

ON MAN'S PRONENESS TO ERROR,

[Continued from the first page.]

rant conjectures? This has been the case with all the nations of the earth, only one excepted, whom God, for his merciful purposes maintained in the knowledge of his truth; and this one, how prone was it to go astray like the rest! Nay, when the divine Majesty himself, from his gratis love, from, I may say his predilection for man, the least and lowliest of his rational creatures; when the Eternal Son deigned to descend, and manifest himself in this our sinful world, clad in our nature, and veiled in our humanity, shewing himself in the midst of his creatures as one of themselves, in order to teach them his heavenly truths, which they had lost sight of; but upon the practical knowledge of which their eternal happiness depended; though he had proved himself God by the stupendous miracles which he wrought, how ill was he received and requited by his hitherto chosen people; by those who had his exact picture clearly delineated to them from the beginning in their sacred records and revered prophecies; even in their religious rites and ceremonies, their long looked for Messiah. They however scorned and rejected him on account of the lowly form which he deigned to assume, and were themselves, as it had been foretold them by him, rejected in their turn. Like our first parents at their fall,—they would not be taught of God. That pride engendered in them by sin, revolted at his meek and humble appearance, and they preferred remaining entangled in the tempter's snare, the short lived grandeur, the perishable riches, the fast passing pleasures and enjoyments of this world; and relished not the heavenly doctrines of wisdom and truth, which shewed them by repentance, by innocence of life, and by a renouncement, at least in affection of these vanities, the only way to secure to themselves that everlasting grandeur, glory and bliss, which they had been created to inherit in the world to come.

But "by their offence" says St. Paul, "salvation is come to the Gentiles; Rom. ii, 11. The Saviour, who honoured his first chosen people, with his presence in the flesh, being by them finally rejected; turns his merciful regards to the heathen world. He sends forth thither, endowed with all his spiritual powers, his messengers of truth, the heralds of salvation; proclaimed to all those who sat "in the darkness" of error and "the shadow of death." These by the edifying sanctity of their lives, by the stupendous miracles which they wrought, the sufferings they cheerfully endured, and even death itself in the promulgation of their divine Master's religion, succeed at length, in spite of all opposition in winning over the pagan world to the Christian faith. The great and mighty, the proudest potentates, with all their people, acknowledge themselves vanquished by the sword of truth; bow their haughty heads at the mere mention of the name of the crucified God; and glory in being accounted his servants and followers. The rich and noble renounce their wealth and dignities for his

sake, or employ them in his service. The voluptuous exchange their carnal pleasures for the penitential rigours of the cross.—The learned and eloquent account their wisdom folly, when compared with the sublime and heavenly truths revealed by the incarnate God, and all the nations, as was predicted, are brought at last under the spiritual dominion of the Messiah.

Yet, though thus reclaimed from their pagan errors, and brought back to the true knowledge of God; though taught now to worship him in spirit and in truth; the great bulk of mankind seems as prone as ever to vice and incredulity. They still more readily hearken to the voice of the tempting fiend, who, they know, seeks but to ruin them forever; than to the fatherly directions, precepts and counsels of their merciful God. So that, as the Saviour has said, "though many are called, yet few are saved." How many do we not everywhere see, acting, as if they really fancied themselves, what the devil said they would become, "as Gods knowing good and evil." How many in all ages since the Saviour's time, urged on by the same spirit of error, have set themselves to judge the very judgments of God; to sound the unfathomable depths of his mysteries, and decide what we may admit as true, and what reject as false of his divine revelations; till at last, a solemn protestation is made against his teaching authority; and every one is bid to judge for himself, and believe or disbelieve of God's word to man, whatever he pleases; so that, save in the Catholic Church, religion has everywhere now become a confused mass of whimsical modes and contradictory systems, the jumbled inventions of numberless reformers, who, claiming the knowledge promised them by the deceiving fiend, affect to determine and decide as gods whatever is "good and evil." In one thing however do these all agree, in opposing the sole church of the Redeemer. Against her they hold it no crime to concoct the foulest fictions, and pour forth the grossest calumnies. Nay, in this case it is a merit with such to break God's express commandment; which forbids to "bear false witness against one's neighbour." But, indeed, to do so; to misrepresent, vilify and degrade that church in the eyes of their followers, is become the necessary and indispensable task of every new creed maker, and modern Evangelist. They must work for their wages, as the hired organs of the lying spirit.—For, should they not first succeed in making their obscene caricatures, the hideous hatchings of their own foul imaginations, to pass with their hearers for the true picture, and exact resemblance of the Saviour's church, which is the terror of them all; whom would they get to follow them? Unless they affected to bring forward something better, wiser, more perfect, pure and preferable than all that was ever taught before them; the common sense of mankind would mock at their obtrusion; and the simplest of their auditory might puzzle and perplex them with the naturally suggested question, to what purpose are you come to instruct us, if you have nothing to inculcate preferable to what we have all along been taught? To render therefore their new teaching acceptable, they are unavoidably forced to cry down, and make appear as odious and abominable as possible, the old. And yet, though this be the stale trick and necessary shift of every strolling evangelist to draw together a beguiled group—form them into a separate sect, bearing his name, and

quarter himself and his family upon them for his future maintenance; such spiritual quacks scarce ever fail to form, each for himself, from among his kindred protesters, a hopeful flock, well worth the shearing; none, however of those, belonging to "the true shepherd," for he has said; "My sheep follow not the stranger; but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers."—JOHN x, 5.

It is true Protestants of all denominations, having, as they own, no infallible certainty of what they believe, are so far consistent in always looking out for something more fit than all they know, to fix their wavering opinions. But in so bewildered and blind a search, when and where will their errings end? In this conduct we see fulfilled to the letter, the prophecy of Saint Paul, who foretells that "there will be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine; but according to their own desires, they will heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables;" ii Tim. 4, 3, 4. Against such delusion he warns the faithful not to suffer themselves, "like little children, to be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the wickedness of men; by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive;" Ephes iv, 14. The same holy apostle seems to have had in view the sly workings of our modern missionaries, and their deceptive influence over their female admirers. "For of this sort" says he, "are they who creep into houses, and lead away silly women laden with sins; who are led away with divers desires; ever learning, but never attaining to the knowledge of the truth;" ii Tim. 4, 6, 7; "but evil men and seducers shall grow worse and worse, erring and driving into error."—Ib. v. 13.

The conduct of Protestants in a religious sense presents us with a striking mental phenomenon, which shews them to be under the delusive sway and mis-directing impulse of the spirit of error. We see them rejecting the greatest possible authority on earth, whether it is considered in a divine or a human light; the unanimous and never varying testimony of the Catholic church, to whose pastors alone the Saviour gave his teaching and ministering commission; the only church, which converted the whole pagan world from heathenism to Christianity; and has ever existed, and still exists, the greatest and most visible of any in every place under the heavens. Yet are they so incredulous as to scorn an authority so permanent, universal, and conspicuous; and at the same time so unaccountably credulous as to submit to the self-usurped and self-proclaimed authority of every upstart dogmatizer. Any false tale that is told, or foul fiction invented, or scurrilous print circulated by their tract peddling apostles, against the venerable and all-enduring religion of their ancestors, is listened to with delight, and unhesitatingly credited. So that one is at a loss which most to wonder at, their extreme incredulity on the one hand, and their no less extreme credulity on the other. This is certainly a more than natural blindness, which clearly shews the power acquired over the human mind by our original deceiver, the father of lies. It cannot possibly be accounted for otherwise.

From Postestantism, the prolific mother of all the dissenting sects now existing; and, from its proclaimed principle of dissent destined to be the mother of all such as may ever exist; we have seen at last spring forth a headstrong, proud and reckless monster; which, like death, in Milton's Paradise lost, re-enters the foul womb of its accursed parent, sin; and

threatens destruction to the very thing that gave it birth. This is the blind and brutal sect of our impious and immoral philosphis; who, following up the protesting privilege of the boasted Reformation, deny's all divine revelation, and every providential interference with this universe. This is the very flower of general Protestancy, already in full bloom, which will soon ripen into perfect fruit; and by that baneful fruit the world will judge at last of the nature of the parent tree; for by its fruit the tree is always known.

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