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## SCRIPTURE AND INFALLIBILITY.

BY ARCHBISHOP WHATELY.

[THE following article appeared first in the Oxford *Protestant Magazine* for September, 1847. We have the best authority for ascribing it to the pen of Archbishop Whately.—EDITORS.]

The case of Mr. A. has afforded me, lately, a remarkable illustration of some of the remarks which I have at various times put forth.

Being a man of ingenuous and pious mind, he set himself to ascertain what was the religion it was his duty to embrace; instead of contenting himself, as one more indifferent on the subject would have done, with adhering to the church (the Greek) in which he happened to have been brought up.

He hesitated for some time between the sect of Swedenborgians and the Romish faith; and ultimately embraced the latter.

At this some persons would be greatly astonished; the two systems being, apparently, so very remote from each other. I saw in the hesitation and subsequent decision, the operation of a principle in the human mind which I have often noticed—the *craving for infallibility*. To examine and re-examine, to reason, to

hesitate, to remain open to evidence, and to acknowledge, after all, a liability to error; all this is very unacceptable to the human mind; to its indolence, and love of self-satisfied and confident repose. There is, therefore, a prejudice in favour of those who promise to put us in the way of finishing the work of inquiry at once and for ever, and to relieve us from all fear of uncomfortable self-distrust. And this is done, either by setting forth the authority of an *infallible church*, which will tell us, on every point, what we are to believe and to do; or again, by putting in the place of a *church*, immediate *inspiration from heaven*, whether bestowed on each individual who joins a certain sect, or on some inspired leader who will communicate to his disciples the messages he receives from heaven.

The Church of Rome offers the one of these, and the Swedenborgians, the followers of Southcote, and other such sects, the other.

And this is a case in which our most natural *conjectures* go along with our *wishes*. If a man were asked what kind of divine revelation he would *choose* to have, or again, what