

testimony of the Catholic Church. their boasted reformation has led them into downright infidelity. That they are now at length become a discordant multitude of temporizing Freethinkers, Deists, Sceptics and Atheists; whose minds are all adrift on their several conjectures, or stagnated in the dead pool of careless indifference. Then shall we know what weapons to choose against them, and how to deal with them decisively in their own proper characters.

## XXX.

## OF PREDESTINATION.

Not content with having led themselves far beyond the precincts of christianity; and urged them, one might think, to the *no plus ultra*, the very utmost verge of incredulity: the spirit of error; as if to shew how far he can decoy from wisdom and truth, all those, who have once taken him for their guide; has brought them yet farther; and placed them on the very outside brink of irreligious blasphemy. There pointing in triumph at his sad exploit, he mocks the pliant folly of the heaven-favored race; and boasts his sway acquired over the mind of fallen man, the moment he enters with him on the mazy path of error. He has induced them solemnly to declare, and proclaim it as their sworn belief, that Almighty God saves or condemns his creatures according to his mere caprice; not in consideration of their free obedience or disobedience to his well known commands; but because he willed from all eternity certain individuals to be saved, and the rest to be damned; *God, say they, from all eternity hath predestinated unto life those whom he hath chosen in Christ, without any foresight of their faith, or good works, or perseverance in either; and the rest he hath passed by ordaining them to destruction and to wrath for their sins.—The number too of those so foreordained is, so fixed and determined, that it can neither be increased nor diminished.* See the Scotch Confession of Faith.

Is it possible for the original tempter to lead man further into error and blasphemy than this? Or can he, with all his seductive power, induce any of our race endowed with reason, to adopt a principle so contrary to what reason most clearly shews, that God, who is infinitely just, as well as infinitely good, must reward or condemn his creatures according to their deserts. This is the accusing plea of Satan and his fallen host against the justice of their creator, for having cast them forth, and delivered them over to eternal torments. and all those adopting it as an article of their faith, imbibe thus a kindred feeling with their unblest inspirers. At such a doctrine the common sense of any heathen would recoil. and yet this is the doctrine of those styling themselves reformed christians, our modern Cathari, Puritans, or the pure. Thus, as Saint Paul avers, does the very devil transform himself into an Angel of light. 2 Cor. xi. 14.

It is remarkable here how error refutes itself. *MENTIS EST INIQUITAS SIBI. Iniquity hath belied herself.* Ps. 26, xii. It is declared in this horrid article of the Presbyterian faith, that God saves or condemns his creatures, without any foresight of their faith, or good works, or perseverance

in either; and yet in the conclusion of this same article it is affirmed that those whom he condemns, are ordained to destruction and to wrath *FOR THEIR SINS*! These last words, *for their sins*, are evidently put but as a blind, to cover the revolting nakedness of the preceding blasphemy; but they refute at the same time the whole atrocious assertion, and upset the whole fabric, which they so awkwardly prop. For, if those ordained to destruction and to wrath, are so ordained for their sins; then their sins are the cause of their doom; and not the undiscerning and capricious decree of the Creator. It follows hence, by parity, that the faith and good works, and perseverance in them of the chosen in Christ, are the cause of their happy election. This is just what Christ himself assures us. *If thou wilt enter into life, says he, keep the commandments.* Matt. 19, xvii. and again, *whosoever shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.*—Matt. 10, xxii.

Those believing in this predestinarian doctrine, need care nothing what faith they hold, or what conduct they pursue. It were folly in them, from any higher motive than human consideration, to practice virtue, or abstain from vice: for nothing of theirs, as they imagine, can any ways affect their future fixed and predetermined fate. Here is furnished by the enemy of all sanctity a lulling spell, to calm the alarm of every guilty conscience: a soothing salve, to deaden the pain, and blunt the inward thrilling string of that worm, which, if not killed in time by repentance, never dies: a sovereign antidote, in fine, against all the wholesome horrors of remorse. Can the enemy of God and man carry his delusion farther: or the blindfolding spirit of error conduct to a more frightful extreme? Yet, such is the detestable principle, which every Kirk of Scotland minister must swear and subscribe to, before he obtains a licence to preach.

But, in order to shew, besides the impiety, the palpable absurdity of such a hideous doctrine; we shall suppose a case neither impossible, nor uncommon.

A Predestinarian returning home late and drunk, after supping with his friend; happens, in his reeling mood, to tumble into a ditch. There, immersed in mud and mire, he consoles himself with the following judicious reflections: *God, says he, from all eternity hath ordained whatsoever comes to pass; and, whatsoever he hath foreordained, must necessarily come to pass.* Then this mischance of mine, which has come to pass, was foreordained, and thereby unavoidable. But he has also foreordained whatsoever shall come to pass. Now it must come to pass that either I shall rise out of this ditch, or that I shall lie here. If then he has foreordained that I shall rise out of it; out of it I am sure to rise, without any troublesome effort of my own: for whatsoever God hath foreordained, must come to pass. But if, on the contrary, he has foreordained that I shall lie here; were it not vain for me to strive to rise; since, whatsoever God hath foreordained, must necessarily come to pass? This is good Presbyterian reasoning; and yet, whoever in such a case could use it, would be con-

sidered entirely out of his senses. And should he take no further steps to save himself, it is quite evident that he would lie so, till he perished.

But the supposed case of the drunk enthusiast is the real case of the Predestinarian. For he too, drunk with the fumes of false wisdom, and reclining wide from the path of truth and righteousness, when happening to fall into the gulf of sin, makes not the least effort to extricate himself from his perilous situation; but continues thus reasoning on, till he is surprised at last by death eternal. Yet might he well have escaped his misfortune, had he but exerted himself to get out of his wretched plight; and, instead of reasoning himself out of his senses, done, as St. Peter exhorts us all to do. *Use diligence, says he, by good works, to make your calling and election sure.*—2 Pet. 1, x.

## XXXI.

## OF TRADITION.

Protestants reject the traditions, or the oral testimony of the universal Church; and consider themselves bound to believe nothing but the written word, or Scripture: and this still in direct contration to that very scripture, which they own themselves bound to believe: for in it they read the Saviour's formal declaration: *He, who will not hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a Heathen and a publican.* Matt. 18, xvii. But, say they, he bids us search the Scriptures. He did indeed bid his enemies, the Scribes and Pharasees, search the Scriptures; as, like our Protestants; they prided themselves in their knowledge of the sacred writings; without however understanding them properly; since they recognized not him for the Messiah, whom these writings so clearly pointed out. Search the Scriptures, says he to them; for in them you think to have life everlasting: and these are they, which bear testimony to me. John 5, xxxix. He did not say, in them you have life everlasting; for, it is clear, they had it not, as they remained incredulous, though they had the Scriptures; (and, like our Protestants, misinterpreted them;) but in them, YOU THINK to have life everlasting: that which the Church, with similar propriety, and for the like purpose, still addresses to her Scripture searching adversaries. Did these search the Scriptures, with minds open to conviction, they would find in them that we are commanded to hold as firmly the unwritten, or traditional word of God, as the written or Scriptural one. Stand fast, says Saint Paul; and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by epistle. 2 Thess. 2, xiv. Faith, says the same Apostle, comes by the hearing: Rom. 10, xvii. not then by the reading. For the reading, with leave for all to interpret, even the things which are hard to be understood, exposes, according to St. Peter, the unlearned, and unstable to wrest the Scriptures to their own perdition: 2d Pet. 3, xv. and hence he affirms that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. 2 Pet. 1, xx. Our Saviour commands us to hear his lawful Pastors, as we would even himself. He who hears you, says he addressing them, hears me, &c. Luke 10, xvi. But to hear them is not to read; for, as we have seen above, and as Saint Paul affirms, the letter kills, if