

make every sober-minded Christian tremble at the thought of yielding himself to its sway.

Scripture is dishonoured; for the appeal to tradition involves the confession of the insufficiency of the words of God. The papist is not ashamed to designate Scripture as a "fallible guide,"\* and adduces the almost "endless variety of conflicting and contradictory doctrines"† as proof that the inspired guide has failed to conduct men into truth and certainty; and there are professed protestants who complain of being "*beset with the clamour*," that "the Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of protestants;" who say, that though we have the word of God, we are left in uncertainty about the doctrine of Christ; and who allow themselves to decry "*the nondescript system of religion now in fashion, that nothing is to be believed but what is clearly in Scripture.*"‡

Whatever respect we owe to the characters of great men, and especially to those who have suffered for the gospel, and whatever credit may be justly due to the testimony of ancient writers in reference to the existing faith and practice of the times in which they lived, we can only regard them as witnesses to facts; of the facts themselves we must judge according to the word of God. That, and that only, is our rule. If we once step over the threshold of the inspired volume, we shall wander about without a guide, till at length we find the path to Rome. We must cleave to unadulterated protestantism; and "what we mean by protestantism can be nothing less than a renouncing the religion of man's

contrivance, and a returning to the religion which God has revealed; and to effect this return, we must recede, not toward the sixth century, not toward the fifth, nor toward the fourth, nor the third, nor the second; not to the times of Polycarp or Ignatius; not even to the age of the apostle John; but we must go where alone revealed religion is to be found—namely, in God's book.\*

A glance at the state of religion in the fourth and fifth centuries will be sufficient to convince an impartial person, that nothing can be more dangerous to the church of God than the establishment of any authority co-ordinate with that of scripture. In the numerous errors that sprung up during this period we see the injurious consequences of the admixture of human philosophy with divine revelation. Exclusive deference to the word of God was soon lost in the church, and some ages passed away before it was restored. They were ages of ignorance, error, and superstition. The foundation of all the mischief was laid, when to the "sure words" of the prophets and apostles were added the multiform vagaries of ill-instructed proselytes from paganism, and the simple ceremonial of the New Testament was burdened with rites unknown to the first propagators of the gospel. True godliness withered under the baneful influence of these novelties; the majority of professing Christians were mere formalists; and those who worshipped the Father "in spirit and in truth" were few and scattered.

It is a dangerous thing to trifle with the word of God in any way. It is grievously offensive to him to treat his blessed book with disrespect, and especially, to disparage its authority by raising traditions to an equality of honour with the divine rule.

\* Butler's Lectures on the Truths of the Catholic Religion, ii. 304.

† Wiseman's Lectures on the Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church, i. 48.

‡ Tracts for the Times.—Records of the Church. No. xxv. p. 8. Tract, No. lxxxv. pp. 25, 108.

\* Introductory Essay to Pfizer's Life of Luther, p. xxx.