

vate judgment and accept the Westminster definition of the mysteries of faith, whether his reason or conscience entirely approves of them *en bloc* or not, outsiders have no reason to object to the step Rome-wards. If men want an infallible human guide, they are surely at liberty to choose Pope, Assembly, or Council, as the authority from whose decision no appeal lies, either to the Bible, or to reason, or to conscience. The only cautionary remark necessary is this, that those who do so must not delude themselves with the idea that they are Protestants in anything but name. It may be added that the Presbyterian proceedings were conducted in a conciliatory spirit, and we are quite willing to believe that it was no mean desire to stifle an incipient scandal that prompted the adjustment which followed. Professors Caven and McLaren especially bore themselves as Christian gentlemen, under circumstances personally trying. It was certainly by no fault of theirs, though they have been accessories after the fact, that burdens have been laid upon men's shoulders which they are not able to bear, whatever their fathers may have borne before them.

Still the disagreeable question remains—"Why were not Mr. Macdonnell's difficulties solved, if need were, by appeal to Scripture? Why, for instance, did Mr. Robb, the hierophant of Philistinism in religion, refuse an appeal from man's theology to God's word? Was there not a latent conviction that the "standards" marked a stronger line of defence than the citadel they affect to guard? The gauntlet was not, in form, thrown down, it is true; but why was not the "heretic" examined according to "the rule of faith and practice" prescribed by the Confession itself? Why, in fine, should them who believe Scripture to be the *fons et origo veritatis*, be called upon to seek unto those that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards of theology that peep and that mutter, seeking unto their God for the living to the dead formulas of the past?" Mr. Robb knows where to find the answer.

It is urged that a Church must have a creed or it could not exist—which we take to be the baldest of truisms. Every associated body, whether secular or religious, must, of course, be founded upon some principle or

principles assented to by all its members; it needs no ghost to reveal the fact that believers must believe something. The real question at issue is not as to the propriety of a creed, but as to its character and extent. Should it be as exclusive as some theologians would have it, or should it be as comprehensive as Christian charity can make it? Or we may ask, if the metaphor be admissible, should the spiritual franchise be placed as low as is consistent with the welfare of the Church, or should the sphere of religion be made the dogmatist's "rotten borough?" The answer will depend upon our notions of the purposes for which the Christian Church was founded. These may be briefly stated in a phrase—the moral and spiritual regeneration and elevation of the race; and if we turn to the words of Jesus, and indeed to the New Testament as a whole, we shall see how little there is of settled dogma or systematic theology there. Belief, that is trust, in the Saviour, purity of heart and life, with self-denial, were all that He required. Speculations touching the future destiny of man beyond the grave, and the number of those who should be saved at death, were rebuked by Him in the memorable injunction, "Enter ye in at the straight gate." He proclaimed nothing about fate, or foreknowledge, or predestination; but He blessed all little children in the beautiful utterances which the Westminster Confession actually gives as a proof for the classification of infants into elect and non-elect. The Apostles, notably St. Paul, were impelled by their environment to make doctrinal statements; but they scarcely ever rose to the exactness of a definition. Even "the article of a standing or falling church" is suggested rather than formulated in the Pauline theology, and is ignored and apparently disapproved by James, whose letter, on that ground, Luther rejected as "an epistle of straw." There are various criteria of belief stated, all centering, however, upon the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In three instances where the religious life is sketched in Scripture, there is no mention of doctrine at all—"fearing God and loving righteousness," "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God," "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Any one approaching the subject for the