

He ever continue in His own proper humanity the Head of His one Body—the Church—then in Him, as the human head, must human infallibility alone rest. Besides, this desire for *personal* infallible guides is a fleshly shrinking from that individual moral responsibility which is one great feature of our present probationary condition. That unerring guidance which Christ has promised, in the great leading principles of our faith and practice, by His Spirit acting through His Church and Word, is the nearest approach to *visible* infallible guidance which, in this state of trial, is vouchsafed to us.

Both Romanists and Irvingites are unquestionably mistaken in their conception of Apostolic gifts; whether considered to centre in St. Peter alone, or in the twelve; at least if they attribute to them anything approaching to personal infallibility, which the Romanists certainly do; and, as we believe, the Irvingites, also to a very great extent. That such was not the case is evident from the fact, that they referred all difficult cases to the decision of the whole Church, since it was to her, as the collective Bride of Christ, and not to any individual, that the promise of Christ was given to be “with her unto the end of the world, and to guide her into all truth.”

To proceed, however, we think that when the Irvingites imagine the Church to be imperfect because she lacks “Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists and Pastors,” so called, they fall into the error of *confounding names with things*, since it is not to be doubted that in the Three-fold Ministry of the Church, we have these offices in actual existence, though under different names, so far as they are still desirable for the “edifying of the Body of Christ.” That this is so we shall now endeavor to prove, confining our remarks, for the sake of a greater conciseness, chiefly to the Apostolic office, as the arguments applicable to it will sufficiently cover the rest.

1. We admit that the twelve Apostles differed from their successors the Bishops, in these two particulars,—that they were the personal companions of our blessed Lord, and were commissioned, in conjunction with Himself, to lay the foundation of the Christian Church. But that in these they could not, in the nature of things, have any successors, every one will of course readily admit. Excepting these two par-

ticulars, however, we know of nothing in which the Apostles differed from the ordinary Christian Priesthood, save in their being the chief overseers of the Church, ordaining her ministry, and confirming her members. But these are powers, which the followers of Mr. Irving will as fully as ourselves acknowledge to have pertained to the office of bishop, “in the ages all along.” Why then sigh for Apostles in name when we have them in fact?

2. Perhaps, however, it will be said that the Apostles had the power of *discerning spirits*; a “gift” which modern bishops do not pretend to. So far as this power was possessed by the apostles, it was evidently one of these miraculous gifts, which were ever, as we have before shown, peculiar to the infant state of the Church, being required both as a protection against impostors, while as yet the members of the Church were without the knowledge to be derived from experience; and also as one of those *evidences* of the apostolical commission, the necessity of which we have before considered. But the fact—of which there is abundant evidence in the New Testament—that Apostles were by no means able on every occasion to *discern the spirits* of those with whom they came in contact, sufficiently shows that it was not an essential qualification of the apostolate; consequently the want of such a function in our bishops is no proof of their inferiority to the apostles.

3. Again, it is very generally supposed that the apostles personally guided and ruled the Church with infallible correctness, being directly inspired by the Holy Ghost for that purpose. To the erroneous character of this idea we have already alluded. But as this error lies at the foundation of the Irvingite schism, and of much of the defective faith amongst ourselves, a few further remarks may not be out of place.

That the apostles were frequently guided in difficult cases, on probably sudden emergencies, by direct inspiration, is not to be doubted; but that this individual apostolic inspiration was considered as a standing ordinance of the Church is contrary, as before stated, to all the evidence upon the subject. Thus the admission of the Gentiles, the question of circumcision, of clean and unclean meats, &c., &c., all these matters were decided, not by the apostles alone, but by “the apostles and elders and brethren,” that is, by the council of the collective church, as the