

PREFACE.

It has been observed, that in controversies about religion, most parties, however wide in their sentiments, have claimed the authority and countenance of scripture for their respective notions. Some, on this account, have been disposed to fix the charge of inconsistency upon the sacred records; and others, for the same reason, have thought it necessary to have some certain rules to interpret scripture by. Hence traditions, church-authority, creeds, and confessions of faith, have been multiplied in great abundance, and which are in general thought better calculated to guard against heresy than that book which is appealed to by all heretics.—The church of Rome has deservedly been held up to public ridicule, for her pretensions to intallibility, and for keeping the people in ignorance, by prohibiting the reading of the scriptures; happy day that was, therefore, which began the dawn of *Reformation*. But does it not lead us back to Rome, to condemn *free enquiry*, from the fear of innovation? What essential difference is there between having the scriptures wholly kept from our eyes, and suffering our understanding, judgment, and conscience to be limited by articles, church authority, &c.? Do not these limitations tend to shut us up in as gross darkness, as our ancestors were covered with, by receiving papal tradition in the room of divine revelation?—The preaching of Fulgentio at Venice, on