the same manner he hath altered the *Te Deum*. *We praise thee, O Mary, we acknowledge thee to be the Lady*; and so in the other hymns of the church. Nay, he hath made a creed for her in imitation of *St. Athanasus's*. *Whoever will be saved, it is necessary that he hold the true faith concerning Mary; which except a man keep whole and undefiled, he shall perish everlastingly*. Now if their church do really disapprove these things, why do they never censure them? Why is this very man canonized for a saint, whilst we are condemned as heretics? For not content with thinking this kind of worship lawful, they pronounce accursed whoever shall think otherwise.

### CH A P. III.

#### *Against the Worship of Images.*

**A**NOTHER thing in which we differ from the Roman Catholics, is this. They make pictures of God the Father under the likeness of a venerable old man. They make images of Christ and of his saints, after their own fancy. Before these images, and even that of his cross, they kneel down and prostrate themselves: to these they lift up their eyes, and in that posture pray. The

least appearance of command, or even the allowance, of such practice, in Scripture they pretend not; and yet against those who disallow them, they thunder out anathemas. Now as to pictures of the Father Almighty, *whom no man either hath seen, or can see (f)*; all visible figures must represent him such as he is not, must lead the ignorant into low and mean ideas of him, and give those of better abilities, from a contempt of such representation, a contempt of the religion that uses them. Anciently the *heathens* themselves had no images of God; and a very learned *heathen* observes, that if they had never had any, their worship would have been the purer; for the inventors of these things, says he, lessened among men the reverence of the divine nature, and introduced errors concerning it (g). The Jews, though the Old Testament figuratively expresses, in words, the power and attributes of God by parts of the human form, were yet most strictly forbidden all sensible representations of him under any form. *Take good heed unto yourselves, says Moses, for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spoke to you in Horeb; lest ye corrupt yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, and make the similitude of any figure; for the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God (h)*. Accordingly we find, that when they had made a golden image, though it was expressly designed in honour of that God who brought them out of *Egypt*, it was notwithstanding punished as idolatry. And far from allowing to Christians, what was then forbidden the *Jews*, St. Paul most

(f) 1 Tim. vi. 16.

(g) Varro ap. S. Aug. de Civ. Dei, l. 4. c. 31. where he says, they had none for 170 years. But *Tarquinius Priscus* introduced them. See *Tenison* on Idol. p. 59.

(h) Deut. iv. 15, 24.

severely

severely condemns it in the very *heathens*, that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man (i). Yet how near doth this approach to what the church of *Rome* doth now, in making pictures of God the Father! Our blessed Saviour indeed, having taken on him human nature, is capable of being represented in a human form. But, as all such representations must be imaginary ones, so they are useless ones too: the memorial of himself, which he hath appointed in the sacrament, we may be assured, is sufficient to all good purposes; and these other memorials have always produced absurd and wicked superstitions. As for the images of the saints, it is sufficient to say, that there being no pretence for worshipping the saints themselves, there is yet less pretence for worshipping these representations of them. But here the church of *Rome* will say we wrong them; they do not worship images, but only Christ and his saints by these images. But indeed, it is they who wrong themselves then. For not a few of their own writers (k) frankly own they do worship images, and with the same degree of worship that they pay to the persons whose images they are. And for the cross, particularly in their publick offices, they expressly declare themselves to adore it, and in plain words, petition it in one of their hymns, to

(i) *Rome*. i. 21, 23.

(k) *Aquinas*, &c. See *Trapp*, Ch. of *England* defended, p. 219. They put in the *Index Exp.* those passages in marginal notes and indexes, that say the contrary. See *Instances*, ib. p. 235. They are to be worshipped, says *Bellarmino*, *ita ut ipse terminent venerationem, ut in se considerantur & non solum ut vicem gerunt exemplaris: so that the worship rest in them: as they are considered in themselves, and not only as they supply the place of a copy.* *Bellarmino*. de *Imag.* l. ii. c. 21. ap. *Vitr.* in *Is.* xlv. 20.

give increase of grace to the righteous and pardon to the guilty. This they say is a poetical licence: and truly, in so serious a thing as worship, no small one. But farther: had they no regard to the image, but only to the person represented, why is an image in one place looked upon to have so much more power and virtue, than an image of the same person in another place? Why hath that of our lady of *Loretto*, for instance, so much more honour done it, than that of our lady any where else? We own the council of *Trent* does give a caution, that no divinity be ascribed to images, nor any trust put in them: and the *heathen* gave the like caution often with respect to theirs: but this never hinders the Scripture from condemning them as idolaters. And the reason is, that such cautions never are, or can be observed by the multitude. Place sensible objects before them to direct their worship to: and in those objects their worship will terminate. This the primitive Christians saw too plainly in the heathens, ever to think of imitating them. Accordingly, neither images nor pictures were allowed in churches for near four hundred years. And when, after being more than once condemned, they came to be allowed, no honour was intended to be paid, to them. On the contrary, when it began to be paid which indeed was not long, it was severely censured, and particularly in the eighth century, by above three hundred bishops, assembled in council at *Constantinople*. But about thirty years after, the second council of *Nice* (so ill did councils agree) established it. Yet even this council held representations of *God* to be unlawful. And all the western countries, except *Italy*, under the pope's immediate direction, continued to condemn the *worship* of all representations,

tions, for some ages afterwards. But by degrees it first became general; and then so grossly scandalous, that the church of *Rome*, it seems, hath judged it the wisest way to leave the second commandment, which too plainly forbids these things, out of their smaller books of devotion, under the absurd pretence of its being only a part, I suppose an insignificant one, of the first: though, since they have been charged with this, they have thought fit in some of them, but not in all, to restore it again. And here let us quit the article of image-worship, with the psalmist's remark upon it. *They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them. O Israel, trust thou in the Lord (!).*

#### CH A P. IV.

*The Doctrine of Transubstantiation shown to be absurd and false.*

**T**H E R E still remains another object of *popish* worship, the sacramental bread and wine. For they have made it an article of faith, that the substance of these is, by the words of consecration, intirely changed into the substance of the living body and blood of Christ: which change therefore, they call *transubstantiation*. Now, were this really the body of Christ, 'tis allowed we have no command to worship it under this disguise, and therefore commit no sin in letting such worship alone. But if it be really not so, they own themselves to pay that honour to a bit of bread, which belongs only to the eternal Son of God. And surely one should think it a question easily decided, whether a small wafer, which is the bread they use

(!) Psal cxv. 8, 9.

on

on these occasions, be the body of a man, and whether wine in a cup be blood. Almost every one of our senses will tell us it is not: And though, in some hasty or distant appearance of things, our senses may be deceived, yet, if, where there is all possible opportunity of examining the matter, we cannot be sure of what our own eyes and our own feeling, our smelling and tasting, all inform us of, then we can be sure of nothing. 'Tis only by such evidence that we know any thing in this world: 'tis by no other that we know we have a revelation from God, and that this sacrament is appointed in it. If therefore we are not to believe our senses, how are we to believe any thing at all? But indeed what they tell us in this case, is as contrary to all reason as it is to all sense. That a human body in its full dimensions should be contained in the space of an inch or two, looks as like a contradiction as any thing well can do: that the substance of bread should not be in the sacrament, where they own all the properties of bread are, and that the substance of flesh should be there, and not one of the properties of it appear, is very monstrous; and what the very same body of Christ, which is now in heaven at the right hand of God, should at the same time be on earth in the right hand of the priest; and that there should be several thousands of those bodies upon earth at many hundreds of miles distance from one another, and yet all these be that very same one body also, this is such talk, that for sober persons in their sober senses to use it, and keep their countenance, is very strange. If one and one be two, then one body of Christ here, and one body of Christ there, make two bodies of Christ, which they own he hath not. And if one body can be in more than one  
place

place in one time, we may all of us perhaps be now this very instant at *Rome* as well as here : a man be at ever so many thousand miles distance from himself, and afterwards he may come and meet himself, (as two of their pretended real bodies of Christ often do;) and then pass by himself and go away from himself to the same distance he was at before: he may in one place be standing still, in another be carried along, and so be in motion and not in motion at the same time. Men may say such things as these if they will: and they may believe them if they can. But in order to it, well do they direct their poor people to profess in their *English* manual of prayers before mass, 1725, p. 409. *Herein I utterly renounce the judgment of my senses, and all human understanding.*

Here therefore we fix our foot: if these things be to every man living evidently absurd and impossible, then let no body ever regard the most specious pretences of proving such doctrines, or the authority of a church that maintains them. It is no hard matter for an artful man, a little practised in disputing, so to confound a plain man upon almost any subject, that he shall not well know how to answer, though he sees himself to be right, and the other wrong. This is an art which the priests of the church of *Rome* are well versed in. Indeed the chief part of their learning is to puzzle themselves first, and as many others as they can afterwards. But always observe this rule: stick to common sense against the world: and whenever a man would persuade you of any thing evidently contrary to that, never be moved by any tricks and fetches of sophistry, let him use ever so many. He will be for proving to you by round-about arguments, of which you are unqualified to judge,

judge, that his church is infallible, and therefore transubstantiation is true. Do you answer him by a much plainer argument, of which you are very well qualified to judge: that transubstantiation cannot possibly be true, and therefore his church is not infallible.

But they plead; with God all things are possible, and therefore this is so. Now we own that all things which are not impossible in themselves, are possible with him; but God himself cannot do what in its own nature cannot be done. For instance he cannot destroy his own being, he cannot cease to be just and good, because this hath a contradiction in it; and for the same reason he cannot do any thing else that hath a contradiction in it: for that would be doing a thing, and at the same time not doing it: to ascribe which to God is not to magnify, but mock his power.

But they say further, that transubstantiation hath no more difficulty than the Trinity hath. But surely the difference is very visible. The doctrine of the Trinity indeed is a mystery: that is, the whole of the subject cannot be fully understood by us. But in transubstantiation there is no mystery at all. For the most evident falshoods are just as clearly understood to be so as the most evident truths. In the Trinity there is nothing we see to be false; only we do not see the particular manner in which some things said concerning it are true: but in transubstantiation there are many things we see to be false, and which can in no manner be true. Let them shew us any contradiction in the doctrine of the Trinity, and we will believe it no longer. In the mean time, since we have shewn contradiction in transubstantiation, let *them* believe *that* no longer.

But

But they have Scripture to plead for it. Now if this were a doctrine of Scripture, it would sooner prove Scripture to be false, than Scripture could prove it to be true; and therefore the papists, by making such a monstrous absurdity an article of faith, have loaded their religion with a weight, which, did it belong to Christianity, were able to sink it. But God be thanked, Scripture is no more on their side than reason. We know indeed that our Saviour said when he gave the sacrament, *This is my body.* But so at another time he said, *Verily, verily, I am the door of the sheep:* And at a third, *I am the vine.* And so have all mankind always called a representation of any thing by the name of what it represented. Why then is he not to be understood in the same figure here? How do you think the apostles understood him but as they were used to do in such cases? They who were so backward at comprehending difficult things, and so ready to ask questions about them, did they without any surprize or any question apprehend that our Saviour then took his own body in his own hand, and gave that one body to each of his twelve apostles at the same time, and that each of them swallowed him down their throats, though he was all the while sitting at the table along with them? Such things are too ridiculous to be mentioned in a serious place, and yet these men force us to it by gravely requiring us to believe them. The only considerable passage besides, that they plead, is in the sixth chapter of *St. John*; where many *Jews* having followed our Saviour, because he had fed them with the miracle of the loaves, he bids them *labour not for the meat which perisheth, but that which endureth unto everlasting life, which he would give them, who is the*  
*true*

*true bread from heaven.* Now were this meant of the sacrament, and to be understood literally, we must conclude not bread turned into Christ's body, but his body turned into bread; which is quite the contrary to what they hold. But indeed the whole is only a figurative way of saying that the souls of all men receive from the fruits of his death a much more valuable nourishment, than their bodies receive from their daily food. Just as he elſewhere ſays (m), *Whoever drinketh of the water that I ſhall give him, it ſhall be in him a well of water ſpringing up into everlaſting life;* which nobody underſtood literally; and juſt as Wiſdom ſpeaks of herſelf in *Ecclus xxiv. 21. They that eat me ſhall be hungry, and they that drink me ſhall yet be thirſty;* that is, they who have taſted the pleaſures and benefits of virtue, will always deſire a ſtill greater experience of them. But the Jews, with their uſual perverſeneſs, cavilling at theſe words of our Saviour, he goes on very ſtrongly to aſſert the propriety of them that *his fleſh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed, that he who eateth the one and drinketh the other, dwelleth in him and liveth by him, but he that doth not, hath no life in him.* But now theſe words being ſpoken, you ſee, concerning the preſent time, *my fleſh is meat indeed,* and ſo on, cannot principally relate to the ſacrament; for there was yet no ſuch thing, nor till a year or two after. Beſides, it is not true that he, and he only, who eateth the ſacrament, ſhall dwell in Chriſt and live by him. For perſons may poſſibly have no opportunity of receiving the ſacrament, and yet be very good Chriſtians; and too many receive it frequently, and yet are very bad Chriſtians. The meaning therefore plainly is, that our

(m) John iv. 14.

Saviour's

Saviour's coming and suffering in the flesh, and shedding his blood for mankind, is the spiritual life of the world: that whoever imbibes the doctrine he taught in his life, and partakes by faith of the benefits he procured at his death, his Soul is inwardly strengthened by them, and shall be finally preserved to a happy immortality. For in this Spiritual and figurative sense, he immediately directs his disciples to understand his words; when misunderstanding them in a gross and literal one had somewhat staggered them. *Doth this, says he, offend you? It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.* His manner of expression had the same intent with that passage of St. Paul <sup>(n)</sup>, where he says, *the Israelites did all eat the same spiritual meat and did all drink the same spiritual drink: For they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.* The papists themselves do not think from hence, that the Jews did eat and drink Christ literally: and Christians do it in the same manner they did, only with a clearer and more distinct faith. For in this spiritual sense, Christ himself explains his words. We firmly believe *his body and blood to be verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper*; that is, an union with him, to be not only represented, but really and effectually communicated to the worthy receiver. But as for any other sense, if we did, or could do so monstrous a thing, as literally to eat the flesh, and drink the blood of our dear Lord, it is not that which could do our Souls any good, but only his grace accompanying this sacrament: which may as well accompany it without any change of the bread and

(n) 1 Cor. x. 3, 4.

E

wine,

wine, as it accompanies that of baptism, without any change of water.

We see then that Scripture by no means favours transubstantiation. It is indeed express against it: For St. *Paul* more than once tells us, that what we eat in the sacrament is *bread*, and as for what we drink, when our Saviour says, *this is my blood which is shed for you*, if he had meant literally, he had spoken falsely: for his blood was not shed till afterwards, and could not be drunk then. Neither is it in a condition of being shed at present, and therefore cannot be drunk now. But too much hath been said of this monstrous doctrine, to which the indiscretion of well-meaning writers gave the first occasion pretty early, whilst they affected to heighten the figurative expressions of Scripture, by still more figurative ones of their own; little thinking at the same time, that such an absurd meaning, as the papists now plead for could ever be ascribed to them; and plainly showing, by innumerable proofs, that it is unjustly ascribed to them. But as ignorance and superstition increased, about 800 years after Christ, this amazing notion began to be distinctly and explicitly entertained and asserted, which some had the good sense to oppose; some the weakness to receive, as a mystery that promoted the reverence of the sacrament; others the wickedness to support with zeal, as an artifice that increased the authority of the priests: for what could he not do, who, as they blasphemously express it, could make God? By degrees then this doctrine prevailed, till, in the thirteenth century, it was established as an article of faith. And when once the speculative error of believing the consecrated bread and wine to be literally the body and blood of

Christ

Christ obtained, the practical one of worshipping them as such, quickly followed. For though a decent respect was always paid to the sacrament, yet a direct adoration to the elements was never paid, till the dark and superstitious ages above-mentioned introduced so senseless an idolatry, to the infinite scandal of religion. May God, who mercifully winked at the times of heathen ignorance, overlook this less excusable folly of Christians, and *forgive them, for they know not what they do.* But let us all remember, that our case will be much worse than theirs, if, after the light hath so clearly shone upon us, we return to darkness again: if, as the apostle expresses it, *we change the truth of God into a lie, and worship the creature instead of the Creator, who is blessed for evermore (o).* Amen.

#### CHAP. V.

*The Administration of the Lord's Supper in one Kind only to the Laity condemned.*

**I** Now proceed to another peculiarity of the *Romanists*, with respect to the sacrament, withholding the cup from the laity. That our Saviour administered the holy eucharist in both kinds, they acknowledge: nay, that he expressly commanded those, to whom he administered it, that they should *all drink of that cup.* What therefore he commands all to do, why do they forbid all but the priests to do? Why; the apostles, they say, were commanded to take the cup as well as the bread, because they were clergy. But the church of *Rome* forbids even the clergy, excepting those who officiate, to take it. Besides, if the command

(o) Rom. i. 25.

of receiving the *cup* relates only to the clergy, that of receiving the *bread* too, must relate only to the clergy: for there is no manner of distinction made in the gospel. Yet they own the laity are obliged by our Saviour's command to receive the bread, and therefore they are obliged by the same command, to receive the cup: which that they did accordingly, the eleventh chapter of the first epistle of the *Corinthians* makes as plain as words can make any thing. Not to say further, that if the sixth of St. *John* relate immediately to the sacrament, as they are sometimes very positive it doth, the fifty-third verse of that chapter expressly declares, that, unless we *drink the blood of the son of man*, as well as *eat his flesh*, we have no life in us. But they tell us, our Saviour himself, after his resurrection, administered the sacrament in one kind only. For St. *Luke* says, that sitting down to eat with the two disciples at *Emmaus*, he took bread and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them: and upon their knowing him, vanished out of their sight (a). Now it happens, that this was not administering the sacrament at all, but doing just the same thing, which the Evangelists in just the same words tell us he did, when he fed the multitudes with the loaves and fishes; and indeed at every meal he eat. For the *Jews* in the beginning of every meal of theirs, use the very same custom to this day (b). But they further plead, that however that be, at least when in the Acts of the apostles it is said, the disciples met together to break bread on the first day of the week (c): This must be the sacrament; and the cup is not once mentioned there as given. We answer, 'tis not certain that even this was the sa-

(a) Luke xxiv. 30, 31.

(b) Buxtorf. Synag. Jud. c. 12.

(c) Acts xx. 7.

crament;

crament; and supposing it was, as, in Scripture language, common feasts are expressed by the single phrase of eating bread, which yet surely does not prove, that the guests drank nothing, so neither is it proved, by a religious feast being expressed in the same manner. And besides, if there is no mention there of the laity's receiving the cup, there is none of the priest's receiving it neither: yet this they think absolutely necessary: and if one may be taken for granted, without being mentioned, the other may. Nor should it be forgotten on this occasion, that as the phrase of eating sometimes comprehends the whole of this action, so doth that of drinking: *we have all been made to drink into one spirit*, says the apostle (*d*); who hence proves the unity of all Christians, and therefore certainly thought it was the right of all Christians (*e*). But they plead farther, that the laity, by receiving the body of Christ, receive his blood also: for the blood is contained in the body. But here they quite forget, that our Saviour hath appointed this sacrament to be received for a memorial of his blood's being shed out of his body, of which, they who receive not the cup, do not make the memorial which he commanded, when he said, *drink ye all of this*. Still they insist, that there being no peculiar virtue or benefit annexed to this part of the sacrament that they withhold, which does not belong to the other, 'tis no manner of loss to the laity to omit it. Now does not the same reason prove equally, that the clergy may omit it too? But besides, what treatment of our blessed Lord is this, when he hath appointed all Christians to perform a solemn act of religion, consisting of two parts, both with equal strictness enjoined; for the church of Rome

(*d*) 1 Cor. xii. 13.

(*e*) *Clayton*, Vol. I. Sermon. x. p. 265.

to say that one of them, the far greatest part of Christians shall not perform, for it is full as well let alone: nay better indeed, if we believe them: for the cup they tell us, may be drunk of immoderately, may be spilled, many dreadful inconveniencies may happen from trusting it with the laity? Now 'tis strange our Saviour should not be wise enough to foresee these inconveniencies: 'tis strange we should not experience them neither: and it adds to the wonder not a little, that the whole church of Christ, for 1200 years, should not be able to find them out any more than we. For in all that time, the cup was constantly given to the laity in the public communions, though there are some instances, yet neither many, nor early ones, in which the bread alone was carried to private houses. And when some of the laity, for absurd reasons, refused to take the cup, no less than three popes condemned them. But superstitious imaginations gradually increasing amongst Christians, a custom arose first of giving the bread dipt in wine instead of both separate; and at last in the 15th century, the council of *Constance*, the same which decreed so honestly, that promises made to the prejudice of the Catholic faith ought not to be kept, (f) decreed also very modestly, that notwithstanding (for so they express it) our Saviour ministered both kinds, one only shall be administered for the future to the laity. And now it is made an article of their creed, that the whole sacrament is given by giving this part: so that whoever shall say both are necessary, (which, if it be not a truth, one should think could not be a heresy) is by the council of *Trent* pronounced accursed.

(f) See *Courayer's council of Trent*, Vol. i. p. 595

## C H A P. VI.

*On the Sacrifice of the Mass, auricular Confession, and private Absolution.*

**A**NOTHER difference between the church of Rome and ours with respect to the sacrament is this. They hold that as often as it is celebrated Christ is truly and properly offered up a sacrifice for our sins. Now we acknowledge, that every act of obedience, and worship more especially, may, agreeably to the language of Scripture, be spoken of as a sacrifice to our Maker: that his creatures of bread and wine, when appropriated to this solemn act of religion, are so far offerings to God: and that this whole act, being a memorial and representation of the sacrifice of Christ, may fitly enough to be called by the same name with what it commemorates and represents: so that in this sense Christians have an altar and an offering upon it. But that, instead of a representative sacrifice of praise, it should be a real sacrifice of atonement; in which Christ's body, literally speaking, is every day offered up anew, of this we can see neither proof nor possibility. For not only it supposes transubstantiation to be true, which hath been proved to be false; but it is absolutely inconsistent with two whole chapters of the epistle to the *Hebrews*; the ninth and tenth; which throughout inculcate that *Christ was not to be offered up often, for then must he often have suffered; but that he appeared once to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; was once offered to bear the sins of many; and by this one offering hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified.* If therefore our doctrine be heretical in this point, St. Paul's is so too: not to speak of

of the primitive Christians; who, though they often called this ordinance a sacrifice, yet, by calling it an unbloody one, shew they did not think the blood of Christ was literally offered up in it; and by frequently saying they had indeed no sacrifices, prove themselves to look on this only as a figurative one.

But now from this notion of a daily atonement thus made, I shall proceed to their other doctrines concerning the forgiveness of sins. And here they hold that a particular absolution from a priest is necessary, if it can be had, for the pardon of every mortal sin, *i. e.* every sin by which any person without repentance forfeits his title to heaven: and that a particular confession of every material circumstance of every such sin is necessary for absolution. And the practice of these things they apprehend to give their church an unspeakable advantage over ours.

The necessity of such absolution they plead for from our Saviour's words to his apostles: *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall lose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven* (g). *Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained* (h). Now certainly these words did not put it in the power of the apostles themselves, to pardon or refuse to pardon whom they pleased, right or wrong. They could use the keys of the kingdom of heaven no further, than he saw fit, *who opens, and no man shutteth: who shutteth, and no man opens* (i). Yet the apostles had great powers, by virtue of these words, which we have not: the power of discerning by the Spirit, in many cases at least, and therefore of declaring, who were penitent and

(g) Matt. xviii. 18. (h) John xx. 23. (i) Rev. iii. 7.

pardoned,

pardoned, who otherwise: the power of inflicting and continuing miraculous punishments on wicked persons, which is *binding and retaining* their sins; and of removing such punishments, which is *loosing and remitting* them. But these things the *Romish* clergy can no more claim than we. What then besides can there be conveyed by these words of our Lord? A power of preaching that gospel, according to the terms of which alone, the sins of men shall be forgiven or punished; a power of admitting persons into a state of forgiveness by baptism, of administering to them the word of God and the holy sacrament, as means of grace; of denouncing his wrath against all sinners, interceding with him for all penitents, and pronouncing in his name that he pardons and absolves them. These things, we trust, are done much more faithfully by us than them. There is indeed another power, of exercising spiritual discipline, for the honour of the church and the sake of example, to distinguish so far as men are able between the good, by admitting them to communion with us, and the bad, by excluding them from it. In this we acknowledge that we are deficient; but they are worse: for they have utterly perverted it from a public institution of general use and influence, to a secret transaction between a sinner and his confessor, in which not only such absolution is made necessary, as the Scripture hath no where required, but such confession insisted on as is no way needful to it. Not needful from any command of God: for the chief and almost only text they plead for that purpose, *Confess your faults one to another* (k), no more obliges the people in all cases to reveal the particulars of their sins to the priests, than the

(k) James v. 16,

priest

priest to reveal the particulars of his to the people. Nor is it needful from the nature of the thing: for it is not knowing a person's sins that can qualify the priest to give him absolution, but knowing he hath repented of them; which is just as possible to be known without a particular confession, as with it. Still in many cases acknowledging the errors of our lives, and opening the state of our souls to the ministers of God's word, for their opinion, their advice, and their prayers, may be extremely useful, sometimes necessary. And whenever persons think it so, we are ready both to hear them with the utmost secrecy, and to assist them with our best care: to direct them how they may be forgiven, if we think they are not; to pronounce them forgiven, if we think they are. Only we must beg them to remember, that none but God can pardon sins as to their consequences in another world. Men indeed may take off from sinners the censures of the church if they have incurred them; but as to any thing farther, all we can do is either to pray to God that he would forgive them, (which was the only form of absolution till the eleventh century at least) or else to declare that he hath done so. And let such a declaration express ever so positively that either God or the priest absolves them, it is a fatal error to build hopes on this with respect to another life, any further then conditionally, that if their repentance be sufficient, their forgiveness is certain. But whether it be sufficient or no, the priests of our church can give their judgment, and those of the church of *Rome* can possibly do no more. For they must own themselves to be as fallible as we are.

But as neither reason nor Scripture makes confession and absolution of this kind necessary, so  
neither

neither did the primitive church hold it to be so. Public confession indeed they required in cases of public scandal: but for private confession in all cases, it was never thought of as a command of God for 900 years after Christ; nor determined to be such till after 1200: when the same council of *Lateran* decreed it, which decreed also the deposing of such princes as would not extirpate heresy. And yet it is amazing, what stress they now lay upon it. No repentance, they tell us, will avail, if it be neglected: and almost any will do, if it be observed. For let a dying sinner have only what they call attrition, such a sorrow as arises merely from the fear of being punished without the least degree of dislike to sin or love to God, this sorrow, though not sufficient without absolution, yet, with it, is. So that if a person who has disregarded God all his life, can but be made afraid of him at his death, the priest shall deliver him from hell, and secure heaven to him, by a word speaking. Some lesser punishments indeed he doth remain subject to first: as to which however there are ways of making matters as easy as can well be wished. But in order to understand them, another head of *Papish* doctrine must be explained.

## C H A P. VII.

### *On Purgatory.*

**O**UR Saviour, the *Romanists* tells us, having procured for repenting sinners the forgiveness only of the eternal punishment due to their sins, there remains a temporal punishment due to them still, which, if it be not in this life either inflicted by worldly sufferings, or satisfied for by good works

works and penances, must be undergone after death, in the pains of a place called *Purgatory*; which pains may, however, be mitigated and shortened, partly by offering up prayers for such persons, and partly by granting indulgences to them. And these things also we are heretics for not believing. Yet for the necessity of our believing these doctrines, they pretend no Scripture proof, and they have no proof for so much as the truth of them. Heaven and hell we read of perpetually in the bible, but purgatory we never meet with: though surely, if there be such a place, Christ and his apostles would not have concealed it from us. St. Paul indeed mentions, *a fire that tries every man's works, and persons that shall be saved, yet so as by fire* (1). But what is he there speaking of? He had been laying amongst them, he says, the foundation of religion, the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ. *On this, says he, another man hath built: but let every man take heed how he buildeth; what he teaches for Christian doctrine: for the day shall declare it, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is:* either the day of the fiery trial of persecution, or rather, the final judgment of God, *whose day shall burn like an oven* (m), this shall try every man's work, search it as thoroughly as fire does things that are put into it. Then, *if any man's work which he hath built, abide, if the doctrines he hath taught bear the test, he shall receive a reward: but, if his work be burnt, if, preserving the fundamentals of christianity, he hath built errors on them, he shall suffer loss; the pains he hath taken shall be of no benefit, and though he may be saved himself, it shall be like one that escapes through the fire, with great danger and difficulty.* For so St. Jude

(1) 1 Cor. iii. 13, 15.

(m) Mal. iv. 1.

speaks:

speaks : *some save with fear, pulling out of the fire* (n) : and the prophet *Amos, Ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning* (o). This passage therefore relates not to punishing, in purgatory, the persons of some men, before the day of judgment, but to trying the works of all men at the day of judgment : and far from patronizing the church of Rome, gives them indeed an awful warning not to *build on the foundation of christianity hay and stubble* ; which useles trash as this, and many other of their doctrines ; which the great day of the Lord will shew to have no solidity in them : but *their works shall be burnt up, themselves suffer loss, and at best be saved only so as by fire*. Their other texts for purgatory are, if possible, less to the purpose than this : that *blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven either in this life or that to come* (p) ; which is only saying, it shall never be forgiven, but punished both here and hereafter : that he who *agrees not with his adversary in the way, shall be cast by the judge into prison, and not to come out till he hath paid the uttermost farthing* (q) ; which perhaps is only saying, that whoever doth not make up a difference with his neighbour before trial, must expect no favour after : or, if God be the judge meant, the sense will be, that the person condemned shall never come out of prison, because he never can *pay the uttermost farthing*. For uncharitableness unrepented of, which is the crime here mentioned, the Papists themselves own, sends men not to purgatory, but to hell. As for their notion, that our Saviour hath not procured forgiveness of the temporal punishment of sin, it is certain from Scripture,

(n) 1 Cor. iii. 13, 15.

(p) Matt. xii. 32.

(o) Amos iv. 11.

(q) Matt. v. 25, 26,

F

that

that he hath procured the forgiveness of every thing that can properly be called punishment. For *his Blood cleanseth us from all sin* (r); and therefore no purgatory is needful. And *there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus* (s), and consequently no such place to be condemned to. Correction indeed there is; but this correction is the work not of an offended judge, but a merciful Father: and as he, by these and many other means, endeavours to amend us, so we should use all proper means to amend ourselves: but such penances as tend only to give pain, are not proper means, even in this life, which is our only time of amendment; much less will any such be inflicted on good men in the other, when they will come too late for any valuable purpose. *Blessed*, says the Angel, *are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth, from the hour of their death, for they rest from their labours* (t). But miserable, says the Church of Rome, are many of the dead that die in the Lord, for a long time after, for they rest not from their labours, but labour under most grievous sufferings. But indeed, even their own apocryphal Scriptures might have taught them better than this. *The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them* (u). Nor is their plea from antiquity better than that from Scripture. For though, many had adopted strange notions of these things, out of heathen fable and philosophy, into the Christian religion, yet purgatory, in the present popish sense, was not heard of for 400 years after Christ; nor universally received, even in the western churches, for 1000 years; not almost in

(r) 1 John i. 7.  
(t) Rev. xiv. 13.

(s) Rom viii. 1.  
(u) Widd. iii. 1.

any

any other church than that of *Rome*, to this day. But supposing there were such a place, how do they know, concerning any particular person, that he ever comes into it, or how long he stays in it? And if not, what is it but *offering the sacrifice of souls* (x), to make thousands of prayers for one, who may be quite out of the reach of them, either in heaven, or perhaps in hell? Though indeed, by praying for the very wickedest of men, as only in purgatory, they strongly tempt other wicked men to conclude, that none of their communion ever go to hell. And thus is this invention at once so great a Terror to good persons, and so great a comfort to bad ones, that one cannot help applying to it the Prophet's words: *With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life* (y). But were they to pray not for particular persons, as they do, but only in general for all that are there; where is the command, where is even the permission for it? Our brethren on earth we pray for, because the time of their trial is not yet over. But the state of the Dead is fixed, and they shall receive, every man, not according to our prayers, but their own past works. Purgatory, they tell us, is that prison whence men shall not come out *till they have paid the last farthing*: and what room is there then for our prayers for them there? We own indeed, some sort of prayers for the dead were used by the church (though without any warrant for them that appears) very early, within 200 years after Christ. But then originally these were made, not for souls in purgatory, for whom

(x) Eccles. v. 1.

(y) Ezek. xii. 22.

the Papists pray, but for saints in *Paradise*, for whom they do not pray; for all righteous persons deceased, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, even for the blessed Virgin herself: and hence it appears by the way, that they did not pray to these since they prayed for them. And the subject-matter of their prayers, was that God would grant them his promised mercy in the day of judgment, and speedily complete their happiness in body and soul. In process of time, it must be owned, men fell into a variety of groundless suppositions, concerning the state of Christians between death and the resurrection; and upon these suppositions they formed their prayers, which many persons went so far as to imagine could benefit even sinners in hell. But as all these suppositions, for a long time, were different from, and inconsistent with, the *Romish* notions of purgatory, so the prayers which the ancients used for the dead, even were they of authority, (which they are not, for nothing is so but what appears to come from God) would condemn, and not justify, those prayers which the Papists use.

## C H A P. VIII.

### *On the Doctrine of Indulgences.*

**A**NOTHER popish method of relieving sinners is by indulgences. Originally this word meant a very right thing, the mitigation of the severity or length of ecclesiastical censures towards such, as, by an exemplary repentance, had deserved it. Nor was any other sort of indulgences known for at least 600 years, perhaps much longer. But the present notion of the church of  
*Rome*

*Rome* about them, (though in their disputes with us they would fain disguise it if they could) is this. Many of the saints, it seems, having not only done enough to merit immediate entrance into heaven, but more than was necessary for that purpose, this overplus of their goodness, called usually works of supererogation, joined with the infinite merits of Christ, makes a treasure of inestimable value, which the church hath the disposal of, and the pope, as head of the church, applies towards the remission of their sins, who either fulfil, in their life-time, certain conditions appointed by him, or whose friends will fulfil them after their deaths. Now we, on the contrary, have learned from Scripture, that in many things the best of us all offend; that were our obedience perfect, it were no more than our Duty; and that, to the grace of God, not to the merit of our works, the salvation of our souls is owing. In some respects, indeed, in useless mortifications and observances of no value, we acknowledge many saints of their church have done much more than God requires, much more than he approves or will reward. But even had they done more really good things than they were obliged to, this might indeed encrease their own happiness in another world: but what pretence is there for affirming, that instead of that it shall be transferred away to the benefit of others; and those others, just whomsoever the pope shall please? This sure is very hard. But after all, what is the benefit conferred by these indulgences? If it be only deliverance, either wholly, or in part, from purgatory, there is no such place to be delivered from. And that it is from hell, they dare not say indeed, but they do every thing that can make the

ignorant think it. Why else are Christ's merits mentioned as one Ground of indulgences? For he hath not merited, they tell us, deliverance from temporary punishment, as purgatory is, but from eternal ones only. Why also do their indulgences declare themselves to bestow the most full remission and forgiveness of all sins, if they mean only the smallest part of forgiveness? These things are too plainly calculated to deceive poor wretches into a fatal belief, that, by such Methods, wickedness here may become consistent with happiness hereafter. Repentance indeed is, in words, made one condition of obtaining these indulgences: but this is easily explained away, or overlooked amongst the others joined with it, of saying so many prayers, going to so many processions, and paying so much money. Nay, if their own historians are to be credited, the inhabitants of whole cities at once, upon upon visiting certain churches, and paying a certain sum, have, before now, been absolved of all their sins by the pope, with these very words added; *Even though they had not been contrite for them, nor confessed them.* But as the reformation was first brought on by the enormities of indulgences, so, since the reformation, they have, in many places, both in this and other respects, greatly moderated their practices, though they have never effectually disclaimed their principles. And indeed, as angry as they are with that happy event, they have great reason to be thankful for it on account of several changes for the better, which it has produced amongst them; especially where part of any country have been protestants. For elsewhere all their abuses are kept up. And for one proof of it, I have now in my custody a plenary indulgence,

gence, granted for a small piece of gold, at *Rome* this very year (*w*), to an absolute stranger, for himself, for his kindred to the third degree, and to thirty persons more, for whose names a proper blank is left in the instrument. So that had not the reformation given them some check, God knows whether, by this time, Christianity had been discoverable under the changes and disguises which the prevailing part of them would have deformed it with. Consider but to what lengths matters had already gone, in this one article of the remission of sins. The necessity of confession puts the secrets of every man's heart and life into the breast of the priest, and the power of admitting into heaven, or excluding from it, forced the bigoted sinner to do whatever should be enjoined him. In how monstrous a manner this power was used, the histories of all nations dreadfully shew. And then to preserve it from growing quite intolerable, an artifice was added, that made it still more fatal. It is too well known, that mankind will do any thing rather than their duty, and part with any thing sooner than their vices. On the terms therefore of submitting in other points, they were made easy in this favourite one. The strictest rules of life, indeed, were laid down for such as thought themselves bound to be strict: but for those who desired to be otherwise, superstitious observances were allowed to take place of real duties: idle penances to stand instead of true repentance and reformation; without a zeal for such follies as these, the best man was reckoned to have but small hope of future happiness; and with a zeal for the notions and interests of holy church, the worst man was easily

(*w*) 1745.

secured

secured from future misery. Absolution, if he were but ever so little sorry for having been a sinner, would set him clear at once from hell; and, and if he had but either time to perform a few silly devotions and mortifications while he lived, or money to purchase a good many prayers for him when he died, his confinement in purgatory must soon be over: and thus was the necessity of a holy life quite taken away, and the gospel of Christ altogether made void. Far be it from us of this church, to affright you with such vain terrors, or deceive you with such vain hopes. *On the contrary, be assured, that were all the priests on earth to refuse absolving a true penitent, it would never hurt him; and were they all to join in absolving a man that hath not repented as the gospel requires, it would do him no good. Be assured, that no equivalent in the world will be accepted instead of true inward piety, nor all the good works of all the saints in heaven, compensate, in the least degree, for the want of good works in any one man on earth. Never be moved then by the most confident pretences of this kind, but know, for a certainty, that whoever flies for refuge from his sins, to those who will flatter him with such wretched expedients as these, instead of mending his condition by trusting to them, only makes it worse, and more desperate than it was before. The words of God in the case of the Israelites, are just as applicable in this: Because ye have said, we have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: Therefore thus saith the Lord God—Your covenant with death shall be*

be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then shall ye be trodden down by it. Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies; and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place (z).

## CHAP. IX.

### *Extreme Unction.*

SEVERAL notions of the Roman Catholics concerning the pardon of sin I have mentioned and confuted; but there still remains one more to be spoken of; their custom, when a sick person is near death, of anointing his eyes, and ears, and nostrils, and mouth, and hands, sometimes also his feet and reins, with oil consecrated by the bishop, and praying, that in virtue of that anointing, the sins that he hath committed, by the several organs of his body, may be forgiven him. This they call *extreme Unction*, or the sacrament of dying persons; and teach, that, besides forgiveness of sins, it gives composure and strength of mind to go through the agonies of death. All this they build wholly on the following passage of St. James. *Is any sick among you? Let them call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him* (a). But a little consideration will shew that what St. James appoints is very different from what the church of Rome does. In those days miraculous gifts were common; that of healing

(z) If. xxviii. 15, 17, 18.

(a) James v. 14, 15.

diseases

diseases in particular: and the persons who had these gifts were usually the elders of the churches, whom the apostle here directs to be sent for. And as miracles, in condescension to the genius of the *Jewish* people, to whom this epistle is directed, were accompanied, for the most part, with some outward act of ceremony, by the performer of them; (a practice which our Saviour himself often complied with;) so the ceremony, used in healing the sick by miracle, *viz.* anointing them with oil, was one to which the *Jews* had been accustomed; oil being a thing of which much use was made in the eastern countries, on many occasions (b). Accordingly we read, that, when our Saviour sent out his disciples with a power from heaven to cure diseases, though he prescribed to them no particular form for that purpose, yet they adopted this; *they anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them* (c). Now what the Evangelist tells us they did, is evidently the very thing which St. James directs the elders of the church to do. And therefore since the anointing mentioned in the gospel was only a mere circumstance used in miraculous cures; that also mentioned in the epistle can be nothing more. Accordingly we find St. James neither appoints any consecration of the oil nor ascribes any efficacy to it, as the papists do: but says, *The prayer of faith shall save the sick.* Now if this means only prayer offered up in a ge-

(b) See *Wheatley* on the office for the Sick. And *Grotius* on *Mark* vi. 13. says the *Jews* used it when they prayed for the sick, to express their hope of obtaining from God, in their behalf, that joy and gladness, which oil signifies. *Preservative against Popery*, Tit. 7. c. ii. § 4. p. 62.

(c) *Mark* vi. 13. The council of *Trent* had at first said that extreme unction was instituted in this place, but afterwards changed that word for *insinuated*. *F. Paul in Preserv.* p. 94.

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neral faith of God's providence, we use it for the sick, as well as they, and may hope for the same good effect from it. But faith, in many places of Scripture, signifies that supernatural persuasion and feeling of a power to work miracles, which in those days was frequent. Thus St. Paul says, *Though I had all faith, so that I could remove mountains (d), &c.* And therefore *the prayer of faith*, since it is so absolutely promised here that it *shall save the sick*, probably means a prayer proceeding from this extraordinary persuasion and impulse: such a one as, in the next verse, we translate *an effectual fervent prayer*, but should translate *an inwrought or inspired prayer*. And therefore unless, in the church of Rome, the priest, as often as he administers extreme unction, acts and prays by immediate inspiration, his prayers are not of the sort St. James speaks of; nor are they directed to the same end. The benefit which he promises from the prayers that he appoints, is the recovery of health: *The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up*: whereas they of the church of Rome never use this ceremony with any hope of recovery, nor indeed, unless they happen to mistake, till the person is quite past recovery. And, for this reason again, his anointing and theirs are quite different things. For though St. James does add; *And, if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him*; yet the very doubt, implied in the word *if*, shews, he is not speaking of a sacrament instituted purposely for the remission of sins, as the church of Rome make their unction to be. And indeed this relates to the very same thing with his former words. For, as bodily sickness and infirmity was frequently a punishment

(d) Cor. xiii. 2. See also Matt. xvii. 20. John xiv. 12. 13

for

for sin; (whence, to mention no other proofs, St. Paul tells the *Corinthians* (e), for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep;) so, the very form of miraculously healing a person of these infirmities, used by our Saviour is, *Son, thy sins be forgiven thee* (f): that is, the illne's inflicted on thee for thy sins is removed. Since therefore St. James promises forgiveness of sins in just a like case, we are certainly to understand him in just the like sense: viz. that, if the sickness of any person prayed for were the punishment of any sin; that punishment should be remitted, and his health restored. Now this forgiveness of the temporal punishment of some particular sins, which is what St. James promises, the church of Rome does not promise from this ceremony; and the forgiveness of the future punishment of all those sins, that the sick person hath ever committed by his bodily organs, which St. James does not promise, they do. Though indeed it is a little hard to conceive, when all a man's sins have been already forgiven; (as they say they are, by the priest's absolution) how any of them should want to be forgiven again perhaps, by extreme unction, the moment after. But the truth is, they themselves lay not near so much stress on this ceremony's procuring pardon of sin, as its procuring composure of mind, against the terrors of death. Now most evidently, this expectation St. James hath not said one word to countenance: so that his precept, which seems at first sight to be some ground for their practice, and is the only ground they have, relates indeed to a quite different thing, as one of their cardinals, *Cajetan* (g), acknowledges. Though the council

(e) 1 Cor. xi. 30. (f) Mat. ix. 2. See also John v. 14.

(g) *Preservative*, Tit. vii. c. 2. § 2. p. 60.

of

of *Trent*, Sess. 14. hath thought proper since to curse all that shall say it. The anointing prescribed by St. *James* therefore, being intirely of a miraculous nature, was in all reason to cease, when miracles were no more. And accordingly the primitive Christians, though they speak more than once of anointing with oil in miraculous cures; yet, in common cases, never mention it as a custom, much less as one appointed in Scripture for the first 600 years (*b*). After that indeed, they came to use it upon all sick persons in the beginning of sickness, for a means of recovery, as the *Greek* church doth yet; till finding it of little benefit in that way, the church of *Rome*, about the twelfth century, began to use it, in the extremity of sickness, as a sacrament of preparation for death: which if it were in reality, they are surely much to blame for not giving it under the apprehensions of an approaching violent death; for instance, before a malefactor is executed; where it cannot but be as needful, as in the fears of a natural one. Upon the whole, you see our laying aside a ceremony which hath long been useles, and, by leading persons into superstitious fancies, might be hurtful, can be no manner of loss, whilst every thing that continues truly valuable in St. *James's* direction, is preserved in our office for visiting the sick: concerning which, I shall only add, that it is much to be wished, men would so live in the time of their health, as to need the least spiritual assistance that is possible, in the time of their sickness: and that what they do need, they would all apply for early, when it might be of great benefit to them, and not content themselves

(*b*) Concerning a passage of *Innocent* I. in the beginning of the 5th Century, see *Prefero*. p. 75.

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with calling in the minister at last for mere form's sake, when he can do them little good, or none.

## CHAP. X.

### *Prayers in an unknown Tongue.*

**A**NOTHER point, in which we differ from the church of *Rome*, is, that all their public prayers are in the *Latin* tongue, ours in our own. This sure at least is no heresy, that, when we pray to God, we all know what we say. Our practice justifies itself. But how is theirs justified? Reason and common sense plainly condemn it. Antiquity is no less against them: for every Christian church originally had their own service in their own tongue. That of the western world was in *Latin*, only because *Latin* was their common language: and therefore, it should have been no longer in *Latin*, when that ceased to be their common language. And for Scripture, read but the xivth chap. of *1 Corinthians*, and see what *St. Paul* would have judged of this *Romish* practice. Even when there was a miraculous gift of tongues in the church, and men prayed, or prophesied in strange languages by inspiration; even then he requires such persons to keep silence, unless another were ready to interpret publicly what they spoke: for says he, *Brethren*—*except ye utter words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a Barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a Barbarian unto me. How shall he that occupieth the room* *the unlearned say amen, at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? I thank my God: I speak with tongues more than you all: yet in the church,*

church, I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. It immediately follows, and very fitly to the present purpose: *Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.* For never sure was greater childishness, than to be satisfied with the mere outward show of prayers to God, perhaps without understanding one word of them, which is not praying at all; nor greater malice, that is, more wicked and cruel cunning, than to keep the poor people in this darkness, and plead for it with such unfair pretences as they do. Some of them tell us very gravely, that *Latin*, far from being an unknown tongue, is the best known of any in *Europe*. And if it were; yet if this best known tongue is notwithstanding unknown to ninety-nine persons in a hundred, why must they all be confined to it, and not have each their own prayers in their own tongue? Why, that variety would be very inconvenient, they say, to travellers. But whose convenience is most to be consulted? That of whole nations, or of a few persons that come amongst them occasionally? But vulgar tongues, they say, are perpetually changing, and expressions growing improper and unintelligible. I answer: our having our Bible and Prayer-book, in the vulgar tongue, undoubtedly prevents its changing near so fast as it would otherwise. But when it does change, let them, where it is needful, be changed to it. For which is worse, to take this little trouble of altering a few words and phrases once in a hundred years, or to let people go on for ages together, with prayers and lessons, of which they understand not one word? But they alledge

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farther, that some of their prayers, indeed a great part of the mass, it would be useless to have said in their own language; for the priest is ordered to speak it so low, that it cannot be heard: as if one fault would excuse another, instead of making it greater. But many of their prayers, they say, may be understood: for though spoken in *Latin*, there are printed translations of them in *English*. But still, great part of them is not translated, unless it be by some very modern indulgence (*i*) and that which is, nothing but our making them ashamed of themselves hath forced them to of late in these parts of the world against their will. For we know that when, within this last century, some well-meaning bishops of their own church in *France*, had published the mass in the vulgar tongue, for the people's use; the then pope declared them sons of perdition to all the world, and condemned what they had done, as if it were the overthrow of religion (*k*). So that, for aught we know, the same liberty taken here may fall under the same condemnation, when a proper time comes. Or were the contrary ever so certain, still putting their prayers into *English* for the people, only shews that they ought to be spoken in *English* by the priest: for this round-about way is evidently a most absurd one; that he should be praying in one language, and they following him by guess, as well as they can, in another. Besides, multitudes of their poor people have never heard of these translations, or at least, have them not: multitudes more are unable to read them: and all

(*i*) The *English* translator of the order and canon of the mass, hath omitted many of the ceremonies, particularly above twenty crosses, out of less than thirty. *Tenison* on Idol. p. 5.

(*k*) *Tillotson*, Sermon. 246.

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these must be left quite in the dark. But we are told, they have a good intention in general: they reverence what they do not understand, and this is sufficient. Now for the purposes of spiritual dominion, this may be sufficient, and such devotions, as many of theirs are, will, we own, be more revered from not being understood. But for the edification of the people, it is far from being sufficient, to have good intentions in general, and no meaning in particular: to pray to God for they know not what; and hear lessons read, which they can learn nothing from.

## CHAP. XI.

### *Prohibition of the Scriptures.*

EVERY Protestant church allows and exhorts all persons to read the holy Scriptures diligently. The *Romanists*, on the contrary, have expressly declared, that, since the promiscuous allowance of Bibles in the vulgar tongue does more harm than good, (these are the very words of the index published in consequence of the council of *Trent's* order) no one shall be suffered to read translations of Scripture, even though made by Catholics, as they call themselves, unless the bishop or inquisitor, by the advice of the curate or confessor, give him leave in writing; and whoever transgresses this rule, shall not be absolved till he gives up his Bible. Nay, throughout the whole kingdom of *Spain*, all Bibles, in their own tongue, are absolutely forbidden. And in all popish countries, getting one, by the means here prescribed, being a matter of time, and form,

and difficulty, and suspicion, the generality seldom put themselves to the trouble of it. So that, in many parts of the world, there are great multitudes of that communion, who perhaps have never either read or heard, in their own tongue, one chapter of the Bible in their whole lives. Or if any one does ask for leave, it is never granted, where they dare refuse it, excepting to such as they are well assured beforehand will see nothing there but what they are bidden. So that where they have permission to read the Scripture, they have none to understand it. Besides, that this permission, even in those countries where they are obliged to indulge it the most freely, as in our own, is but during pleasure, and may at any time be taken away when it will serve the turn better: nor dare the poor deluded people, upon pain of damnation, help themselves. And as to Protestant translations, having one is looked on as a mark of heresy; for which, in this very nation, poor creatures have been burnt, and their Bibles with them. Which practice now, think you, is the righter, theirs or ours? What authority can there be on earth to forbid any part of mankind from reading what heaven hath revealed to them? 'Tis the law of our lives, the foundation of our hopes; God hath given it to us, and man hath no right to take it from us. But they tell us it is from kindness they do it: for there is great danger that the Scripture may be misunderstood and perverted: *unlearned and unstable men, (c) St. Peter hath declared, may wrest it to their own destruction.* Now this is possible indeed: and so it is possible every thing may be applied to an ill purpose: health, strength, food, liberty, common

(c) 2 Pet. iii. 16.

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day-light: but is this a reason for taking away any of them? It is possible that persons may do themselves harm by having the Scriptures: but is it not something more than possible, that they may suffer harm from the want of them; and be destroyed, as the Prophet tells us, *for lack of knowledge (m)*? Why do not these persons, who are so very cautious in this case, shew the same caution in others, which surely need it full as much? Why do they never restrain any body from image-worship, for fear of their falling into idolatry? Why do they never forbid the use of indulgences for fear of their being mistaken for a licence to sin? Multitudes of questions like these might be with equal reason asked; and it is very strange, methinks, that they should be suspicious of nothing doing harm but the Bible. But after all, is the danger so very great? Hath God Almighty inspired men to write and publish so exceedingly unsafe a book, and so very unfit to be read by the generality of those, for whom he intended it; that had not the church of *Rome*, in their great wisdom, forbidden persons to look into it, without their leave, it might have done infinite harm, and does not a little still? We cannot think so. Men were liable to make an ill use of things, to fall into errors and heresies, in all ages. Yet neither the prophets under the Old Testament, nor our Saviour and his apostles in the times of the New, ever bethought themselves of this way for preventing it; but recommend and enjoin the reading of Scripture in the strongest terms. Now it is wonderful they should not be as wise as those who come after them. St. *Peter* himself, who mentions this danger of men's *wresting the Scrip-*

(m) Hof. iv. 6.

tures;

tures, yet does not in the least blame, but suppose, every man's reading them notwithstanding. And St. Paul, whose epistles were the very Scriptures they wrested, yet never requires them to be kept from any one Christian of the several churches he writes to; nay, most strictly requires the contrary, concerning an epistle as liable to be misunderstood as any of them all, and which actually was misunderstood immediately, I mean his first epistle to the *Thessalonians*. Yet notwithstanding that, *I charge you by the Lord*, says he, *that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren* (n). Did then the ancient Christians, in whose days there were heresies in great plenty, did they restrain any of the people from reading the Scriptures, in order to preserve them from heresy? No: the *Romanists* do not pretend it. They well know, that a man's delivering up his Bible was always, as it ought to be, the mark of apostacy from religion. They know there is no one thing almost so much insisted on by fathers and councils, as the necessity that all persons, without exception, should be well acquainted with the word of God. Thus little apprehensive was the primitive church of any danger from this practice. The church of *Rome*, we own, has some cause to be apprehensive. For had the people once general liberty to read and judge from Scripture, there is great danger they might come in general to see, what now they who do see, dare not own, how widely it differs from the doctrines commonly taught them. We acknowledge then they are *wise in their generation*. The Scripture is against them; and they will be against the Scripture: lower its credit as far as they dare; keep it out of men's hands where they

(n) 1 Thess. v. 27.

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can; and where they cannot, they pervert it by false translations, obscure it by false glosses, and make it of none effect, by setting up a pretended authority of interpreting it to quite another thing than it evidently means. We, God be thanked, need not these arts, and we use them not. We permit, we beseech, we require you all to read the Scriptures diligently, and judge of their meaning impartially; to compare with them every thing we teach you, and believe nothing but what you find agreeable to them. We have no fear of your being poisoned by the food of life, or led into error by the word of truth. On the contrary, we know not any surer way of preserving men from errors, and those of the church of Rome in particular, than that which St. Paul prescribes *Timothy*, in the third chapter of his second epistle. *This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come. Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But continue thou in those things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of: knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

CHAP.

## C H A P. XII.

*Various Corruptions and Superstitions of the Church of Rome.*

THERE are still many other points, in which great corruptions of the *Romish* church might be shewn you. Such is their equalling the apocryphal books to the canonical: which the ancient Christians did not. Such is their modern addition of five new sacraments to those two which Christ appointed, and making the belief of this precise number essential to salvation; making also the priest's intention so necessary to the benefit of the sacraments, that no body shall be the better for them without it: a person baptized, for instance, shall be no Christian notwithstanding, if the priest had malice enough to design he should not. Of the same bad tendency is their burying every part of religion under a load of rites and ceremonies, that turn it into outward show; and giving it the appearance of art magic by an infinity of absurd superstitions, many of them the undeniable remains of heathenism very little disguised: Their engaging such multitudes of people in vows of celibacy and useless retirement from the world: their obliging them to silly austerities and abstinences of no real value as matters of great merit: their excessive veneration of relics, most of them fictitious and unfit to be thus honoured, were they ever so genuine: their inventions of romantic legends and lying miracles, which make weak and unlearned persons believe any thing, and too many of those, who see through them, believe nothing. And besides these and other errors in spiritual matters, there are many more

more of most weighty consideration in temporals, which they jealously maintain: their claim of punishing whom they please to call heretics with penalties, imprisonments, tortures, death; their excommunicating and deposing kings; their forbidding divine worship through whole nations at once; their annulling the most sacred promises and engagements, when made to the prejudice of their church: their drawing, by wicked artifices, the wealth of all countries to the support of their own tyranny. But many of these things I have set in a proper light to you on other occasions, and dwelling on all would be endless as well as unnecessary. Enough, I hope, hath been said, to shew you which are in the right: and that *this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand*. For observe, as the whole claim of the church of Rome depends upon her being in all points infallible: so, if in any single point she proves to be mistaken, her pretence of being believed in the rest falls intirely to the ground. But indeed, though for your fuller satisfaction I have confuted many of her doctrines, yet any person may have sufficient satisfaction of his own being in the right way, without so much as knowing or having heard what any one of her doctrines are. For let him but keep close to the creed and the Commandments; believe those things which Scripture hath made necessary to be believed, and do those things which Scripture hath made necessary to be done; and he is under no manner of obligation to enquire, what any church on earth thinks fit to believe or do besides. Many opinions may be true and useful; many practices may be innocent and edifying; but nothing can be matter of necessity, except what Christ and his apostles have required as  
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terms of salvation. Every person, that complies with these, is a true Christian: every church, that teaches these, is a true church: and neither ignorance nor error about any other matters can forfeit our title to everlasting life. Search then the Scriptures and see: is there any one thing made necessary there which our church forbids? Is there any one thing declared sinful there which our church requires? If not, let other churches prohibit or enjoin as they please at their own peril. We are no way bound to enquire what they do, or why. Letting alone their peculiarities, we are sure is safe. Whether making use of them be or not, is their business to consider, not ours. So that were transubstantiation, for instance, and purgatory true; were the worship of images and praying to saints lawful, which, God knows, they are far from being; yet as there is no pretence that they are necessary doctrines and practices, the mistake of rejecting them could have no harm in it; but the uncharitableness of condemning and accursing those who reject them may have great harm. For when once Christ hath said, Believe and do such and such things, and you shall be saved; who is it that shall dare to say, believe and do more, or you shall not be saved? It is dreadful arrogance, therefore, which the church of *Rome* shews in this respect; coining new articles of faith, some of which they own were not articles of faith from the beginning, and sentencing men to hell for not believing what, before that sentence, themselves acknowledge no body was bound to believe. This, you see, is changing the terms of the Christian covenant arbitrarily, and making a new Gospel at their own pleasure. But in opposition to their decisions and *anathemas*, hear one

one of St. Paul: *Though an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we the Apostles of Christ have preached, let him be accursed.* Trust then yourselves on this foot: for *other foundations can no man lay, than that which is laid (o).* Nor indeed did the primitive church, for several hundreds of years, attempt it, or make any doctrine necessary, which we do not: as the learned well known from their writings; and the unlearned may know from the most ancient of their creeds, which we now use in our constant service. Afterwards indeed needless additions first crept in, then false ones: but, had they begun ever so much sooner, our cause had received no prejudice. *To the law and to the testimony, as the prophet directs, we appeal: if they speak not according to his word, it is because there is no light in them (p).*

CH A P. XIII.

*General Pleas of the Papists confuted.*

**A** Sufficient number of the doctrines of the *Romanists* have been considered, and what they plead for them, examined. But besides the pleas they make for each in particular, they have others for all in general. Should they, when they want to make a convert, fairly propose to him each of their notions separately, and give him proofs, first that it is true, and then that it obliges him to quit our communion for theirs; this they are sensible would be a hopeless undertaking. And therefore very wisely they are for shorter work, and have general arguments, it seems, to prove that, let

(o) 1 Cor. iii. 11.

(p) II. viii. 20.

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their

their doctrines or ours be what they will, we must be in the wrong, and they in the right.

One of these arguments is their infallibility, but these I hope was fully confuted in my first discourse, and indeed in every one since. For it is in vain for them to pretend they cannot be mistaken, if it appear but in any single instance that they are.

Another is, that Protestants, not being of the *Roman Church*, are not of the *Catholic Church*: for the *Catholic Church* is but one, and out of it, there is no salvation. Now, we acknowledge it is but one body under one head, *Christ Jesus*; but then in this one body there are many members; and why are not the churches of *Greece, Asia, and Africa*; why is not ours, as true a member of it as theirs? On what authority, if names were worth disputing about, do they ingross that of *Catholic* to themselves? Do we not profess the true *Catholic Faith*, that faith which the *Universal Church* received from the apostles? We profess it much purer than they. Are the sacraments more duly administred by them than by us? Far from it: For of the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, one half they have taken away from the laity: and concerning the other half, they taught the most monstrous absurdities, and built on them the most shocking idolatry. Then, for that of baptism, we administer it with water alone, just as *Christ* appointed, whereas they have added oil, salt, spittle, and I know not what, as if it were on purpose to make it as unlike his institution as they can. Is then the appointment or ordination of their clergy more valid, or more regular than ours? On no account whatever. For if they brought down the succession uninterrupted to the reformation, we have

have certainly preserved it uninterrupted since; which now they may be ashamed to deny, since a learned man of their own communion hath fully proved it. And consequently, for them, who are but a very unsound part of the Catholic Church, to call themselves the whole of it, is quite as absurd, as for a diseased limb (though perhaps the larger for being diseased) to be called the whole body. But they will say, we separated, and so cut off ourselves from the Catholic Church, at the Reformation. I answer, we did not. We only cast out, as was our duty, the errors that had crept in: and we did it by the lawful authority of our superiors, both ecclesiastical and civil. Upon which, the church of *Rome*, instead of imitating our good example, commanded all they could influence, to quit our communion. 'Tis they then who made the separation, and 'tis they that continue it. We are ready still to join in communion with them, upon the Terms of the Gospel: and they refuse to join with us, but upon terms of their own devising. Now when two Churches break communion with one another; though it is always a fault, yet it does not always follow, that either of them is thereby broken off from the Catholic Church, any more than it follows, that when two men break off acquaintance, one of them is broken off from the civil society to which they belong. But when one church shall excommunicate another, merely because the governors of that other made such alterations in it as Scripture warrants, and because the people complied with those alterations, such an instance of presumption and uncharitableness is much more likely to cut off those that use it from the church of Christ, than those against whom it is used. But supposing we had even acted without,

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and

and separated from, our church governors, as our Protestant brethren abroad were forced to do: was there not a cause? When the word of God was hidden from men, and his worship performed in an unknown tongue; when pernicious falshoods were required to be professed, and sinful terms of communion to be complied with; when church-authority, by supporting such things as these, became inconsistent with the ends for which it was established, what remedy was there but to throw it off, and form new establishments? If in these there were any irregularities, they were the faults of those who forced men into them; and are of no consequence in comparison with the reason that made a change necessary. For were a man to separate himself from every church he knows on earth, in order to obey the laws of Christ, he would still be a most valuable member of that *general assembly and church of the First-born, that are written in heaven* (a). *For what communion hath light with darkness?—And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?—Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty* (b).

But 'tis an article of faith, they tell us, that the church of *Rome* is the mother and mistress of all churches, and therefore to cast off her authority, can never be lawful. We answer, the mother of all churches she certainly is not. For in *Jerusalem* was the first Christian society, and from thence were derived many others, more ancient than that of *Rome*. Nor was that church the mother of the *British* churches, nor of all the *English*. But had the first persons that founded the Gospel here been

(a) Heb. xii. 23.

(b) 2 Cor. vi. 15, 16, 17, 18.

sent from *Rome*, that had given them no manner of authority over us. Whence is she then the mistress? Why, *St. Peter* was head of the church, and the bishops of *Rome* are his successors. But the Scripture tells us, *Christ is head of the church (c)*, and tells us of no other. We own it was said to *St. Peter*, *Upon this rock will I build my church (d)*. But this rock, for aught they can ever prove, might be, not *St. Peter's* person, but his confession made immediately before: that *Jesus was the Christ*. Or, if the church was to be built on *St. Peter*, yet not on him alone, but upon the foundation of all the *Apostles and Prophets*, as *St. Paul* teaches expressly (e). And accordingly, the wall of the new *Jerusalem*, or church of God, is said to have twelve foundations, on which were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (f). To *St. Peter* indeed it was promised, that the keys of the kingdom of heaven should be given him, and that whatever he bound or loosed on earth, should be bound or loosed in heaven (g). But this very same, and other as great things, are said to all the apostles equally (h). *St. Peter* was appointed by *Christ* to feed his sheep (i): but so surely was every one of them. The first rank therefore he might have among the apostles; but authority over them not the least. On the contrary, *St. Paul* tells us, that he withstood *St. Peter* to the face, because he was to be blamed (k), and says of himself, in two different places, that he was nothing behind, not a whit behind, the very chiefest apostles (l). But had *St.*

(c) Eph. i. 22. iv. 15.

(d) Matt. xvi. 18.

(e) Eph. ii. 20.

(f) Rev. xxi. 14.

(g) Matt. xvi. 19.

(h) Matt. xviii. 18. John xx. 23.

(i) John xxi. 15, 16, 17.

(k) Gal. ii. 11.

(l) 2 Cor. xi. 5. xii. 11.

*Peter* possessed ever so much authority, what is that to the church of *Rome*? Why; *St. Peter* was bishop of *Rome*. But even this is what they can never prove, nor is it probable. Or if he was, perhaps it was only of the *Jewish* Christians at *Rome*. For *St. Paul* tells us, the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to him, and that of the circumcision to *Peter* (m); and the *Jewish* church there is extinct. Or if bishop of all *Rome*, he was bishop, they say, also of *Antioch*; and why must their church inherit his authority more than that church? But why indeed must it be inherited at all? It was given personally to *St. Peter* as an apostle: what had others to do with it who were no apostles, though they did succeed him as bishops? All pre-eminence of one church above another was nothing originally, but an institution of men for convenience and order. *Rome* being the chief city in the world, it was natural to look on the bishop of *Rome* as the chief bishop. And precedence being thus allowed them; by time and opportunity, and arts that were often very wicked ones, they improved it into a claim of authority: to which, though not near the whole church ever submitted, yet at length a great part did. Then to the prerogative, of which they had thus by degrees got possession, they began to pretend Christ himself had originally given them a right. And having managed so well, that part of the world believed them, and part durst not contradict them; they took on them the title of universal bishops, which one of themselves not long before had declared, whoever should take, was the forerunner of antichrist. And then under this they claimed all power over the souls, bodies, and fortunes of men, and exercised it with all possible insolence, rapaciousness, cruelty and impiety.

(m) Gal. ii. 7.

Now

Now what could there be done when such a power was thus acquired, and thus exercised, but to throw it off, and assert that liberty to which we had an undoubted right? For as to any scheme of coming to terms, never did the church of *Rome* recede from any one pretension she ever made. The exercise of authority she hath omitted indeed, whenever she durst not exercise it: but all her claims she hath constantly kept up, and excommunicates yearly to this day every prince in *Christendom* that shall refuse obedience to any constitution of the pope's whatever. It is true, even the *popish* princes at present regard not this excommunication, and she knows not how to make them regard it. But were once the *Protestants* reunited to that church on the terms of allowing her any superiority: who knows how soon a power, that had once risen from nothing to that formidable height which it had attained, may rise again to be as formidable as ever? Another of their pleas is this: That which was the ancient religion and church must be the true one. Now where was your church, say they, before *Henry* the VIIIth? Where was your religion before *Luther*? We answer, our church was before that time just where it is now. Only then it was corrupted with many sinful errors, from which it is now reformed. Still 'tis the same church it was before: just as a man formerly addicted to many vices, and afflicted with many distempers, continues the same man, after he hath forsaken the one, and recovered from the other; and it would be very strange to make his alteration for the better an objection against him. And for our religion: where was that before *Luther*? Why, wherever Christianity was. Did *Luther* invent the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the two Sacraments? These are the things in which our religion consists: and theirs

theirs consists in the same. Only they have added by degrees, a number of needless, false, and wicked things to them, which we have cast off again. Our religion therefore is the ancient Christianity, professed from the days of the apostles. But where was their religion in those days, I mean the doctrines in which they differ from us? All of them, hundreds of years later; many of them a thousand; some of them established no longer ago than the council of *Trent*, which is since the time of *Luther*. For then, and not before, was it, that they filled up the measure of their iniquities, which had long been growing; equalled their own traditions to the Word of God, and added a new creed to the old one. Our rejecting their additional doctrines, we own, is new; and no wonder: for the doctrines themselves are new. Some of them indeed reigned much too long: had they been rejected sooner, it had been the better: but better late than never. Still, our denying these is no more part of our religion, properly speaking, than our denying *Mahmetanism*, or the idolatry of the *Chinese*, is part of our religion. Were it not for their pressing them upon us, our people should never hear them mentioned. We take no pleasure in exposing their absurdities, but are heartily grieved at them: and have much better employment for our hearers than these controversies, did not their restless endeavours to pervert men, make it sometimes necessary.

But this plea of their church being the most ancient, they sometimes put in a different form: and tell us, that either the *Romish* church established here before the Reformation was the true church, or it was not. If it was, why do we protest against it? If it was not, how can ours be a true church, which is derived from it? The answer is very

very plain. In one respect, as their church professed the fundamentals of Christianity, it was, and is a true church: and so far ours is derived from it. In another respect, as it obscured and contradicted them by unjustifiable doctrines and practices, it was not a true church; and so far we protest against it. Their truths we have preserved: their errors we have rejected. In one sense we are the same church with them still: in the other we are not the same, but a much better.

Another way which they have of arguing against the Reformation, is aspersing the characters of those who were engaged in it, and ascribing bad motives to them. Now as to this: if the main thing done was right, as it plainly was, what sort of instruments God employed in it, or what their personal inducements were, is of no consequence to us in the least. *Jehu* was an instrument of God in destroying *Baal* out of *Israel*, and executing vengeance on the house of *Ahab*; yet very wicked in some respects (*n*). So was *Henry* the VIIIth commendable in destroying the supremacy of the pope, yet highly blameable in other things. The greatest part of the reformers were very good men, and acted from the best of motives. Some of them had double great faults, and might act from bad motives. Nay, such as meant very well, might, in particular things, do very ill. For what constantly happened in all other cases, no wonder if it happened in this. However, the most blameable were not near so bad, as the malice of their adversaries represents them: and had they been much worse, yet they could scarce possibly be so bad as some of those princes, and even of those popes were, who built up the antichristian power, which these men demolished.

(n) 2 Kings x. 28—31.

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But whatever becomes of this comparison, still upon the whole, theirs is the church, they tell us, in which the most numerous and brightest instances of devotion, self-denial, and good works, have shone forth, as the many histories of their saints fully prove: ours is a low, carnal religion; most of our people are very bad, few or none of them eminently good: and that must be the best church, which makes the best men. Now the truth is, these magnified instances of piety of theirs, are most of them instances only of mere superstition, or blind zeal: and the saints which they have canonized, were, many of them, very weak, and some of them, very wicked persons, whose lives are pompously dressed up in legends and fables, to amuse and mislead the ignorant. We, for our parts, leave them to make a noise with fanciful ways of being religious; and doubt not, but we please God much better by performing quietly the real duties of life. And, though we acknowledge and lament that a failure in these is too general amongst us, yet we must remind them, when they insult us upon this, that there is no where on earth more vile and more open wickedness, than where Popery reigns without controul. If, when they live under Protestant governments, they live in a more Christian manner, we are heartily glad of it. But still we hope, even here the lives of our people are not worse than theirs: and we are sure it is not the fault of our religion, if they are not much better.

But they tell us, however these things may be, yet their communion is undoubtedly the safer of the two. For they say we cannot be saved, and we own they may be saved: and that church is plainly the safer, in which both sides acknowledge salvation is to be had. But consider: does their saying we are not safe, make us ever the less so in reality?

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The question is, Upon what grounds do they say it? Why, upon none at all, as I have shewn you. And therefore all they can prove by saying it, is their own confidence, of which those persons have generally the most, who have the least reason for it: and their own uncharitableness, for which, if we at all understand Christianity, no side will ever be the safer. Well: but we do not deny, that they may be saved. No more do I or they deny, but even a virtuous heathen may have some degree of happiness in another life. Suppose then he should take it into his head to deny that a Christian could, must I turn heathen to be of the safer side? You see it is just the same case. But after all, do we lay it down as a rule without exception, that all Papists may be saved? We dare not say so. Some of them go much more unjustifiable lengths than others: the ill things that many of them do, they do in ignorance: this, we hope, will be an excuse for them in a great measure. Yet, even for the most ignorant, their salvation is grievously hazardous, amidst so many corruptions, which one should think even they might perceive to be such, and so many temptations to neglect that *holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord* (\*). The condition of the learned amongst them, who, when the light is before their eyes, continue in darkness and keep others in it, is still more dangerous. But in the worst state of all are they, who being born *children of light*, return to darkness again; and sin wilfully after they have been bred up amongst us in the knowledge of the truth. Yet even among these there are very different degrees of guilt. Such whose good meaning hath been misled by plausible artifices, we would still hope well of: though doubtless they must have been sinfully negligent of in-

(\* Heb. xii. 14.

forming themselves concerning the grounds of their first belief; else they had never left it. A second sort, who depart from what, in their consciences, they believe is the truth, merely because a presumptuous man tells them they cannot be saved if they adhere to it, these are much more blameworthy than the former. But for such as, either from the love of worldly interest, or the wretched hope of reconciling sin and salvation together, turn aside from the way of righteousness, and forsake that pure and holy Communion, which the good providence of God had placed them in; as to such we cannot judge favourably, and we will not judge hardly; *there is one that judgeth (p), who will also render to every man according to his deeds (q):* but indeed we can see no promise of their finding mercy in that day. Suffer not yourselves then to be moved either by vain threatenings or false promises, nor ever think to be safe in any other way, than that of first enquiring carefully, what your duty is; and then keeping close to the practice of it. Be assured it is safe to worship God, through Jesus Christ, and let all other worship alone; safe to receive the holy Communion as our Lord himself gave it, to pray in a language you all understand, and make that holy word *which was written for your learning (r)*, the foundation and rule of of your faith, your practice, and your hopes. Fear not but you are safe in doing thus; whether *Romanists* be safe in doing otherwise or not. God grant they may! but God forbid that any of us should try.

(p) John viii. 50.

(q) Rom. ii. 6.

(r) Rom, xv. 4.

## C H A P. XIV.

*Rules of Conduct towards the Roman-catholics.*

**I**N the first place, let none of their bad doctrines or practices ever tempt you in the least to any hard treatment of them, any incivility or secret ill-will towards them. Justice and mercy, equity and charity, are main parts of religion: and a failure in these is one of the worst heresies into which we can fall. We know the church of *Rome* hath failed in them greatly; our ancestors have felt their cruelty; our Protestant brethren abroad groan under it at this day, and may God preserve us and our posterity from the danger of it! *for never had they mercy long when they had power.* Careful self-defence against such a spirit must be allowed us: but, as to any thing farther, in those things for which we blame them, let us not be like them. The severe laws we have in force against them were not enacted for their religious opinions; but for their refusing to own, and promise due obedience to the government under which they live: and they have long experienced, that nothing but absolute necessity will ever oblige our superiors to put any of these laws into execution. Let us therefore shew in our private capacities the same good temper. As men, they have a title to all humanity: as Christians, though mistaken, they have a yet stronger claim to our forbearance and tenderness. Their doctrines indeed are dangerous; their practices have been dreadful: but this, in a great measure, hath arisen from ignorance, and a zeal of God, though not according to knowledge (s). Numbers of them, without doubt, inwardly disapprove religious cruelties, and think at least they could never be brought to join in them. However this may be, (which

(s) Rom. x. 2.

God forbid should ever come to be tried) yet in the mean time nothing hinders but as in religion they may to the best of their judgment be sincerely pious, so in common life they may be just and honest, friendly and neighbourly. Let us therefore, with much better-natured principles, be sure not to appear worse-natured persons; but recommend our profession to all the world by that *wisdom which is from above, first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits (t).*

In the next place, let nothing which hath been said make those, who are not some way called to it, over forward to dispute about these matters with persons of more learning and art than themselves. For a man may have very good reasons on his side, and yet be so little qualified to set them in the best light, that an excellent cause may be hurt by want of skill in managing it. What I have endeavoured is only that you may *be able*, as St. Peter directs, *to give an answer to them that ask you a reason of the hope that is in you (u).* In doing which, remember you are concerned only to be on the defensive. They are to prove, if they can, that every one of their doctrines is not only true, but an article of faith, and every one of their practices not only lawful, but necessary. Till they have done all this, you have no reason to change: and when they have done it, we allow you to change. But observe one thing: if you hear them deny any of the points with which they have been charged, do not be staggered at it. Would to God they were not guilty of them! They would be more in the right, and we should be nevertheless so. But do not think a charge unjust, because they confidently say it is. The more ignorant of them here among us, perhaps, do not know the worst part of their doctrines: and the more learned will not

(t) James iii. 17.

(u) 1 Pet. iii. 15.

own them, till they are forced. These concealments are no new things with them. In some countries many of their missionaries have concealed a great part of the Christianity they pretended to teach, and allowed heathenism to be blended with it, in order to make converts, such as they are, the more easily. No wonder then if here they veil over their corruptions with a fair mask, which if we do not pull off, they will not throw off, till the proper time comes.

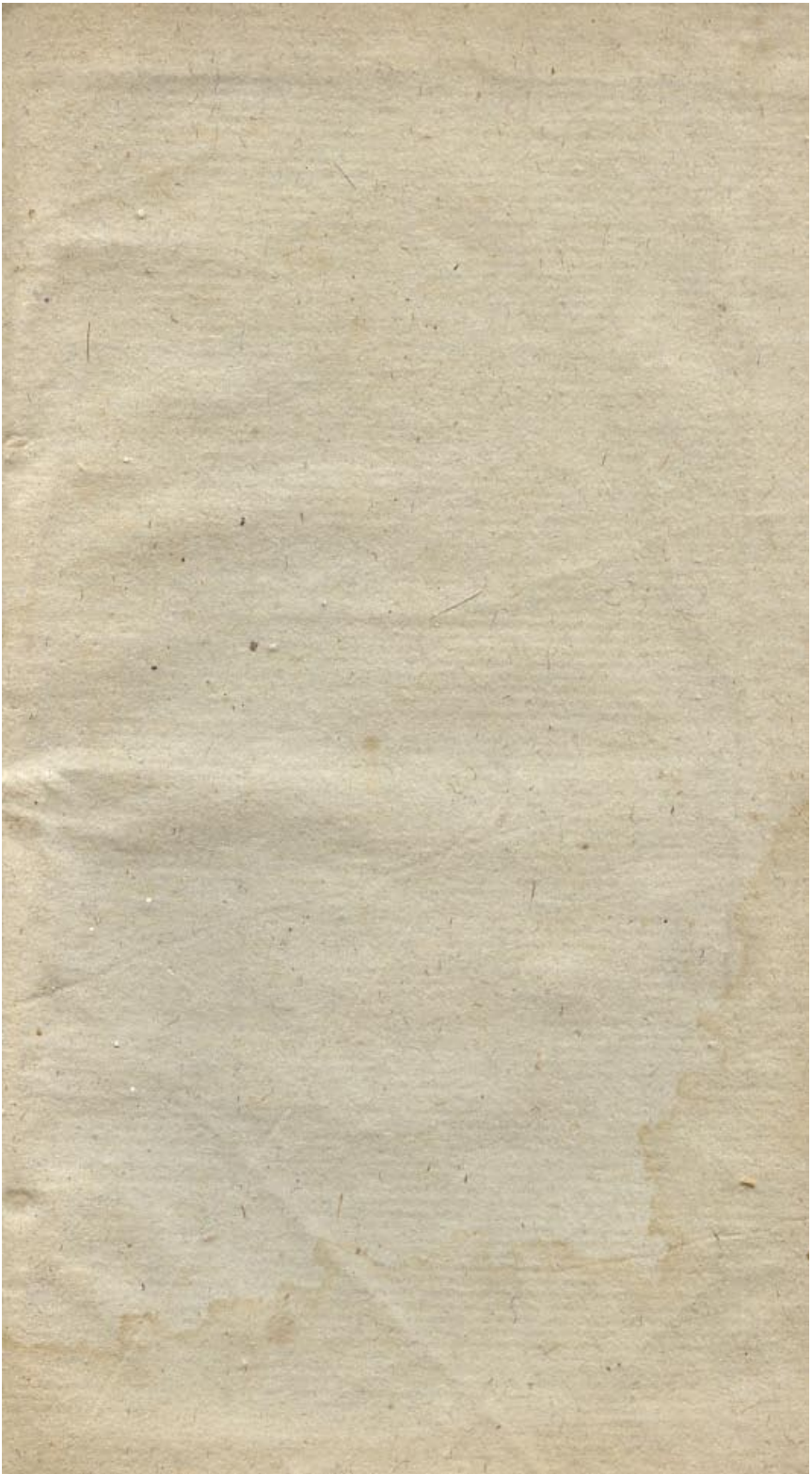
Another thing is, If ever you should be pressed with any of their arguments which I have mentioned, and not perhaps remember the answer to it, still remember you have seen it answered. Or if any other argument should be used, to which you cannot of yourselves reply, consult those that can: tell us your difficulties in time; be assured such as would keep you from this do not mean honestly; give us but a fair hearing before you determine to leave us, and we doubt not your staying with us. Even if any of you should be unhappily brought to think favourably of some of their doctrines, remember still how monstrous others of them are: and yet, if you do not swallow all, you have done nothing. We allow persons to have very different opinions from us in some points, and suffer them to continue among us as very good Christians notwithstanding: but their church makes no abatement: their very grossest errors must be professed, or you are none of them. Think well then what you do: and, as I once advised before, never let subtlety and sophistry, whether you know exactly how to answer it or not, prevail against Scripture and reason; but ever stick to the plain word of God, and plain common sense.

One direction more I have of the utmost importance; which is, if ever we would secure ourselves to good purpose against the dangers of false religion, let us carefully promote the profession and practice

of the true. If persons are bred up in no knowledge of, and no zeal for, the principles of their own church, no wonder that they are easily carried off, and seduced into another. If they are encouraged to live without regard to God, many of them however will be afraid to die so too; and then that communion which makes the largest promises of forgiveness on the easiest terms will be almost sure to be embraced by them. Men, wise in their own imaginations, think they are sure to root out superstition, if they plant infidelity. But mankind must and will have some religion; and if they forsake a good one, sooner or later the uncomfortableness of unbelief, and the terrors of conscience after a wicked life, will drive most of them to a worse. Besides, whilst we are divided and negligent about these matters, the emissaries of the church of *Rome* are united and active, and never with more sanguine hopes, that when they can plead experience, that the liberty allowed by the protestant religion leads men of course to throw off all religion. These are plain reasons for a public regard to piety and virtue: and there are yet more important ones for a private conscientious practice of them: for that, after all, is the only thing that will establish us in the truth, fill our hearts with peace and comfort in this life, and give us everlasting happiness in the next. If then you have any concern either for the honour of that church to which you belong, for the welfare of your country, or the salvation of your souls, *let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ* (w). Pity and pray for them who are in error, that God would *give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth* (x), *and building up yourselves*, as St. Jude exhorts, *on your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God; looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life* (y.)

(w) Phil. i. 27. (x) 2 Tim. ii. 25. (y) Jude, ver. 20, 21.

F I N I S.



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