

would not countenance the omission of one essential doctrine of the Gospel; and all the additions countenanced by the whole mass of manuscripts which have been collated, do not introduce a single essential point which is not found in the most imperfect versions. Thus the greatest discrepancies leave untouched the rule of faith and life."

4. Many difficulties arise from our own ignorance. Just as it is with secular knowledge, so is it with divine. There are many things in secular knowledge that young people cannot understand; but by and by they may understand them well enough,—that is, when they are older, and their minds have obtained a stronger grasp. Just so with many things in the Word of God. There is milk for babes, but there is strong meat for men. *Let not the children complain if the meat is too strong for them; they will be able to relish it by and by.*

5. Other difficulties arise from the nature of the subjects themselves. The Word of God touches, but it does not solve, those unfathomable mysteries respecting which speculative intellects had wearied themselves in debate for centuries before Christ came, and have wearied themselves ever since. In the Bible we find the broadest and strongest asseverations of the absolute sovereignty of God; in it also we have the strongest appeals to the conscious freedom of man. How to reconcile these two, has been the problem of problems ever since men began to think; and the Word of God does not attempt to solve the mystery. If we ask why, it may be on the same principle that we reply sometimes to an inquisitive child, "*I don't tell you, my dear boy, because if I did, you would not understand it: you will know all about it by and by.*" When, therefore, these things are treated of, let us bear in mind that there are *some* things beyond the range of the human intellect, and that it becomes us not to *cavil*, but to believe.

This, however, be it remembered, is a very different thing from that blind credulity which Rome requires. It is one thing to say, "We believe in three persons in one Godhead, though we do not understand how the union exists; we believe in the operations of the Holy Spirit, and that they are perfectly compatible with the free exercise of our own faculties; we believe in the absolute sovereignty and foreordination of God, though we cannot tell exactly how it is that men are nevertheless free and responsible;"—it is one thing to say this, and quite another thing to say, "We believe that this round substance, which our eyes and tongue tell us is a wafer, is nevertheless not a wafer at all, but the flesh and blood of Christ." And why? Because in the one case we are perfectly capable of judging, and in the other case, unless we have a keener intellect than ever was vouchsafed to mortal, *we are not*.

Such are the difficulties of the Word; and it may already be understood what we would say as to their solution.

1. Any supposed error of translation or transcription may be referred to a minister, or a learned commentator; and be it remembered that it is just as much a divine ordinance that there shall be men able to teach in the Church, as it is that the Word shall be preserved at all;—not that this teaching is to supersede the Word, as is the case in the Church of Rome, but to be in subordination to it.

2. Obscurities from division into chapters and verses, will be removed by careful consecutive reading.

3. Obscurities arising from our ignorance, (except those mentioned next,) will gradually disappear as we become older and wiser,—that is, if we have the disposition to learn.