

as to be out of the *age of truth* entirely, and therefore unworthy to have his name in the honourable catalogue. This brings to view a multitude of historical and biographical dates and facts, respecting which there is no certainty, but hopeless confusion, and endless disputes.—There are some, of whom it is not certain whether they wrote any thing at all; there are others whose writings are wholly lost; others of whose writings only some small fragments remain, preserved in quotations made from them by other writers; and it is uncertain whether they quoted them correctly. Many of the writings ascribed to the Fathers are proved to be spurious, and others of which it is suspected that they ought to be put in the same category. Another uncertainty exists, respecting the authenticity of what are called, the genuine writings of the Fathers; many contending that some passages have been corrupted, by changes in the words, or by interpolations. There is another uncertainty respecting the correct translation of them; and the correct interpretation of them after they are translated. In fine, although Romanists and Tractarians speak about “the unanimous consent of the Fathers,” yet it is well known that there is nothing from which those “venerable” men are farther removed than unanimity. Peace may be expected sometimes amongst the winds and the waves, but not unanimity amongst the early Fathers. Consequently when one opposes and condemns another, a difficulty arises upon the question, whose opinion shall we follow? The whole matter is beset with difficulties and uncertainties. In investigating it, we are constantly meeting with obscurities: even the ablest scholars meet with cases in which they must be satisfied with conjecture; with gaps and breaks in history which they must fill up as they best may, from the meagre, con-

fused, and contradictory materials of by-gone ages. I venture to affirm that not one Romanist or Tractarian can tell, with certainty, who the Fathers were, or what are their writings, or what are their opinions individually respecting the disputed points of Christian faith and practice. And yet he will require us to accept of the writings of these Fathers as the rule of our faith, and even attempt to cast us out of the body of Christ if we refuse to do so! But shall we forsake “the word”—the pure “word of prophecy,” in which we have a rule of faith so lucid, and stable, and satisfactory, and embrace in its stead, or along with it, (for both come to the same thing,) the crudities, perplexities, contradictions, and endless disputes, of those whom the superstition of a later age has dignified with the pompous title of “The Fathers?” Shall we leave the quiet and secure haven, in which our faith and hope are now anchored, and commit ourselves to the dark and stormy sea of tradition, where we can have neither chart nor sounding, nor star nor compass, but must be driven at the mercy of winds that never cease? No! we reply; we will “keep the Word of God, and the testimony of Jesus.” We will declare, in the words of a distinguished writer, “the Bible, the Bible is the religion of Protestants!” Here we have, not idle speculations, and doubtful conjectures, to feed our souls, but *truth*, blessed, certain, indestructible truth, on which we rest our hopes for eternity, and feel that, weighty as these hopes confessedly are, the foundation on which they are laid is able to sustain them. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this word shall not pass away.”

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The right way of interpreting Scripture, is, to take it as we find it, without any attempt to force it into any particular system.—*R. Cecil.*