

matter of importance to me to have the question answered, for should what the Catholic Bishop said of the calendar be true, (which, of course I could not suppose possible, and still I could not shake off the impression it had left,) what he said on other subjects might be so also, and then alas, for me! I approached the Rev. gentleman as he descended the pulpit stairs, apologised for stopping him, but said I was a stranger in Edinburgh, anxious to have a question answered which had been put to me by a Catholic, viz: *what was the exact meaning of Ash Wednesday?* and that I was ashamed to say I had not been able to give a proper answer. He took my hand, with the greatest kindness, and cheered me by the most friendly reception, and said, looking me hard in the face, "you are aware we Protestants have nothing to do with *ashes*, or *candles* or crosses, or any such nonsense." Yes sir, I said, I know that, "Well," he continued, that being the case, *the day is more a name than anything else*, and, indeed, it should not be in the prayer book, no more than Christmas day, which ought to be called *the Nativity of our Lord*. Such terms, *Christmas Day* and *Ash Wednesday*, and some others, were quite Catholic, and spoke for themselves being so, and indeed such things needed reforming before being placed in a reformed prayer book." At these words my heart sank: all the Catholic priest had said rushed into my mind, and a horrid thought crossed me and forced itself upon me, *that perhaps my long treasured faith was insecure?* When I could speak, I said, but sir, am I to say what you have said to my friend? "No, no," said he, "just say, that ashes are typical of humility, and therefore, the day is called *Ash Wednesday* to remind us of the time it ushers in, in which we are to humble ourselves by prayer and *fasting*." Fasting sir! said I, almost choking with the feelings contending with me, if I say, "fasting," my friend will naturally triumph over me again, for you know sir, *we don't fast*. "That, my dear, is quite another subject, therefore, say nothing of fasting," (and looking at me very hard, and drawing me quite close to him,) "you know my child there are different meanings, that can be attached to that word, and besides you know many good Protestants do fast, but as your mind does not seem quite established, I would advise you *not to use the word*, but just say to humble ourselves by *prayer*." And is that the answer, sir, said I, scarcely able to articulate? upon which I raised my eyes, and, at the same time they met his, which were anxiously resting upon me, and with much alarm in his look, he took hold of my two hands and said, "may I urge upon you, a total stranger, *the ill effects of Catholic society*. Avoid it—do, for, believe me, you will get no good, whatever harm you may from it. We parted my head full of confusion, my

heart full of sadness. I tried to avoid the subject with my friend but she was too anxious to impart some of the joy and peace she herself had to me so she instantly inquired to be enlightened. I gave the words delivered to me, to which she simply replied, "and do you think that satisfactory?" no, I said, I do not; and though at this, I dare not disclose to her, or allow myself for a moment to feel my faith was not founded upon a rock still I inwardly felt a great desire to know really what the Catholic faith was, but I knew not how to go about it. I commenced, however, by making attacks upon the different points of her belief.

The first thing I inquired after, or rather insisted upon was, that the Pope was considered by all Catholics *individually infallible*, that he was called by Catholics "God" and that every title given in scripture to Christ, was ascribed to him; this idea I got out of the books I had brought with me to convert my friend. To my astonishment she boldly declared such was not nor ever had been a doctrine of the Catholic Church; no more is he called, or entitled God, than any nobleman would be, when addressed in Latin he is called "Dominus;" and so far from being impeccable, he continually humbles himself by falling upon his knees to confess his sins to a poor Monk, besides which, he can never offer up the sacrifice of the Mass without making a public confession of his sins, in the same manner, as, the humble priest, by reciting the "confiteor" in the commencement of the Mass.

The next point I asserted with great determination, because I remembered having read a most *convincing* book founded upon the *very fact*, (Father Clement!) and that was, that to this hour, the Church forbids the use of Scripture to the laity.— Here again I was baffled, she assured me no such command or restriction was laid upon Catholics; so far from it, proper translations of the Bible were, and are circulated by order of the Church, wherever people can be found capable of reading them; besides, I knew her to have become, since her conversion to Catholicity, quite a biblical scholar.

My next attempt was aimed at confession. I exclaimed with horror at a doctrine so repugnant to human nature, as that of confessing one's sins to a priest, and then, to complete the matter, of supposing he had power, after hearing, to pardon.— This I knew was a Catholic doctrine, and Catholic only; so I anticipated a glorious triumph, as far as this point went, and I was more successful than on the two former subjects, at least, *I* was not told that what *I* was stating was false; but *I* question whether my defeat was not more perfect. She alledged that *confession* and *absolution* were not!