

SELECTED.

MUSENBETH'S DEFENCE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Continued.

Origin of protestantism.—What is called the reformation proved to have been unlawful in principle, criminal in means, and fatal in effects.—Spiritual authority of the Pope.—False charge renewed by Mr. White, that Catholics acknowledge temporal authority in the Pope.—His attack on the Catholic clergy.—His erroneous account of the doctrine of exclusive salvation.—That doctrine properly stated and explained.—True account of the albigenses, and waldenses, or waldenses.

Mr. White professes, in the beginning of his second Dialogue to give the origin and true principles of Protestantism. The origin would be easy enough to give; but the second part of the undertaking is no easy task. Who can give the true principles of Protestantism, which has no fixed principle, except enmity to the Catholic Church, in which all the many sects of Protestants devoutly agree? They allow every one the boasted liberty of forming his own principles as he pleases, of speaking what he believes, and believing what he pleases. A man may make out whatever he chooses from his Bible, provided he does not find the doctrines of the Catholic Church there, and be a very good Protestant. It is absurd then to talk of pointing out the true principles of those, who boast of having liberty to adopt any that they imagine to be taught by the Bible. But let us examine how Mr. White proceeds to his task.

"The Roman Catholics," he says, "would fain persuade the world that Luther is the author of our religion. But such as are learned amongst them, cannot but know that Protestants acknowledge no master, on religious points, but Christ." Mr. White is very sore that it should be thought that Protestants should follow Luther; and yet, a short time before, he was loud in accusing Catholics of laying another foundation than Christ, and making the Pope, if not the author, at least the finisher of our faith. However the truth comes out a little further on. at page 48, where he says, Luther and the Reformers, who established our Church.—No Catholic ever charged Protestants with exalting Luther above Christ; but they regard him as the instrument of God in reforming Religion, and they are obliged to own that he established their Church. This is enough for us; Luther's own writings testify his character, and it is easy to shew that the Almighty would never have chosen such an instrument to reform his Church: if we could for a moment suppose that his Church could need any reform in faith, after he had expressly promised that his Holy Spirit should guide it into all truth.

Mr. White professes to have carefully examined the works of Luther, and assures his reader that the well-known conference of Luther with the Devil is a calumny. It may be that he examined them in a library where the memorable seventh volume is kept out of sight; as is known to be the case in certain libraries in England. But if he did examine the seventh volume, with what face can he pretend to deny that Luther acknowledges having had this conference with the Devil? Let Mr.

White look again; and in the seventh volume, and in the treatise De Unct. et Missa Privata, fol. 228, 229, 230, of the Wirtemberg edition, in 1558, he will find the whole account, of the first part of which the following is a faithful translation. "It happened to me," says Luther, "once at midnight, to awake on a sudden. Then Satan began this sort of disputation with me. 'Hear, Luther, he said, 'most learned doctor, dost thou know that even for fifteen years, thou hast celebrated private masses almost every day? What if such private masses should prove to be horrible idolatry?' To whom I replied, 'I am an anointed priest...I have done all these things by the command of my superiors, and in obedience to them: thus thou knowest.' 'That,' he said, 'is all true; but the Turks and Gentiles also do all things in their temples out of obedience.' In these straits, in this combat against the Devil; I wished to overthrow the enemy with the arms to which I was accustomed under the papacy &c. But Satan, on the other hand, urging me more strongly and vehemently, said, 'come, then, shew me where it is written, that a wicked man can consecrate, &c.' And Satan pressed me further; 'Therefore thou hast not consecrated, &c. What is this unheard-of abomination in heaven and in earth?' " Besides this, Luther has published to the world, that he held frequent communications with the Devil; and the writers of his life speak of many other apparitions of the Devil to him. Now, for Mr. White, after these well-known passages, to attempt to persuade his readers, that Luther's conference with the Devil had no other foundation than "the spite of the Roman Catholic clergy," is monstrous and disgraceful. It only shews how much Mr. White dreaded the clear inference to be drawn from Luther's own acknowledgment; namely that he, who by Mr. White's own admission, established the Protestant Church, learned the most material part of his Reformation, the abolition of the mass, from the Devil!

"It is nothing to us," says Mr. White, "by what instruments God was pleased to deliver us from the impostures and tyranny of the church of Rome. If Luther had really been the worst of men (which is the reverse of the truth), &c." Does then Mr. White mean to make his readers believe that Luther was a good man? The contrary is evident, even from his own account of himself. He acknowledged that while he was a Catholic, he spent his life in austerities, in watchings, in fasts, in prayer, with poverty, chastity, and obedience: but after he began his reformation, he declares, "he could no more be without a woman, than he could cease to be a man." (Sermon, De Mat., tom. v. p. 119.) To prove which he broke his solemn vow of continency, and married a nun, bound by the same solemn obligation; for which even Henry VIII. tells him that he has committed a horrible sin, for which even in ancient days he would have been whipped to death, and his wife buried alive. In his answer to Henry VIII. he says, "he yields not in pride either to Emperor, King, Prince, or Devil; not to the universe itself." If this, and much more that

could easily be quoted from his own writings of himself, do not prove him to have been the worst of men, Mr. W. can never prove any thing like the reverse of it, viz. that he was the best of men, or any thing approaching to a good man. Mr. White appears to be sensible of this, when he affects to feel that the vicious character of the reformers is not of any consequence, because the Almighty can effect his purposes by the most unworthy instruments.—But this plea will not avail. If the Church of Christ had really strayed into error and imposture, the work of its Reformation would have been one of great and extraordinary importance. If any individual had been inspired for that great work, he would certainly have been able to exhibit proofs of his divine commission, to oblige men to follow him. The Almighty uniformly enabled his prophets and messengers of old to support and confirm their commission by the most convincing signs. Prophecy, miracles, and, above all, a holy and exemplary life, were the attestations of their being favoured with Divine communications. But Luther and his associates exhibited none of these; nor could they give any other proof of their being the instrument of the Almighty. It is therefore a great deal to Protestants, though Mr. W. pretends "it is nothing," what characters their founders bore: for our Saviour had said long before, that "an evil tree could not bring forth good fruit."

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