

the word" which the blessed Apostle meant, we have undoubtedly reached the last degree of perfection; but if he spoke of another dwelling of the word of God, we may, for aught that appears, have fallen back not a little. We do not find among these Bible maniacs any who seem inclined to renounce every thing on earth, to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Christ. We have not heard of many who have sold all they had, that they might buy the pearl of evangelical poverty. We read of St. Anthony, that, on hearing these words, "Go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor," he immediately put this lesson of evangelical perfection in practice. We have yet to learn of similar instances as the effect of the distribution of Bibles. One thing we know, that many there are who seldom or never take a Bible in their hand, who yet have constantly in their minds, in their hearts and in their daily life the words of St. Paul, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all things for the glory of God"; and we hazard nothing in saying that these are they in whom the word of God dwells plentifully, even though they know not how to read; and we cannot be blamed for preferring these to the proud and worldly minded though able to boast of a house full of Bibles.

It were well if sterility of good works were the only consequence of the promiscuous distribution of the word of God. But his distribution is not only inadequate to the production of good but it has been and cannot fail to be the occasion, if not the direct cause, of serious and enormous evils. A thing may be itself good and holy and yet not be fitting for all, nay, even be most prejudicial to those who are only prepared to abuse it.—Hence, the Church while revering the word, and preserving it with an affection and fidelity of which Protestants can form no conception, has yet always protested against this Protestant mania, for mania it is. She obeys the words of Christ, "Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine"; and this distribution of Bibles indiscriminately to all sorts of persons, whether prepared to receive and read it with the proper dispositions, with due reverence for the word of God or not, is a flagrant violation of the precept contained in these words of our Lord. The Scriptures are holy, a treasure of infinite value to the Christian Church; but they are profitable only to such as are initiated into and well grounded in Christianity; to others they are in general poisonous and destructive. From the reading of the Bible by those not prepared to profit by it has resulted the wildest and maddest fanaticism; and the "thousand and one" sects which have afflicted the christian world since Luther, and which every right minded man must deeply deplore owe their origin to no other cause. People reading the Bible alive, as St Paul complains, 1 Tim. i. 7, learned to assume the title of Doctors of the law, though "understanding neither the things they say, nor whereof they affirm." Many by this reading have lost their faith; and, indeed, if the apparent contradictions found in the Bible give no little trouble even to the learned, and have been the occasion of voluminous commentaries what temptations must they not offer to a mere sciolist? Voltaire thought there was no more effectual way of spreading infidelity than by the Bible explained in his own way; and the grand means on which unbelievers of our day rely for spreading their creed of unbelief is the same. Deprive them of these apparent contradictions and inconsistencies, of the difficulties and objections which they find or suppose they find in the Scriptures themselves, and they would have very few arguments with which to perplex the unlearned and captivate the conceited and vain. And what shall we say of the imminent danger young persons particularly must run of shipwrecking their purity and chastity, when they read the impure actions related in the Old Testament in all the simplicity of primitive manners! Alas! they need not so much to inflame their passions, and it will be well if they escape with approving even in theory, some crimes which they find to have been committed by persons eminent in general, for their good qualities and deeds! We could easily enlarge on this topic, but forbear lest we fall into the very inconvenience we are speaking against. It is, however a topic well worthy the serious consideration of those who affect to be so shocked with certain passages in Moral Theology, not intended for general reading, but simply to prepare the moral physician for treating the moral diseases which, unhappily he is too

sure to encounter in the practice of his profession. Looking to the little good and the enormous evils which result from this indiscriminate distribution of Bibles, to the character of the book itself, and its utter unfitness to serve as the summary of Christian doctrine or as the introduction to religious truth, its obscurities and acknowledged difficulties, many of which baffle the skill of the ablest and most learned commentators, and the ease and readiness with which the unlearned and unstable wrest it to their own destruction, we are forced to conclude that a more ineffectual and absurd way of making the word of God dwell plentifully in all, and to answer the end for which it was designed, than thus proposed by Protestants, could not easily be devised.

But we come at length to the last two articles of the chapter on the Scriptures. We give them together for they both mean the same thing, and together form a suitable key stone to the arch of Presbyteranism. They are as follows:—

"Art IX. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it may be searched and known from other places that speak more clearly. X. The Supreme Judge, by whom all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures.

"Acts xv. 15. And to this agree the words of the Prophets as it is written. John v. 46. For had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me. Matt xxiii 29, 31. Ye do err not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God. Eph. iv. 20. Acts xxviii 25."

Singular articles these! Reduced to plain English, they are simply, Scripture interprets itself, and God is the supreme judge of religious controversies. The proofs in the notes are in keeping with the assertions in the text. They have, however, the merit, if not of proving the assertions, at least that of disproving them. They show us our blessed Lord reasoning from the Scriptures against the Jews, and in his own person giving them an example and establishing the necessity of a living tribunal, a speaking judge, for the interpretation of Scripture and the determining of controversies of religion. So far as the example of our Lord and the occasion he found for correcting the Jews in their understanding of the Scriptures can count for any thing, they establish the contrary of what they were brought to prove. It is remarkable how difficult it is for Presbyterians to quote any Scriptural authority in their defence which does not make against them. There is a Providence in this cheering to the faithful, but which should make Presbyterians fear and tremble.

But in these articles, we have received the secret arrived at by our Presbyterian divines as the result of their long and laborious researches. It is now laid open before us. Come; ye men of the Old School, of the New School, Cumberland and all other species of Presbyterians, ye Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians, Universalists, and hearken to this lesson of profound wisdom! Why in vain dispute and quarrel, why worry and devour each other, about the various matters which separate you one from another? Let the Bible decide. Call forthwith a "world's convention" of all the sects; let them assemble; let the Bible be placed reverently on a stand, let all keep silence; the book will open its mouth, utter a sentence, and all your controversies will be settled, and ye will all bow down in meek and humble submission. How simple and easy! What a pity men should not have discovered this admirable method of settling controversies, before the Westminster divines! Alas! the controversy between sectarians is precisely as to what the decision of the Bible is!

Presbyterians, however, have been driven to adopt this rule by the necessity they were under of steering between two formidable sand bars. If they acknowledged in the Church an always living and divinely instituted tribunal for the determination of controversies, it was all over with them; for that tribunal existed at the birth of Presbyterians, and had condemned it; and, on the other hand they were ashamed to avow, in just so many words, that every one interprets the Bible as he thinks