

SERMON IV. (I.)

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THERE IS NO EXTERNAL, SUPREME, AND INFALLIBLE JUDGE IN THE CHURCH OF GOD, TO WHOM ALL CHRISTIANS ARE OBLIGED TO SUBMIT THEIR FAITH AND CONSCIENCE IN ALL MATTERS OF RELIGION.

POPE AND COUNCILS NOT INFALLIBLE.

But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.—Matthew xxiii. 8—10.

THE “but” in the beginning of these words hath a manifest respect unto the foregoing verses, wherein our blessed Saviour describes and censures the ambition and usurpation of the scribes and Pharisees. He tells you, in the fifth verse, “All their works they do for to be seen of men;” not for the pleasing of God, but for [the] gaining of reputation amongst men; not for the satisfaction of their own consciences, but for vain-glory and ostentation. “They made broad their phylacteries.” The phylacteries were little scrolls of parchment, which the Jews did wear upon their arms or upon their foreheads, wherein they wrote some parcels of the law of God. How solidly grounded that practice was, I shall not now examine; but the scribes and Pharisees made these phylacteries larger and broader than the rest of the Jews, that they might gain that respect from the people by their outward garb, which they could not gain by any true and solid worth. It follows, in the sixth verse: They “love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues;” and in the seventh verse, “And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi;” that is, “Master,” or “Doctor;” for so the word signifies: and the word is doubled for the greater honour and respect. They affected titles of honour; and the Jewish sanhedrim did solemnly confer these titles upon learned men; and they obliged the people to give them these titles; and they had a saying, that “he that saluteth his teacher as he doth another man, and doth not call him Rabbi, provokes God to depart from Israel.”

But, indeed, there was a deeper and worse design than this in it; they did not only aim at splendid and glorious titles, but they did usurp authority and dominion over the consciences of the people, whereof this was but a sign: as amongst us the flag is a sign of the dominion of the seas, so this title was an indication and sign of that

authority [which] they usurped over the people. Against this leaven of the scribes and Pharisees, our Saviour cautions them in the words read: "Be not ye called Rabbi. Call no man your father upon the earth. Neither be ye called masters." The same thing thrice repeated in various expressions, to show the great importance and necessity of this precept. "But how is this to be understood?" I answer: It is not a prohibition concerning the use of the name, but concerning the practice of the thing. You are not to understand it thus, as if it were unlawful to call any man "father," or "master," as the Quakers with sufficient weakness will understand it. Certainly, the apostles best understood the meaning of their Lord and Master; and forasmuch as we find that they themselves did give men these titles, we have warrant enough to use them: "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath;" (Eph. vi. 4;) and lest any man should have such an allegorical humour as to understand it of spiritual fathers, they are called "fathers of the flesh:" "We have had fathers of our flesh." (Heb. xii. 9.) And so "servants" must "obey in all things their masters according to the flesh." (Col. iii. 22.) Nay, more: it is not unlawful to call teachers by these names; it is not unlawful to call teachers "masters," "doctors," "rabbies:" "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel:" (1 Cor. iv. 15;) "I am your father, your spiritual father." And the title of "master" (διδασκαλος) answers to *rabbi* in the Hebrew, as the learned know, and plainly appears from John xx. 16: "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni!" a word of the same signification with *Rabbi*, which is as much as to say, "Master." This name, I say, is commonly given to teachers and ministers of the gospel: "He sent some apostles, and some teachers," or "masters," διδασκαλους. (Eph. iii. 11.) And so St. Paul calls himself διδασκαλος, "a teacher, a master, a doctor, of the Gentiles." (2 Tim. i. 11.)

QUESTION. "What then is here forbidden?"

ANSWER. Two things.

1. He forbids a vain and ambitious affectation of such titles of honour as these.

2. And principally he forbids that authority and dominion over the consciences of men which these titles do import.

I shall say nothing to the former; the latter is that [which] I must discourse of at this time. And to this purpose, and that you may the better understand the mind of our blessed Saviour in these words, you must know that the scribes and Pharisees did arrogate to themselves this authority over the people, the self-same power which the Popish teachers at this day usurp over their people. This was their doctrine,—that the people were obliged to believe all their doctrines, and to practise all their injunctions. These are the very words of the Jewish Talmud, which is, as it were, their Bible: "All the words of our Rabbins are to be believed, and received, as the very words of the living God." And in another place: "We owe the same faith to all

which the Rabbins teach in their homilies, which we give to the law of Moses." Nay, they went so far as to say, as Rabbi Solomon, an eminent doctor of theirs, saith upon Deut. xvii. 11, "Thou shalt not depart from the words of the wise," that is, their teachers, "though they tell thee that thy right hand is thy left, and thy left hand is thy right." And in another place: "He that dissents from his teachers, is as bad as he that dissents from the Divine Majesty; and he that believes the words of the wise, it is as if he did believe God himself." Nay, they went higher: "My son, attend rather to the words of the scribes than to the words of the law."

Nay, by this you may clearly understand what our Saviour aims at, and why he presseth this point with so much vehemency. You see, the very life and soul of religion was struck at by this intolerable usurpation. Therefore our Saviour saith, "'Call no man Rabbi, call no man your father upon earth;' let none of my disciples or apostles ever usurp this authority. And if any of them should be so arrogant as to do it, let no man give this title to them:" (that is, acknowledge not this authority to be in them:) "own no man for your father or master on earth, except myself or your Father in heaven."

From the words thus explained I gather this doctrine:

DOCTRINE. *There is no external supreme and infallible judge in the church of God to whom all Christians are obliged to submit their faith and consciences in all matters of religion.*

This was the point that I was desired to discourse of at this time; and I do it the more willingly, because, in the whole body of Popery, the opposite doctrine to this is the heart of it. This is *articulus stantis vel cadentis Papismi*; "Popery will either stand or fall by the truth or falsehood of this assertion." It is usual with Papists confidently to invite us to the debate of this doctrine, concerning the supreme and infallible judge of controversies: this, they all acknowledge, strikes at the root; and we do but nibble at the branches, unless we strike at this.

Now, that you may the better understand this discourse, I must acquaint you with the doctrine of the Papists in this particular. They are not content with Christ the Judge in heaven, and the holy scriptures the judge upon earth; but they must have another judge, a visible judge. Like the Israelites, they must have a visible God to go before them, though it be but a calf. They say,

1. That an external and visible judge of all matters of religion upon earth is absolutely necessary; and this judge, they say, is the church; by which they understand the governors of the church; either the pope, as some of them say; or, as others, a general council; or the pope and a council together, as those that would seem wiser than the rest pretend.

2. They say, [that] this supreme judge is infallible: he can neither be deceived himself, nor deceive them that stick to him, and are taught by him.

3. They say [that] it is the duty of every particular Christian entirely and unreservedly to submit his faith and conscience to the

conduct and guidance of this judge ; to believe whatever he teacheth, and to practise whatever he commands ; according to that known and often-mentioned and never-to-be-forgotten assertion of Bellarmine, *De Pontifice Rom.*, lib. iv. cap. 5, *in fine*. “If,” saith he, “the pope could or should so far err, as to command the practice of vice, and to forbid virtuous actions, the church were bound to believe vices to be good, and virtues to be bad.” This is plain dealing ; and I cannot but adore the wise and wonderful providence of God, that should give up a person of such wisdom and learning as Bellarmine, to discover the true and the desperate consequences of this principle, that all men that have a care of their souls might avoid and abhor it.

This is the sum of their doctrine. And they further add, that this doctrine of the church’s supreme and infallible authority, as it is of more weight and importance, so it is, and in all reason ought to be, more evident and demonstrable, than any other Christian doctrine whatsoever ; as a learned doctor of the Romish church expressly affirms ; I mean, Cressy, in his *Exomologesis*. (Whether this be so or no, we shall by and by discern.) And against this bold and wicked assertion I have laid down this PROPOSITION :

There is no external supreme, infallible judge in the church of God, to whom all Christians are obliged to submit their faith and consciences in all matters of religion.

That which I am now pleading for is, that you may preserve the greatest treasure you have in the world, even your consciences, against the horrid usurpations of wicked and unreasonable men. I shall not use multitudes of arguments to confute the Popish assertion ; but a few, and those such as may convince the conscience of any person who will not shut his eyes against the light.

ARGUMENT I. *This authority which they pretend to is a greater authority than the apostles themselves did ever claim or exercise in the church of God.*—As plainly appears from 2 Cor. i. 24 : “Not that we have dominion over your faith.” I do not understand what dominion over a man’s faith can be, if this, that they pretend to, be not so. God himself can scarcely be imagined to have a greater dominion over any man’s faith than this,—that a man be obliged to believe every thing which God saith, without examination, and practise whatsoever he commands. And this the pope lays claim to, as you have heard, and it is notoriously known ; by which alone you may sufficiently discern who is that “man of sin” prophesied of, in 2 Thess. ii. 4 : “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped ; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” This was our blessed Saviour’s sole prerogative : “Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me ; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.” (Acts iii. 22.) So that this is the height of Christ’s honour. And the truth is, it might well be said of Christ, [that] we may safely rely upon and hear Christ in all things whatsoever he should say to us. This was very agreeable to the nature and person of Christ, one “in whom

were all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," one in whom "the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily," one that was "God manifested in the flesh." (Col. ii. 3, 9; 1 Tim. iii. 16.) I say, we may safely rely upon such a person; but that this should be said of a weak and wicked man, such as themselves confess many of their popes to have been, that we should hear whatever he says,—this is such a stupendous usurpation, that I can never think of it with horror enough.

The holy apostles thought it good manners to keep a distance from their Lord and Master: they never durst arrogate such an absolute and unlimited authority to themselves. Witness that evident place: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. And as I said before, so say I now again, If any man" (be he what he will, the pope or a council, or any company of men; for *ubi lex non distinguit, non est distinguendum*; * God makes no difference or exception here, neither must we) "preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. i. 8, 9.) And do you not think [that] this would be another gospel, if any man should say, that vices were virtues, and sins duties, and consequently that unbelief and impenitency were gospel-duties? would not this be another gospel? And you see [that] they allow this authority to the pope: if the pope teach so, you are bound to believe so. But this was not St. Paul's mind: "'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel,' do not only disbelieve him, but curse him to his face. It may be, he will curse you, and pronounce an anathema against you, and roar with his Bulls against you; but regard not that, 'the curse causeless shall not come;' (Prov. xxvi. 2;) but the curse shall rest upon himself."

ARGUMENT II. *Such an authority as they pretend to, is contrary to that command of the trial of doctrines which is laid upon all Christians.*—For if there be an infallible judge to whom I ought to submit my faith and conscience in all matters of religion, what need I try doctrines? Certainly, there is no room left for it; and therefore, the Papists laying down that assertion, they do with very good sense collect this conclusion from it,—that you owe an implicit faith to all their doctrines, and blind obedience to all their commands. It is Bellarmine's assertion. "A Christian," saith he, "should receive all the doctrines of the church without any examination." Now let us see whether this be the mind of God or no: if it be, then they are in the right; if not, then it is an abominable usurpation.

If we consult the holy scriptures, we shall find that no Christian is to offer to God a blind sacrifice, but a "reasonable service." (Rom. xii. 1.) "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." (1 Peter iii. 15.) It is not the collier's reason [that] will serve the turn, nor the collier's faith,—to believe he knows not why; this is not to give a reason of our hope. "Beloved, believe not every spirit;" that is, every teacher that pretends to be led by the Spirit; "but try the

* "Where the law makes no distinction, we must not frame one."—EDIT.

spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (1 John iv. 1.) God hath given us sufficient warning, that there should be a great and a general defection amongst professors; yea, amongst the preachers of the gospel: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." (1 Tim. iv. 1.) "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day." (Acts xx. 30, 31.) "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways." (2 Peter ii. 1, 2.) Well now, what is the remedy against this doleful disease? Be not surprised when you see various and contrary opinions in the church; it is no more than was foretold by all the apostles. But now, what shall Christians do in this distressed condition and contradiction of opinions? What was the remedy prescribed in case of false prophets of old? and what is the remedy in case of false teachers now? Why, it is trial. Christians are commanded to try them.

There were two ways proposed to try the prophets of old: the one was by the event. "And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him." (Deut. xviii. 21, 22.) And the other way of trial was by the scripture: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isai. viii. 20.) And, "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples." (Verse 16.) And, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel. And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?" (Verses 18, 19.) The way to discover these delusions is to inquire, and that is by the law and by the testimony; and this the people were obliged to. And so this is the remedy prescribed in the New Testament. I need instance but in that place, in 1 Thess. v. 21: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." "Prove all things;" who is this that is required to do it? "It may be [that] it is the pope; it may be [that] it is a general council; and they indeed must prove all things." No: read the first verse of the first chapter: "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father." The members of the church,—these are here commanded to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." The same persons are obliged to "prove all things," who are obliged to "hold fast that which is good;" and since it is confessed [that]

the latter clause belongs to the people, so must the former also. Consider three things:—

1. *Christians have ability to try things with.*
2. *They have a rule to try things by.* And,
3. *They have a promise of discovery:* and I think more is not necessary.

1. *Christians have ability to try things with.*—They have reasonable faculties, they are capable of judging between things that differ. The apostle speaks to the church of the Corinthians: “I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.” (1 Cor. x. 15.) Christians, as well as ministers, have the Spirit of God, which enables them to judge of spiritual things: “He that is spiritual,” that is, he that hath the Spirit of God, “judgeth all things.” (1 Cor. ii. 15.) He is capable of judging between doctrine and doctrine, between precept and precept, between practice and practice; and upon the warrant of this text, and many others, I dare affirm, that a serious, godly, discreet Christian is a more competent judge of many divine truths, than the greatest scholar in the world, that wants the direction of the Spirit of God. Add to this what our Saviour saith in John x., and remember [that] he speaks not of the shepherds, but of the sheep: “My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me.” (Verse 27.) “A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.” (Verse 5.) You see, the sheep are endued by God with faculties; they can distinguish between Christ and a stranger, between Christ and Antichrist.

2. *Christians have a certain rule to try things by.*—And that is the holy scriptures, to which Christ commanded the Jews to bring all his doctrines: “Search the scriptures.” (John v. 39.) “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (Acts xvii. 11.) “We have also a more sure word of prophecy;” (the prophecies of the Old Testament, compared with the events and doctrines of the New;) “whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.” (2 Peter i. 19.) Pray observe, (1.) *Who writes this.*—It is Peter, he from whom the pope claims all the power [that] he hath; and yet Peter saith, “Ye do well to take heed” to the scriptures. I know, the popes are grown wiser since; they have corrected Peter; they say, “People do ill to take heed to the scriptures;” they say, it is the fountain of all heresy, for people to study the scripture. Our Saviour said, it was the fountain of all error, that men did not understand the scriptures: “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures.” (Matt. xxii. 29.) The pope saith, “Men err because they will know and read the scriptures.” (2.) *To whom he writes this.*—Look upon the endorsement of his Epistle. “Peradventure he writes thus to his successors.” No; but “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us.” (2 Peter i. 1.)

3. *Christians have a promise of discovery upon trial.*—“If thou seekest her” (that is, wisdom) “as silver, and searchest for her as

for hid treasures ; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” (Prov. ii. 4, 5.) “ If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” (John vii. 17.)

ARGUMENT III, against the supremacy and the infallible authority of the pope, is taken *from the danger of following false guides*.—People may sin in following their guides and teachers. This the Papists deny : they say that people are obliged to believe their teachers ; and if they do so, they are free from sin and danger. And if their doctrine be true, it must needs be so. This is that [which] I must now briefly examine, as that which alone will decide the whole controversy. When Aaron taught the people to worship the golden calf, and proclaimed, “ To-morrow is a feast unto the Lord,” (Exod. xxxii. 5,) did the people sin in obeying Aaron’s doctrine, and complying with his precepts, or did they not ? I think nothing is more plain than that they did sin in it : “ And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, O, this people have sinned a great sin.” (Verse 31.) Not only Aaron sinned in teaching this doctrine, but the people sinned in believing this doctrine. And, in verse 35 : “ And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made ; ” or, as the words may very well be interpreted, “ because they worshipped the calf, or sacrificed to the calf, which Aaron made.” So you see plainly, [that] the people sinned, and were plagued because they followed the doctrine of Aaron.

And so in Isai. iii. 12 : “ O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err,” by their corrupt doctrines and sinful practices ; and yet this did not at all excuse them ; for, “ Behold, the Lord maketh the earth ” (that is, the land) “ empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest ; as with the servant, so with his master ; ” as with the leader, so with the follower : the priests shall be punished sorely for misguiding the people, and the people shall be punished for following them. (Isai. xxiv. 1—3.)

To come lower, to the priests and rulers of the church in our blessed Saviour’s time. The chief priest and the great council at Jerusalem then were, as the Papists confess, the supreme and infallible judges of all the matters of religion, as the pope, at least with a general council, pretends to be at this day. These infallible judges are called “ blind guides : ” “ Woe unto you, ye blind guides.” (Matt. xxiii. 16.) They were universally enemies to Christ : “ Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him ? ” (John vii. 48.) They accounted Christ an impostor ; the very words of their great council are these : “ Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.” (Matt. xxvii. 63.) These were the men that stirred up the people against Christ : “ But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.” (Matt. xxvii. 20.) You see [that] nothing is more plain ; no adversary can be so impudent as to deny this,—that the high priests and the great council of

the Jews did unanimously agree in preaching this doctrine,—that Christ was a deceiver. Now the question is, whether the people did well in believing this doctrine, or not. Certainly, if the Popish doctrine be true, the people did well in following the high priest's direction ; and so the Papists affirm : they are the words of Becanus, in his "Manual of Controversies : " "The whole people of the Jews, in the matters of religion, were bound to follow what the high priest said ;" and the greatest of their divines, even Bellarmine, expressly says, that "the people were bound to stand to the high priest's judgment, whatsoever sentence he should deliver." Now we say, they did sin in believing their teachers. Let us both hear what Christ says, and no more need be said against this abominable assertion, nor for the deciding of this question, and establishing you against this doctrine. What can be more plain than that passage of our Saviour's?—"Let them alone : they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." (Matt. xv. 14.) You see, he that follows a blind leader is punished, as well as he that leads him : "Both fall into the ditch." And in Acts iii. 17, when the apostle was preaching to the Jews, "I wot," says he, "that through ignorance ye did it," (that is, you crucified Christ,) "as did also your rulers." Ignorance it was in the priests, and ignorance it was in the people. And the people, say the Papists, are excusable, because they were bound to follow the priests ; but did this make it no sin in the people ? Let us hear what St. Peter says : "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." (Acts ii. 23.) Neither God's decree nor the high priest's misguidance did at all excuse them from that wicked act. And as they said, "His blood be on us, and on our children," (Matt. xxvii. 25,) so, we see, that sad curse is upon them to this day : "Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost," as the apostle says. (1 Thess. ii. 16.)

And if we search this matter a little further, it will more evidently appear, and indeed afford another undeniable argument to confirm this truth. Here were two contrary authorities, God, and Christ in his name, on the one side, and the authority of the church on the other side. Christ commands the Jews to believe in him. When they asked him, "'What shall we do, that we may work the works of God ?' What does God require of us ?" (John vi. 28 ;) "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (Verse 29.) And the great doctrine, you know, preached by Christ was, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark i. 15.) And Christ tells them, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii. 36.) And the arguments [which] our Saviour brings to prove himself to be the Messiah, and to oblige them to believe,—they are principally two : the first is, the works [which] he did : "The works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."

(John v. 36 ; x. 25.) And the second is, the scriptures : " Search the scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me ;" (John v. 39 ;) and in verse 46 : " Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me : for he wrote of me." This for the one side. On the other side stands the authority of the church, " the supreme and infallible judge of controversies," as the Papists say these were : " The chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death." (Matt. xxvi. 59.) And the high priest pronounceth, " He hath spoken blasphemy ; what further need have we of witnesses ? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye ?" And the rest consent to his sentence : " They answered and said, He is guilty of death." (Verses 65, 66.) And " the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." (John ix. 22.)

Now then the question lies here, whether the Jews were obliged to believe Christ in this case, or whether they were obliged to believe the high priest and sanhedrim, and the church of the Jews. And methinks the very mentioning of it should presently determine it in all your thoughts. It is so prodigious a thing that the church should set up itself in opposition to Christ, that no man can hear it without tingling ears. St. Peter hath decided it : " ' Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men ;' " (Acts v. 29 ;) we ought to believe God rather than man." Can any man that hath the understanding of a man in him, or the conscience of a Christian, think that the people of the Jews, that the disciples and apostles of our Lord, did sin in believing in him, because it was contrary to the command of the high priest and church of the Jews ? Can any man think [that] their unbelief was their duty ? or that the authority of the church could make void the command of God ? or that the Jews did but their duty in believing Christ to be a deceiver ? These are stupendous and prodigious assertions ; and yet all these, and many more, must be digested, or else they must part with their fundamental doctrine. And just as the case of the Jews was then, so is our case now. For example : God clearly and plainly commands me, as plainly as words can express it, " Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth : thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." (Exod. xx. 4, 5.) And says our Saviour, " It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matt. iv. 10.) The church of Rome comes and teaches us a quite contrary doctrine ; they say, " Thou shalt worship graven images, and saints, and angels, and not God only." The question is, which of these two we must believe, and whose command we ought to obey ; whether the children must obey God their Father, or the church their mother ; whether I must believe the word of God, which is confessed to be so by the Papists themselves ; or the word of man, which they vainly pretend to be the

word of God. Let 1 John v. 9 determine this controversy: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." The witness of God certainly ought to be preferred before the witness of man. Add to this, "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your traditions;" (Matt. xv. 6;) and, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men;" (verse 9;) and tell me, what is it to make void the commandments of God by men's traditions, if this be not?

ARGUMENT IV, and last, against this doctrine is, *from the want of a divine appointment and promise*.—We must remember the question [which] our Saviour puts: "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke xii. 14.) And that passage, "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." (Heb. v. 4.) If there be such a sovereign and infallible judge as the Papists pretend there is, and the pope be he, this judge ought in all reason to produce his commission, and show his letters-patent, for it. It is confessed on all hands, that man is of himself a vain and foolish creature, full of ignorance, apt to error, that loves darkness rather than light: "Men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie." (Psalm lxii. 9.) The minds of all men do need renovation; or else they are not capable of discerning divine things. Now if any man pretend to an exemption from the common infirmities and corruptions of human nature, this man ought to produce his writ of privilege, and to show wherein and how he hath such an exemption. Certainly, if any pretends to be infallibly guided by God in all things, he can claim it only from the grace of God, and by virtue of God's promise; but such promise there is none. I acknowledge [that] the Papists pretend they have such a promise; that I shall next examine. And here are two things to be inquired into:

(I.) *To whom this commission and promise is given*.—And this is the foundation of all the rest. For though it should appear, that God had made a promise of infallible guidance to some person or persons; yet unless it plainly appear to whom that promise is made, no man can lay claim to it, or have any benefit by it.

Now let us inquire to whom this promise is made. The Papists say, "It is made to the church." But, say I, what do they mean by "the church?" Say they, "It is to the governors of the church." But go a little further; and what do they mean by "the governors of the church?" And herein they most horribly break into pieces. This doctrine, they say, as you have heard, is of more importance than any doctrine whatsoever, and so ought to be proved with the greater evidence than any other. But when we come to examine it, their evidences are so obscure and inevident, that they are not sufficient to convince their own brethren. "It belongs," say some of them, "to the pope, to the bishop of Rome." Say others, "No; it belongs to a general council:" and these opinions are quite contrary one to another. And this difference is not only amongst obscure and private persons, but their greatest doctors; there is

university against university, city against city, kingdom against kingdom. So that till they be agreed to whom this promise is made, they can make no benefit of the claim, nor are we obliged to follow them.

(II.) *Where this grant and promise is.*—The Papists answer, “It is contained in the holy scriptures.” And here they muster-up some “promises,” as they call them, that confer this privilege either upon the pope, or a general council. And this I shall briefly examine. Only in general observe three things.

1. *More clear and express promises than any [which] they pretend to did not secure the church of God formerly from error; and therefore it is a vain thing for them to expect it now.*—I will deal so charitably with our adversaries, because they want proofs, as to help the infirmity of their cause. We will suppose there were such a text as this, “In the church of Rome shall my name be for ever;” surely, they would desire no more than this; they would say, “It is plain from hence that the church of Rome is infallible.” But I say, If there were so plain a proof, yet that would not be sufficient to prove it infallible, or to secure the church from error; and that I will prove by a plain instance. God speaks concerning the temple of Jerusalem, “For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually.” (2 Chron. vii. 16; 1 Kings ix. 3.) You see, here is the same promise which I supposed made to Jerusalem. But how far this was from securing the church of Jerusalem, the high priest, and his brethren, from error and apostasy, doth sufficiently appear, from those frequent and grievous complaints of the prophets concerning the universal depravation of that church, and particularly of the priests of it; from the instances of the gross errors and miscarriages of the high priests and others: and particularly it is put out of all dispute by that fatal and damnable error of that church in the condemnation of Christ.

2. *God’s promise of leading them into all truth is suspended upon certain conditions.*—The Spirit of truth, you know, is only promised to them that ask him: “How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke xi. 13.) And it is supposed that they must ask aright; for, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.” (James iv. 3.) And in the place fore-mentioned, John vii. 17: “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself:” where, you see, the knowing of the doctrine of Christ is suspended upon the doing of God’s will. Now then, forasmuch as the church of Rome hath apparently broken the condition [which] God requires, (as no man that reads their own historians can doubt,) no wonder if God, according to his commination in that case, make them to “know his breach of promise.” (Num. xiv. 34.)

3. *The promises which they pretend to are so dark and obscure, that they do not convince many of their own brethren; therefore it is a ridiculous thing to think [that] they should convince Protestants.*

—For instance, I told you [that] they were horribly divided in that fundamental doctrine of the infallible judge; that some place this infallibility in the pope, and others in the council. Now whereas the promises they pretend to are of two sorts;—some pretend this infallible authority to be in the pope, and some in a general council;—those that say it is in the pope do both slight and dispute against those arguments that are brought to prove it to be in the council; and, on the contrary, those that believe the infallibility to be in the council, despise and confute those arguments which are brought for the infallibility of the pope:

This being premised, I come particularly, but briefly, (because I have discussed them elsewhere,) to the promises pretended for this usurped authority. First, *for the pope*; and then, *for the council*.

First. *For the pope*.—They tell us this story, that St. Peter was made by Christ the supreme and infallible judge of all matters and controversies of religion; and that Peter's successors, the popes and bishops of Rome, are invested with the same authority and privilege. And this, they say, is evident from scripture, and hath been owned by the church of God in all ages, from Christ's time till Luther's days. This is the Romish legend; to which I answer: This doctrine hath no foundation in scripture. The places they allege for it are principally two:

1. Their first place is Matt. xvi. 18: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Therefore Peter, and consequently all his successors, the popes, are the rock upon which the church is built; and therefore have the supreme and infallible judgment, to whom all persons must submit their faith and practice.

ANSWER. (1.) It is plain enough that it is not Peter's person, but Peter's doctrine, which our Saviour doth here speak of. Peter had made a glorious confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. xvi. 16, 17.) And, for a further confirmation of this truth, he adds, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter," (he mentions Peter's name by way of allusion,) "and upon this rock," that is, this confession made and delivered by thee, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

(2.) If it were Peter's person, and if he were called "a rock," and "a foundation of the church," yet all this will not prove him to be infallible, much less his successors. The proper and primary foundation of the church Peter was not; witness that evident place, in 1 Cor. iii. 11: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." In a secondary and ministerial sense, Peter was a foundation, and so were all the rest of the apostles: You "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets;" (Eph. ii. 20;) that is, upon the doctrine delivered by the apostles

and prophets, not upon their persons; for then the prophets could never have come in for a share. And therefore, in like manner, if you will allow scripture to be its own interpreter, when Peter is called "a rock" or "foundation," it is not his person, but his doctrine, to which that title belongs. "The wall of the city" (the new Jerusalem, the church of God) "had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (Rev. xxi. 14.) Here is no prerogative of Peter; but all are equally foundations.

(3.) The promise of infallibility doth not belong to Peter, but unto the church: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "Prevail against what or whom?" Against the church. It is not the rock upon which the church is built, but the church which is built upon that rock, unto which that security is promised. He doth not say, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against thee;" much less doth he say, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against thy successors to the end of the world;" but, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church." So that though Peter dies, and all his successors should prove (as a great number of the popes have done) apostates from the faith; yet still the church remains built upon the rock.

(4.) This promise is made to the true, invisible, and sincere professors of the gospel-church. This is evident from the accomplishment of the promise. The promise is, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church;" and it is manifest [that] the gates of hell did and do prevail against all other persons except the sincere professors of the gospel; therefore those persons that are said to be infallible, and secure against all danger, are only the true and invisible members of the church.

2. The other place is Luke xxii. 31, 32: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:" therefore, say they, Peter did not err in the faith, and consequently the popes, his successors, cannot err. But, alas! what vain and ridiculous arguments are these! Nothing is more evident than that this promise, or prayer rather, of Christ doth not concern any infallibility in the doctrine of faith, but his establishment in the grace of faith. If you consider, Peter was not so much mistaken in his judgment,—the opinion of Peter concerning Christ was not changed,—it was not so much an error of his mind, as an error in his practice. Peter was afraid of suffering, and slavish fear made him speak against his own conscience, when he said, "I know not the man;" and his miscarriage was in his tongue, not in his judgment: so that it is plain it was the grace of faith that was there shaken, and not the doctrine of faith; and therefore no infallibility can be pretended from it. And here I might desist; but, for more abundant confutation of this absurd and abominable doctrine, I shall show that as they cannot prove it from scripture, we can disprove it from scripture. I hope I shall make it plain from scripture, that the doctrine of Peter's infallibility and supreme authority in the church of God

was not received after Christ's death. For this I shall offer two arguments.

(1.) *That Peter nowhere challengeth this power.*

(2.) *The apostles nowhere give it him ; therefore it is an intolerable arrogance that his successors should claim it.*

(1.) *Peter did not challenge it.*—It is observable, that in the Gospel of Mark, which the learned believe was indited by Peter's direction, there is not so much as a repetition of that famous text, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church." Peter durst not have omitted it, if it had been so fundamental a doctrine as the Papists would have it. And afterward Peter writes two epistles, and there is not one syllable in either of them concerning this authority. But some may possibly say, "This was Peter's modesty, that he would not take it to himself." But certainly Peter durst not exercise his modesty to the impeachment of his fidelity, and the concealment of so necessary and important a truth ; but he would, and ought to, have done as Paul did, who, when his authority was opposed by false teachers,—he asserts and vindicates, and, as himself expresseth it, "magnifieth his office." (Rom. xi. 13.) And so, no doubt, Peter would and should have done, had he really had that supreme power which the Papists, for their own sakes, would fasten upon him : and because he did not, it is a great presumption [that] he had it not.

(2.) *The other apostles nowhere give this honour to Peter, but rather by their practices show themselves to be of a contrary opinion.*—Which I think will be sufficiently evident to all sober, discreet, and disinterested persons, from two places of scriptures ; which methinks might suffice for the determination of this controversy.

The one is Acts xv. ; where I must first remind you, that at this time our blessed Saviour was dead, and St. Peter, by the doctrine of the Papists, was supposed to be in the actual exercise of his headship over the church,—to be the supreme and infallible judge of all controversies ; and if they say true, he was believed and known to be so by all the rest of the apostles, and all the Christians of that age. Whether it were so or no, we shall see by this chapter. A controversy ariseth in the church. Well, what do they do for the resolution of it ? "They go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question." (Verses 1, 2.) Why did they not go to Peter, if he were the infallible judge ? It was a vain and frivolous thing to call them all together, if Peter alone might determine it. "But, it may be, these were the Christians at Antioch, and they did not well understand Peter's supremacy and infallibility ; but the church of Jerusalem understood it better." Well, let us examine that too. In verse 6 : "The apostles and elders came together to consider of this matter : " St. Peter was no more consulted with than the rest. In verse 7, Peter spake in the assembly, and delivers his opinion : "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear ? " (Verse 10.) The yoke of the ceremonial law is wholly to be taken

off from the necks of Christians, and no burden should be laid upon them.

After him, James comes and delivers another opinion, different from Peter's: "My sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood." (Verses 19, 20.) As if he had said, "I am not altogether of Peter's mind; I would not have all these things wholly and on a sudden discharged. It is but meet that some respect and tenderness should be shown to the believing Jews, and that we should 'become all things to all men,' that we may save some: and therefore it is fit we should a little comply with the Jews; not to impose circumcision, but 'to abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.'" And the manner of his expression here is very observable: "My sentence is," *Διο εγω κρινω*, "Wherefore I thus determine and conclude." He doth not say, according to the present style of the Romanists, and as he ought to have done, if their doctrine were true, "I do in all humility present my opinion to the vicar of Christ, the prince of the apostles, the supreme and infallible judge of this and all other controversies, to whom I freely and fully submit my thoughts and judgment;" but barely relates part of Peter's discourse, and then concludes with a kind of definitive sentence. And, which is further considerable, this great council prefers James's opinion before Peter's, and the decree runs in James's words: "That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well." (Verse 29.) Can any man in his right senses imagine that things would have been thus managed, if Peter had been the supreme and infallible judge of all controversies?

Yet, further: the decree runs not in Peter's name as now it doth in the pope's name, but in all their names: "The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia." (Verse 23.) And, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." (Verse 28.) And, "They delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained by the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem." (Acts xvi. 4.) It is ridiculous and incredible to think that there should not in all this story be one word of Peter's pre-eminence, if he were at that time what they vainly pretend him to be,—the supreme head of the whole church, and the infallible judge of all controversies.

Another place of scripture, no less evident, is the second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians; where there are divers remarkable passages. "The gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me," saith St. Paul, "as the gospel of the circumcision was" committed "unto Peter." (Verse 7.) How? What strange news is this? I thought all the gospel of Christ, whether of the circumcision or uncircumcision, had been committed to Peter; and not any to Paul,

but in subordination to Peter. So says the pope, so say the Papists at this day: Circumcision and uncircumcision, Jews and Gentiles, all committed to Peter. This is a new discovery! St. Paul, though rapt up into the third heaven,—he knew nothing of this. Peradventure whilst he was in heaven, the decree for Peter's supremacy and infallibility was enacted upon earth; and so he lost the knowledge of that mystery. Howsoever, he found nothing of it in heaven, and we can find nothing of it upon earth; and therefore it must needs come from a third place; and what that is, I leave to you to judge. He adds further: "When James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars," (he speaks of them all alike, all rocks and pillars,) "perceived the grace which was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship;" (verse 9;) and, "When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." (Verse 11.) What! the infallible judge to be blamed! This is nonsense! The infallible judge to seduce and mislead them that followed him! This he did, says St. Paul; and therefore it is a very nonsensical opinion, to think that at this time he owned Peter to be the supreme and infallible judge of all controversies. Observe further, how slightly he speaks of all the apostles, and that promiscuously, without any reservation for Peter: "Those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person: for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me." (Verse 6.) "Peter is no more to me than another man, nor than James, nor John, and all the apostles. I received the gospel immediately from Christ; and 'he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles.'" (Verse 8.) Can any man living think, that considers what he believes, that the apostle would have spoken thus, and that all the apostles would have dealt thus, if they had known and believed that Peter had been at this instant the supreme, infallible judge, to whom all were obliged to submit?

But, further: if all that is said concerning Peter had been true, and if the alleged promises did indeed belong to Peter, and did make him an infallible judge of all controversies; yet what is this to the pope, who is a person of a quite different character? Which that you may understand a little, I shall in brief present to you the quality of those persons who, they say, are infallible judges of all controversies. I shall not mention a word out of any Protestant author, but out of their own writings. The pope's library-keeper, Platina, confesseth concerning divers of the popes, as is notorious, that they were *hominum portenta*, "monsters of men;" and elsewhere he confesseth, that "there were eighteen popes successively, one after another, that were magicians, and in covenant with the devil." Can any man living think that such persons were infallibly guided by the Spirit of God, that had made a league with the devil? And Genebrard, a violent and virulent Papist, confesseth that "the popes, for a hundred and fifty years together after the apostles, were apostates, not apos-

tolical." And our countryman, Stapleton, an eminent man amongst the Papists, saith, "I must acknowledge, I think there were scarce any sins, except that of heresy, of which the popes and bishops of Rome were not guilty." And it is notoriously known that many of them were adulterers, and many of them sodomites, and many of them bloody and cruel men, and guilty of all sorts of wickedness.

I need say no more, but shall leave it to you to judge how incredible a thing it is, that persons of such a character as this should be the supreme and infallible judges of all controversies. How can it be imagined, that such a person should be the foundation of the church, that is not so much as a true member of the church? Or how can that promise, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against thee," belong to that man that hath made a covenant with hell itself, or that is a bond-slave of the devil? How can any infamous, wicked wretch make claim to those promises which Christ made to the holy and blessed apostles? How can it be imagined that that man's faith is secured, all whose other graces are ruined and come to nothing? You shall find that faith and a good conscience go together: "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." (1 Tim. i. 19.) How can any man's faith live, when all his other graces are confessed to be dead? And you know what St. James saith: "Faith without works is dead." (James ii. 20.) How can that man pretend to be infallibly guided by the Spirit of God, that hath not the Spirit of God in him? It is expressly said of such sensual and brutish men as many of the popes are acknowledged to have been, that they have not the Spirit of God. We have it under the hand of one of the apostles: "Sensual, having not the Spirit." (Jude 19.) Which also appears (and it is very remarkable that it doth so) from that very text which they bring to prove the infallibility of councils: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world" (that is, as is evident, the wicked men of the world) "cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him:" (John xiv. 16, 17:) the world hath not the Spirit of God, because they have not seen nor known God. Now, who those men are that have not seen nor known God, you may learn from another place: "Whosoever abideth in him" (that is, in God, or in Christ) "sinneth not: whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him;" (1 John iii. 6;) that is, whosoever doth sell himself to sin, whosoever alloweth himself in the customary practice of sin; for of such only that phrase is meant: otherwise, the same apostle says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;" (1 John i. 8;) and "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (Eccles. vii. 20.) But the meaning is: He that lives in a constant course of sin,—this man hath not seen God, nor known him; and therefore hath not the Spirit of God. And therefore away with that impudent doctrine, that pretends the infallible guidance of the Spirit to him that hath not so much as the common graces of the Spirit of God!

By this time I hope it sufficiently appeareth that the doctrine of the pope's supreme and infallible authority hath no foundation in scripture. I should now proceed to show that this doctrine was not owned by the ancient church succeeding the apostles; but because this would of itself require a large discourse, and hath been abundantly demonstrated by others, and I have elsewhere spoken something to it, I shall at present wholly forbear it. I thought to show you, that as it was not owned by the scripture, so neither was it owned by the first and purest churches.

Secondly. For the second particular, *the supremacy and infallibility of councils* separate from the pope, it is so little owned by our English Papists, that I shall not need to spend many words about it. The places of scripture which they allege for it are principally these three:

The first [is] Matt. xviii. 20: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." A most ridiculous proof! For all that this text proves, is the special and gracious presence of Christ. Christ's gracious presence is one thing, infallible guidance is another thing. If that presence of Christ's makes all those infallible who have it, it is not only the pope, or a general council; but all councils, and all assemblies of Christians, are infallible. Further: this promise is suspended upon that condition of being gathered together in Christ's name; that is, by Christ's command and commission; seeking his honour and glory; being guided by his rule, and acting according to his will; all which is included in that phrase of being "gathered in Christ's name." It is true, he that doeth all this is infallible; but the question is, whether they do this; nay, it is abundantly evident [that] they do it not.

Another place is John xvi. 13: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." To that I shall need only to say this,—that this promise is made to the apostles alone, and it is made to every apostle. Pray, observe it. It was not only made to Peter; but to all the apostles, and to every apostle. Whereas one apostle went one way, and another another way; one preached to the Jews, another to the Gentiles: God did promise that he would direct all these in preaching the doctrine of the gospel, that they should be led into all necessary truths. And this was necessary to be done in laying the foundation of the Christian church. But what is this to the pope or general council? He doth not say, that the apostles shall be infallible only when they are gathered together; but every one asunder: otherwise, all those churches which were converted by the preaching of any single apostle (which was the case of most churches in the world) had no certain and infallible foundation for their faith. And, consequently, if this privilege be extended to the successors of the apostles, then not only the pope is infallible, but all and every other successor of any one of the apostles is infallible. So that either it proves the infallibility of divers particular persons, or else it doth not prove the infallibility of councils.

Another place is Acts xv. 28: "For, it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay no other burden upon you:" a most imper-

tinient allegation! This is only a declaration of the present case, and no promise for the future. It is true, he says this council was guided by the Holy Ghost, and so they were; but does not say all other councils shall. It is notoriously known, that many councils there were that were Arians, and others that were erroneous in other points; and the Papists themselves confess, that many councils have erred, especially those councils that have undertaken to censure and condemn the popes, and to set up their own authority above them. These, they say, were not led by the Holy Ghost, but (as they say expressly of the famous council of Carthage, for that very reason) acted by the instigation of the devil. So that it seems all general councils are not infallible, but such as they please, or such as please them; the rest must seek their fortunes and shift for themselves. As for this council, Acts xv., it is confessed [that] they were infallible; but doth it therefore follow, because this council (all the members whereof were holy men, and divers of them holy apostles, every one of which was infallible) were infallibly guided by the Holy Ghost in this controversy, that therefore a general council, consisting sometimes (for aught [that] appears to the contrary) wholly of wicked men without the Spirit of God, should be infallibly guided in all controversies? There is no man of common sense but sees an evident disparity in the case.

I know there is one thing they further pretend,—that though it be true, [that] the pope is not infallible of himself, nor the council alone, yet both together are infallible,—the decrees of the pope confirmed by a general council are infallible. Two things only I shall say to this:

1. This is but a shuffling evasion against their own consciences: because it is notoriously known, and the Popish doctors unanimously confess it, that this supposed infallibility is lodged either in the pope, or in the council. They will not allow of a mixed infallibility; that the pope should constitute one part, and the council another. Belarmine says, that “infallibility does not lie partly in the pope, and partly in the council; but it is wholly in the pope; and in the council so far and no farther than they cleave to the pope.” And, says another, (Stapleton,) “The council adds no infallibility to the pope; it is he alone that is infallible.” And, on the other side, those that place the infallibility in the council do as expressly affirm, “It is not partly in the pope, and partly in the council; but wholly in the council; and in the pope no further than he sticks to the council.” Which having fully proved elsewhere out of their own authors, I shall here omit. By which it is evident enough, that this is only an artifice to deceive the ignorant and injudicious people; but is not satisfactory to their own consciences.

2. If this were true, it would do them no good, because it doth not reach the present state of the church: for at this time there is no general council in the church; the pope is now the only head of the church amongst them: so that either the pope alone is the infallible judge, or there is none at this day. If it be said, they have, beside

the pope's authority, the decrees and writings of the councils; that will do them no good: for they all say, there is a necessity of a living infallible judge; and they say of the scripture, that it is but a dead letter, and that no writings can determine controversies. So that there being now no head of the church beside the pope, either he is infallible, or there is none such in their church at this day; and therefore I may conclude, that no particular person or company of men now is, or can be, the supreme judge of the church, to whom all Christians are bound to submit their faith and consciences.

I shall conclude all with two practical INFERENCES.

INFERENCE I. Learn from hence what infinite cause you have to bless God, that hath delivered and preserved you from Popery; and what need you have continually to pray, and to use all lawful endeavours, that this iron yoke may never be put upon you. The Popish teachers do by their people as the Philistines did by Samson,—put out their eyes, and make them grind in their mill. Papists must see by their teachers' eyes, and are obliged to believe whatever they teach them. I have been informed by an English merchant, sometimes residing in Spain, that, being in some conference concerning religion with a Spaniard of note there and his intimate acquaintance, he used these expressions with tears in his eyes: "You people of England are happy: you have liberty to see with your own eyes, and to examine the doctrine delivered to you, upon which your everlasting life depends; but," says he, "we dare not say our souls are our own; but we are bound to believe whatever our teachers tell us, though it be never so unreasonable or ridiculous." It is doubtless a dreadful thing for a man to see the Inquisition on the one hand, and damnation on the other hand. Therefore let us bless God, that hitherto hath delivered us, and hath prevented in some good measure the hopes and expectations of Papists. Understand, I beseech you, and consider your privilege. We ministers do not impose upon you, and tell you, [that] you must believe all we say; though it would be for our interest to do so. But we say, with the apostle, "We speak as unto wise men; judge ye what we say." (1 Cor. x. 15.) We commend you, as St. Paul did the Bereans, for searching the scriptures, whether these doctrines we teach be true or no. (Acts xvii. 11.) It is a great evidence of the truth of the Protestant doctrine, that it is not afraid of the light, it desires nothing more than to be tried; and it is no less an evidence of the falsehood of Popery, that they dread nothing more than the light. You know what our Saviour says: "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (John iii. 20, 21.) God hath given you talents. We command you to use your talents; they command you to wrap them in a napkin. God hath given you light: "The spirit of" a "man is the candle of the Lord." (Prov. xx. 27.) We command you to see by that light; they command you to hide it under a bushel. Pity blind Papists; pray for them; and rejoice in the goodness of

God toward you ; and see what cause you have to be fervent in prayer, that God may never suffer Popery to recover its standing in these kingdoms.

INFERENCE II. Forasmuch as there is no person upon earth that can infallibly guide you to salvation, it concerns you to have the greater care of your own salvation. You will say, "What shall we do?" I shall only give you these three directions, and so conclude. Do but these three things, and you need not be troubled that you have no infallible judge to secure you in your way.

1. *Study the holy scriptures.*—Let the pope forbid you to do it, it is no matter ; it is sufficient for us, that Christ commands you to do it : "Search the scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : " (John v. 39 :) "*Ie think*, and ye think right." You must not take that for a term of diminution ; no more than when the apostle saith, "I think I have the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. vii. 40.) But the meaning is, "You judge, and you judge aright in it." "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John xx. 31.) The word is written, and (blessed be God!) you have it before your eyes. It is not hidden nor locked up from you, as amongst the miserable Papists ; but the book is open, and you may read it, and may, by God's blessing upon your own industry, and the use of those helps which his gracious providence affords you, in competent measure understand it. I shall only mention that one place, and methinks the very reading of it should put this dispute quite out of doors : "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them ; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. iii. 14, 15.)

2. *Pray fervently for the guidance of God's Spirit.*—And, for your encouragement, know, that God hath not left you without promises, and those much more clear than those which the Papists produce for their Diana of infallibility. In general this : "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." (John xvi. 23.) And lest any should think this promise is confined to the apostles, our Saviour adds, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word ; that they all may be one," &c. (John xvii. 20, 21.) Another clear and comfortable promise to this purpose you have in Luke xi. 13 : "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children : how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Whence I may venture to draw this conclusion, that a holy and humble Christian, sincerely asking the conduct of the Holy Spirit, hath better assurance of his infallible guidance in all truths necessary to salvation, than an ungodly pope that either doth not ask it, or asks amiss, seeing such a person hath no interest in Christ, in whom alone "all the promises are yea and Amen." (2 Cor. i. 20.) And therefore let no Christian perplex himself with such anxious thoughts as these :

“What shall I do under the various and contradictory opinions that are amongst us? I want wisdom to discern.” St. James tells you what you should do: “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men” (mark that!) “liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” (James i. 5.) And therefore in this case beg counsel from God. There is not the weakest nor the most ignorant creature amongst you, but if you, faithfully and diligently seek direction from God, you may confidently expect it. Pray to God, as David did: “Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.” (Psalm xxv. 5.) And, “O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.” (Psalm xliii. 3.) And as David did beg this of God, so he promiseth it to himself; and so may every sincere Christian: “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” (Psalm lxxiii. 24.) God is the same God still, and as able and as willing to direct you as ever he was, and as faithful in keeping his promise as ever, as ready to hear as you are willing to ask. You have it under God’s hand: “Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” (Luke xi. 9.) What need more be said to encourage the faith and the hope of all that fear God?

3. *If you would discern and hold fast the truth, love and practise it.*—The best way to be certainly guided into the way of truth, is to live up to it. Of this we have evident assurance in that fore-mentioned place: “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” (John vii. 17.) Certainly, a good conscience is the best preservative of a man’s faith; and therefore when once men put away a good conscience, the next news is, they make shipwreck of their faith: “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck.” (1 Tim. i. 19.) An eminent instance you have in 2 Thess. ii. 10—12: “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness:” a text that needs no other comment but the examples of this generation. Papists brag much of the many proselytes they have gained amongst us. For my part, I am not at all surprised with it. When I consider such texts as this, and the righteous and tremendous judgments of God, I rather wonder they do not flow in to them in far greater numbers. Nor can I believe that any wise man will think [that] they have any great cause of triumph in their proselytes, if he will but make a little inquiry, and get a true character of the generality of them. He that knows their morals will never wonder at the change of their religion. It is no strange thing if a dissolute Protestant turn a zealous Papist; or if the righteous God shake those out of his lap, and out of the Protestant church, who were but rotten members of it.

I conclude all with that excellent advice : “ Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter iii. 17, 18.)

SERMON V. (II.)

BY THE REV. RICHARD BAXTER.

THERE IS NO SUCH CHURCH INSTITUTED BY CHRIST, AS ALL CHRISTIANS JOINED TO ONE MERE HUMAN HEAD, EITHER PERSONAL OR COLLECTIVE : BUT CHRIST IS THE ONLY UNIVERSAL HEAD.

CHRIST, AND NOT THE POPE, UNIVERSAL HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.—1 Corinthians xii. 27, 28.

OUR appointed work at this time is to determine whether there be such a church of Christ's institution as consisteth of all Christians united or subjected to any one mere human head, personal or collective ; or, whether there be any universal head or governor of the whole church on earth beside and under Jesus Christ. Which I deny. And when I have fully opened the question, I shall prove the negative both from this text, and several other texts and arguments.

Of all the controversies between us and the Papists, this is the first and greatest : we, first, deny that there is any such head ; and, secondly, that the pope is such a head.

The Papists, as knowing the impossibility of finding any fair pretence of ascribing the internal acts of Christ's office to the pope, are forced to distinguish a mediatorial head of vital influx to the church regenerate, from a political governing head of the church visible or congregate. And they confess that Christ only is the first ; but say that, under Christ, the pope is, as his vicegerent, the second. But we maintain the negative as to both ; and if there be no such head, there is no church that is so headed. Two things in this word are meant in our denial :

First. There is no such *constitutive head*, who is to the universal church a constitutive, essential part : as is a king in a kingdom, a master in a family, and the *pars imperans* [“the party that commands”] in every political society.