

same arguments, and the same conclusions which our divines have always employed against yours. If these arguments in your hands be conclusive against Dissenters, they are conclusive with tenfold force, when employed by our Church against you.

2. Of the numerous tracts which have lately come from the pens of your clergy on the subject of Bible reading, I consider *Thoughts on the Tendency of Bible Societies, &c.* by the Rev. A O'Callaghan, 1816, to be the best. Its lowest merit is its elegance and precision. It is the highest merit of this publication, that, except in a few instances where the professional prejudices of the author intervene, it takes a most masterly and comprehensive view of the subject. It is curious, though not unusual, to see your divines unconsciously advocating our cause, and not a little amusing, to see Protestants fighting for us our controversial battles against Protestants. I will read you some of Mr. O'Callaghan's remarks, because they subvert the very foundation of your friend's pamphlet, viz: That the Bible interpreted by private judgment is the Rule of Faith; and confirm by Protestant evidence my general argument, that the Bible alone, without the Apostolical Tradition and the interpreting authority of the true Church of Christ, cannot lead to the unity of faith, but, in its general operation, to error, delusion, and absurdity.

"The common assertion, that the Bible is suited to all ages, capacities, and stations of life, is not true," says this Protestant clergyman, "or true only in a very restricted sense. Of all books, it is perhaps the most difficult. This is natural and unavoidable. It is the work of different men, writing in different ages, and all very remote. Some of its books are the most ancient compositions extant, and none of a later date than the first century of the Christian era. They are written in a country far remote from western Europe, whose climate, soil, animal and vegetable productions, are strikingly contrasted with our own: while the laws, manners, customs, civil and military institutions, opinions, and form of government of the inhabitants, discover scarcely any resemblance to those with which we are acquainted. All these circumstances powerfully influenced their language and produced modes of speaking, allusions, and images, obscure, or unintelligible to the peasantry of modern Europe. Necessity, as well as choice, would lead the writers of the Old Testament to adopt a style highly figurative, as that alone could enable them to pour out their exuberant conceptions, in a language deficient in copiousness. The want of appropriate words would be supplied by metaphor, and ideas sometimes communicated by external action. Most of these sources of obscurity are common to the Old and New Testament, while the latter has some peculiar to itself. Its extreme conciseness, its elliptical phraseology, frequently darken the meaning, which is still further obscured by Hebrew idioms, with which the Greek of the New Testament abounds. Now all these difficulties, which the learned reader must encounter

in the original languages of the Old and New Testament, are faithfully transfused into our authorised version, while many others naturally spring up from the imperfection of translation. Accordingly, it is only by long and severe study, that men of the best understandings, enlarged by multifarious reading, can acquire an adequate knowledge of the sacred writings.—The Bible ought to be approached even by the wise and learned, with an humble sense of their own limited capacities." The author then proceeds to shew, that reading these sacred writings without due precautions produced a variety of mischievous sects and even were made a pretence for rejecting the Messiah among the ancient Jews; and that the same cause produced effects equally lamentable among the primitive Christians, some of whom, says St. Paul, *wrested the scriptures to their own destruction.* "Yet these men," says our author, "who thus perverted the sense of St. Paul, and that of the other inspired writers; were cotemporaries of the Apostles, and spoke the language of the New Testament, and Septuagint version. Asiatics themselves, they were familiar with oriental idioms and oriental images, with the figurative style, and bold amplification of eastern nations. And shall it be said, that illiterate peasants, distant two thousand miles from the country, and nearly two thousand years from the age of the Apostles, will not grossly pervert the meaning of the sacred oracles, reading them, without oral or written explanation, through the medium of an English version of two hundred years standing, scrupulously literal, and therefore retaining all the difficulties of the original, and superadding others?"

"The experience and observation of mankind lead to the same conclusion, that the scriptures are of themselves too obscure for the generality of mankind. This the History of the Church in all ages, but particularly since the reformation, abundantly testifies.

"In opposition to the Church of Rome, the first reformers loudly asserted the right of private judgment in expounding the Scriptures—but anxious to emancipate the people from the authority of the Roman Pontiff, they proclaimed it without explanation or restriction and the consequences were dreadful. Impatient to undermine the foundation of papal jurisdiction, they maintained it without any limitation, asserting that every individual whatever had an undoubted right to explain the Scriptures for himself. The principle, now extended too far, was no longer tenable; so that it became necessary to fortify it with another, namely, that the Bible is an easy book, level to all capacities, and that the greatest perspicuity is the necessary character of a divine revelation. But neither single nor combined, are these principles capable of resisting any serious attack.

"The private judgment of Muncer discovered in Scripture, that titles of nobility and large estates were impious encroachments on the natural equality of the faithful, and invited his followers to ex-

amine the Scriptures, *whether these things were so.* They examined, praised God, and proceeded with fire and sword to the extirpation of the ungodly, and the seizure of their property. Private judgment also, thought it had discovered in the Bible, that established laws were standing restraints on Christian liberty, and that the elect of God were incapable of sinning. John of Leyden, laying down his thimble, and taking up his Bible; surprised the city of Munster, at the head of a rabble of frantic enthusiasts, proclaimed himself King of Zion, and took unto himself fourteen wives at once, affirming that polygamy was Christian liberty, and the privilege of the saints. But if the flagitious madness of foreign peasants, interpreting the Bible for themselves, befalling to the friends of humanity and rational piety, the history of England, during a considerable part of the seventeenth century, offers little to console them. In that place and period, countless enthusiasts sprung up successively, and contemporaneously, endued with extravagant doctrines and noxious propensities, in various degrees from the wild ravings of Fox, to the methodical madness of Barclay; from the formidable fanaticism of Cromwell, to the drivelling impiety of Praise-God-Barebones. Piety, reason, and common sense seemed to be driven from the world, to make room for canting jargon, religious frenzy, and fiery zeal. All quoted Scripture, all made pretensions to illuminations, visions, revelations, and illapses of the spirit; and the pretensions of all were equally well founded. The expediency of abolishing the clerical and regal functions, was strenuously maintained: priests being the servants of Satan, kings the delegates of the Whore of Babylon, and both inconsistent with the kingdom of the Redeemer. These zealots denounced learning as a heathenish invention, and the universities as seminaries of Antichristian impiety. The sanctity of his office was no protection to the prelate; the sacredness of majesty no defence to the king; both were scoffed at, denounced, and finally murdered by merciless fanatics, whose only book was the bible without note or comment. At this time, prayer, and preaching, and reading the Scriptures, were at their height; every man prayed, every man preached, every man read, and no man listened. Scripture authority was pleaded for every atrocity. The ordinary business of life was transacted in scripture language. In scripture phrase were discussed the internal state of the nation, and its external relations. In the language of Scripture conspiracies were formed, proscriptions planned, treasons hatched, and by scripture authorities they were not only justified but consecrated. These historical facts have often astonished the good and startled the pious. Engrossed by such feelings, the reader too often overlooks their awful moral, that the Bible without note or comment is unfit for the perusal of the rude and illiterate.

"Its doctrines, never contrary to reason, are sometimes above it; its truths, generally deep, are sometimes mysterious, but always important. So that the character and matter of the sacred volume