

she is infallible, and at the same time attempt to prove her infallibility by that construction, would be an insult to common sense. Her right to be acknowledged as the infallible guide and director of our faith, must either be blindly submitted to without proof or inquiry, or it must be left to be determined by the private judgment of every individual; and if the votaries of the Church of Rome are not willing to confess they admit the validity of her claims without any reasons whatever, they must have exercised the right of free inquiry as well as Protestants, not indeed in respect to particular controversies, but in relation to this great controversy. What is the standard of truth, and who is the judge of controversy? The Church of Rome boldly affirms, that if individuals are left to judge for themselves, such is the obscurity of Scripture, that no certainty can be obtained, no conclusion deduced, in which the conscience may safely rest. Yet, with egregious inconsistency, she refers us to that very Scripture in proof of the justice of her claims. Here I would ask, can we without an infallible guide attain the real meaning of the texts which she quotes in her favour? If not, it is impossible for them to prove her infallibility. If we can, then it follows that there are some parts of Scripture whose meaning may be certainly ascertained without her infallible guidance. And what then becomes of her complaint of the hopeless obscurity of Scripture, which is affirmed to render her aid so indispensable? And what must we think of her outcries against the supposed arrogance of pretending to the exercise of free inquiry, and of judging of the Scriptures for ourselves, when, without such an exercise and such a power of judging, it is found impossible to obtain the least proof or presumption of her boasted infallibility?

Some parts of Scripture, then, the Church of Rome herself must allow,

are capable of being understood without her aid. Those declarations of Scripture on which she rests her claim to implicit submission and obedience, she *must* allow to be sufficiently plain and intelligible, to bind the conscience of every member of her community who is prepared to assign a reason for his being a Catholic; and as an entire agreement with the dogmas of the church is all the faith which she requires in order to the salvation of her members, she must acknowledge, as well as ourselves, that the Scriptures contain a rule of faith sufficient for the purpose of salvation; the only difference is, that in our opinion the Scripture clearly unfolds a system of saving truth, while in that of the Roman Catholics they are obscure in every point, except in the few passages which direct us to the church, the only authentic and immediate source of saving knowledge.

We ascribe some efficacy to the word of God itself; while they contend that the principal or only benefit it affords consists in conducting us to the church. The Scriptures themselves indeed affirm, that they are "able to make us wise unto salvation," and by them "we must be judged at the last day." The church asserts, on the contrary, that they are covered with an impenetrable obscurity, not to be removed without her interference, and that we shall be judged at the last day, not by our submission to the *Scriptures*, but our obedience to *her*. In her system the principal use of the Scriptures was to give birth to the church, whose place she now occupies, whose prerogatives she assumes as the sole directory of conscience, and the living oracle of God. Her treatment of the Scripture almost reminds us of the fabulous history of Jupiter, who ascended to supreme power by the mutilation and banishment of his father.

The portentous doctrine of infalli-