

THE BIBLE, AND THE BIBLE ONLY, THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS. (Concluded.)

"Bark cures the ague," says a physician, as he administers a dose to his patient. "What did the doctor say?" inquires the sick man, when the physician is gone. "Oh," replies the attendant, "he said that bark is, as it were the sign of the ague being cured."

Most wise and faithful interpreter! But I have not done with this wonderful man yet. I have read you his explanatory note: let me now read you his practical improvement.

"Let us beware" he says, "that we rest not in outward forms, as if that Baptism could save us which only washes away the filth of the flesh."

I confess that, much as I knew of the non-natural sense in which Protestantism very often interprets the Bible, I was startled to find so audacious a contradiction in terms so fearful an instance of giving the lie direct to its words.

Let us take another instance. A poor simple man, reading the Gospel according to St. Matthew, comes upon this verse: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Why, he would say, here is a most fearful power of some kind given by Christ to St. Peter. Was it given to him alone, or to the other Apostles also, and if so was it given to others beside them? It is merely a mode of speaking, replies a Protestant interpreter. It only means that if God forgives a sinner, and His ministers, declare to that sinner that he is forgiven, he may take comfort in their declaration. But is not this something like a truism? inquires our simple friend. And in that sense has not every one, as well as a minister the keys of the kingdom of heaven? And is it not remarkable, that our Lord should have made with so much solemnity a gift which, according to you, was no gift at all? And is it not yet more strange, that in the parallel passage, the word, Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained, He should have introduced them by those most solemn words—Receive ye the Holy Ghost? That is all very plausible, replies the Protestant; but if you attribute any further meaning to those words, you fall into Popery; and whatever we do, we must take care not to do that.

Now I will give you another example of explaining away the words of Christ, and for something of a similar reason. Our Lord says, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now the famous Paley preached a sermon on this subject. Of course one question which he had to discuss was: What is meant by the new birth? He did not like to say that it was Baptism, because that might have been thought Popish: he did not like to say that it was Conversion, because that might have been thought Methodistical. And so he says, that the expression means nothing: nothing, that is, in the present time, and under present circumstances.

You will confess that this is awful. But why more awful than to tell us that "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" means nothing, that is in the present time, and under present circumstances?

Now, I will take another subject, but one on which I should not have entered, had not Mr. THELWALL afford me so remarkable an example of the manner in which Protestants deny those parts of the Bible that they do not like, that I am unwilling to pass by it, especially as what he said may be fresh in the remembrance of some of you.

A plain man, taking up his Bible reads this saying of our Lord's: "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." And again, "The Bread that I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Now, let any man read first that passage, and then the account of the institution of the Holy Eucharist; and will any one say that he would not, whether mistakenly or not, is not the question, but that he would not

naturally, refer the one to the other? Says Mr. Thelwall, That is rank Popery. The words can have no such a meaning. Why not? He gives two reasons:

The first is, that the Holy Eucharist was not then instituted. Now it is very remarkable, though of course Mr. THELWALL, and other Protestants pass that quietly by, that our Lord speaks in the future sense—"the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." But even if this were not so, by Mr. THELWALL's argument, none of the prophecies in the past or present tens such as those in the 53d chapter of ISAIAH can apply to our Lord, because He was not then come. This argument however is older than Mr. THELWALL, but I really give him credit for his second. And it is a wonderful example of what a man will do to twist Scripture, rather than accept it when contrary to his own traditions. He says; Let us imagine that the whole Bible were lost except the Gospel according to St. John. As that Gospel contains no account of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, a reader could never interpret those passages in the 6th chapter of that Sacrament. But what nonsense and worse than nonsense is this! Why every man may get rid of every doctrine that he does not like by the same simple expedient, of supposing those chapters or books of the Bible lost which happen to contain it. And curiously enough, in that same chapter is a striking instance of the absurdity into which Mr. THELWALL runs. Our Lord there says: "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?" Can any one doubt that this refers to the Ascension? According to Mr. THELWALL, it cannot. For supposing all the Bible except the Gospel of St. John to be lost, as that Gospel contains no account of the Ascension a reader could never interpret that text of the Ascension.

Now I will give you two more instances how Protestants, notwithstanding their watchword, take anything rather than the Bible, as true, when its plain sense is against them. You have all heard of ZWINGLI, the Swiss reformer. He was the first who taught that the Holy Eucharist is a mere bare sign, and that our Lord's Words—This is My Body—mean—This is a figure of My Body. He was defied to bring forward from Holy Scripture any one passage where *This is* means *This is a figure of*. He tells us and it is no matter whether the story be true or false, it proves thus much, that Protestants would do any thing to get rid of such parts of the Bible as make against them; he tells us that he puzzled and puzzled over his challenge and was hopeless of finding any other example. He had been thinking deeply on the matter when a supernatural figure, so he says, appeared, and said: "Fool! Why not answer him: *Ye shall eat it in haste: It IS the Lord's Passover.*" And ZWINGLI joyfully caught at the text.

CAROLSTADT, the German reformer, pressed by the same difficulty, explained the text thus; Our Lord, he said, administered the Holy Eucharist to His Apostles with the words, Take, eat, and then pointing to Himself added, *This is My Body*!

But now to draw to a conclusion.

Shall we not be ashamed to call ourselves by a name which pledges us to no faith, but merely to a negation of all faith? that taking its very title from division, perpetuates a contradiction of our Lord's last prayer, That they all may be one? this is shared by heretics and unbelievers of all kinds and degrees? that has no principle but self-contradiction, no logic but an argument in a circle—whose profession is an unreality, whose watchword is a lie? Shall we not rather with all our hearts and souls cling to that blessed title which, by its very name, embraces all mankind in the arms of its love—which speaks of peace upon earth and good will to men—for which so many martyrs have rejoiced to shed their blood—for which so many confessors have toiled and have suffered—a name which must be victorious over every enemy, which has the promise of infallibility against all error—a name proper to that Church which, as universal in space, is to receive the heathen for her inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for her possession: which, as universal in time, will endure as long as the world lasts, yes, and after the world shall pass away, even for ever and ever?

NON-NATURAL INTERPRETATION.

At the the foundation of much evil has lain the mischievous principle of *non-natural interpretation*. This has, in our day, infused a deadly poison into the far-famed Oxford movement; which for a while, was doing great and much-needed good to the catholic cause; but which this perversion gave a sad turn towards the cause of Popery. The same pernicious principle is striving, also, to corrupt the Gospel in the opposite direction, both in its faith and its morality. For instance, the Bible says: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "The tradition of men" interposes, and so distorts this simple declaration, as to make it say that water has nothing to do with man's regeneration; but that this is the effect of spiritual influence, imparted without any sacramental means; and therefore a non-natural interpretation must be attached to the word "water."

The Church says, after every baptism of a child, "We yield Thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that *it hath pleased Thee to regenerate this infant with Thy Holy Spirit.*" By a non-natural interpretation, a theory adverse to the Church, and to the evangelical doctrine which the Church has received, maintains that this does not mean what the words say, but implies only a *hope* that such has been the case, inasmuch as we cannot tell whether the child has been regenerated or not. To use the words with this *mental reservation*, what is it but sinful Romanizing?

Again: Every baptized child is taught by the Church to say, that "in baptism" he "was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven." "The minister of every parish" is laid by the Church, and required to lay himself, by solemn promise, under a moral obligation diligently to instruct the children of his charge in this great truth. The theory above adverted to, says that we do not know whether this is true of every baptized child, or not. According to this theory, therefore, a clergyman is to teach in one breath, what he is to unteach in another, by telling the child to beware how he takes for granted that the Church, and his minister, as the Church's agent, have taught him the truth, inasmuch as it is, unhappily, as likely to be false as true, to say that he is a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven. And, moreover, the child is thus taught *prevarication*: for what else can be the natural result of requiring him to say a thing, of which he is immediately to be instructed, that it is by no means certain that it is the truth? He is thus placed, at once under a demoralizing training, fraught with one of the most deeply-rooted evils of Romanism.

The theory referred to is, also, connected with the monstrous principle, that the Church is to be considered less careful to enunciate the truth, when she takes with her words, wherewith to come before the Lord, and engage her members in homage at His throne, than when she announces her faith and religious principles and views to man: in other words, that her prayers are not to be regarded as standards of her principles. "The spirit and understanding" of true evangelical piety and devotion instinctively revolt at this.—*Evergreen.*

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