

**PROTESTANT ALLIANCE LECTURES.**

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**THE RULE OF FAITH.**

**FIFTH LECTURE,**

**DELIVERED BEFORE THE PROTESTANT ALLIANCE,**

**OF NOVA SCOTIA.**

**AT TEMPERANCE HALL, HALIFAX, ON FRIDAY EVENING,  
FEBRUARY 11th, 1859.**

**BY REV. WM. SOMMERVILLE,**

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

The writer is not a member of the Protestant Alliance, and the members are not therefore understood to assent to every statement made in the illustration of the several points introduced. As, however, he believes the single object of the Alliance is the advancement of *truth* in opposition to Anti-christianism, he takes this occasion to say that the only reason of not identifying himself with it arises out of his own distinguishing position, as a Reformed Presbyterian.

W. S.

# THE RULE OF FAITH

BY REV. WM. SOMMERVILLE.

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THE subject of the proposed Lecture, as you are already aware, is "THE RULE OF FAITH."

Theological use has attached a peculiar sense to the phrase, and a few sentences shall dispose of the terms employed in the enunciation of the topic of discussion.

Faith is reliance upon evidence, and is developed in the reception of whatever is exhibited to the understanding, sustained by such evidence as is judged to be sufficient. Evidence is of various kinds. Sometimes it consists in the attestation of a person who is of acknowledged veracity, and fully competent to pronounce upon the subject of his testimony. Sometimes evidence is presented in the form of self-evident or received facts or principles, from which we draw our conclusions. Again, the senses in a healthy state constitute the evidence on which we rely. Consciousness also supplies the basis of faith on another class of subjects. The term faith, however, is very generally limited in its application to reliance upon personal testimony, and the consequent reception of the information which we receive through that medium. At all events in the present discussion we are restricted to the consideration of faith resting upon the testimony of an intelligent witness, and more particularly upon the testimony of one whose veracity cannot be questioned, and whose competency is absolutely perfect—the testimony of Him whose name is true, and whose wisdom is unsearchable. As we speak

exclusively of faith resting on Divine knowledge and Divine integrity our faith is of necessity limited to what God has spoken, and is regulated by what God has spoken.— We cannot consistently profess to believe God at all, and not receive with unqualified confidence every part of his communications. The reception of what He has not set forth lies without the range of that faith, the consideration of which claims our attention this evening. What is not comprehended in a Divine communication may be as true, then, as anything which God has revealed, but it is not the object of Divine faith. The truths presented to us in Geometry, or in any of the exact sciences, being demonstratively true cannot be received with less confidence than the utterance of an audible voice from heaven, but they are excluded by the very nature of their proof from the object of Divine truth, or the faith delivered to the saints.

The Rule of Faith, therefore, of which we speak, is the revelation which God has made to us, at whatever time, under whatever form, through whatever channel, or under whatever circumstances He has been pleased to make a communication or communications to his creatures—to us. The *principle* of faith in God may be most absolute, profound, and reverential, but the exercise of that faith supposes a knowledge that God has spoken, and a knowledge of what he has spoken. Our subject supposes that he has spoken; and the question for immediate consideration is, where is this revelation to be found? which, being known, must constitute a Rule of Faith.

In treating of a Divine revelation there are two classes of opponents with whom we have to deal. In opposition to the one we have to shew that God has spoken, and that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a record of his deliverances. But I do not intend, you do not expect me, to urge an argument against the Deist who denies the fact of a revelation from heaven. We have to

deal with a far more insidious, and a far more formidable, and a far more successful enemy of intercourse between God and man than all the Tindals and Humes, the Paines and Howdens, of ancient or later times. That enemy

Rome. Professing to recognise and receive a revelation from God, the question "What constitutes that revelation?" has been so involved as to render the blessing very equivocal—the Word of God practically useless as a rule to man. Indeed, Rome herself being witness, it would be better out of the hands of men in general than placed at their disposal—so that we have and have not a revelation: or we have one without which we would do better, unless we can secure a superadded deliverance, in the form of an ecclesiastical and authoritative exposition.

Still the ever blessed and ever wise God has secured for us a very remarkable advantage in dealing with the Church of Rome. We claim the reverence due to the Word of God for no one book, for no one verse, which Rome has not in the most ample and dogmatic manner recognized as of Divine origin and obligation. The far-famed Council of Trent has not only pronounced in favor of the inspiration of all the books which we denominate the Old Testament, and all that we call the New, but has pronounced its curse upon all who do not recognise that inspiration. In the decree which records its anathema upon the man who does not hold them "sacred and canonical" it has supplied a list of the books in favor of which it has decreed, and there is not one wanting of our acknowledged books of Scriptures. It would be useless to spend time in reading that decree in the terms in which it was given, or in terms of a translation. You will find it in almost any book of considerable size on the Romish controversy you may choose to take up. Perhaps the circumstance should not be entirely overlooked that the Tridentine decree ascribes sacredness and canonical authority to the Latin translation



usually called the Vulgate. But besides that the authority of a translation pre-supposes the authority of the original, I find an English edition of the Scriptures, published in New York with the approbation of the Right Reverend Bishop Hughes, professing to be "diligently compared with the Hebrew and Greek." Of course, that the translation of the Vulgate is sustained by such a comparison is intended to furnish a recommendation.

The fact that the Council of Trent recognises all the books of Scripture for which we plead should never be suffered to pass out of sight or be forgotten in treating either of the doctrines or practices of the Church of Rome, and in particular in disposing of her Rule of Faith, or in ascertaining the true rule in opposition to her extensions. To this decree, binding, under pain of damnation, every priest and every member of that anti-christian church to the full and unqualified recognition of all that we call a revelation from God, every Romish controversialist should be fixed, the attention of every Romanist should be directed, that they may know that we appeal to no authority for their conviction but what the Pope himself is bound to acknowledge and revere. It is not unusual for the advocates of the Church of Rome to demand the evidence of Inspiration, whether to embarrass discussion or to exhibit the Church as the only depositary of that evidence. Not one word should be listened to, implying a need of evidence of the inspiration of the Protestant Rule of Faith. The Council of Trent has pronounced its judgment. The Pope, the Priest, the debater, is bound by its decree, and he cannot be permitted to raise a doubt, or ask a question that implies it. It is true that the decree enumerates many other books as of the Old Testament besides those we acknowledge, but our canon the member of the Church of Rome must regard as settled, and we merely employ what he dare not refuse in reasoning, with respect to what we *do* refuse. If we reject

what he owns as canonical, it is upon the authority of what he does not deny to be canonical.

Let us now attend to the testimony which the unquestioned Word of God gives respecting itself. I begin by an appeal to the words of Peter by which the equal claims of the Old Testament and the New are ascertained. There may be occasion to introduce afterwards a line of argument which shall completely cover this ground; and the reference is made in the present instance to show the breadth of the application of which a passage admits which is presently to be introduced. The statement of the Apostle of the Circumcision is: "This second Epistle I now write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the Holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us, the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour." 1. These words were written after the introduction of the Christian dispensation. 2. They fully recognise the permanent obligation of the Old Testament. 3. The commandments of the Apostles are exhibited as having the same high character and authority as the words of the prophets. The address, therefore, of the Apostle Paul to Timothy applies with equal precision to all that we, in common with the Church of Rome, receive as the Word of God,—the rule of Faith. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine," &c.,—2 Tim., iii, 16. This is a very impressive and full statement. It contains a remarkably specific exposition of the origin, and character, and design, and tendency of the Scripture. 1. All Scripture is given by inspiration. 2. This is the Scripture recognised by the Jews, for it is what Timothy knew from a child. 3. It is fitted as an instrument to completely form the character of the servant of Christ.

By this simple sentence we are able to dispose, in a very summary manner, of the subject of oral tradition, to which

the Church of Rome attaches so much importance, and which is so necessary to her existence. *It is unnecessary.* By means of Scripture the man of God is thoroughly furnished unto all good works. He finds doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness there. Tradition is therefore a very useless, and of course a very cumbrous appendage.

Inspiration is claimed only for what is *written*. All *Scripture* is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable. We have a divine warrant to appeal to the *written* word; and the *unwritten* word must come before us supported by the same evidences of Divine presence that sustained inspired writers. Nothing less than the demonstration of miraculous gifts is needed to command our homage. If traditions proceeded from the lips of men possessed of extraordinary spiritual qualifications we might receive them. The communications of Patriarchs were the utterances of *Prophets*; the *oral* traditions of Paul were the utterances of a holy man speaking as he was moved by the Holy Ghost—and if these traditions have not been committed to writing, we must forfeit the advantage to be derived from them, except we can place the same faith in the reporter as in the original speaker. The value of an original communication may be admitted and there may be good reason to doubt, notwithstanding, whether it has been faithfully transmitted. Upon this subject MR. GAVIN has remarked that water which has issued from the purest mountain fountain becomes corrupted by passing through a dunghill, and the stream of tradition could hardly find a worse channel than by the city of the seven hills. When LUTHER opened the sluices that discharged the sewers of that ancient foundation, the POPE and the Cardinals themselves were obliged to put the branch to their noses.

It is true that the Church must be heard under pain of excision, but it is to be recollected that the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth, because to her have been com-



mitted the living oracles of God, and whether the Church that asks our ears be the spouse of Christ or a harlot must be determined by the word which has been deposited with the body, and is accessible to all who are required to judge—that which is unwritten by that which is written, if there would be no scism in the body. But I might have summoned up all that is really necessary on the subject of oral tradition in the words of an aged Seceding Minister, and a much-beloved Classical teacher of mine, in a sermon on the word Church. Speaking of the Church of Rome, he says, “She got a word in secret from the Head of the Church. It would be hard to guess what it was ; but it made her infallible.”

The writers of some of the books constituting the Apocrypha claim for themselves to have written under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit. The author of the 2nd Esdras freely uses the distinguishing phraseology of inspired writers—“Thus saith the Lord.” In Baruch we meet with the same form of words. Yet, looking at the collection as a whole, there is hardly a consistent claim preferred. The admission in the second book of Maccabees is curious—“If I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired ; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.” Rome’s explanation is more curious than the apology, representing it as regarding “the style and manner, which in the sacred penmen is not always the most accurate.” This is accompanied by an appeal to Paul’s acknowledgment of rudeness of speech, in which there is an oversight of the fact, that whether the style is to be pronounced rude or polished, the Apostle claims to have used the words which the Holy Ghost taught. The translator of Jesus the son of Sirach, the acknowledged writer of Ecclesiasticus, does not claim inspiration either for himself or his author. He says in his introduction, “My grandfather, Jesus, after he had much given himself to a diligent reading of the law and the pro-

phets, and other books that were delivered unto us from our fathers, *had a mind also to write something himself* pertaining to doctrine and wisdom." And again, "Thought it good and necessary for me to bestow some diligence and labor to interpret this book."

The examination of the reasons assigned by the Church of Rome for the introduction of the Apocryphal books into the Canon, suggests sufficiently strong reasons for their rejection. It is admitted that "it is uncertain who was the writer of the book of Wisdom," and that "he wrote in the person of Solomon." This is to proclaim him a *liar*. The Church has received Ecclesiasticus "instructed by Apostolical traditions, and directed by the spirit of God." Though not in the Jewish calendar I would have thought that direction by the Spirit of God might suffice without tradition. But in either case we have nothing to rely upon but the testimony of the Church of Rome, and after hearing the Lord Jesus announce, "If I bear witness of myself my witness is not true," we hope to be excused if we assign to her as high a place as the Lord claims for himself, and say "Thou bearest witness of thyself—thy witness is not true. Out of thine own heart, and neither from tradition nor the Spirit of God, has the Book of Wisdom been placed beside Moses and Solomon, Isaiah and Malachi." "Baruch was secretary and disciple to Jeremiah, and a sharer in his labors and persecutions," therefore "the ancient fathers have considered and quoted this book as a part of the prophecy of Jeremiah," quoted it knowing it not to be his, without knowing that Baruch ever wrote it. Surely in this the Fathers were not directed by the Spirit of God. The history of Susanna, and of Bel and the Dragon, are confessedly not in the Hebrew, but "they were from the very beginning a part of the *Christian Bible*." Beginning of what? The Christian dispensation, or the mystery of iniquity? We are not told, and the proof of nothing is attempted.—

Again, speaking of the books called Maccabees: " Though they are not received by the Jews they are received by the Church, who, in settling her Canon of the Scriptures, chose rather to be directed by the traditions she had received from the Apostles of Christ than by that of the Scribes and Pharisees. And as the Church has declared these two books Canonical, even in two General Councils, viz: Florence and Trent, there can be no doubt of their authenticity." Of course not. Yet there are some circumstances that are calculated to inspire doubt. When men can persuade themselves that the Jewish Canon was settled by the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, who *made void* the Word of God by their traditions, we are tempted to question their credibility when they report the traditions of the Apostles of Christ. And if the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, instead of confirming, made void the Word of God, how shall we be assured that the traditions of the Church of Rome, as Apostolical, are not working, and likely to work, the same mischievous effects under this dispensation. The Scribes and Pharisees were held in as much esteem by their disciples as Popes and Priests are held by the most devoted Papists; and I am not aware of any reason why they should not. The Scribes and Pharisees, it is true, could devour widows' houses, and fill their dishes with extortion and excess, and if, where Popery prevails, we did not find a rich Church and a poor people, there would be no temptation to place our modern traditionists with the ancient.

I must refer you to such men as HORNE, and HALDANE, and BEGG, to demonstrate what books were received by the Jews. It would be a waste of your time to rehearse what they have said better than I could. To determine their Canonical books I will only remark that with Protestants the Canon of the Old Testament is settled neither by Elders nor Fathers, but by Jesus Christ himself, who has, in the most explicit manner, recognized the Jewish Canon, never hinted at



its imperfection or corruption, and whilst he failed not to reprove the Jewish doctors for their manifold doctrinal and practical errors, never insinuated a charge of unfaithfulness to their trust, having committed to them the living oracles of God.

Let us now advert to the manner in which he and his Apostles used the Scriptures so recognized. To them they unhesitatingly appeal as competent to pronounce definitely upon all subjects of which they treat. Indeed both the master and the scholar discover a perfect willingness to have the truth of their doctrine tried by that sovereign arbiter in all theological questions. Neither the high character of the Son of Man, nor the Spirit, moving the lips and directing the pen of the Apostles, may come in competition with *what is written*. We have their full warrant, if the record be contradicted, to deny the claims of the one and the inspiration of the other. *What is written* repels every temptation—exposes the corruption of their traditions—refutes the errors of the Sadducees—sets aside the charge of blasphemy—justifies the shouts of the children bidding welcome to the coming King of Zion. The obligation laid upon the Son of God by the Word is recognized, even to his crucifixion. He has only to ask, and more than twelve legions of angels are present to deliver him out of the hands of the rulers of the Jews, and out of the hands of the Romans; but their interference would militate with the fulfilment of the Word of God—“How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be”—and he will not ask. When he would satisfy his sorrowing and anxious Disciples that all that had befallen him was in keeping with the pre-ordained character and course of their expected Messiah, “Beginning at Moses and the Prophets he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Paul justifies his doctrine at Damascus, at Jerusalem, throughout all Judea, and among the Gentiles, in

that he had said "none other things than those that the Prophets and Moses did say should come." And whether he writes to the Romans an exposition of the doctrines of grace, or to the Galatians, to meet the opposing doctrines of false Apostles, or to the Hebrews, to show that their sacred ritual was superseded, not by repudiation, but by fulfilment in him in whom it was magnified, the recognized Scriptures must sustain his doctrines and his reasonings. In fact the New Testament is not presented to us as an independent and new Revelation so much as a re-publication of what had been of old, as it derived a glorious illustration in God manifest in the flesh, in his works, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory. In anything gainsaying what had been written aforetime it must fall to the ground. The New would in truth be as unintelligible without the Old Testament as a commentary without the text.

It was a bold act of Luther to deny the authenticity of the Epistle of James, but we must admire the stern integrity of the principle upon which he acted,—nothing must be respected which contradicts what is unquestionably of Divine origin; and this principle restored him to soundness of mind at a later period, as it ultimately must every man upon whose heart it has been written.

Now, if the Son of Man says, "Let my doctrine be tested by Scripture," for one thing from God cannot contradict another from the same source. If the Apostles say, "Let our doctrine be tested by the Scripture," surely the Roman Catholic will not hesitate to have the Apocrypha subjected to the same ordeal, even in the presence of the Council of Florence or of Trent. The Spirits of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets, and if the Apocrypha be Canonical it will bear to be compared with the other Scriptures that are Canonical. As I said before, we do not appeal from what Roman Catholics hold to what they do not recognize, but



from what they hold and we repudiate to what they do in the fullest manner recognize. As St. Paul does not appeal to Scripture against the Philosophers of Greece, but to their own poets, or known facts, so we do not ask a Roman Catholic to reject the Apocrypha but upon the evidence of his own acknowledged standard. We do not, therefore, allow the propriety of prayers for the dead, the merit of good works, and the mediatorial character of angels, because they are taught in the Apocrypha; but we refuse the Apocrypha because it teaches these things contrary to the recognized Word of God. To bring the discussion to as narrow limits as possible we have thus reduced it to the argument from internal evidences, and having indicated the line of argument, it is scarcely necessary to follow it out by a more specific application.

The conclusion to which we are led by the considerations thus imperfectly produced is, that the New Testament recognized by Romanists, without limitation or addition, and the Old Testament, to the exclusion of oral tradition and the Apocrypha, constitute the Divine Testimony, and are The Rule of Faith.

We shall now proceed to animadvert upon the use and efficiency of the Scriptures as a Rule of Faith, having premised a single remark upon a current distinction between faith and practice, or the rule of faith and practice. Faith and practice are easily distinguished in idea. The distinction is obvious, yet they cannot be separated. All practice is grounded upon faith of some kind, and faith leads to action. As might be expected where thorough conviction is introduced, faith and practice are submitted to us in the Divine Word, completely interwoven and mutually dependent. Principles are ever exhibited with reference to their practical results; and the practice which God approves assumes a principle which sustains and regulates it. The faith which is inoperative is

represented as dead, being alone ; and faith itself is represented as an act of obedience, whilst that conformity to the will of God which we denominate Christian practice is introduced as an exhibition of faith in God. In fixing the rule of faith, therefore, we fix the rule of practice. They are one. With this anticipatory observation I remark,

I. This Rule is valuable only as it is applied.

When it has been proved beyond all rational contradiction that the Bible is the Word of God, that that word is limited to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments : when copies have been multiplied indefinitely, circulated with unwearied diligence, and stored in depots in every city, village, and hamlet, no beneficial results may follow. Men may not be disposed to read—disposed to hear the proclamation of the word. We cannot persuade them, and our antecedent labour has been against the wind and the tide. A grave question arises ; how is this evil to be remedied ? how is the Divine rule to be brought to bear, for the formation of the character and the determination of the destinies of man ? The question is at the present hour most pressing, not only with reference to the general aspect of society and its interests, but in particular on account of the reduction of Rome, as far as its rulers are able to effect it, to the situation of Jericho, when, alarmed by the gathering of the children of Israel, “ it was closely shut up, none went out and none came in.”

The Westminster Standards are not Presbyterianism ; nor are the Thirty-nine Articles and the Liturgy the Church of England ; but the approbation, reception and practical embodiment of them in the lives of men, set before us the one and the other respectively. So the Scriptures are not Christianity, but the living and active display of them in those of whose understanding they are the light, of whose character they are the elements, and of whose conversation they are the image.

It is sometimes a subject of bitter complaint that the world are so resolved upon making professors of religion an object of observance that they are ever watching with the eye of malice, magnifying and registering their defects, while they cast their excellencies into the shade, or ascribe them to improper or vile motives. Granted. We have before us an object that ungodly men are disposed to survey—to examine from every point of view. We neither inquire into the motive, nor care what it is. It may be the worst possible; but the fact is, they are anxious to examine—diligently, minutely, unwearily, to examine. And why should we complain of this. Nobody but the conscious blaek-leg feels uneasy when he finds the eye of the Police Constable intently fixed on him. It seems to me the wisdom of God is displayed in this—the wisdom of Him who sees the end from the beginning. Christ was carefully scrutinized; and he was able to bear it. God was manifest in the flesh: and the more closely and constantly he is watched so much the better for his honor,—and in him men read, without being aware of it, the word of God. He is indeed the living word. Now, his followers are ordained to be the light of the world—lights shining in the midst of darkness,—they are commanded to let their light shine; and God has said, they are a city set upon a hill. God has said to the world, “Look at them.” He has given them a conspicuous position, that they may be easily seen—contemplated from afar—seen upon every side. We need not ask men to look,—they do it uninvited, undesired, I am sorry to say. What are we to show them? Let us shew them the Word of God, this Rule of Faith prepared by the Highest—not so much paper and letter-press and sheepskin binding. They would turn away from it with disgust, with indignation, or with scorn. But read they must, and shall; in the name of the Lord we will compel them,—no, not compel them, shew them the Rule in that form that they shall be anxious



to read. Into the image let God put life—this image of God Himself—this image of Him, whose name is the *Word of God*. Let us set before them the epistle of Christ, written, not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God; not upon tables of stone, or parchment, or on paper, but upon the fleshly tables of the heart. This is the first copy generally read by man, and they are thus led to a more extensive personal examination of what is written, and improve the facilities afforded to know more of Him thus imperfectly reflected—more of the Holy One. If they would see Jesus, by his grace we shall shew him also in those who have had the promise fulfilled in their favor—“I will dwell in them and walk in them.” God is in his holy temple, and is seen there in glory and beauty. Christians; His temple ye are.

Who, according to the arrangement of Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working—who can escape from the perusal of the Word of God? Who can refuse? Who can close his eyes? What Infidel, what Priest can hinder? It is impossible. Assume that as we profess to know God, we know Him, and that His Word dwells richly in us, Priests, Nuns, Infidels, and profligates, must leave the sphere in which Christians move, or they must read. The epistle is spread before them in the field, in the counting-house, in the lawyer's office, in the court of judgment, in the hall of Legislature, in the palace.

But those who are partakers with him, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, will recognize the obligation they are under to put forth a direct instrumentality in scattering the seeds of Divine truth. The epistle written upon the heart is like the “best wine, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.” This phase of Christian exertion recognizes the fact that

II. The Scriptures, as a rule, are of universal obligation.

It is the rule God has given to man. Who can claim a

right to close his ears when God speaks—speaks to him—sends to him a message by another? Eglon, King of Moab, heathen and oppressor though he was, when Ehud informed him that he had a message from God for him, stood up. The Most High has purposed that the knowledge of Himself shall cover the earth as the waters cover the seas. He has promised it. He has accordingly commanded His servants to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. The foundation of this command from the Son of God is set before us in the terms following: “All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore,” &c. The dominion of the Son of God, by a Divine right, is the universe; and he sends his ambassadors into every part of his own dominions, to treat with his own subjects—all flesh. There is not only a Divine warrant but a Divine command, to bring before all men this Rule. The despots of earth, the Dukes of Tuscany and the Emperors of Austria, may plead exemption from foreign interference, and respect for their laws of those who reside in their territories. In Tuscany or in Austria, as in Britain, we are within the realms of the Son of God, whose power alone is imperial, and to him we must yield obedience. They may signify their “will and pleasure,” but our primary concern is with the “will and pleasure” of Him who sits at the Father’s right hand. This is “the law of Nations.”

We hold in our hand the *exequatur* of the Lord to address men, and to require of them subjection to the Word of Life, wherever we find them. The man who claims a right or power to set limits to the proclamation is himself the subject of address. The Priest, the Prime Minister, or the Prince, possesses no more right to interfere than the humblest individual who walks the streets of Halifax. The voice says Cry, in the streets of Liverpool or London, of Paris or Peking, of Florence or of Rome. When the Apostles found men



assembled in the Temple they deliver to them their message. The rulers are dissatisfied, arrest and imprison them. Their defence is the repetition of their message, and the equal claim of the Lord upon their Judges. They have not time to spend in exposing, before a Christian audience, the superstition and unbelief of the rulers and masses of Jewry, the despotism and idolatry of heathen lands. Time presses. Men are perishing—God is ignored. The command of Christ is imperative—what their hand finds to do they do with all their might. They tell to the Jew the self-righteousness of the Jew, and to the Gentile the idolatry of the Gentile. Shall we wait till we have obtained liberty of the Pope, the Emperor of China, or the Governor of India, to publish a rule which claims from *them* subjection. If the Apostles had waited till the Emperor or Priests of Rome had published liberty of conscience, would the Gospel have penetrated in thirty years into every part of the Roman Empire? Had the Reformers waited the liberty of the Emperor and Princes of Germany, and the other Sovereigns of Europe, to obey the command of Christ, their progress would have been as slow as our own, while we wait for the negociations of politicians, the operation of international treaties and deputations to the Duke of Tuscany. Did FARREL exceed his commission, (I do not ask did he act prudently,) did he exceed his commission when he mounted a stone in the cemetery, adjoining the Church of Serriere to preach, although he had been forbidden to preach in any Church of the Earldom of Neuchatel? Had he forgotten the character and claims of Christ when in Valangen he ascended the pulpit, the Priest in the meantime preparing to celebrate Mass, and (a young man having snatched the consecrated wafer from the Priest's hands) took occasion to proclaim him whom the heavens must receive till the restitution of all things. What would be thought of a Minister in Halifax were he to enter into the Romish Cathedral during public service and

preach one sacrifice for sin to the assembly? His Brethren would be the first to condemn him—Christian Magistrates would imprison and punish him, and, when times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, his name would be written down beside the name of WILLIAM FARREL.

While we descant upon civil and religious liberty we are very sparing in the definition of terms. The phrase graces many a polished period; and while laws and Protestant opinion guarantee civil and religious liberty, not in their intention but in their operation, the gospel is limited in its operation, and men remain strangers to the law by which the Holy One intends that men should be governed. Magistrates, themselves bound by our rules, cannot consistently support its contradiction; and laws that are at variance with its universal dissemination are respected at the expense of disrespect for the rule.

My friend demands respect for his conscientious convictions. The Romanist demands respect for his. Granted. He is entitled to respect. So is the Mahomedan—so is the Pagan. And therefore he is entitled to a demonstration of the error or absurdity of his opinions before he be required to abandon them—to an exhibition of the Divine claims of truth before he is required to adopt it—to exemption from all physical compulsion in either case. But if the civil and religious liberty which he claims means exemption from interference with his views—free examination of their character, or from any attempt to set forth their contradiction to the rule that God has settled, and such exemption guaranteed by civil statute, we must peremptorily refuse such a demand; and to expect our support and patronage in the maintenance of error is to expect that more respect be had for his opinions than for the judgment of God. Opposition to the Divine Word is not merely to be regulated but rooted out, if we respect the

universality of the *Rule*. If Baal be a God, all that he has a right to ask is that he have liberty to plead for himself.

The preceding considerations are applicable to settle the obligation to use the Bible in Schools, and to refuse any public support to Popish Colleges, or other educational institutions of Popery from which the Scriptures are excluded—or to Chaplains whose doctrines are a controversion of the Divine Word.

But if without respect to existing authorities or civil institutions, we press the universal obligation of the Divine Word, we will be rushing upon certain ruin, and much disaster and strife will ensue. Very likely. When the Apostles went forth they took up their cross, and so did the Reformers; and they actually resisted unto blood striving against sin. The Lord knew what would be the consequences of his own course, and he knew and made known to the Apostles the consequences of theirs, yet the command is imperative, “Preach the Gospel to every creature—preach the Word.” Men cannot be left to perish eternally, that we may escape temporal affliction; neither may the claims of God be suppressed, lest we should incur the displeasure of the magnate or the noble by the publication of their subordination.

III. This rule is authoritative and final on all subjects of which it treats.

This is fully sustained by the appeals to it by our Lord and his Apostles, to which reference has been made, and which it would be superfluous to repeat.

But we are not competent judges of the subjects which may come under the operation of our Rule. “Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him?” The things that are revealed to us by that Spirit are things which eye hath not seen, ear heard, or the heart of man conceived.



The assumption has often been made that with such and such subjects the Bible has nothing to do. The only legitimate plan of resolving a doubt with respect to any given topic is to open the book and read. If it be not introduced there, of course the Bible and Christianity have nothing to do with it, but if, on the contrary, the Bible does deal with it, to that resolver of doubts we claim a right to appeal, however inconvenient or disagreeable it may be to gainsayers. Often have I heard—have you heard, for instance, that Religion has nothing to do with Politics. The knave has made the proclamation, and the fool has listened and believed, and echoed. But the knave is nearly reduced to silence, and the fool begins to stare, and attempt a little consideration. It has been ascertained by facts that Scriptural godliness and unscriptural politics cannot stand together. To the oppressive Nimrod in the state or in the church the Bible is a tremendous book. It is terrible to the *despot*. He is not unwilling to hear—complacently to hear the grave annunciation of his equally despotic minions:—“Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. There is no power but of God. Whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God.” But when the question is one of damnation it is natural to enquire, “Who are those persons who claim so high an origin, a subjection so absolute?” and where their high position is displayed, their character is unfolded and their identity ascertained. They are such as are “a terror to evil doers and a praise to them that do well.” Who will say that powers pledged to the support of the Man of Sin, and who shed the blood of the servants of God, can adduce the Bible in favour of subjection to their behests? As well might we plead conscientious subjection to the Lion or the Bear we encounter in the forest, and with whom we are not able to cope, for the Bible says, “As a roaring lion and a raging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.”

The Bible is a terrible book to the *Slaveholder*. Very pleasant to his ears are the accomodating doctrines of the prudent preachers of the South, who, dividing not rightly the word of truth, tell the slave that servants must be subject to their masters with all fear, "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward;" but forget to tell the master that the servant is entitled to that which is just and equal, that he is the freeman of Christ, and that in Christ there is neither bond nor free.

It is a terrible book to the *Priest* and *priestly claims*. True, most true, "We are to obey them that have the rule over us, and submit ourselves, for they watch for our souls as they that must give account:" but there is another page that breaks the arm of spiritual tyranny and strengthens the hands of Stewards of the mysteries of God. We would know by what authority the individuals claim the gracious submission, and we are instructed not to believe "every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God;" and to take heed *how* and *what* we hear, that proving all things, we may hold fast that which is good.

No wonder the Bible is reprobated by the great and the little, the political and ecclesiastical despot. It is the fire and the hammer that shall break in pieces their strong rock, and set their chained at liberty. If the Son make you free, you are free indeed.

Neither are we competent judges of the relative importance, still less of the intrinsic importance of the several subjects that are introduced by the Spirit of the Lord. God has spoken, and it is ours to hear, and reverently to receive and act. He has given the measuring reed, and it is ours with submission to apply it. A yard is intended to measure thirty-six inches. An inch is a small part of a yard, and in the measurement of a building or a town lot, may seem very insignificant. A chain is four perches, and, in the survey of



a farni, a link may seem a trifle. But thirty-five inches are not a yard, nor are ninety-nine links a chain. I must have the last inch and the last link; for, in extensive measurements, the errors would otherwise be serious, and the world has to be measured. We must have the whole rule. Abridged, it is not God's rule but man's. Never so small a part cut off, it is false.

There are ten times as much space occupied in describing the tabernacle and its furniture, and in giving instructions about its erection—in describing the garments of the Priests and in giving instructions respecting their use, as in setting forth the creation of the earth and its fulness, the heavens and all their hosts. Sixteen verses furnish all the history of a war between four kings and five in the valley of Jordan, and the issue of the contest—the negotiations respecting Isaac's marriage require sixty-seven. Paul's conversion looms more largely on the horizon of revelation than all the events of the day of Pentecost, and he spends nearly as much time in shewing whether worshippers should appear in the sanctuary covered or uncovered as in furnishing information of the institution of the Lord's Supper.

Considerations such as these, especially when viewed in the light which the history of Christendom sheds upon them, are adapted to deter us from treating the principle and precepts of the Divine Word lightly. Those that appear to us most insignificant are from God, and to be profoundly respected for the sake of the Author.

But is no concession to be made to weakness, to ignorance, to sincere conviction? As much money as you please, as much land as you please, as much privilege as you please, as much ease as you please, as much reputation as you please, as much liberty as you please, as much life as you please, you may surrender: but not one jot or tittle of the testimony of Jesus. As witnesses for Christ you are to declare the

truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Men are accustomed to contend for what they value ; and I am hardly persuaded that the man who is prepared to concede the contradiction either to Rome or others, attaches much value to the truth he professes to believe. The adoption, besides, of the course of concession opens the door of that monstrous system of iniquity which rests like a deadly incubus upon Christendom, and, while it stands open, our triumph over Popery is indefinitely postponed.

It is refreshing and animating to listen to the bold, and decisive, and unflinching, language of Peter and John—  
 “ Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye, for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and hear.” Like subjection we recognize in all to whom God has given victories, and whom he has made instruments in subduing kingdoms. Britain affords illustrious specimens of that resolute adherence to the truth of the Scriptures which God honors, has honored, and will honor. Turn we to the bleak mountains and waste moors of Scotland, and learn the results of a ready concession of everything but what the Bible taught. When the puissant arm of Britain’s monarch attempted to coerce enlightened consciences in that land, there lived those who were prepared to jeopardize, to surrender, their lives in the high places of the field. The most remorseless exercise of power was not able to subdue them. No concession inconsistent with the Word, was their motto engraven on their every act. At what the world would still scorn as *splitting of hairs* they were adepts. Pray for all the Covenant blessings upon their persecutors and persecuting king they would ; but when such a prayer is demanded as a test of loyalty their lips are firmly closed, and their approach to a Throne of Grace must not be tainted by a corrupt motive instigating the act. A drop of ink allowed to fall at the foot of a paper presented for sub-

scription would exhibit neither a name, nor a letter of a name, but that drop would be interpreted into an approbation of the document on which it falls ; and although the alternative of subscription is death—death is welcome. The simplicity with which their respect for Scripture was manifested is entitled to universal admiration. Of these old Covenanters, a handful abandoned to utter ruin (they were neither philosophers nor politicians, but fearlessly applying the Rule of God to the state of Society, and measuring by it the throne and the cabinet,) dared to pronounce Charles II. a tyrant, and his government a conspiracy against the government of God and human rights. When the wise and the great speculated and hesitated, trembled and procrastinated, they boldly proclaimed their convictions, and proceeded to act upon them. Exposed of course to all the rage of the oppressor, and to the obloquy of their less upright brethren, their blue banner waving upon their native hills was an index of the nation's state which Continental Europe could not misunderstand. In eight short years the kingdom of Scotland and England endorsed their rebellion, repudiated the oppressor, and placed William of Orange upon the Throne. An important part did these men play in the Revolution of 1688. When the Convention of Estates deliberated upon the measures involved in the pending Revolution, the men who pursued them as the foxes of the desert dared not trust their personal safety to their own myrmidons. They invited their former victims to come armed to Edinburgh. The call was responded to : and securely did the Nation's representatives pursue their deliberations, covered by the lofty and unyielding spirits, the bold hearts, and the strong arms, of the Cameronians. These were disappointed in their hope for the time. The Revolution gave us all the liberty, civil and religious, that we enjoy ; but gave not to them the desired supremacy of the Bible : and Scotland's Church has passed through the ordeal of three



secessions ; the good name of Episcopacy can be saved only by a disruption of England's Establishment ; and the battle of Popery must be fought over again, under the heavy disadvantage of a neutral or counter working administration in Britain, and Nova Scotia, and elsewhere.

This digressional illustration you will pardon : but I wished to put in a word in favor of men very much misunderstood and calumniated, not blameless, but blameless in that in which they are most blamed ; who, insisting that the Scriptures are a supreme rule to all men in all things affecting character and manners, private and public, had the presumption to be wise eight years before wiser men, and the hardihood to enter the field of strife eight years before the men of might had buckled on their armor.

There is yet no alternative. If we have discovered a healthy principle, we must carry it out to its legitimate results. If we are to contend successfully, and wield to God's honor the Sword of the Spirit, there must be an unhesitating use of it. We cannot hope to prosper if engrossed by the horrors of the Papal system, we would spare the Romish errors that are outside the walls of the city ; I say Romish errors, for I look upon Rome as the cesspool in which you will find collected all the errors that have disgraced the name of Christianity. We must fearlessly cast all principles into this crucible. The agitation arising from the action of the fire may be tremendous, but we must fight the battles of the Lord with clean hands. There can be nothing lost in God's furnace but the dross and the tin.

I am well aware that the proposal to make a vigorous and uncompromising application of the Rule to all persons, and to all subjects to which it is applicable, is not entirely in keeping with the spirit of the age. At the same time there is an approximation to such an application while difficulties are obtruded, arising out of the diversity of interpretation which is

supposed to quench the hope of a definitive issue. We have present to our view the strange spectacle of contradiction that usually attends a transition state of mind. On the one hand discussion is urged upon us, is popular, and change the subject all discussion is deprecated. Only yesterday and the agitation of the Romish controversy was opposed as at variance with the rights of our Romish fellow-subjects, a useless wounding of the sensibilities of our Catholic Brethren. We have learned the necessity of taking up the measuring reed and entering into their most hallowed precincts ; as they cannot be allowed the claim of right to set up their most cherished convictions in opposition to the Word of the Eternal.

But this assumes (and very properly) that the Word is competent to decide, and that it is our duty to prosecute the examination of it to a decision. The Protestant Alliance is formed upon this assumption, and all its labors proceed upon the principle that Popery stands condemned by its judgment, and that men do not go beyond their province in declaring that judgment : and it is entitled to the support of all who love the Bible, in seeking the overthrow of a system which is most destructive to those who are most under its influence.

But when we condescend upon the details of the multitudinous aspects under which Christianity has been exhibited, and the different phases of Protestantism, many, very many, adopt a tone of speech which would, if followed out, anticipate the examination of any question affecting the religious conviction of any human being. Among men of different views who is to decide, is the inquiry ? " Men of equal talents, equal learning, equal piety and devotion, to the Word of Life, differ, have differed, and will differ, and it is in vain to hope to bring men to one mind." Therefore, what ? " Let these vexed questions alone. Who is to be the judge ? You cannot set yourself up over all the piety, learning, and talent, of the Christian world."



Let us look at this matter a little. This mode of staying discussion is plausible, captivating and formidable to encounter. It seeks to silence a man by placing him in a position in which he is exposed to the opprobrium of assuming a lordship over men's consciences, and claiming to be wiser than others. To many it has proved an effectual silencer. To the decision of any scriptural question left between your judgment and mind? Not at all. It is laid between your judgment and God's—between my judgment and God's. Your judgment, your thoughts are subjected to the Word of Life, and in the name of the Lord you demand the same subjection from others. "But others say, who differ from you, 'we have yielded that subjection;' and they have as good a right to their opinion as you have to yours." Shall we place Roman Catholics in the same category, and give them the benefits of the same concession? "They have as good a right to their opinion as you have to yours." Then there must be an end of discussion—the Protestant Alliance must be dissolved—the pulpit and the platform must be silent—we must not say there is an antichrist—that there is error, or that any man in the world is wrong. Still the question returns, "Who is to decide?" Is it come to this among Protestants? Must we have an interpreter after all, to make the word of God available? If he be not infallible he is useless. Must we have an infallible interpreter? Then have we unwittingly, captivated by the deceivableness of unrighteousness, gone over to Rome; and whilst we boast of an open Bible and our liberty to appeal to it, we retire behind the fortifications of Popish strength to secure ourselves from the assault of an adversary. This lamb-like inquiry of affected timidity or liberality is after all nothing but the suppressed roar of the dragon in the midst of us. We need no interpreter. The Bible is its own interpreter. If Paul or Peter stood before us, prepared to answer all our questions, what

would Paul or Peter say? Under the guidance of the same spirit? They would say—*just what they have written*. If God were to send a special messenger from Heaven, what could he add to a law that is *perfect and converts the soul*? Nothing. But are not the Scriptures hard to be understood? No. Peter says in Paul's epistles there are *some* things hard to be understood. But this difficulty never was the cause of error in any; for the unlearned and the unstable, who wrest these hard sayings, wrest "the other Scriptures also to their own destruction." There are, it must be admitted, mysteries in the Scripture. The Scripture however is not a *mystery*, but the *revelation* of a mystery. The word mystery is much misunderstood, and, of course, misapplied. It does not necessarily suppose any thing difficult of apprehension. A mystery may be abstruse, but it may be something level to the weakest understanding. It means what we never could have discovered, and to be known must have been revealed to us. That Saul was a native of Tarsus is a mystery to us, because we never could have known it, if it had not been communicated. Divine mysteries are such as God has revealed, and God only could reveal. His design was that we should know them, and I will not easily believe that when God condescends to become author, he only of all authors is the one that needs an authorized interpreter. The great obstacle to right interpretation of Scripture is found, not in its obscurity, but in our reluctance to receive it. We don't like the reproach of infidelity, and we don't like the doctrines of the Bible, and we adopt the accomodating course of finding or inventing an interpretation that is agreeable to our views,— "The natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God." The Papacy dislikes the Scriptures, and as it would not do to disown them, they spread over them a parchment on which they have engrossed their own doctrines, and which they call the interpretation of the Church, and by the same magic in-

fluence by which men are persuaded that a wafer is Christ, they are persuaded that what they read on the parchment is the Divine Word seen through a transparency.

The Scripture is not a sealed book. Any man would blush to speak of it as an obscure production except the man who does not read it. Open and read. Shew us the dark sentences. The lucidness of the Divine Word is its great fault. It speaks too plainly for those who do not like to be subjected to it, and they flee to the Apocrypha, Tradition, Fathers, Councils, Philosophy, &c. Timothy from a child knew the Scriptures able to make wise unto salvation, not through an *interpretation* but *faith*. They are a lamp—a light. Not the interpretation, but the *entrance*, gives light and makes wise the simple. The Psalmist was wiser than all his teachers, not because he had one to *interpret*, but because the statutes of the Lord were the subject of his *meditation*. Wisdom has said, “Search the Scriptures.” God forbid that Roman Catholics should discard the Pope or the Priest to place Protestant Ministers in their room. We would that they would simply hear what God speaks, and judge us by His dictates—judge whether we are of God at all, or speak the words of God. All God’s children are taught of Him, and among this number we desire to see them, emancipated, free, and walking in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The truth shall make them free, and the Word is truth.

This Divine and perfect Rule, let us seek grace that we may appreciate, apply, recommend, and enforce, as binding upon all, and recording the utterance of Zion’s king. We cannot fail, for the knowledge of the earth must cover the earth. Before the glorious consummation Babylon must fall, and if any remain to perish in the ruins let us take heed that their blood be not required at our hands, inasmuch as by us the word was not fully made known. Let us not wait for a suitable season, but, in season and out of season, preach the

Word. The Lord shall give testimony to the Word of His Grace. And "whilst the Spirit and the Bride say Come, let him that heareth say come." Let not one member of the body of Christ so far forget his position that he should not respect the importance of his operation in faithfully exemplifying the purifying and ennobling influence of the Holy Word upon the body "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, growing up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."