

**THE BIBLE, AND THE BIBLE ONLY,
THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS.**

(Continued.)

But I now come to the second part of what I proposed to prove. I say that with respect to those who are really Protestants, the text with which I began is not true. The whole Bible and the Bible alone does not form their religion. Not the whole Bible, because they in point of fact, reject a good deal that is in Holy Scripture: not the Bible alone, because they hold a great deal that is not in Holy Scripture.

Let us begin with the latter assertion first. And here we come to the question that has so often been asked, but that never has been, and on Protestant principles never can be, answered. Why do you believe in Holy Scripture itself? It is nonsense to quote texts to show its inspiration, its authority, its sufficiency: nothing—it stands to reason—can prove itself. By a similar method of argument, you may convince yourself of the inspiration of the Koran. In the Koran you may find plenty of texts asserting its excellence, its inspiration, its binding authority. So you may argue for the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. But the thing is too plain to need proof.

Now, ask this question at the next Brighton Protestant Defence Meeting. A set of men meet to defend the infallibility of the Bible against the traditions of men. Ask any one of them to tell you how he knows the Bible to be infallible. Nothing more important can be asked. Nothing, on Protestant principles, more impossible to answer. As Mr. NEWLAND said the other night—"I can tell you: but you cannot tell me."

I can tell you the only thing that your lecturer, or your president, or chairman can say. (He ought to say—"I do not know: I take it for granted.") But he probably would say something of this kind: that those who study the Bible find it so admirably adapted to their own wants, their own distresses, their own difficulties—they find it so true a picture of what they feel within themselves, and of what they see in the world around them—that the internal evidence convinces them that it must be the Word of God.

Now, do not misunderstand me. I do not undervalue internal evidence. When, from external evidence you know that the Bible is indeed God's book, then you may find this and a great deal more to confirm you in your certainty. But that has nothing to do with the point. The question is, supposing a man tells you—I do not find this in the Bible: therefore it is no argument to me: how are you to answer him then? Some of you may have read that infamous book, Miss MARTINEAU'S correspondence with Mr. ATKINSON. Well—she there lays it down that a great part of the Bible is so utterly repugnant to her moral sense, that she is convinced, from internal evidence, it cannot be the Word of God. What now can you say? The Bible meets your moral wants, and therefore you believe that it must be a divine revelation.

The Bible you own is the Word of God.

How do you know that.

Because it is suited to the moral sense of all good men.

How do you know that?

Because the Bible says so.

How do you know that it says true?

Because the Bible is the Word of God.

Poor Protestantism! What it argues from, and what it argues to, are the same! It puts the world very nicely on the elephant, and the elephant pretty comfortably on the tortoise: but the unfortunate tortoise must rest on what it best may.

Again: suppose a Mohammedan were to argue in the same way: how are you to answer him? His arguments are just as good as yours—yours are every whit as good as his—and so neither of you can convince the other. Depend upon it, by this way of talking, by making the Bible its own witness, and its own proof, you are playing into the hands of infidels. It is a very solemn thought, that Protestantism has more than once joined with infidelity never perhaps more remarkably so than in the Antipapal Aggression of last year. That by the by.

Well; still I ask my question. How do you know the Bible to be the Word of God. "By evidences," you will at last be forced to answer.

But stop! stop! you set out by saying that the Bible, and the Bible only, was the religion of Protestants. Not a word about evidences then. Protestants have nothing to do with extraneous evidences. The Bible only is their religion.

"I cannot find it: 'tis not in the bond."

How dare you bring them forward, and thus give the lie direct to the Protestant watchword?—Because you cannot help it.

Yes;—on evidence you believe: and so do I. But on what evidence?

You believe: some of you, because you have read books, written by fallible men, quoting a number of passages, bringing forward a chain of authors, from the SAVIOUR'S time till now, and all establishing the truth of the Christian religion. Some of you, because you have been told that there are such books. Now, I wonder how many of you here have ever studied the subject of evidences for yourselves; I wonder, of those who have, how many have themselves investigated and verified the passages quoted. It comes to this then: that you believe the Scripture to be infallible on the testimony of fallible men. Now, it is a rule in the art of war, no fortress can be stronger than its weakest point. Apply that to the present subject. How can you call the Bible infallible, when you acknowledge that those who tell you it is so are themselves fallible?

But you will ask me, how do I know the truth of the Bible? Well, that is a little wandering from our subject: but I will answer you shortly.

I find, as matter of notoriety, a body at this time existing in the world, professing to be the keeper, and guardian, and interpreter of a book called the Bible, and claiming for it a divine authority. I find, on common historical evidence, that for eighteen hundred years this body has existed, to all intents and purposes the same as at the present day: that it has always appealed to this book as infallible, always received it as of Divine Authority—and has from its origin till now supported its belief, and proved its mission, by miracles. I know that the Church, eighteen hundred years ago, received that book, and I see prophecies in that book of the perpetual existence, and of the infallibility of this very Church. I receive the Bible, then, because the Church bids me receive it, but—mark you—for no other reason.

But, when I said Protestants did not receive the Bible only, I did not mean in the sense alone in which I have been speaking. I say that Protestants, at least the very great majority, have received, and clung to, doctrines, of which not one syllable is to be found from one end of the Bible to the other.

Let me take an instance. LUTHER said that the doctrine of justification by faith was of such importance, as to be the article of a standing or falling Church. Now how is that doctrine generally understood and received by Protestants? I am sorry—even for the sake of illustration—to have to enter into such solemn subjects: but the point I am proving is one of no small importance. Now, is that what you mean by justification by faith? That, whereas we are miserable sinners, and have many ways broken the strict laws of God's justice, and therefore should be most justly condemned at the last day—God, if we put our faith in CHRIST, will impute or reckon to us the righteousness of CHRIST as if it were our own, and thus, though we are not really righteous, will esteem us as if we were? Is not this the way in which the Parable of the wedding garment is usually interpreted by Protestants? You know it is. Page after page of MILNER, and SCOTT—volume after volume of CALVIN, I might quote, if there were any need, to prove this.

Well now—it is nothing to my argument whether this be a true and holy doctrine, or altogether false and unholy. I simply say that it is a tradition which Protestants have received to hold over and above the Bible: for not a syllable of it is there to be found in Holy Scripture. I defy any one to quote me the semblance of a passage. And yet you will hear this doctrine laid down in the pulpit; and such a text as "ABRAHAM believed in the LORD, and it was imputed to him for righteousness," brought in to prove a

doctrine with which it has no more to do than it has with the Newtonian system.

Again: the Protestant observance of the Sunday, as it is in this country, and more especially in Scotland (for on the continent it is widely different), is a most curious instance where a tradition, not only not founded in Scripture, but opposed to many passages of it, is urged forward with the greatest vehemence by those who are the loudest in crying, "The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible!" Did it never strike you that—if you merely take the Bible—you break the fourth commandment twice a week? You break it on Saturday, because the command is, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God:" and you break it on Sunday, because the command is, "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work:" whereas, one of these six days you observe as a day of rest. But, if you give up that commandment in its strictness, then you stand convicted of having foisted into your Creed a tradition, of which you cannot find the least trace in the New Testament. Our LORD never speaks of the Sabbath but to rebuke its superstitious observance: St. PAUL once mentions it, and he does the same: and so all that is left to you is the one text in which St. JOHN tells us he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. Granting that to mean Sunday, what does it prove? assuming it, which is probably the case, to mean Easter day, and it serves your turn less if it be possible.

I will give you a curious instance how other Protestants, who, like those of England, profess to receive the Bible, and the Bible only, regard this tradition. I once made acquaintance abroad with a Lutheran minister, a very good, hardworking man in his way. All his heart was in his parish; he had been forced to travel for his health, and could hardly speak of it without tears. A most devoted man indeed to his work and to his people. Well: we came together to England, where he had never before been; and, as he did not speak English, I took him up to London with me, and served as his interpreter. On the Sunday, I took him to St. Paul's in the morning and the afternoon, and very well pleased he was. Afterwards I asked him how he would like to spend the evening. "Why," said he, "let us go to the opera." "The opera!" I cried: "Why, you don't suppose that we have the opera on Sunday?" "Why, not?" said he. And "Why not?" if you are tied down to Protestant principles, said I too. No. I can only answer on higher principles than Protestantism.

Now let us go to the other side of the question, and see how Protestantism diminishes from the Bible, as we have just seen how it adds to it. And in the outset let me just point out to you a very great difference between Protestant tradition and Catholic tradition.

If a text appears to contradict what we hold, we are not surprised at it. We never teach that Scripture is easy to be understood, on some of its most vital doctrines. We never teach that it needs no other interpreter than prayer and study: we believe it does; and we know who is the divine interpreter of the Divine Word—namely, the Church. But you do say that, on all essential points, the Bible is easy to be understood. You say that the most ignorant person may there find all the vital doctrines of Christianity clearly expressed. Therefore, if a text seems to contradict you point blank, it is a very serious thing. You are bound, on your own principles, to take it as it stands, and not to twist it about and bring forward recondite explanations. Now let us see whether you do.

St. PETER has these words: "The like figure whereunto, even Baptism, doth also now save us." What can be clearer? "Baptism, doth save us." Why no Tractarian can say it more boldly, and few would say it so boldly. But this is not Protestant doctrine: and therefore, when St. PETER said this, he said it (of course) in a non-natural sense. Let SCOTT the commentator tell you what he meant.

"Baptism doth save," says St. PETER.

"Thus the Baptismal water forms, as it were, the sign of salvation," interprets SCOTT.

What! call this an interpretation? What, that it means the same to say Baptism doth

save—or Baptism is a sign of salvation—ay, and not so—but Baptism is, as it were, a sign of salvation? What, this the practice of those who theoretically hold the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible? what, this the faithfulness of those who call us unfaithful—the natural sense of those who taunt us with non-natural senses?

(To be Concluded in our next.)

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