

thinkers, who take upon trust whatever tends to release them from religious responsibility, regard the whole as a solemn mockery and gross imposition.

In this country the character of religion has been, very generally and systematically, reduced by Hoadley, and his literary followers, to a something that is little better than artfully concealed deism. Compelled, as these men constantly tell they were, by the principles of the reformation, to allow all men to judge for themselves, and to follow the dictates of their own judgment, and therefore, of course, to tolerate every order of believers; they thus opened an abyss, in which all sects and forms of religion come together and unite; or, to speak more accurately, in which, all plunged together, mutually confound and destroy each other. For, as no one religion can properly subsist but by the rejection of all others, so do they reciprocally expire in each other's embraces. Thus, by removing that sacred barrier, which separates truth from error, and the real worship of Christianity from the pretended reformations of human wisdom, our modern innovators have gone so far as to have set aside the very badge—that distinctive badge—which points out and first forms, the Christian—the divine seal and stamp of baptism. Baptism—which, the Scripture declares is so essential to the security of salvation—is, according to the School of Hoadley, neither more nor less than an empty, unmeaning ceremony—a mere childish rite. Such, too, as this is the notion, which is very commonly entertained of the mysterious action in many other Protestant states; insomuch that, in some of them, the civil power has been obliged to interfere, in order to prevent its total abolition. In these,—or, at least, in several of these,—if the infant be still a sacred being—if religion still sheds its amiable influence around its cradle—it is to the wisdom of the civil policy that the gratitude is due: for, it is its protection alone that has defended the rights both of the Christian, and of the man, against the cold and insupportable indifference of a barbarous theology.

From England, the doctrine of latitudinarianism and infidelity have passed over to America. It is in its newly-erected university of Cambridge in particular, that the seeds of irreligion are sown in the minds of the young. Thence, they are carried, and profusely scattered abroad, through all the provinces of that boundless continent. There they grow and develop, and expand themselves, with such a degree of luxuriance, that the old plant of the reformation is nearly choked under the confusion and pressure of their shade. There, as in Europe, the ministers of the countless sects are careful not to shock and offend each other by preaching a series of contested mysteries. Or, rather,—since all mysteries are contested—they appear to be mutually agreed amongst each other not to preach by mystery whatsoever. Their method is, vaguely to dissertate upon certain subjects of morality; which, alone, just like the deist, they are pleased to inculcate as essential. It is true they put the Bible, without note or comment, into the

hands of the people: and in doing this—that is, in giving them a book which they either do not read, or else read without understanding it—they give them as they are pleased to call it—'a religion.'

In Protestant Germany the scene, as it is described by its own Protestant writers, is if possible, more afflicting still. There, these writers tell us, the very ministers of the different sects, whilst they pretend to revere the Bible as the oracle of Christian faith, make it at the same time, their real endeavour to bring it into contempt."

A nation of infidels, however, is a moral impossibility: man will be religious in spite of absurd theories; and the result of religious doubt—for nothing is so potent in generating doubt as infidelity—as a spirit of inquiry comparatively free from prejudice, which generally terminates in truth. Thus, the thinking part of the German Protestants are embracing Catholicism; and the same thing is taking place in Geneva—the Protestant Rome. A native writer, addressing the pastors of the Swiss church, says, "You delight the Catholic clergy, who had long since foretold you that the reformation would lead to deism. Certain it is, that these men have converted great numbers to Catholicity. And I know that a still greater number are on the point of re-entering that church,"

ON BIBLE READING.

To the aid of reason, and to the sanctions of sentiment and inspiration, the Protestant, call in the aid of the Scriptures; appealing constantly, and confidently, to their testimony; and reposing his convictions upon their presumed authority. This is; indeed one of the chief,—if not the best,—stronghold of his defence. And it is because the Catholic does not exactly approve of this mode of deciding the truth, or the falsehood; of any doctrine, that he is so severely condemned, as the enemy of the word of God. This is even a subject, which forms the great theme of those countless publications, which are unceasingly issuing from the press, against Popery; and, above all, it is that which fires the zeal and animates the eloquence of our modern hosts of bibliomaniacs. Wherefore, since both the imputation, and the question itself, are so important, I will hence, pause, at some length upon them. And first, I will state the opinion which the Catholic entertains respecting the sacred volume; evincing, how groundless is the accusation of our supposed hostility, either to the divine book, or to its circulation.

The fact, then, is that the church of Rome, so far from being an enemy to the Bible, considers its possession as the most valuable of its treasures; and so far from being averse to its circulation, she, on the contrary, wishes to see it dispersed through every corner, and cottage, of the Christian universe,—provided only that its translations be correct; and that men read it, in the dispositions of humble, and prudent piety. We deem it a peculiarly fortunate and happy circumstance, that the Christian religion,—although, indeed, it was established without the aid of any written word,—should have its annals, and its written code of doctrines. It is well, that the faithful should possess

the authentic registers of their faith, and the titles of their future expectations; well, that, amidst the trophies of error, and the monuments of incertitude and incredulity,—truth should equally,—and still more,—have its trophies, and its monuments too. It is well, that whilst books without end, and number, attest the thoughts of man, there should at least, be one to attest the thoughts of God.

But the utility and advantages of the Scriptures, are, still, farther, rendered evident from the consideration of the following circumstances,—that, precisely, as tradition serves to explain, and determine, the sense of the sacred pages, so also do these same pages, in return, serve to prove the antiquity of tradition, and to confirm, and strengthen its authority. They show, that religion, its dogmas, and its duties, are, at all times, binding and irrevocable. They fix, or contribute to fix, the language,—and consequently, too, the stability,—of the public faith.—Whilst moreover, it is true, that, without their aid, and testimony, a variety of facts, instructions, &c., which help powerfully to move the heart and to enlighten the understanding, would either, by this time, be unknown, or at all events, known but to few; they present to us truths, the most sublime; and injunctions, the most important,—designed, for the regulation of the church; the order of society; and the conduct and sanctification of individuals.—Whence, St. Paul says: 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; in order that the man of God may be made perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' Such are the Scriptures; and such as these, the notions, which the Catholic entertains of their sanctity; their utility; and their benefits.—revering them as the most precious and important gift, that the wisdom and goodness of the Almighty has bestowed upon his creatures.

With all these advantages; then,—and seeing that the sacred volumes have been lent to us for the above-cited purposes;—seeing this, is it not, for these reasons, but a piece of consistency to suppose, that the understandings of men, assisted at the same time, by the instincts, and impulse, of their feelings, are competent, with these aids, to judge, and determine, what in religion, it is wise and proper to believe, and what it is right and prudent to reject?—Such as this, no doubt, is the doctrine.—the necessary doctrine,—of every Protestant church, and of every consistent Protestant. All these in the language of the 'immortal' Chillingworth, as he is called, exultingly proclaim, 'The Bible, the Bible, and only the Bible, is the religion of Protestants.—And hence it is, that we hear, the clergy, and the preachers, of each Protestant sect, so earnestly exhorting their respective followers to read, and study, the divine book unceasingly. 'Read it,' they call out; 'examine it: for it is the book of life. Learn from it, for it will teach you what it is proper for you to believe, and what it is right to practice.' As I have just remarked, all this is but a piece of consistency.

Since then, it is thus contended, that it is the privilege; and duty, of men to interpret the sacred