

But if we would make the best of things as they are, we must begin by laying aside that spurious humility above alluded to, and putting on true humility. We must inquire, not what, according to our notions, God ought to have done, but what he *has* done. And we shall find, on examining his written word, the most plain expositions of the purpose for which his revelations were designed, and of the way in which they should be used.

We find, for instance, Paul and the other apostles, speaking of the errors which had already crept into the church, and which, they warned their hearers, would creep in, even in their own times. We find Paul telling the Ephesian elders that he had for a long time warned them night and day with tears. "He knows," he says, "that after his departure men will arise, even among themselves, teaching depraved doctrines;" and he bids them, therefore, not consult the Church of Rome, but to "take heed to themselves." He refers them to no man on earth but to *himself*—to the gospel which *he* had preached. *He* did claim to be an inspired and infallible guide; having confirmed his pretensions by the "signs of an apostle;" by miracles wrought, not like those which some churches lay claim to, before believers only, but openly, and before unbelievers. And, "after his departure," when he could no longer be consulted, he bids them "take heed to themselves," on account of the many false teachers who would seek "to draw away disciples after them." He no where gives them such a consolatory assurance as that none of these false teachers should be regularly ordained ministers and governors of the Church of Rome, or of any other church. He leaves them, as our Lord did, in warning his disciples against false prophets, to judge of the tree by its *fruits*. This is the very opposite of the plan of *judging of the fruits by the tree*; that is, receiving

such and such doctrines implicitly, *because* they are taught by such and such a church.

Now if men will resolve to harden themselves against all the warnings given by our Lord and his apostles, of the errors that would creep into the church, who can wonder that they should be misled? or whom can they blame but themselves? They may make out, I have no doubt, that in very early periods of Christianity there was worship addressed to the Virgin. Why may not this have been one of the very errors which the apostles foresaw and forwarned men of, as likely soon to arise, or even as already arisen? How, then, are men to know whether this is allowable or not? If we look to scripture, we find in all parts God alone represented as omnipresent, and as able to hear at once the prayers addressed to him, by all persons in all parts of the world. As for the notion, that the disembodied spirits of saints should be able to hear all the prayers of their thousands of votaries, in various places, if anything so much at variance with the general character of scripture had been designed to be taught, we may be quite sure that the apostles would have distinctly declared it. And the same with numerous other dogmas and practices that have crept into various churches.

If my friend will earnestly study God's word, as revealed in scripture, with a spirit of true, and not of spurious, humility—that is, with devout reverence for God, and not for man, he will, I trust, learn to distinguish the genuine doctrines of the gospel from the various errors and superstitions with which presumptuous men have overlaid them. But if he shall continue to cling to the notion that wherever there is a revelation there must of "necessity" be an infallible interpreter of it always at hand, I think, that with his intelligent and inquiring mind, he will hardly escape