

establish infallibility. If the Romanist asserts that his is the infallible sense of those texts, he begs the question, and assumes the existence of that which it is the object of the texts to prove. If he appeals to the exercise of private judgment, he gives up the question, since the Protestant is equally entitled to the use of his reason, and as the exercise of that faculty conducts him to a different conclusion, there is an end of the matter. Either, therefore, the Church of Rome must adduce testimony independent of Scripture, to prove that her interpretation of the texts in question is infallibly correct, or she must be satisfied to rest the fabric of her infallibility upon the basis of private judgment, leaving every member of her community free to question whether she is infallible or not. There is wanting, said Mr. Gordon, an infallible guide to the infallible guide, and until such a director shall be found, the Church of Rome cannot take another step in the inquiry. Granted, however he observed, that the sense of the texts which are adduced to prove infallibility is so obvious and self-evident that there can be no doubt upon the subject: are those, he would ask, the only texts in Scripture whose meaning is obvious and self-evident? Is the infallibility of the Church of Rome the only doctrine in Scripture that can be clearly seen through the light of private judgment? We demand of the gentlemen opposite, said Mr. Gordon, an intelligible and satisfactory reason why we are directed to the Bible for the proof of the infallibility of the Church of Rome, and afterwards to that Church for the proof of every thing else,—why in other words, we are required to exercise our private judgment upon a few texts of Scripture which she chooses to point out, and forbidden to exercise the same judgment upon the other parts of the same chapters in which these texts are to be found. We shall probably be told, that having discovered an infallible guide, we ought to submit implicitly to his direction—that is, we are at liberty to use our eyes in the choice of a guide, but it is modestly demanded that we shall put them out when we have found him*. Let us assume, however, that infallibility exists somewhere,

as each one was met in council? And if a particular individual was infallible at his own fireside, how could any one expect to be so in council assembled? And if no particular one was infallible there, how could they as a body produce infallible decrees? Add nothing to nothing to all eternity, and what will be the amount? Would such a process ever produce the mysterious and incalculable unit? Would all the baboons in the universe furnish mental materials for even a human idiot? But since Rome herself exhibits diversity of opinion as to the precise spot where her infallibility resides, well may others hesitate till that important point is infallibly settled.—EDITOR.

It is true that the Church of Rome does, in the first instance, consult the private judgment, or sense of right and wrong, of all she attempts to proselyte. She virtually asks them to judge by that sense whether she is a safer guide than others; for she condescends—not to convince by a flash of her infallibility—but by submitting argument to the decision of private judgment. She virtually rests the whole of her claims upon proof addressed to the discriminative powers of the mind. Her votaries then must believe their own senses before they can believe her. This she grants them, or she would never "reason with them." But if the first offered evidence contradicted point blank their senses, by her own virtual concessions they could not believe her. But how does she afterwards treat the senses to which she made her humble obeisance in the outset, and by which she gained admission to their confidence? Why truly, she declares that they can be trusted no longer than till she gets the key into her own pocket; and that on pain of eternal damnation, that very judgment which she first addressed as a competent guide between right and wrong, must forever after be abandoned as a villain and an assassin! For illustration: The truths of religion in the first instance were all established by the evidence of miracle addressed to the outward senses; and nothing properly cognizable by external appearances was required to be believed to be what it did not appear to be. They saw, they heard, they felt the evidence to be what they were told it was. How else could they have recognized the real miracle of transubstantiation when Jesus turned water into wine? These religious truths we receive on the veracity of the first witnesses, which is nearly the same as if we ourselves had seen them tested by miracle; for by certain laws of historic evidence, joined to the manner in which the facts were given, we find it next to impossible to disbelieve them. But when the miracle of Transubstantiation* is addressed to the senses, and through them to the understanding and private judgment or sense of discrimination between

* We have seen the evidence of the bodily senses appealed to as a proof of this doctrine; of which we may hereafter take notice.

and then proceed to the question of locality. If a typhus fever, or some such disorder, was wasting the population of Birmingham, and shrouding the town in the aspect of a general mourning, the announcement of the fact that a certain physician possessed an infallible specific, might gladden the hearts of thousands of its inhabitants; but if this announcement was succeeded by the intelligence that it was impossible to discover his retreat, it will not be contended that the skill of such a physician could be rendered practically serviceable to the suffering population of Birmingham. Just as useless to the members of the Church of Rome is the existence of that infallibility which somewhere exists and can no where be found. Every one who is in the least acquainted with the controversy, or with the ecclesiastical history of the last three centuries, knows that by one part of the Popedom infallibility is referred to the Pope, and by another part of the Popedom to a general or œcumenical council. Take, for example, the French and Italian Churches, and we have at once the two most important sections of the papacy at issue upon the question, the former restricting it to a general council, the latter ascribing it to the Pope, without at the same time denying the infallibility of a general council. But, said Mr. Gordon, until this question is settled, it will be impossible even to attempt a definition of the Roman Catholic rule of faith, much less to determine its contents. For if the Gallican or French opinion be the correct one, then the infallible dicta of the Church are to be found only in the decrees of the few councils which are admitted as general, and those bulls and rescripts which have been received without opposition or difference of opinion by the whole Church. If, on the other hand, the Italian be the orthodox opinion, then it follows that every bull, decretal or rescript, treating of faith or morals, which ever emanated from the chair of St. Peter, is infallible authority, and consequently part and parcel of the Roman Catholic rule of Faith. According to the first opinion the infallible dicta of the Church of Rome might be compressed into the compass of a moderate sized volume. According to the latter opinion, it would require the assistance of a wheelbarrow to move it along the pavement.

If, however, we overlook these and many other equally insurmountable difficulties that might be started, and grant, according to the Gallican opinion, that a council regularly convened by the Pope, and whose decrees have been dated or approved by the same authority, is infallible, we are placed in another difficulty with respect to the interpretation of those decrees. For if there be difficulty or danger of mistake in the interpretation of their true meaning, the end and object of infallibility may, after all, be frustrated. Nor, as it is a notorious fact that the deep ambiguity of the phraseology in which many of those decrees are couched, renders it about as difficult to understand their true meaning, as it was to penetrate the intention of the Delphian Oracle, there may be danger lest the sense of the Church should be mistaken. That there is actually a difference of opinion respecting the meaning of them,

truth and falshood, and they all agree in denying and disbelieving what they hear, see, feel, taste, smell and know to be the direct opposite of what it is claimed to be; then must we disbelieve the only evidences which we can trust with certainty, and take for infallible truth what these only witnesses, (which we in all other things are compelled to trust to) are unanimous in declaring an utter falshood. In short, before a man can receive and acknowledge the pretended miracle of Transubstantiation, he must be guilty of treason against all the means which God has given him to distinguish between truth and falshood, and to guide him through the many and various dangers of this world.

The Church of Rome then consults the private judgment or sense of right and wrong in those whom she seeks to proselyte, (and a being without this power must be below the human,) and asks them to judge of her, and her doctrines in a bundle; but the instant the bundle is attempted to be taken to pieces and examined in detail, she tells them that the Church has done this for them, and therefore it becomes their duty to receive all her particular dogmas with unquestioning credulity, the same as a horse must receive bridle and saddle and a rider: which amounts to this; namely, That the legitimate office of private judgment in religion is, to determine, that whatever the Church of Rome declares as truth cannot by any possibility be otherwise, even though it flatly contradicts the bodily senses, private judgment, and universal experience of the whole world; and that a man cannot be in his right mind in religion, unless he formally takes leave of all his senses.—EDITOR.