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THE

TRUE CHURCH,

INDICATED

TO THE INQUIRER.

A BRIEF

TRACT FOR CIRCULATION.

(Second Edition.)

By Rt. Rev. J. McGill,

BISHOP OF RICHMOND.

The Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of truth. I TIM. iii. 15.
And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the
publican. MATTH. xviii. 15.

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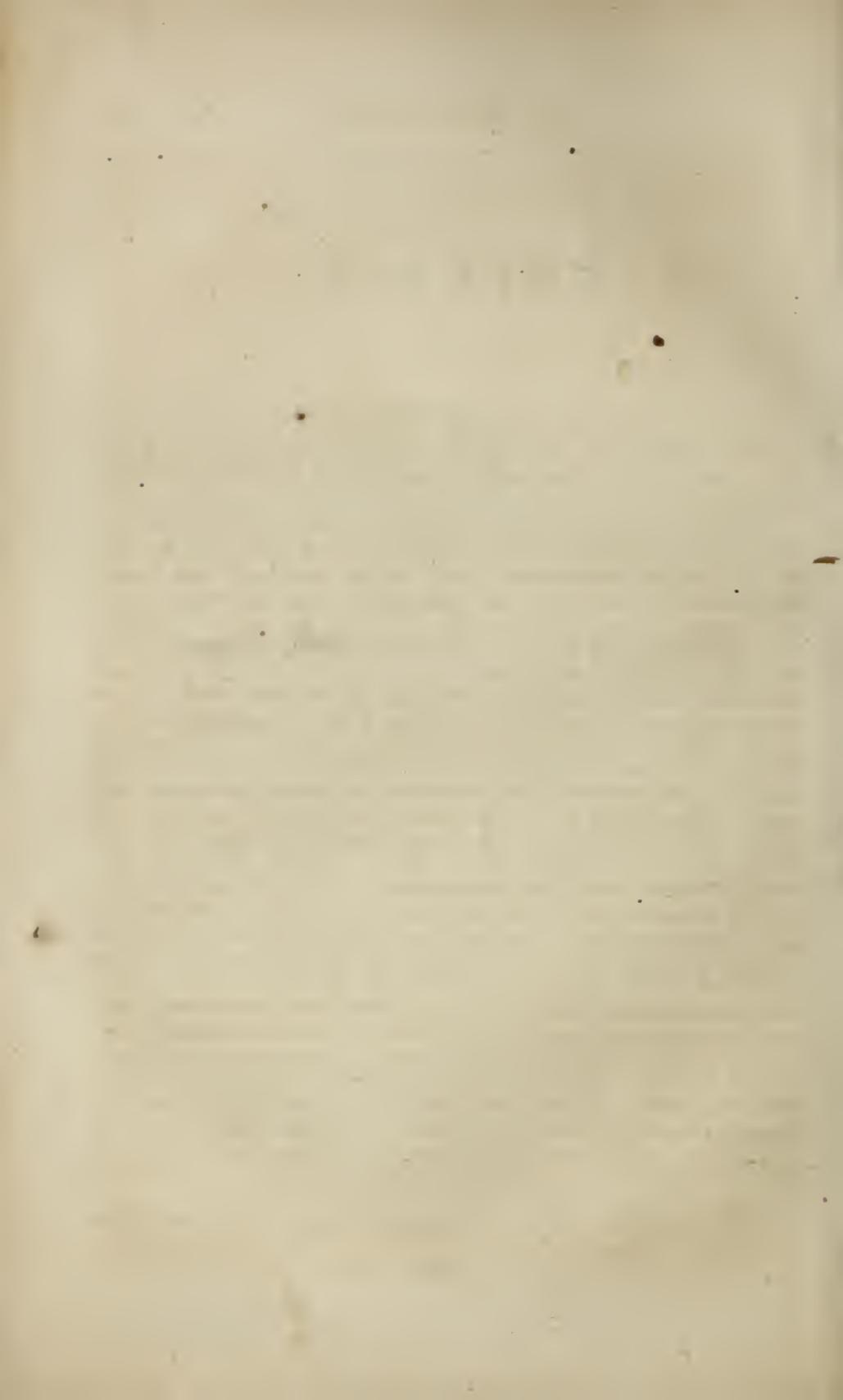
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ENTERED, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of
the Confederate States of America for the Eastern District
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P R E F A C E .

This little tract has been before published, but without a division into Chapters, as now given. Its present form is preferable. It has already done some good, and we hope it will do more. The difficulty of procuring books at present, induces us to reprint it. We are aware that the subject has been, more fully and forcibly, set forth in excellent works, which, but for the war, could easily be procured by such as feel any interest to examine it. But many, into whose hands the present little tract, by some chance or other, may fall, would not take pains to procure, and might even be averse to read, more learned and voluminous treatises. If we can be the means of awakening in the breast of some of these, a desire more fully to investigate the momentous question of "The Church," and induce them to seek for "The glorious spouse of Jesus Christ, which he purchased with his blood," in order to entrust to her affectionate charge, their immortal souls, we shall have completely succeeded in our object. To such solicitous inquirers, we would beg leave to recommend, among other works, the perusal of the following, viz: Milner's End of Controversy, Fletcher's Comparative View, Bossuet's Variations, The Amicable Discussion, The Faith of Catholics, Dr. Kenrick on the Primacy, and Poynter's Evidences of Christianity. An attentive reading of these works will convince them, that there is no certitude for Faith, no firm anchor for Hope, no security for Charity, except in submission to that divinely constituted and unerring authority, which Jesus Christ gave to his Church.

RICHMOND, *July* 1862.



THE TRUE CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Whatever may be said in eulogy of the pretended reformation of the sixteenth century, and however extravagantly the authors thereof may be extolled, one fact will ever stand forth in bold relief, like some terrible writing upon the wall, to warn the doubtful and make the guilty tremble; it is, that by the reformation, *truth* and *charity* have both suffered more grievously than human skill can describe. Its friends may regard the cause as glorious, and lament the evils which it produced as only incidental, just as the storm, by which the atmosphere is rendered salubrious, may perchance have left marks of its passage through the scathed forests, and across affrighted cities. But we regard it, both in cause and consequences, as disastrous; a tornado of human passions, sweeping along upon the lower strata of air, and involving in the vortex of its whirl, everything, however valuable and sacred, which lay in its path.

In newspaper essays, in the more pretending columns of pompous periodicals and reviews, in the declamations of schoolboys, and in the speeches of legislators and statesmen, from whom at least wiser things might be expected, the present age and the two preceding, are extravagantly praised, for the rapid strides made by the mind in its onward march, for the increase of knowledge, the spread of intelligence, and a thousand important items of social progress and improvement, so that everything which occurs, or has occurred, since the beginning of the sixteenth century, from the opening of a country school to the fabric of a steam engine, is gravely placed to the credit of the great religious revolution, which, it is pretended, removed all trammel from the wings of genius, and gave the Bible, to the world at large, as a heritage of blessings.

It is an easy thing to make pompous boasts and assertions, and to string out empty nonsense in elegant phrases, like sparkling gems of paste, set to glitter upon gilded pinchbeck. It is easy

for men who know little to seem wise, and for men who know something more, like paid advocates, to dress up a bad cause until the worse appear the better reason. But as all men are not ignorant, and as even those who have been deceived, by some chance or other have their eyes opened at last, to see that "all that glitters is not gold," and all that is said boldly, and repeated often, is *not true*, so with regard to the stereotyped eulogies of the reformation, we discover on inquiry, that there is but little real ground for them, and that they spring chiefly from a gratuitous liberality on the part of the admirers and dupes, of this mighty falsehood in the history of religion.

If we admit that, in all the mere material concerns of human life, in the sciences and arts, and rather in the industrial and mechanical arts, than in those of a more elegant and ornamental nature, there has been extraordinary progress and advancement since the period of the reformation, we are far from admitting that this result is the legitimate effect of that outrageous revolt against the Kingdom of Christ; and we think that all the improvements in the condition of mankind in a material point of view, can be sufficiently accounted for, by reference to inventions, and to the operation of causes, absolutely and entirely independent of Luther's desire for a wife, or the crimes and despotism of Henry VIII. We admit, however, that, if men are material; if their destiny, like that of the crawling worm, be limited to the present theatre; if the thinking principle in them perish in the gloom of the grave with their mouldering remains; and if there be no dawning beyond, of another and endless existence, the reformation was a great and glorious epoch in the history of the world, because its tendency has been to give, to the present material interests of men, a superiority over their spiritual and future interests. And, supposing the soul immortal, and that there is a Heaven, we still admit, that, if men will be gathered there when they die, no matter what they have *believed*, or how they have *lived* here below, the reformation was of great advantage, inasmuch as it did away with many restraints and difficult observances, only tolerable, because supposed either necessary or useful to secure our happiness hereafter. But if men, as the gospel teaches, can only be made free by the truths revealed through Christ, and can only gain Heaven on conditions expressly stated by the Redeemer, then we maintain that the reformation has been a mighty curse to mankind, because it has covered the truths of the gospel with darkness and obscurity, and rendered it to many a hard task to discover what are the conditions upon which Christ offers us a place in his glorious kingdom.

Men have progressed, if you will, "in the knowledge of this world; they are *wiser grown*, in their own generation;" have more

of that "science which puffeth up," since the reformation; and were this *entirely* the effect of the reformation, all carnal, worldly, material men might boast of it as a glorious event. But as to real knowledge, as to the knowledge of religious truth, as to the science which avails for the eternal happiness of men, the movement, among all out of the Catholic Church, has been *retrograde*, and religious knowledge has at last become so unfixed, uncertain, obscure, and so loaded with disputation and controversy, as to be, for all practical purposes, equivalent to mere *nescience*—to unqualified *ignorance*. All the landmarks of truth have been broken down, all the prerogatives of spiritual authority have been opposed, all the tenets of faith have been controverted, all the revelations of Christ have been intrinsically examined by the light of erring reason, and in part or altogether rejected, all sorts and kinds of religious theories have been devised and preached, all kinds of sects have appeared and mingled in one common battle field; and we ask in sadness, what one religious truth is *now known* by the whole Protestant world? We ask what *one truth* is so *certainly known* as to be received by all the divisions of Protestantism, and denied by none? This confusion, of contradictory opinions and speculations, of itself implies *ignorance*; for if the truths in dispute, were once *known*, there would be an end to discussion. Investigation, inquiry and discussion cease, when there is precise and positive knowledge. No men dispute on the questions, whether "two and two make four," whether "a part is less than the whole," whether "Cæsar, Alexander, Washington and Napoleon lived," &c. These things are so well *known* and *ascertained* that dispute is impossible. The truths of revelation are *facts* to be known, and when *known* there can be no dispute about them. The disputes, and controversies of the religious world, therefore, prove a lamentable *want of knowledge*; that is, a very great ignorance of religious truth. And, as far as Protestantism has affected the present age, we maintain that it should be called "the age of religious ignorance;" or if you prefer, "the age in which Christians are very wise for this life, and very ignorant concerning the next." As sects have continued to multiply ever since the epoch of the reformation, and daily more and more of the tenets of faith have been involved in disputation, so has religious ignorance continued to spread, until Christians are pained to find the ranks of the unbeliever, on every side, augmented to a fearful extent. Persons, of good education, are driven by the disputes of professing Christians and by their uncharitable bickerings, to the very abyss of deism. Such a condition is certainly not less lamentable, than that of the thousands of poor creatures, whom bible-loving England keeps toiling in her mines, and whose ignorance is so great that, though grown to man's estate, they

have heard nothing of Jesus Christ and nothing of the mighty work of redemption.* Which is worse, a reformation which has produced infidels by the legitimate operation of its principles, or a reformation which allows the rich to leave the poor in the ignorance of the heathen? But it matters not which is worse, the reformation of the sixteenth century will have to rest under the blame of both these sad results.

We cannot take up space to manifest, that no other result, should, from the first have been expected from the reformation but an increase of religious ignorance; that the authors of this revolt, were carnal, worldly, unprincipled men, impelled by their passions, and regardless of the interests of religion and the glory of God; that they acted upon false principles for a mere temporary effect, and, with glaring inconsistency, opposed the very same principles, when others assumed them, to support opinions and views contrary to their teaching; that the princes and potentates, who supported and encouraged "these bold bad men," were also actuated by the very worst motives; that the people, who rallied round them, were lured by the liberal privileges and great immunities offered to their passions, and were not, as some have falsely pretended, converted to a holier and purer life; these facts can all be proved—indeed, they have all been substantiated by irrefragable testimony, in works of every size and form, accessible to such as desire information.

We design to invite attention to a question, which naturally occurs, upon viewing the dissensions and disputes about religious truth, and the continual injury done to the very essence of Christianity, by the destruction of charity among men; viz. whether the Divine Author of religion did not, in some way, provide for the preservation of religious truth and charity, and establish defences against the possibility of the state of things now existing among Protestants?

CHAPTER II.

The Sects are numerous; but all admit that there is a true Church of Christ—
Assumptions of Protestants against the Catholic Church.

The numberless and endless controversies, waged with bitterness among those who call themselves Christians, clearly imply and evidently show, a want of knowledge of the truths of reli-

* See Dublin Review No. XXVII. Art. 5.

gion. and we are justified in attributing. to the pretended right of private judgment, these bitter disputes and dissensions. If Christ then made provision against the sad result. he could not have authorized the cause. and consequently, in his plan. the unity of truth and the dominion of charity, must be secured against the destructive pretensions of private judgment.

All who claim the name of Christian, admit that Jesus Christ established a Church, since the different denominations are heard to speak frequently and warmly about the Church of Jesus Christ.

The manifest intention of Christ, in founding this Church, was to propagate the principles of his religion; that is, to make them known over the whole world, and to all men, even until the end of time.

Those who should receive the principles of his religion were, on certain conditions, to be admitted as members of his Church, and thus in fellowship with himself, and with the rest of his followers, to be brought safely through the desert pilgrimage of the present life, to the eternal kingdom, of whose glory and brightness, of whose joys and delights, they should be made partakers after their departure from this world.

Jesus Christ must have designed that the truths of his religion should be taught, believed and practised in his Church, precisely as he taught them himself, without alteration or evasion, and consequently he must have intended that those who should, in the course of time, be added to the fellowship of his Church, should believe precisely with the rest, and "in the bonds of christian peace preserve the unity of the christian spirit"

The religious truths which Jesus Christ taught, and a knowledge of which, by the establishment of his Church, he was desirous to propagate and spread over the whole world for the benefit of all men, were well defined and precise dogmas, and well ascertained moral principles, perfectly harmonizing with each other, and of their nature incapable of change or improvement.

We need not undertake to prove these positions, because there is an evidence of their truth in their simple exposition, superior to the light of the best contrived and most forcible argumentation.

The world was ignorant of the religion of Christ until he came and taught it, and men could in his time, only learn it from himself; and since his time, they have been able to come to a knowledge of it, only by the aid of the Church, which was established for the express purpose of teaching what he revealed. Hence, we find, from ecclesiastical history, that all the nations of the earth, that have been fortunate enough at any time to pass from the darkness of Paganism into the admirable light of Christian knowledge, have done so under the guidance of the Church established by Christ, which, like a faithful spouse, has presented them to her beloved as the children of her affection. Hence,

also, those nations which have renounced allegiance to this Church and refused to claim her as mother, have gradually relapsed into ignorance of Christian Truth, in proportion to the violence and perseverance of their rebellion, until some are becoming, with respect to the moral virtues and the Christian mysteries, but little superior to the very heathen.

As there are various sects in Christendom now exhibiting claims to be the Church of Christ, we often hear the inquiry, "which is the true Church?"—"which is the Church of Christ?" But we marvel how any person, who is at all acquainted with the facts of history, can be the least puzzled to decide this question. Upon the records of the past may be seen the true titles of each of these pretenders, and God, in his mercy, has so disposed events, that to the honest inquirer there is superabundant proof of the superior claims of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. We easily fix the origin of each of the sects at a period far posterior to the time of Christ, and thereby show, that if Christ established a Church at all, none of these can, by any possibility, be his Church. We easily prove from the records of history, and from the progress of religious controversy, nay from the very admissions of the different sects, that the Catholic Church existed before them all; that these separated from her; that they protested against her; and thereby we show that if any existing Church be the one which Christ established, it must be the Catholic Church. We do more, for we prove the continual existence of the Catholic Church from the very time of Christ and his Apostles, and thereby show that *she is truly his Church*.

Yet, it is a general tenet of religious opinion, among Protestants, that the Catholic Church is "a false, superstitious, and even idolatrous Church," and that, for the love of God, all true Christians should regard her with hatred and aversion.

This tenet of religious opinion, ought to be considered as the only fundamental and clearly ascertained point of the Protestant symbol, because it seems to be the only one not in dispute among Protestants. Let us examine, for a moment, the *data* upon which this assumption against the Catholic Church is made.

First: Protestants take for granted that several of the doctrines and observances of the Catholic Church are false and superstitious. Assuming the doctrines to be false, they denounce the Church which teaches them. But, in response, the Catholic Church proves that these same doctrines have been taught by the Church, during preceding centuries, from the very time of Christ.

Secondly: Protestants, finding this to be true, assume that the Church, very soon after the time of Christ, fell into error, superstition, and idolatry, in a word, that "it fell into popery."

Thirdly: When asked, where was the Church of Christ during the ages when the Catholic Church was the only visible Christian

Church, they assume that the Church of Christ was, during all that time, *invisible*.

Fourthly: They assume that it became again visible in the person of Luther and his followers, in the sixteenth century, and is now visible in the heterogeneous sects, who are disturbing Christendom, with their clamorous disputations and contradictory gospel schemes and theories.

Upon these liberal and perfectly gratuitous assumptions, is based that harmonious and concordant hostility to the Catholic Church, which, as we before remarked, is the only point upon which Protestants present a semblance of agreement.

A proper apprehension of the nature and attributes of the Church, must, at once, prove how false and absurd it is, to assume that the Church of Christ could either become invisible, or fall into error and idolatry. And these assumptions are but the subterfuge of schism and heresy, which have no better plea to shield themselves from censure and condemnation.

CHAPTER III.

The Church of Christ defined—It is a visible Society—It is a teaching authority endowed with Infallibility in its teaching.

The Church of Christ is his spiritual kingdom on earth, and may be defined, to be the society of men united in the profession of one and the same faith, and in communion of the same sacraments, under the government of legitimate pastors, and especially of the Roman Pontiff, "who is the Vicar of Jesus Christ."

As an organized society of men, with a well ascertained government, the Church must, of its very nature, be *visible*, and to assume that it could, at any time, become invisible without ceasing to exist altogether, is repugnant to the principles of common sense.

A society composed of Pastors and the faithful, united in the exterior profession of the same faith; where the doctrines of Christ were daily explained; where the ordinances or sacraments of Christ were daily administered; where the members were continually in the custom of assembling together for the public worship of God, was essentially a visible society.

Of this great visible society, the prophet, Isaiah, foretold: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall

flow unto it.”* Daniel, also, alludes to its visible propagation: “And the stone that smote the statue became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”†

In Micheas, it is said: “But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and the people shall flow unto it:” “And many nations shall come and say: Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths, for the law shall go forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”‡

These prophecies are understood by all, to have reference to the reign of Christ, and to describe the extent of his Kingdom. The house of the Lord, thus lifted up, like a mountain upon the top of mountains, was *to be seen* far and wide, since “the nations of the earth were to flow unto it,” to receive the law and listen to the word of God. And we find that Christ, who came to be “the light of the world,” tells us that his chosen followers and apostles should also “be the light of the world,” and his Church be as “a city seated on a mountain” which “cannot be hid.”§

To suppose that the Church became *invisible*, is to say that the light was obscured, that “the city seated on the top of the mountain” was concealed, which Christ declared impossible.

Of this visible society, we find mention made in the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: “Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you Bishops, to rule the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” It would be superfluous here to undertake to show that *visible* men, selected by the *Holy Ghost*, to *rule* the Church of God, could do little good as governors or rulers of an *invisible* Church; that their office of shepherds would be a perfect sinecure, if their flocks were *invisible*. St. Paul exhorts Timothy to *preach the word*, and avers that he himself and his co-laborers, are “*dispensers of the Mysteries of God*,” which functions necessarily imply the existence of a *visible society* of men, for whose benefit, the word is preached and the mysteries are dispensed.

We will now proceed to show that Christ, when he instituted his Church, created therein a *teaching tribunal*, for the purpose of disseminating the truths which he revealed, and, in order that mankind might learn these truths *with certainty*, he invested this tribunal with an *infallible authority*, and made it a sure and safe guide in the affairs of religion.

This is the solution of all difficulties upon the momentous concern of salvation. It is hostile to the pretended claim of private judgment, and obviates the danger of *sects, schisms, and heresies*.

* Chap. ii. v. 2.

† Chap. ii. v. 35.

‡ Chap. iv. 1, 2.

§ St. Matth. v. 14.

It prevents the sacrifice of truth and charity, by preventing vexatious and interminable controversies about the revelations of God. It is a secure guide to the learned, who are willing to humble their pride to the will of God, and to the unlettered, who are disqualified to examine the real merits of controversies. It is *the way* spoken of by the Prophet, in which even "*fools cannot err.*" It is the only provision which Jesus Christ has made "to preserve the unity of the spirit of faith, in the bonds of divine charity," and hence all who have, at any time, by their pride and obstinacy been willing to make schisms, to broach heresies, and to found new religions, have been forced, in self defence, to deny, that in the Church of Christ, such authority exists. And none have denied its existence but those whose interest it was to represent it as a pretension.

Now, let a person seriously reflect, whether the existence of such an authority is not essential to the very nature of the Church. The Church consists of those who teach and those who believe the doctrines of Christ; consequently it consists of persons united together by the bonds of the same faith. How, then, can these remain united by the bonds of the same faith, if each one is at liberty to believe what he pleases? A unity of faith is in direct contradiction to the liberty of private opinion. The one excludes the other.

If men become members of a Church, it should be because they consider it the Church of Christ. If they consider the Church which they join, to be the Church of Christ, they must believe its doctrines, or else suppose that the Church of Christ can teach erroneous doctrines. They enter the Church of Christ not as superiors but as inferiors, they join in fellowship, not to teach the Church, but to be taught by the Church. If there be in the Church an authority to teach, there cannot be in the individual member a right to constitute himself a *superior judge* of the doctrines, and select or reject at his own pleasure. Hence, the very nature of the Church implies the existence of a teaching tribunal, whose decision is absolute, and hence all sects have, in practice, been forced to adopt the principle of authority, which they rejected at first, merely to justify their revolt against the Universal Church.

Luther denied the infallible authority of the Church, and against the whole world *stood up alone*, pretending that the Church of the whole world had fallen into error, while he *only*, knew, believed, and professed the true doctrines of Christ. Protestants applaud Luther for this bold stand against the divinely constituted authority of the Church; but Luther claimed afterwards for himself the authority which he denied to the Church, and each reformer, who imitated Luther in his rebellion, afterwards imitated him in his pretensions to rule and govern with an authority not to be set

aside, opposed, or disputed—that is, with an authority practically infallible.

How revolting is the scene, which Protestants contemplate with such pleasure, as the glorious origin of their inconsistent sects! Here, on one side, is the whole Church of Christ immersed in error and superstition, consequently in subjection to “The gates of Hell,” contrary to the express promise of her Divine Founder; and on the other, stands Doctor Martin Luther, an apostate friar, who declares that he alone is right; that the *true doctrines* of Christ are known only to him; that consequently, he is himself the *true Church of Christ*, being the only person possessed of religious truth. How revolting to good sense to suppose such a condition of things! As if the Church, which St. Paul says “Christ purchased with his blood;” and over which he placed bishops to watch and “*rule*,” should have become a faithless, degraded spouse, no longer bringing forth children unto her beloved, but the leman of the devil, guiding men to eternal destruction, while at the same time God can find no better, purer, holier person than Luther to be the preserver of his doctrines, and to recall men to a knowledge of his forgotten gospel. What a gross, palpable absurdity lies here before us when we examine the salient point of that clamorous outcry, raised by Protestants, against the Catholic doctrine of an infallible teaching authority.

CHAPTER IV.

The Infallibility of the Church is a question of fact—Did Christ authorize his Church to teach unerringly the truths of Christianity? The Protestant sophism of a “vicious circle”—The real “vicious circle” of Protestants—A sacred Hierarchy constituted by Christ—The Apostles and the Primacy of St. Peter.

Whether or not the Church of Christ has been invested with the authority to teach *positively* and *unerringly* the truths of Christianity, is a question of *fact* susceptible of proof, and numerous and conclusive are the arguments drawn from every source, by Catholic writers, to set this fact in the broadest light of evidence.

1. That Christ established a Church is a point conceded by all.
2. That he instituted in this Church a teaching tribunal is also admitted.
3. That the duty of this tribunal, was “to teach all nations, to observe all those things, which he commanded,” will also be admitted.

4. That he could make provisions to protect this teaching tribunal from any danger of disseminating error as his doctrine, will scarcely be denied by such as admit his divinity.

5. That it would have been greatly to the advantage of mankind, to have such infallible guide in matters of religion, few can deny.

But many boldly maintain that Christ has not instituted this *unerring authority* in his Church, and has left with men no safer guide than the scriptures, interpreted by private judgment. It is the aim of these, to extol the scriptures in the most extravagant manner, as if they only have due admiration and reverence for God's revealed word, whereas they are guilty of the sophism, of making much ado about the material while they sacrifice the spiritual. They laud the letter of the law, while they do as they please with the spirit or meaning. They profess much reverence for God's word in the abstract, whilst in practice all their reverence is for their own sense. They care more for their own views about what God said, and for their own ingenuity in the art of interpretation, than they do about what God in reality has said. This is but too apparent from their contradictory interpretations, so tenaciously and bitterly advocated.

It is the boast of Protestants to admit nothing but what the scriptures teach, and hence to convict them on the ground they select themselves, and, as it were, to foil them with the very weapons in which they confide for victory, Catholic writers are accustomed to say to them "you admit the scriptures to be the word of God; we know that you cannot prove the divine inspiration of these books, because you obtained them from our Church, and the testimony of our Church is necessary to establish the fact that they are divinely inspired. But inasmuch as you admit this fact, we will confute you from the very testimony of these sacred writings, and prove that the Church of Christ, which you oppose, received from her Divine Founder a promise of infallibility while accomplishing the great work which she was appointed and commissioned to perform." "Take care," cry out our opponents in alarm, "you are about to be involved in your famous vicious circle; you will prove the Church to be infallible by the scriptures, and prove the divine inspiration of the scriptures by the testimony of an infallible Church."

This specious sophism may be dissolved by the simple statement, that the existence of the Church, its organization, its constitution, and its authoritative and successful operation in fulfilling the work for which it was commissioned by its Divine Founder, can be proved to him who denies the scriptures to be *divinely inspired*, but who will necessarily admit the historical antiquity and authenticity of these writings. Like other facts, it can be proved by historical evidence that an extraordinary personage,

Jesus Christ, preached Christianity, and founded the Church in which Christianity has been taught and professed; and that the writings, preserved by this Church, were written at the time and by the persons specified, and are truly authentic documents. The fact of their authenticity is distinct from that of their divine inspiration. It is on these grounds that we meet and convince the infidel. If then this Church, which has existed perpetually since the time of its foundation by Christ, teach that the scriptures are inspired by God, and are testimonials of her attributes, prerogatives and doctrines, and contain the history of the works performed by her Divine Founder, as well as of the first events of her own existence; where is the vicious circle? The rational and liberal of mankind, who look to the evidences of history, and are not blinded by prejudice, do not hesitate to acknowledge, that upon the character and testimony of the Catholic Church, as upon the foundation stone, reposes the character of the Bible and the true titles of the Christian system. From the Catholic Church, they admit that the scriptures have been received, and if she be proved a corrupt and incredible witness, there can be no religious certitude. Hence it was with portentous meaning that the Apostle called the Church "the pillar and ground of truth." If the pillar be shattered, or the ground become a treacherous marsh, what will be the fate of truth? And even if there be between the Church and the Scriptures, a mutual testimony, and the one uphold the other, does this constitute a vicious circle? When the Redeemer referred to the scriptures, saying: "These are they which give testimony of me," in order that he might confound the unbelieving Jews, who admitted the scriptures while they rejected Christ, was he, too, guilty of arguing in a vicious circle? But enough concerning this subterfuge of error, which is held up as a blind to conceal the confusion of defeat.

We might retort upon Protestants the charge of using a vicious circle. They are asked to prove the divine inspiration of the scriptures, and they tell us that the scriptures prove themselves to be divinely inspired. When this is denied, they endeavour to make out that the Holy Spirit enlightens men to perceive that the scriptures are of divine inspiration. They prove the illumination of the Holy Spirit by the scriptures, and prove the scriptures by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. They know nothing of the Holy Spirit except from the scriptures, and by the Holy Spirit they know the scriptures. That is, they take for granted what they are required to prove. Upon this point Protestantism must be always at fault.

Availing ourselves therefore, of the admission of Protestants that the scriptures are divinely inspired, we have the right to prove to them by *the scriptures*, the infallible authority of the Church, and when the demonstration is complete and impreg-

nable, they have no right to evade its force, by asking us, how we show that the scriptures are divinely inspired? The force of our demonstration, grows up out of the mutual admission of the first position, that *the scriptures are to be consulted as God's word.*

In the scriptures, and particularly in the New Testament, we find proofs direct, clear and conclusive, to establish the fact, that the Church of Christ was constituted the unerring, infallible guide of mankind in the concerns of salvation. Jesus Christ selected from his followers twelve men whom he invested with high powers and commissioned as his Apostles. Of these twelve, he appointed one, St. Peter, as the chief of the rest. When the names of these twelve are mentioned, St. Matthew emphatically says of the one appointed as the chief, "The first, Simon, who is called Peter."* And we find, from St. John, that Simon was not called Peter, until he was chosen by Christ to be made an Apostle, and he then received this name, because he was to be "the first," and because upon him, as upon a rock, Christ declared that he would build his Church. "And Jesus looking upon him, said: thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter."† "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church."‡

It was then with great significance, that St. Matthew, in naming the twelve divinely commissioned ministers of Christ, who were chosen to propagate the faith and plant the Church, states that Simon, who is called Peter, is *the first*, for his name was changed from Simon to Peter, by Christ, to indicate his supremacy, and to show the important place which he should occupy in the Church.

Consistently with this view, we find the name of Peter, at all times brought forward prominently by the sacred writers, when the other Apostles are merely referred to, in general terms, as being with Peter. Thus we read "Peter and the eleven," "Peter and those with him," &c. Also, when the Saviour paid tribute, he did so for himself and Peter.

No person, who has examined the scriptures with attention, can deny that the Apostle Peter was chosen by Christ, in a particular manner, to aid him in the great work of man's salvation. A French writer§ has taken the pains to collate the passages wherein the name of Peter is introduced into the New Testament, and has found this Apostle named in thirty-two passages. He says that "of these thirty-two passages, there are twenty-seven, where Peter is named first; three, where he is named last, but where evidently the last rank is the most worthy; and only two in which he is not brought forward first." Of these two, one is the passage wherein St. John says, that "Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of

* Matt. c. x, v. 2.

† John, c. i, v. 42.

‡ Matt. c. xvi, v. 18.

§ The Bishop of Bayonne in his demonstration of Catholic truth.

Andrew and Peter;”* but at this time neither Andrew nor Peter had been chosen Apostles. The other passage, in which Peter is not first named, is this of St. Paul: “And when they had known the grace that was given to me, James, and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars,”† &c.

Here we find the name of Cephas second, but, 1st, there is a doubt among the learned, whether or not the Cephas here mentioned, was the Apostle Cephas, or Peter. Among others of the ancients, Clement of Alexandria, thought it was not St. Peter. 2dly. It is shown from some ancient manuscripts, that the reading has been altered, and in place of “James, Cephas, and John,” we should read “Cephas, James, and John.” “Mamachius proves from ancient copies, that in this text, Peter was first named.” Sabbathier maintains that he was first named in the ancient Italian version.‡ And Grotius, though a Protestant, testifies that this is the reading in the version of Alexandria.§

Cardinal Perronius, in his response to the King of England, proves this fact from the Greek edition of Complutus. He and Lieberman also show that St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome, in their comments on the epistle to the Gallatians, used the copies referred to by Mamachius, and gave the reading “Cephas, James, and John.” Theodoret does the same in his 15th chapter on the epistle to the Romans.

The scriptures, therefore, may be said invariably to give to Peter the most prominent and important place.

Moreover, it is undeniable that the Saviour gave up to Peter the care of his whole spiritual flock. After, three distinct times, exacting from this Apostle, by name and in express terms, a profession of love, he says to him, “Feed my sheep, feed my lambs.”||

But if Peter was the first, and was particularly selected to be chief ruler, or shepherd, the rest were commissioned to co-operate with him in the high and holy duties of the pastoral charge. And though Christ professedly “built his Church on Peter,” the rest were placed with him in the foundation of the mighty Temple of Holiness, of which “Jesus Christ was himself the chief corner stone.”¶

We have now before us, from *scripture* testimony, the first elements of the constitution of the Church. We behold it founded by Christ, its great invisible head. We see it receive from Christ a visible head or ruler, with a body of Bishops to act in conjunction with him. The head, and the Bishops are well acquainted with the powers and prerogatives of their respective offices, and are well aware of the end for which they have received them. All this has been made known to them during the time that they

* John, c. 1. v. 44.

† The first Latin version, or old Vulgat.

|| John xxi. 15, &c.

‡ Gallatians, c. 2. v. 9.

§ See Lieberman. Theol. 2 tom. p. 194.

¶ Ephes. ii. 20.

were listening to the instructions of their Divine Master. We discover, on further examination, that these Apostles selected subordinate and inferior ministers, to co-operate with them in the fulfilment of their mission. St. Paul writes to Titus: "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and shouldst ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee."*

In another part of scripture we find them establishing an order still inferior to that of the Priesthood, viz: the order of Deacons.†

Yet they acted thus, not of their own authority, but, undoubtedly, after the express direction of their Divine Master. For it is said that Christ "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all meet in the unity of faith," &c.‡

And to the clergy of Ephesus, it was said by St. Paul, that "the Holy Ghost had placed them" in the office which they filled, and appointed them "Bishops to rule the Church of God."§ The Bishops, Priests, &c. whom they selected, ordained, and appointed, to be co-operators with them "in the building up of the Church, the body of Christ," and in bringing "all to meet in unity of faith," were represented, as "given by Christ," and as "placed in their office by the Holy Ghost." And here we behold the constituents, of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, instituted by Christ, for the government of his Church. There is a head pastor; there are bishops, priests and subordinate ministers. There are different officers of the spiritual government and different grades; but all form *one* body under *one* head, and all are designed to combine their energies to establish *one* faith and *one* Church, through the whole world, and through all ages.

CHAPTER V.

The promises made by Jesus Christ to the Hierarchy—Four important truths to be considered—Christ's Prediction and its fulfillment—The Spirit of Truth given to the Church.

We will now turn to contemplate the promises, which Jesus Christ made to this Sacred Hierarchy, to insure its success in the accomplishment of the important object for which it was instituted. Peter, *the first* of the Apostles, on occasion of his direct

*Ep. to Titus, i. 5. †Acts vi. 3. ‡Eph. iv. 11, &c. §Acts, xx. 28.

profession of faith, that his master "was Christ, the son of the living God," was called "blessed," because this foundation truth of Christian faith, had been revealed to him by "the Father who is in Heaven." The *fact* that it was thus revealed, was declared to Peter, by Christ himself, in the presence of the rest of the Apostles, and combines, with much other testimony, to show the superior part assigned to Peter. After this testimony to Peter, Christ proceeds to speak concerning the establishment of his Church: "And I say to thee: that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the *gates of Hell* shall not prevail against it."*

The enemies of the Church, have endeavored to explain away the force of these terms; they have tortured language, and done violence to the most palpable suggestion of common sense, in order to invalidate this most clear and direct testimony of scripture. Although the name *Peter* was given by Christ to this Apostle, precisely with a view to indicate the important place he should hold in the Church, and although the Saviour, in speaking of the establishment of this Church, addressed Peter by name, and even mentioned the name of his father, saying in express terms, that he designed, upon "him to build his Church," as upon a *rock*, which was signified by his very name; in the face of these facts, an attempt is made, by torturing plain language, to prove that the Church was not built upon *Peter, the rock*, but upon Christ himself, *the rock*.

Will any one, who impartially considers what the words of scripture in this place naturally signify, ever for a moment imagine that, after giving to this Apostle a name to signify a *rock*, and after bearing such a solemn testimony, that the Father had made to him a particular revelation concerning his own divine character, as the eternal Son of the living God, Christ would say, "thou art Peter, that is, a *rock*;" and upon *this rock*, that is, upon *myself*, I will build my Church?" If Christ did not intend to build his Church upon *the rock*, Peter, why would he here make a reference to this Apostle by name, and in a manner so pointed? Surely, we have a right to assume, as self-evident, that if the scriptures, as is pretended by Protestants, are designed to teach us the will of God, and the means which he has prepared for our salvation, the language is not itself a snare to entrap us, and the truth is not designedly buried beneath false and unnatural constructions, but rises up to view, according to the plain import of the words. The violence, therefore, which is done to this text, by those who protest against the Pope's supremacy, only proves, that the plainest passages of scripture are not *sufficiently plain* to confound the ingenious subtilty of private interpretation, and have

* Matth. xvi. v. 18.

no voice, except from the Church of Christ, to complain of the manner in which they are abused. However pregnant the scriptures are with a living spirit and meaning, yet as writings they are inert and passive in the hands of men, and allow themselves to be properly used, or grossly abused, as may happen, neither smiling approbation nor uttering groans of complaint. Had they a voice of their own, how often would they rebuke the rash speculator and presumptuous theorist, who forces them to give unwilling testimony to his crude, inconsistent, and even blasphemous conceits and opinions!

The passage of scripture here under consideration, literally and naturally refers to Peter in his relation to the Church, and in it we behold four important truths:

1. The choice made of Peter, as the first visible head of the Church of Christ.

2. The stability of the Church of Christ, because it is a house built upon a rock, upon which the rains will fall, and around which the storms and waves will rage in vain. "It will stand, because built upon a rock."

3. We behold a clear prediction, here made by Christ, of the fact that "the gates of Hell," that is, the powers of Hell, will try to prevail against this Church. The prince of the lower world will come up from the bottomless pit, and with all his forces; with seductions of error; with schism, heresy, and persecution; struggle to subvert this Church.

4. We have also a clear, express, unambiguous promise, that the fury of the powers of Hell shall never be able to subvert this divinely founded Church; "*The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it,*" &c.

The progressive history of ages, which have elapsed since the prediction and promise were made by the Saviour, as stated in this passage by the Evangelist, shows how perfectly they have been verified. The Church has stood permanently upon its solid foundation, in defiance of the storms and tempests of passing centuries. Persecutions raged; the children of the Church, flying before the kindled wrath and unsheathed swords of pagan princes and governors, were driven into the catacombs, into deserts, into hiding places of every sort. They were seized, tortured, and put to death by tens, hundreds, and even thousands, in every part of the world; and still the Church stood, prospered, and was extended. Centuries rolled on, and with occasional intermissions, the storms of persecution continued to rage. Hell groaned to see its idols broken; its oracles silenced; the monuments of its power destroyed, and more fiercely waged its war against the Church, but still *in vain*. The citadel of faith was impregnable, the armies of Christ, the soldiers of the Cross, were multiplied on every side.

The storms of persecution ceased, and then arose the storms of heresy and schism, which raged with the same fury, and the same want of success. The rock stood; the Church which had been built upon it stood; and *Hell could not, and did not prevail against it.*

The Saviour had foreseen the whole of these trials through which his Church would be destined to pass in the progress of time; he had a clear view of the efforts which Hell would make against his Church; but *He promised* that it should not only stand, but “stand as *his Church*”—and that “*the gates of Hell;*” viz. error, superstition, idolatry, wickedness, and whatever else is contrary to God, and to his law, “*should not prevail.*”

Keeping in mind this consoling assurance of the Redeemer, concerning the invincible character of the Church in its contests with the enemies of truth and righteousness, let us consider some further promises, exhibiting the means of victory, always with the Church, however terrible may be the assaults and attacks of her adversaries.

“I will ask the Father and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you forever.”

“The Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive.”*

In this promise, the Church is assured by her Divine Founder, that “the Spirit of Truth” will come “and abide with her.” For what purpose should this Divine Spirit abide with the Church? We learn, in another chapter of the same evangelist, that it was in order to “*to teach her all truth.*”

“But when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he shall teach you all truth.”†

This Spirit of Truth, the *Paraclete*, or Comforter, was promised to abide with the Church of Christ *forever*, in order to *teach her all truth.* How, then, will error, falsehood, superstition, and idolatry be able, at any time, to triumph over the Church? How can the Church fall away from Christ, while the Spirit of Truth, from the express promise of her Divine Founder, shall always be with her? If she will *always* continue to have this supernatural aid, (and who can doubt this after a promise so express!) she will *always* teach truth, with unerring authority. To say that she can teach error, is, either to suppose, that she can be deserted by the Divine Spirit which was promised to her as her animating and directing spirit, or to suppose, that she can teach *contrary* to what the Spirit which abides with her *will suggest*, but neither of these hypotheses can, for a moment, be entertained.

The Church, then, solidly founded upon the rock, will have *abiding with her* the Spirit of Truth, to teach her all truth, in order that she may fulfil the commission which Christ gave her just

* St. John, c. xiv. v. 16, 17.

† St. John, c. xvi. v. 13.

before his ascent into Heaven, when he said: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."*

Let the reader duly weigh these words, and, by the light of reason, consider their natural import, and in them he will find express confirmation of facts to which we have already invited his attention. We here perceive that Christ establishes, in his Church, a *teaching tribunal*, and invests it with authority to teach his doctrines; "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations"—"Teach all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

We further notice that this teaching tribunal will *unerringly* and *infallibly* teach the doctrines of Christ, because Christ promises to be with it while discharging this sacred and important duty. "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

Moreover, we perceive, what Christ expects of those who shall be taught by this tribunal. He expects them to *observe* those things which they are taught. "Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you." What can be more clear and express than this? Suppose even we had no scripture proof, except this passage, would it not suffice to confound our adversaries, when they rise up against the authority of the Church which has a divine commission from Christ himself?

What would have been the utility of instituting a Chair of doctrine, or of giving a Commission to the Church to teach, if for the want of due attributes, it would be incompetent to attain the great end of its institution, which assuredly was, the dissemination of the true doctrines of Christ? If fallible, and liable to teach errors as the true doctrines of Christ, it would certainly be in *natura rei*, in the very nature of things, inadequate to accomplish the end for which it was instituted and commissioned. And precisely to make it competent, as well as to certify to the world that mankind might securely listen to its voice, Christ promised, not only to remain with it himself, *all days*, even to the end of the world, but also, that the Divine Spirit of Truth, the Paraclete, should abide with it *forever*.

Did these promises of Christ mean nothing? Did they give no *pledge* to those who carried the *sealed* commission to preach the gospel and plant the Church? Did they not rather furnish a glorious and consoling assurance of what had been said before; that the Church of Christ would obtain a certain triumph over all the powers of Hell?

* Math. xxviii. v. 19 and 20.

CHAPTER VI.

Further proofs from Scripture of the unerring authority of the Church—The Apostles were to have successors—Christ's Ministry would be always needed, and therefore would be always perpetuated.

But we can still marshal further scripture proof, against those who deny the tenet that the Church of Christ *infallibly teaches* the doctrines of Christ. The Saviour has so closely and intimately identified himself with his Church, that he says, "He who hears you hears me; he who despises you despises me."*

In another place, where indicating the necessity of recurring to the authority of his Church, he declares, that those who refuse to hear and obey her authoritative decisions, are worthy to be ranked with the outcast and infidel.

"If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican."†

Would the Redeemer of the world have thus subjected mankind to the authority of his Church, and required their obedience to its decisions under so grievous a penalty, if there were the least danger that her authoritative teaching should lead them into error and "damnable idolatry?" Would he leave, in his own place, a guide inadequate to conduct mankind safely and securely, and at the same time require that her voice should be obeyed? Would he declare that he remains with the Church all days, even to the consummation of the world, and that the Divine Spirit of truth abideth with her forever, if she could teach, as his doctrines, false conceits, human devices, and soul-destroying superstitions? The idea is preposterous in the extreme. It involves absurdities and follies without number, and totally frustrates the grand and noble work of the world's salvation, by means of the purifying and regenerating truths of the gospel of Christ. It places mankind in the absolute necessity of yielding obedience to an authority which may be teaching doctrines directly repugnant to those doctrines which Christ requires all to believe who would be saved. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," says the Apostle. And *Faith*, considered in its object, is certainly a belief of the true doctrines of Christ.

"Without obedience to the Church," says Jesus Christ, "you shall be as the heathen and publican, and, consequently, an outcast." "But if you obey the Church, it is certain," says the Protestant, "that you may be led to believe *falsehood, error, and damnable idolatry*," instead of the true doctrines of Christ, for the Church is an erring and fallible guide.

* Luke, x. 16.

† Math. xviii. 17.

What a sad condition is this for men to be placed in, where without a belief of the true doctrines of Christ they cannot be saved, and without yielding obedience to a Church, which may be teaching any and every thing, except the true doctrines of Christ, they still cannot be saved! Yet in this sad and hopeless condition do Protestants place mankind, by their pretended reformation of the institutions of Christ.

Nor let any one object, that these glorious promises and assurances were only given to the Apostles, and to the Church of the Apostolic times. The fact of the perpetuation of the Apostolic ministry, shows that Christ did not look to the interests only of those who lived in the times of the Apostles. He wished his religion to be preached to all nations of all times, and, certainly, if those who had lived and conversed with him during his mortal life, needed the promise and pledge of his aid, and the assistance of another Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, to enable them faithfully and successfully to combat the powers of Hell, and to defend and advocate the truth, so did their successors in the work of the ministry. The same object was still to be accomplished, the same difficulties, trials, and perils opposed the progress of Christ's kingdom—and the same Divine aid was necessary to insure success. Indeed the promise of assistance embraced all ages, even to the consummation of the world. If you rob the Church of her claim to these divine assurances, you must also admit that there exists no Church of Christ, no christian ministry, and that the means of salvation, provided by Christ, concerned those only who lived in the Apostolic times. For all, whose misfortune it has been to come into existence posterior to those times of blessedness, there are no divinely commissioned teachers, and, of consequence, there exists no obligation to hear and believe. There are no *dispensers of the Mysteries of God*, as the Apostles were; none to appoint and ordain priests as the Apostles did; none to govern and rule the Church of God as was done by those, whom the Holy Ghost placed over the flock of the great Shepherd of souls; in a word, there is no flock and no salvation.

It is the very extreme of absurdity to imagine and say that Christ cared only for the salvation of those who could be benefited by the ministry of his Apostles. His purpose of divine charity was of a more generous and sublime character. It contemplated the happiness of all men of every generation. It looked abroad through the length and breadth of the whole earth, and through all the periods of revolving time, until the close and consummation. It pervaded space and time like the light of his own Divine Presence, and left neither height nor depth, unwarmed or unilluminated by its gladdening rays. If any soul should perish, it would not perish without the opportunity of redemption, for "Christ died for all men." and wished that all should know the truth, that

the truth might make them free. When he made provision to have his saving doctrines taught it was for the benefit of all nations of all ages. "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations." "Preach the Gospel to every creature." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "Teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

Behold here how the purpose of the Saviour's charity, embraces all nations of the earth, till the consummation of time! Consider the objects to be accomplished:

1st. The doctrines of Christ are to be taught to all nations.

2dly. The regeneration by baptism; the Christian birth, by water and the Holy Ghost, whose necessity was declared on another occasion, is to be conferred upon the individuals of all nations, till the consummation of the world.

3dly. Those who are commissioned to perform this duty of teaching the doctrines of Christ, and of conferring the sacred rite of baptism, are assured that they will have the assistance of Christ, "all days," that is, at all times, while discharging this important duty.

4thly. The Apostles, are the persons who first received the commission here given, with the promise of Christ's co-operation and aid.

But will the Apostles be able, in their own persons, to accomplish the whole purpose of the Redeemer, and preach the Gospel to all nations, and baptize them during all days, till the consummation of the world? They assuredly will not, unless their natural lives be miraculously prolonged for this great work. Did Christ intend to prolong their days beyond the ordinary term? Time has shown that he entertained no such intention. Was he ignorant of the fact that they were mortal men, and would, in a few years, depart from life to receive the crowns of glory, and claim the thrones which he promised them? It were impious to imagine this. Who then should preach the Gospel, and administer baptism after they were dead? Who should carry the tidings of salvation, and "the laver of regeneration" to nations, not evangelized and baptized by them? Certainly, as the work for which they were commissioned and sent forth would only be in part performed by themselves, and much would still remain to be done, it was necessary that there should be laborers to accomplish it. Nations of future ages would need to be instructed in the doctrines of Christ, and to receive baptism, that having *believed and been baptized*, they might also *be saved*. And when, in their destitution, these should cry for the bread of life, who would break it to them? When they should groan in their bondage, and being "children of wrath," stand in need of a second birth to become

the children of God, and heirs of Heaven, who would dispense to them the regenerating mystery. Christ must necessarily have designed that the Apostles should have successors in the work of the ministry, for otherwise his purpose and intention could not be accomplished beyond the term of their lives. If they were to have successors, then, to the Apostles and to their successors, the promise of divine aid and co-operation was given, as well as the commission to teach all nations and to baptize them. The duty of teaching and baptizing was not destined to terminate with the lives of the Apostles, and therefore neither was the consoling assurance of divine assistance limited to them, but given as a perpetual prerogative to the Church. When Christ said, "behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world," he addressed the Apostolic body, the teaching tribunal in his Church, whose ministry was designed for the conversion, instruction and salvation of all men of every generation and age.

Nay, we find that the Apostles knew that their body was destined to receive accessions, and to be not only increased, but perpetuated. After the ascension of their Divine Master, they soon selected another member to supply the place of the fallen Judas, and no one will pretend that Matthias had not a part in the Divine assurances which had been given to the others. Paul, Timothy and Titus were soon found engaged in the same ministry. When the Apostles gave testimony to the doctrines of Christ by their martyrdom, they left others after them to supply their place. The Gospel was still preached, and the ordinances of Christ were still administered. Those who discharged the pastoral office, still needed the assistance of Jesus Christ, and amid persecutions and tribulations of every kind, amid the difficulties and obstacles which they encountered, amid dangers from false brethren and the seductions of error, and the assaults of the gates of Hell, they have sustained their courage by looking ever to that divine promise, "Behold I am with you all days, till the consummation of the world."

In conjunction with the scripture proofs, which we have already considered, we should also reflect upon the declaration of the Apostle, that those only had a right to preach who were sent, "how can they preach unless they be sent?"* and that no person had a right to exercise the functions of the Apostolic ministry, "unless called to this by God, as Aaron was,"† and invested with the character of minister, or ambassador of God, by "the imposition of hands," as was done by the Apostles, when they wished to set aside worthy men for the work of the ministry.‡

In thus, by solemn ceremonies and sacramental ordination, introducing others into the sacred hierarchy, which Christ had es-

* Rom. x. 15.

† Heb. v. 4.

‡ Acts, xlii. 3.

established for "the building up of his mystic body, the Church," the Apostles, no doubt, were complying with the commands and injunctions of their Divine Master. And this fact clearly manifests, that among the Christian people, there was always to exist a body of men invested with a sacred character, and possessing spiritual prerogatives and powers delegated by Christ, to which no man could pretend who had not "entered by the door," and been properly ordained.

The perpetuation of the ministry, by means of a divinely instituted ceremonial for conferring the sacred character of minister of Christ in its various grades, is called *Apostolical succession*, and is justly regarded as one of the marks of the Church of Christ. For if the ministry were really perpetuated, and perpetuated by a particular ceremonial, as *in fact* appears in the sacred scriptures, from the proceedings of the Apostles themselves, when associating others with them, to aid "in feeding the flock and in ruling the Church of God," there must have been a gradual formation of a *chain of succession*, as time marched onward in its progress, and those who at any given epoch, held the end of this chain, could say, "we are the ministers of Christ, and the lawfully appointed '*dispensers of his mysteries*,' for behold, we are united with Christ, by this unbroken chain of succession in the Christian ministry."

With this ministry Christ left extraordinary powers, such as never before had been given to men, and the possession of which no man had ever before claimed.

To Peter, the first of the Apostles, and whose name signified a *rock*, he gave the plenitude of pastoral power: "And I will give to THEE the *keys* of the kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven."*

These words, in their natural import, prove that an extraordinary power was conferred upon Peter. The term, *keys*, indicates full power and authority, and it is so explained by Christ himself: "*Whatsoever* (without any restriction as regards *the kingdom of Heaven*,) "*whatsoever* thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound also in Heaven, and *whatsoever* thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed also in Heaven." The keys are the symbol of power. In the prophet Isaias, we find a passage in point to explain to us the meaning of the *keys*. God is represented by the prophet as speaking to Sobna, and threatening to deprive him of power, and to substitute Eliacim, who is understood to be a figure of Christ. "I will clothe him with thy robe, and I will strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will give thy power into his hand: and he shall

* Matth. xvi. 19.

be as a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Juda."

"And I will lay the *key* of the house of David upon his shoulder: and he shall open and none shall shut: and he shall shut, and none shall open."*

The *key* was to be laid on the shoulder of Christ, to whom all power belonged of right, as second person of the mysterious Trinity, but to whom as *God made man*, "all power was given in Heaven and on earth" by "THE FATHER." And here Christ gives the *keys* to Peter, as his first Apostle, and chief representative on earth; as his first ruler in "the kingdom of Heaven," established indeed in the world, but not of the world. What Peter binds, shall be bound; what Peter looses, shall be loosed; for Christ has promised this, and Heaven and earth shall pass away, but every "tittle of the word of Christ shall be fulfilled."

No where in the scriptures, has Christ recalled the promise here made to the Apostle Peter. But the power "to bind and to loose" as here, *in its plenitude*, given to Peter by name, was given to the Apostolic associates of St. Peter, as we find recorded by St. Matthew: "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in Heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in Heaven."† And it is not a little worthy of remark, that Christ said this to the Apostles, in conjunction with the express command of yielding submission to "the Church," which he declared he would found upon Peter, *the rock*, to whom he gave the *keys*. He changed the name of Simon to Peter. He prayed that the faith of Peter should not fail, and gave him the command "to confirm his brethren," even the very pillars of his sanctuary. He gave him care of the whole flock, of "the sheep and the lambs." He gave him the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; he gave him brethren to co-operate with him in the work of the ministry; and these, with Peter, were to build up the mystic body of Christ, the Church, and to bring "all to meet in the unity of faith." And thus united, as the teaching and ruling Church of Christ, they were to have power to speak and decide with authority. "He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican." "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in Heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in Heaven." The associates of him, who held "the keys of the kingdom" and who had been invested with plenary, unrestricted power, were indeed empowered by Christ "to bind and loose," but not as against Peter, but with him, and subject to him. For the plenary power was given to Peter singly, and without partition, but with the rest, as being many, it was more re-

* Isaias, xxii. 21 and 22.

† Matth. xviii. 18.

stricted, and of course it was given to them, subject to the unlimited and specific commission, which had been given by Christ to Peter, to take charge of his whole flock, and to carry the keys of his kingdom.

We are forced, by the dictates of correct reason, to admit that Christ gave these powers, not as mere personal honors, to his Apostles, but to them *as his ministers*, and consequently to the Christian ministry, to be perpetuated for the preservation and propagation of his doctrines, and the due administration of those sacred institutions, called sacraments, designed to convey grace to the souls of believers.

The scriptures show us these Apostles exercising the powers which they have received, and administering the sacraments to the faithful.

They teach and baptize ;

They confirm those who have been baptized, and impart the gift of the Holy Ghost, by "the imposition of hands ;"

They discharge the duty of "the ministry of reconciliation," according to the power they have received "to forgive or retain sin ;"

They bless the bread and chalice, and distribute the same as "the communion of the body and blood of the Lord," "Showing forth his death," as they had been commanded, and giving to men an opportunity "to eat his flesh and drink his blood" that they may have life ;

They are ready "to anoint the sick and infirm with oil," and to say "the prayer of faith."*

They "separate and set apart" holy men for the work of the ministry, and by the imposition of hands ordain them.

They take measures and give instructions to secure the purity of the married state, made a sacrament by Christ.

They "rule and govern" the Church of God as they were commanded.

And in the performance of all these sacred duties, they always have due regard to the authority of Peter, who carries the keys of spiritual power ; they act in conjunction with him, and labour, not to divide the fold ; not to subvert the authority of others, and enhance their own ; but to consolidate the kingdom of Christ in its integrity, preserving its unity while extending its limits.

* St. James, v. 14.

CHAPTER VII.

The powers to be exercised and the Sacraments to be administered were for the benefit of the people, hence the Ministry must be perpetuated—The true doctrines of Christ must be taught, and the teaching body must teach them truly, that is infallibly—This further proved from the necessary *unity* of the Church—Protestants believe that the authority which Christ gave to his Church was a fallible authority—Have they any Scripture to prove this belief?—Some parts of Scripture they only use to refute them: can they prove nothing in their own favour from them?—To *protest* or destroy is easy.

Do not these facts prove conclusively that Christ intended to establish a body of men distinct from the mass of the people who should embrace his doctrines; a body, which through all time, should continue distinct; the members of which, should be invested with a sacred character, and possess certain spiritual powers, derived, not from the followers of Christ, not from the body of believers, but from Christ himself, and therefore not to be frustrated, despised, or made of no effect, at the caprice or fancy of the people.

When he instituted this ministry, and invested it with such high spiritual powers, the Saviour expected that all who should enter his Church, would respect the character and authority, and, with thankfulness, avail themselves of the ministry, of those who were duly authorized to dispense the sacred mysteries of faith.

The commission to teach and preach implied the obligation to learn and to be taught; and it was also said, “He who hears you, hears me; he who despises you, despises me.”

The commission to “rule and govern” the Church of God, implied an obligation on the members of the Church, to be *ruled* and *governed*; moreover, it was said, “Obey your Prelates, and be subject to them. For they watch as being to render an account of your souls.”*

The institution of Sacraments, or sacred channels of Divine grace, implied the utility or necessity of using them. And, of the first, Baptism, the necessity was even indicated as indispensable. “Unless a man (in the Greek *unless any one*) be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”†

Men can do as they please, as mere *free agents*, willing to abide the ultimate consequences of their acts; *as such* they may claim a right to refuse the gospel of Christ altogether; but *as Christians* they have no right to expect Heaven on any conditions, but those laid down by the Saviour, and *as such* they have no right to refuse submission to the authority and powers which he gave to his ministers. He gave these powers to ensure the perpetual preser-

* Heb. xiii. 17.

† John iii. 5.

vation and spread of his religion, and the triumph of his Church. He gave these powers to guarantee, unity of faith, unity in the administration of the Sacraments, and unity of spiritual government, lest his kingdom, by division, should be "brought to desolation."

And, although these powers be wielded by men, they are not wielded by them as *men*, but as *ministers of Christ*. It is not the power of men, but the power of Christ.

"All power," said the Redeemer to his Apostles, "All power is given to me in Heaven and on earth."*

"As the Father sent me, so also I send you."†

"You have not chosen me; but I have chosen you, and have appointed you."‡

The Apostles felt that they were really in possession of these extraordinary powers and used them.§ When they acted, with power and "as having authority," the people respected their acts because of the source from which their authority was derived. Jesus Christ was himself the great Lawgiver and Ruler, and they were recognized as his lawfully deputed ministers.

The fact, that these extraordinary powers were left by Jesus Christ with his ministry, in order to preserve the deposit of his doctrines in their integrity and purity, and, with these doctrines and the sacred rites or sacraments which he instituted, to feed his flock, as with a divine nourishment, and to watch over and govern all believers, keeping them members of one society and one holy communion, proves conclusively, that his promises to send the Spirit of Truth to abide with them, and to be himself with them, aiding and assisting, were intended to enable them to accomplish these solemn and important duties with unfailing success. A preservation of his *true doctrines*, a due administration of his ordinances, or *sacraments*, and a correct and beneficial exercise of pastoral authority, could not be insured, unless, with the body of pastors, united under their visible head, Christ co-operated effectually. And this effectual co-operation, so necessary and indispensable, is what the Catholic Church has ever claimed, and now continues to claim, as the bulwark of her authority. The great powers left with the body of pastors would be ineffectual, and even dangerous, without this divine co-operation. If the flock were subjected, without limit or qualification, to their authority and guidance as a united body, and required to obey under penalty of being reputed with heathens and infidels, and their authority was erring and fallible, it would be little better than "the blind leading the blind," and all might "fall into the ditch together." But if their high and extraordinary powers, and their authority

* Matth. xxviii.

† John xx. 21.

‡ John xv. 16.

§ See the Council of Jerusalem, Acts xv., and first Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, chapter v., where the incestuous Corinthian was excommunicated.

to guide and govern, be protected by the abiding presence and effective co-operation of Christ himself, in obeying them, we obey *him*, and we cannot be led astray, unless Christ himself can conduct us to perdition.

And why would the Redeemer give such powers, make such promises, and then require obedience, if he foresaw into what condition Christendom would be brought by yielding obedience to those who should claim to be his ministers,—a condition, as Protestants pretend, of universal popery; that is, the whole Christian world, for centuries together, recognizing the supremacy of the Pope, the unerring authority of the Church, and all the present doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church? Protestants admit that Christians believed and practiced as Catholics do at present, from a very remote antiquity, indeed almost from the first ages of the Church. Christ must have foreseen that this would be the case, and why did he devise no measures to prevent this sudden pretended ruin, and continued perversion, of the pure principles of his Gospel? On the contrary, why does the very first constitution of the Church, in its primary elements, show a character and authority in the ministry, requiring respect and obedience from the faithful; an authority, not to be contemned without despising Christ, and an obedience, not to be refused by those who would not be classed with the heathen and unbeliever? We have a right to conclude that the Christian Church was organized and perpetuated precisely as its Divine Founder desired and intended; that the laws by which it has been governed for ages, were enacted with heaven-directed prudence and wisdom; that its decisions, on matters of faith, were always in accordance with the doctrines first revealed and delivered to the body of witnesses, teachers and ministers, by the great "Author and finisher of faith;" that "the gates of Hell" have *never* prevailed against the Church, according to his promises; and that Christians at any given period of time since the first establishment of the Church, were always safe, and only safe, when submitting to its guidance. These things must be admitted true, by those who admit, that the ancient prophecies, which foretold the establishment and extended and persevering triumph and glory of Christ's kingdom, have been verified, and that the labours and revelations of the Saviour, for the redemption and regeneration of the human race, have been made effectual. For, otherwise, it must be maintained that faith perished, and the Church became the synagogue of Satan, soon after the death of Christ and his Apostles.

The great powers left with his ministry, as proved from scripture, show therefore, that Christ designed to confer the attribute of infallibility, which the Church has always claimed, as the consequence of his direct and unqualified promise to be with her, till the consummation of time.

Other arguments might be erected on those texts of scripture, which set forth the unity which the Saviour designed to exist among his followers. His fold was to be *one*,* his kingdom to stand undivided; his disciples were to love one another, to avoid divisions, dissensions, heresies and schisms: for this he prayed to his Father; to this he referred as a characteristic mark, to convince the world of His divine mission. Unity in the Church can only be secured by submission to authority. If Christ desired unity, he also desired this submission to authority, for he who wishes the end must also wish the means. The authority would be incompetent, without his divine aid and co-operation to render it a true and safe guide in the concerns of Faith, by the assistance of Christ, it is then an *unerring* infallible authority.

Submission to authority thus divinely supported by Christ himself, will effectually secure the unity which he recommended, and for which he so earnestly prayed. Without this submission there can be no unity of faith, no unity with regard to the sacred rites, ceremonies, and worship of Christians: no unity of ecclesiastical discipline and government. Heresy, schism, and innovation would march abroad among Christians, introducing division and confusion into their ranks. Truth and Charity would both be sacrificed. System after system, scheme after scheme, sect after sect, would appear and disappear. And amid the universal confusion of a thousand controversies, the Gospel of Christ would become a mere fable, for the scoff of the infidel, and the contempt of the wicked.

If therefore Christianity be a divine and harmonious system, if the plain teaching of scripture be entitled to credit, unity among Christians is indispensably necessary. If unity be necessary, Christ must have invested his Church with an unerring, infallible authority.

Are we correct in referring to these scripture proofs, as conclusive to demonstrate that the Redeemer invested his Church with an unerring authority in the concerns of divine faith? Protestants think not. They protest against the doctrine that the Church established by Christ, has an unerring authority in matters of faith. They do *not* believe it. This is one of the *negative* articles of their faith. But to assert a negative and seek to establish it by a false interpretation of the texts of scripture which teach the affirmative, will scarcely satisfy a rational and impartial inquirer.

Let them make this article of their faith positive, and in place of saying, "I deny that Christ left an unerring authority with his Church," let them affirm this: "I believe, as an article of

* See John x. 16; and xvii. 20. Also Rom. xv. 5; 1 Cor. i. 10; and Ephes. iv. 3, &c.

faith, that Christ established a Church and invested it with an *erring, fallible* authority, to which, however, he enjoined submission."

And, as they only believe what the scriptures plainly teach, let them show one plain text of scripture which sustains this article of their faith. We defy them to do so. And yet it is an article of their faith that *fallibility* is an attribute of the Church of Christ. They shelter the glaring absurdity of their positive doctrines behind sophisms, and come forth with negations to wrestle against the positive faith of Catholics. Let their negations be made affirmations, and then let them prove them by scripture. Let them prove that Christ intended his Church to lead men into error, superstition and damnable idolatry; that he established a fallible Church; that he wished heresies and schisms; that he desired his kingdom to be divided, his followers to be disunited and in continual controversies; that he was willing that any and every man who chose, might usurp the office of preacher, instructor, guide and minister, without any regard to ordination or mission. And let them show plain scripture in support of these affirmations. They cannot do so: and they never undertake it, notwithstanding all their boasts about believing only what scripture teaches.

It is something not a little remarkable, that Protestants can make no use whatever of all those plain, strong passages of scripture which are brought forward to prove the controverted points of Catholic doctrine. They can do nothing with all these to show, any of the truths which they profess to discover in the word of God, or any of the attributes, or prerogatives, of their own sectarian Churches. If they quote them at all, it is that they may, by ingenious, strained and far-sought interpretation, deprive the Catholic Church of the testimony which they furnish her, and if they succeed, by explanation, construction, and false logic, to set aside the point of their testimony, they are perfectly satisfied, and seem to take for granted that their own heterogeneous assertions are consequently confirmed. But why do they not bring forward these same plain texts, to show some positive doctrine of their own creeds, to set forth some attribute of their own Churches? Why can their Bible-religion make no direct, positive and affirmative use of these passages of the written word of God? Can they, from the text, "Thou art Peter: and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it," show that some promise is here made to their Church, and what this promise is, and what is the result thereof in the history of their Church? Can they, from the text, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven: whose sins you shall retain, they are retained;" and from this other, "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in Heaven; whatsoever

you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in Heaven," prove that Christ left with their ministry some extraordinary powers? Can they, from the text, "If he will not hear the Church let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican," show the obligation to submit to their Church? And from the text, "This is my body, this is my blood;" "Do this in commemoration of me," can they show the right to give "the flesh and blood" of Christ to be the life of their members, and say, as the Apostle did, "The Chalice of Benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?"*

Can they show their compliance with the injunction of St. James "to anoint the sick with oil?" Can they use these and other plain texts of scripture to set forth their own positive doctrines, in place of trying their ingenuity in controversy against the Catholic Church? They protest, they deny, they oppose—they face these texts as antagonists; they regard them as so many witnesses arrayed to condemn them, and like parties to a process, their chief aim and desire is to invalidate the testimony, to find in it some weak point, some flaw, some ground on which to impeach it and set it aside. But as far as it is direct and positive, they can do nothing with it, and really these texts seem to make no part of those scriptures, upon which they profess to ground their faith. Why, like Luther, do they not expunge them, and pronounce them papistical interpolations? Luther found his novelty, about "faith alone," *condemned* by the epistle of St. James, and he soon set the testimony aside by expelling this epistle from the canon of scripture; pronouncing it "an epistle of straw." Luther has shown Protestants an easy way to silence the witnesses which come forward to condemn their principles. They treat the texts which positively condemn them, with silence and neglect in all cases, where they are not engaged in protesting against the ancient Church, and undermining her authority and doctrines.

It is quite an easy matter to protest, or pull down and destroy, and for this work a strong combination of hostile and discordant forces may be made. Whatever may be the principles of the parties, and however discordant, it is enough, to insure their union for the work of destruction, that they all feel opposed to the existence of that which they desire to subvert. But after the work of ruin is complete, these forces, which for a time were united, again dissolve into their original elements, and they cannot unite to build up again, in any shape or form, the scattered materials of the subverted edifice. The sects can all unite to subvert the Catholic Church, but they cannot unite to furnish a substitute.

* 1 Cor. x. 16.

They all adopt principles, which, did not Christ protect his Church as he promised, would really bring her to ruin and desolation, but they cannot agree upon any substitute, in case the ruin which they desire, were in fact accomplished. See their sects, their churches, their doctrines, arrayed against each other in open antagonism—a war of churches and creeds, a war of systems and principles; and no combination, no agreement, as to what are the doctrines of Christ, or which is the Church of Christ.

CHAPTER VIII.

A further proof is derived from the conduct and practice of the Church—The Pastors always taught with an authority which implied Infallibility—The Councils—Vain effort of Protestants to evade this argument.

In order to prove still more conclusively that the texts of scripture, which we have placed under the view of the reader, do really establish the tenet, that the Church possesses an *unerring, infallible authority*, in matters of faith, we have only to consider the conduct of the Christian Church from its first establishment to the present time, as manifest in the decrees of Councils, and in the testimonies of the Fathers and doctors of the different ages of Christianity.

The conduct of the Church, unvaried from the beginning, is a *practical exposition* of the meaning of these texts of scripture, far more enlightened and correct, far more worthy of attention and reverence, than all the ingenious criticisms of modern Bible readers. The clear, explicit and harmonious *traditionary testimony*, furnished by Christendom throughout its whole extent, and by each successive age, is a commentary upon the revelations of God, and the sense and import thereof, of a credibility, weight, and importance, such as cannot be counterbalanced by any earthly testimony which can possibly be arrayed. The opinions, theories, views and speculations of the reformers, were they even harmonious, instead of discordant, could not weigh as a feather in the balance against this venerable testimony, consisting as it does of the combined voices of the Christian people and teachers, of every part of the world and of every age. And even the present Catholic Church, with its unanimous faith on this point of the *unerring authority* of the Church, presents to the world more than one hundred and eighty millions of Christians, who give the same interpretation to these texts of scripture. against those who claim the privilege to think more highly of their private understanding

and wisdom, than of the combined learning and wisdom of all nations and ages.

That in the Church of Christ the pastors have always taught with authority; when disputes and contests arose among the Christian people of any particular congregation, city, or province, that the pastors decided the questions in dispute, with a *positive authority*, even saying *Anathema* to those who refused to submit to their decision; that the majority of Christians, always bowed reverently to these authoritative decisions; and that the rebellious were forthwith cut off from Christian communion; are *facts*, which, who, no person, ever so little acquainted with ecclesiastical history, will pretend to deny.

The Church, in all ages, from the meeting of the Apostles in the Council of Jerusalem to decide the dispute about the necessity of circumcision, to the time, when Protestants were condemned by the Council of Trent, has *always exercised* a supreme authority in proposing and explaining the doctrines of Faith. The proofs which establish this position, are numerous, solemn, and certain. Plain historical evidences, confirmed by political and ecclesiastical institutions, and bearing the seal of public authority, throng forward to place this fact beyond dispute. From the assembling of Bishops in the first general Council of Nice, in the commencement of the fourth century, to that of Trent in the sixteenth, not only the chief pastors, the Bishops, but other learned doctors, and even Emperors and Princes personally, or by their representatives, attended these grand and imposing assemblies, where the authority of the chair of Peter presided, and the more essential points of Catholic Faith were set forth in precise terms, such as they had been first taught by the Apostles, and delivered from mouth to mouth, from heart to heart, and by daily practice exemplified, among the faithful of every country and clime, and of every generation. The decisions of these Councils are matters of historical record. They were hailed throughout Christendom as conclusive upon the points implicated. They were received with submission by the faithful in all parts of the world.

The custom of assembling the Bishops, as far as persecution allowed it to be practicable, existed long before the first general Council of Nice, held in 325 for the condemnation of Arius. Thus we read of a Council held by Pope Victor at Rome in 196, to settle the dispute about the time of celebrating the festival of Easter; and of others held in Palestine, and in different parts of the Western Church. A Council was held at Rome in 251, to condemn the heresy of Novatian. A great Council at Antioch, in 269, deposed Paul of Samosata, who denied the divinity of the Saviour. Another in Mesopotamia in 277, condemned the Manichean heresy.*

* For these facts see Fleury and Berault Bercastel.

When occasion required, and circumstances permitted, General Councils were held. The holding of Councils implied the existence of authority, and when this authority represented, or received, the suffrages of the Universal Church, all regarded it as conclusive and infallible.

In exercising this authority, the Church relied confidently upon the promises of Christ to be with her, and that "the Spirit of Truth should abide with her, to guide her unerringly." She had either received from her Divine Founder the right thus to govern the Church with supreme authority; or else, in the days of her very first existence, when her confessors were languishing amid chains, and her martyrs bleeding for her doctrines, she had already *usurped* a supreme authority; changed the fundamental principles of her constitution as settled by her Founder; altered the rule of Faith; annihilated the supreme authority of God's written word, and "the glorious gospel privileges of private interpretation;" effectually overturned the whole work of Christ; and substituted a system which, in its operation, soon brought "all Christendom into a state of error, superstition, and damnable idolatry," in which it remained till the sixteenth century, "*totally buried*," and in which, even since Luther's reformation, the majority of Christians have remained, still continue, and no doubt will, in spite of the sects of the reformation, and liberal distribution of Bibles, persevere to the end of time itself. Can we for a moment imagine, that, so soon after the time of Christ, and while some of the very disciples of his Apostles, still lived, and occupied the Episcopal Chairs which had been founded and occupied by the Apostles, the Church could have thus fallen away from Christ and become unfit to preserve and propagate the doctrines of Faith? This is absolutely incredible.

The Pastors of the Church exercised the authority which the Apostles, their predecessors, had exercised in their assembly at Jerusalem. It was Christ who delegated this authority. It was the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, who spoke by the voice of this authority. When the Church was disturbed by the winds of heretical doctrine, when she was agitated by the waves of controversy and disputation; when the storm raged and the sea swelled and heaved, and disaster seemed inevitable; lo! was always heard amid the din of the tempest and the cries of alarm, the voice of Christ himself, saying: "Peace, be still!" and the winds subsided, the waters fell, the danger disappeared, and calm was restored to the Christian people.

It is an historical fact that the Church of Christendom was accustomed to hold Councils for deciding what was the Catholic faith handed down from Apostolic times through descending generations, and in passing their decrees, these Councils virtually testified to the whole world that *the authority*, to decide disputed

points with *unerring* certainty, had been vested in them by the Divine Founder of the Church. This unerring authority was indispensable to justify their positive decisions. For without an *unerring authority*, those positive decisions, enforced as they were by solemn ecclesiastical censures, and spiritual anathemas and excommunications, would have been most bold and destructive usurpations, such as the Church of Christ could not, so soon after her foundation, have possibly made. For this would have been the accomplished triumph of the "Gates of Hell" over the Church which Christ founded, inasmuch as the continued exercise of such usurped authority, submitted to as it was by all Christians, would engraft upon Catholic, or universal faith, human errors, falsehoods, heresies, superstitions, and various principles and tenets, ruinous to the souls of those who believed them. By this, the whole Church, both teachers and believers, would have been forcibly rooted out of Christ, and made fondly and blindly to follow Satan, as his trophies of victory over Christ himself.

Each succeeding General Council virtually claimed the attribute of the same *unerring authority*, and each succeeding General Council respected and confirmed the determinations which had been made by those which preceded.

Through the whole course of revolving centuries, the undisputed existence and exercise of an authority considered *infallible* or *unerring*, are seen in the history of the progress of the Church. Why should the chief pastors and bishops of the Church hold Councils and issue solemn decisions if they had not this authority? Why should the bishops of each succeeding period of time claim for General Councils this same authority? Why should each such Council profoundly respect the determinations which had been made by those which had preceded, and consider the points involved as *finally decided*? Why should the Christian people, every where dispersed, most reverently receive these determinations and decisions of Councils? Why were those who refused submission, always cut off from the communion of the faithful, and always regarded by the faithful as really *excommunicated*? Why does the present Catholic Church, with its millions diffused through the whole earth, still reverently respect the authoritative decisions of these grand, imposing assemblies of the venerable prelates of past times, in which the various dioceses of Christendom were represented by their chief pastors and rulers? Why can the sects of Protestants show no General Council, no assembly of ancient prelates and bishops, with which they can claim religious sympathy and Christian Communion? Why do all the ancient Councils belong to Catholics, and their acts and decisions all uphold the authority of the present Catholic Church?

We are aware that Protestants strive to evade the force of those arguments, which, on this ground, are brought forward to

show that they are in a state of rebellion against a just and divinely constituted authority, by resting their defence upon the written word of God, understood in the sense, and *only* in the sense, which they are pleased to put upon it by their own ingenious interpretation. But an impartial inquirer, not interested to deceive himself, will view things by the light of evidence. To such we say, that having admitted that Christ established a Church and left with it his revelations, certainly not by him written, and not written before his death, we have a right to look to the public teaching and practical operations of that divinely founded Church, for evidence of the revelations and authority which she received from Christ. The traditionary history of the Church, while propounding the revelations of Christ, and administering the spiritual government instituted for the preservation and propagation of the Christian religion in its purity, must furnish the very highest order of evidence to show the faith and principles, with which men became Christians and continued Christians. To appeal to the mere written word of God, without any standard to settle its meaning, may allow the appellant an open field for endless disputation, and an escape, amid the mazes of arbitrary interpretation, for his fondly conceived and novel theories, but it will not suffice, to indicate or confound *heresy*, to prevent or heal the wounds of schism, or to settle doubts and controversies about what men shall believe and do, in order to be saved.

This appeal is made with as much confidence by Arians, Socinians, Universalists, Millerites, and Deists, as by those Protestant sects which pretend to be more orthodox. The impartial inquirer for truth, must therefore perceive the necessity of some sufficient means to settle and determine the true intention of Christ, and the import of his divine revelations; and without a direct individual revelation from God himself, which he cannot be foolish enough to expect, he can find no evidence so rational, respectable and conclusive, as the solemn authoritative acts of the Church, and the catholic faith and practice of its members, in each successive generation and age, and in every country of the world, from the period of its foundation to the present time.

When questions arise among the citizens, of different States, whether United or Confederate, with regard to the fixed fundamental principles of their constitution, it is rational to try them by the writings and comments of those great men who first administered the government; and we consider the practical operation of the government in the past, as a safe commentary on the principles of the constitution. Besides, we have a supreme tribunal, for settling disputed questions of constitutional law; and the decisions of this tribunal are respected, throughout the whole republic, as final and conclusive. Why, then, shall not the practi-

cal operation of the Church of Christ, and the writings of the eminent doctors and fathers of the early ages, be held as rational and convincing evidence, of the nature of the principles and truths of that sublime constitution, which has been left by the Redeemer and his Apostles, to secure the valuable and imperishable blessings of religion? And why shall the decisions of that tribunal, which Christ instituted and commanded us to respect and obey, not be considered final and conclusive, with regard to any questions which may arise? The man who would pretend to understand the constitution of the United States, or of the Confederate States, in a sense *adverse* to the continued practice of the government, and to the unanimous testimony, furnished by the writings and commentaries of the most profound statesmen and lawyers of the country in times past, should be looked upon as eminently presumptuous, if not as entirely insane. And why shall modern reformers, with novel theories and views about the Christian law and faith, be more esteemed, when found opposed to the continued practice of the Church, and to the unanimous testimony of the eminent writers and fathers, whose genius, talents, and very names, have been in veneration for ages?

We cannot undertake to array all these testimonies, since to do so, volumes would be necessary. Some of the early fathers have written volumes in vindication of this single point concerning the authority of the Church. Among these, are: *Tertullian, St. Cyprian, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Vincent of Lerins, &c.* But we may, in the next chapter, set down a few of these testimonies, which are direct and conclusive.

CHAPTER IX.

A few testimonies from the Fathers—The testimony of tradition—Three considerations especially worthy of attention—The statement of Dean Paulin de Cressy as to *Archbishop Usher's* declaration respecting the *variations* in the manuscripts of the Greek Testament.

St. Ireneus, a Greek by birth, but ranked with the Latin Fathers, and who, through St. Polycarp, his preceptor, was connected with the Apostolic times, said :

“Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace.”*
 “We must obey the priests that are in the Church: those who

* Ireneus, Book III.

have succession from the Apostles, who, together with the episcopal power, have, according to the good pleasure of the Father, received the *certain gift of truth*. But as to those who depart from the original succession, wheresoever they be assembled, they should be suspected, either as heretics, schismatics, or as hypocrites.*“What if the Apostles had not left Scriptures, ought we not to have followed the order of Tradition which they delivered to those to whom they committed the Churches? To which order many nations yield assent, who believe in Christ, having salvation written in their hearts by the Spirit of God, without letters or ink, and diligently keeping ancient tradition. It is easy to receive *the truth* from God’s Church, seeing the Apostles have most fully deposited in her, as in a rich store-house, all things belonging to truth: For what! if there should arise any contention of some small question, ought we not to have recourse to the most ancient Churches, and from them to receive what is certain and clear concerning the present question.”†

The same father, also, in his fifth book against heresies, says: “The teaching of the Church is true and stable, showing to all men the same one path of salvation;” and further, “Every where the Church proclaims the *truth*.”

St. Clement of Alexandria, a great father of the same age, declares that the “right doctrine is to be found only in *the truth* (or *the true*) and ancient Church;” and he maintains that “there is *only one true Church, that Church which is in reality the old one.*”‡

Tertullian, in his Prescriptions, maintains that “We are not to appeal to scriptures, neither is the controversy to be settled upon them, in the which there will either be no victory at all, or one very uncertain.”.But,

“Wheresoever it shall appear that the truth of the Christian discipline or faith is, there will also be found the truth of scriptures, and expositions, and all Christian traditions.”

And further, he maintains that,

“To know what the Apostles taught, that is, what Christ revealed to them, recourse must be had *to the Churches which they founded*, and which they instructed by word of mouth, and by their epistles.”

He contended that these “*Mother Churches*” taught the *truth*, and that all other opinions “must be *novel and false.*”§

Origen, who lived in the last of the second, and died in the beginning of the third century, and is numbered among the Greek Fathers, says:

“Since there are many who think they believe the things which

* Ireneus, Book iv.

† Id. B. v.

‡ Strom. lib. vii.

§ See Prescriptions of Tertullian, *passim*.

are of Christ, and are of different opinions from those who went before them, let the doctrine of the Church be kept, which is delivered from the Apostles by order of succession, and remains in the Church to this very day. That alone is to be believed for truth, which in nothing disagrees from the tradition of the Church."

And this father plainly says, that we are, "To draw intelligence from the scripture, according to *the sense which has been delivered by the Apostles*;" and that we are "not to believe otherwise than as the Church of God hath by succession *delivered to us*."*

St. Cyprian, a Latin father of this age, after maintaining the unwavering fidelity of the pure spouse of Christ, and the impossibility of her ever being defiled by adultery, says:

"Whosoever divideth from the Church, and cleaveth to the Adulteress, he is separated from the promises of the Church: He cannot have God for his father who hath not the Church for his mother."

And he asks:

"He that doth not hold the unity of the Church, can he think that he holds the unity of the faith?"†

And Lactantius, who from the eloquence of his style, deserved to be called "the Christian Cicero" and who is classed with the Latin Fathers of the fourth century, says:

"It is only the Catholic Church that hath the true worship and service of God: this is the source of truth; this the dwelling place of faith; this the temple of God: into which who entereth not, and from which, whoever departeth is without all hope of life, and of eternal salvation."‡

Ruffinus, in his ecclesiastical history says that the great St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen, "took the interpretation of scripture not from their own sense, but from the tradition of the Fathers."§

St. Cyril, of Jerusalem, of the same fourth age, testifies that the Church is called *Catholic*, "because she teacheth *Catholicly*, and *without omission*, all doctrines, which men should know, concerning things visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly."||

The same Father in his *fifth catechesis*, says,

"Guard the Faith, and *that Faith alone*, which is now delivered to thee by *the Church*, confirmed as it is by all the scriptures."

St. Ambrose represents men as walking in the darkness of night, and says to them individually,

"*Let the Church point out the way to thee.*"¶

* Origen in his preface to his Periarchon, his Tract on Matthew, and Homily VII. on Leviticus.

† St. Cyprian de Unitate Ecclesie.

‡ Catechis. xviii.

§ Inst. lib. iv.

¶ Ruf. Hist. Eccl. lib. 2.

¶ In ps. xxxv.

Also this Father declares

“Faith is the foundation of the Church: for it was not spoken of the flesh of Peter, but of his faith, that the gates of Hell should not prevail: His confession overcame Hell: and this confession excludes many heresies: for seeing the Church, like a good ship, is beat upon by many waves, the foundation of the Church must prevail against all heresies.”*

St. Augustine, whose works contain a great deal on this subject, among other things, maintains that,

“In the Church the truth resides, whosoever is separated from it, it is necessary that he should speak false things.”†

He also says, in his fourth book against the Donatists:

“That which the Universal Church holds, and is not ordained by Councils, but hath been always retained and observed, is most justly believed to have been delivered no other way than by Apostolic traditions, &c. We must observe in these things that which the Church of God observes: The question, therefore, between you and ourselves is, which of the two, yours or ours, is the Church of God?”

This Father considered the authority of the Church the true guide of men in points of faith, and looked upon her decisions as conclusive.

He thus eloquently sets forth the authority of the Catholic Church:

“There are other things which most justly keep me in her bosom: The consent of peoples and nations keeps me there: The authority begun by miracles, nourished by hope, augmented by charity, confirmed by antiquity, keeps me there: The succession of prelates ever since the see of Peter, to whom our Lord, after his resurrection, committed the feeding of his sheep, to this present Episcopate, keeps me there: and finally the very name of Catholic, keeps me there; the which *name* this Church alone, not without cause, hath retained among so many and great heresies, insomuch that when any stranger demands where the assembly is wherein a man may communicate with the Catholic Church, there is not any heretic has the boldness to show him his temple or house, &c. These many, and so strong ties, retain a believer in the Catholic Church.”

He also declares emphatically:

“I myself would not believe the gospel were it not that the authority of the *Catholic* Church moves me.”‡

He further demonstrates, that the same Church which teaches him to believe the gospel, also teaches him not to believe those heretics (the Manicheans) against whom he wrote, and argues,

* De Incar. Domini.

† St. Aug. on ps. 57.

‡ Nisi me Catholicæ Ecclesiæ commoveret autoritas. St. Aug. Con. Fund.

that since these heretics admit that we must receive the gospel from the Church, it is *madness* in them to pretend to teach the sense of the gospel against that which the Church teaches.

“*What madness is this? Believe them (Catholics) that we ought to believe Christ; but learn of us (Manicheans) what Christ said.*”*

And writing against Cresconius, he argues that we believe the scriptures, by believing the Church, since the scriptures commend the authority of the Church to us:

“Whosoever feareth to be deceived with the obscurity of this question, let him require the Church, which the holy scriptures, without any ambiguity, doth demonstrate.”

St. Vincent of Lerins, after naming several of the heresies which had arisen, says:

“For this reason, to avoid the labyrinth of so many contrary errors, it is very necessary that the line of Prophetical and Apostolical conceptions should be drawn according to the rule of ecclesiastical and catholic sense, or understanding.”

St. Leo, writing concerning penitential fasts, says:

“It is not to be doubted that all Christain observance is of divine instruction, and that whatsoever is received by the Church into the custom of devotion doth come from Apostolical tradition, and from the doctrine of the Holy Ghost.”

We find also among the testimonies of antiquity many express commendations of the authority of Councils to determine controversies. The ancient canons, termed *Apostolical*, and, though admitted not to have been drawn up by the Apostles themselves, yet certainly a work of the first ages, by some even attributed to St. Clement. These canons specify,

“That Bishops should twice a year hold Councils, and among themselves examine the decrees of religion, and settle such *ecclesiastical* controversies as should arise.”

Here is proof of an authority to compose ecclesiastical disputes at least.

St. Ignatius testifies,

“That it was the *order* in his time, that synods and assemblies of Bishops were frequently celebrated.”

Tertullian witnesseth the same concerning Councils held in Greece. And the historian, Socrates, records this memorable saying of the Emperor Constantine:

“Whatsoever is decreed in the Holy Council of Bishops, that is *universally to be ascribed to the Divine Will.*”†

St. Ambrose terms the decrees of the Council of Nice,

“*Hæreditaria signacula, hereditary seals, not to be violated by the rash boldness of any man.*”‡

* Lib. de utilitate credendi.

† Soc. hist. ecclæs. lib. 1.

‡ St. Amb. de Fide. lib. 3.

These proofs, from antiquity, multiply before the inquirer, in proportion as his investigation brings him down from century to century. He discovers *first*, that the Bishop, in his diocese, was the *ruler*; that he possessed the spiritual authority and power, necessary for administering the affairs of that part of the fold, of which he had immediate charge. St. Ignatius is found thus exhorting:

“Do you all follow your Bishop as Christ did his Father. Without the Bishop let no man presume to do *any* of those things which belong to the Church.”*

He discovers, *secondly*, that provincial and national synods had still more authority than single Bishops, but not an *unerring* authority. Their decrees must still be subject to the approbation or rejection of the Universal Church, united under its head. If the decrees of particular synods, accorded with what had been “every where delivered and believed,” they might stand, but not otherwise. Hence Pope Stephen caused the Bishops of an African council to *reverse* one of their decrees on the subject of *rebaptization*. The letter of the Pope set forth that this decree opposed the traditionary faith and practice of the Universal Church, and declared that “*no innovation should be admitted, but what was handed down should be retained.*”

But he observes, *thirdly*, that it is a well ascertained and settled point, that a plenary, Œcumenical council of the whole Church, over which the incumbent of Peter’s see presided, had *supreme authority to decree* what had been the doctrine *always taught and believed*; and such decisions were, every where and by all Catholics, received with reverence and submission, and regarded as *final and conclusive*. These decisions “could not be violated by the rash boldness of any man,” who cared for the sacred unity of faith, and respected the authority which Christ vested with his Church.

This current of traditionary testimony shows that all Christians, from the earliest ages, held to the tenet of religious faith maintained by Catholics at present, “that there exists in the Church of Christ a *supreme, unerring authority,*” and *proves conclusively*, that any Christian society pretending to be Christ’s Church, and not having, or even professing to have, such authority, is, by this fact alone, manifested to be something else, than the Church of Christ.

The present Catholic Church is the only Christian society which claims now, as she has always claimed, this *supreme unerring authority*, and, therefore, she must be the Church of the fathers, the Church of primitive christians, the Church which Christ founded on *the rock* Peter, the Church which, in the words of St. Cyprian,

* Ig. Ep. ad. Smym.

all must "have as Mother who will have God for Father;" in a word, she must be THE TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

The force of the testimony, furnished by the unanimous consent of the fathers and doctors of past ages, to convince us of this fundamental doctrine, of the *unerring authority of the Church*, is shown by the following considerations, among others which might be presented.

1st. The doctrines of Christ were *orally delivered* to the Apostles, and *orally delivered* by them to the christians, who first formed the Apostolic Churches. By the *way of oral tradition*, therefore, christianity was established and spread over the world.

2ndly. *This way* is no where set aside in scripture, but on the contrary, it is especially commended.

3rdly. It is the most sure and safe way for preserving the true doctrines of Christ.

We will, in brief, show that these three considerations are well grounded.

And *first*, We find from the scriptures, that the Apostles were taught by Christ, from his own lips, and sent by Christ to *preach* the gospel to every creature. Christ wrote no scriptures himself, and there is no evidence that he commanded his Apostles to write. It seems to have been his purpose, not to write his law, upon tablets of stone or upon paper, but *in the hearts* of believers. He wished his Apostles to preach, and the people to obtain *faith* by *hearing* the word of God. "Faith cometh by hearing," says St. Paul. There is no evidence that *all the Apostles* wrote scripture, or that those, who wrote, did so, as a duty, commanded, or deemed absolutely indispensable. There is no evidence that the sum of these writings, admitted to be inspired, or any one of them, was designed to be the sole guide in matters of Faith, independent of the Church, which Christ instituted and commissioned to teach his doctrines. Evidently, with the Apostolic body was invested the authority to teach by oral tradition, and no where in scripture do we find that *this way* was at any period to be changed for another.

But secondly, *this way* is expressly commended and approved in scripture. "There are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." (Query: Did these persons wish to change the written word?)—"As we said before, so say I now again, if any one preach to you a gospel besides that which you have *received*, let him be anathema."^{*}

The Gallatians had *received* the gospel, but certainly not a written one, otherwise, here was a fit and convenient place for the apostle to say, "see what is written in the gospel which you have received, and judging for yourselves believe as you please."

^{*} Gal. 1. 7. &c.

They received the gospel from his preaching, and by what they *had received*, they were to test the *preaching* of these persons who came to disturb them.

Again, St. Paul writes to the Phillippians: "The things which you have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do ye."*

The Apostle wished them to *practice* those things which by word and example they had learned from him. Their faith, thus reduced to daily practice, would be preserved precisely as it had been *delivered* and *received*.

To the Thessalonians he said emphatically, "Therefore, brethren, stand *firm*; and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word, or by our epistle."†

And to Timothy he said: "Hold the form of sound words, which thou hast heard from me in faith, and in the love which is in Christ Jesus."

"Keep the good deposited in trust to thee by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us."‡

And to the same he said, "And the things which thou hast heard from me, before many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also."§

Again he declared to him: "The Church is the pillar and ground of Truth."||

There is, in these passages, an express approbation of the way of tradition for ensuring the preservation and propagation of Christian doctrines and practices. The Greek word, *paradoseis*, used by the Apostle, is rendered literally by the word *traditions*. A deposit of these was made with Timothy, to be, by him, delivered to "faithful men," to be by them, delivered to others. And, no where do we find that this way was, at any time, to become inadequate, or to be displaced by another.

We have said thirdly, that this way of securing the transmission of the doctrines of religion, is the best and most secure. For the doctrines of Christ were so interwoven with daily practice and observance, that change was not possible, unless first the authority of tradition was itself despised. As long as Christians believed and practiced as they had learned and received, as long as they taught to their posterity to believe and practice as they did themselves, change and innovation were impossible. They daily reduced their faith to practice; they daily instructed their children to believe and observe as they did themselves. And in every part of the Christian fold, the same things were believed and observed, and the same things taught and delivered, so that novelty was recognized as false, by the very sign, that it was *novel*, and hitherto unheard of, and unobserved.

* Phil. iv. 9. † 2 Thes. xi. 14. ‡ 2 Tim. i. 13. § 2 Tim. xi. 2. || 1 Tim. iii. 15.

No writings or books could possibly be so well preserved as *traditional doctrines*, cherished in the minds and hearts of Christians every where dispersed. Mere abstract and speculative propositions, not often thought of by the people, and having no direct relation to the every day conduct of life, might indeed soon be changed or forgotten, but doctrines of Divine faith, identified with *daily observance* by all Christians, could not be in the same danger. And certainly, these would be less exposed to alterations, than writings accessible only to a few, and perhaps read and studied by fewer still.

Besides, we are not left to mere surmise on this point. It can be proved satisfactorily, that the writings and books of scripture, owing to circumstances, have not always been preserved precisely as they were written. A multitude of transcribers and copyists, not necessarily protected from error in their labours, have passed the scriptures through their hands, and hence are found various readings of the same passages. Even in the original languages, these varieties are found, and perhaps no other volume presents the same difficulty on this point. It is said on the authority of Dean *Paulin de Creney*, once a church of England minister, and afterwards a convert to the Catholic faith, that the learned Protestant Archbishop *Usher* declared, "that whereas he had of many years before a design to publish the New Testament in *Greek*, with various readings and annotations, and for that purpose, had spent much money, to furnish himself with *manuscripts* and *memoires* from several learned men abroad; yet in conclusion he was forced to desist utterly from that undertaking, lest if he should ingenuously have noted all the several differences of readings which he himself had collected, the incredible multitude of them in almost every verse, should rather have made men atheistically to doubt of the truth of the whole book, than satisfy them of the true reading of any particular passage."*

If such were the fact, notwithstanding the reverence which the Catholic Church has always had for the scriptures, and the care she has taken to collect and preserve them through all the vicissitudes of time, what would have been the case, had the Protestant doctrine, of "scripture alone the rule of faith, with the right of private judgment," prevailed through all those centuries, and every copyist and transcriber of scripture, with his own self-selected faith, had striven to set it forth in the written word of God in still clearer terms, as has since been done in modern Protestant versions.

It is said by the learned, that some of the sacred writings have been lost to the world, and among these are specified, an "epistle of St. Paul to the Laodiceans," and a "gospel in Hebrew, according to the Nazareei," (*secundum Nazaraeos.*) This fact proves

* *Exomologesie*, p. 178, Ed. 1647. Paris.

that writings and books, though sacred, were not sure to survive the destructive revolutions of time, and if these writings alone were designed, in their collection, to serve as the only rule of faith and judge of controversy, Protestants can have no perfect rule, because they cannot have an entire collection. But if, after the perishing of some of these books, there was still left with Christians a means of obtaining faith, and of knowing the doctrines of Christ, it is evident that there existed another and safer way, which was no other than the traditionary teaching and practical observance of the Church. And that this was the way relied upon and used, must even be inferred from the very loss of these sacred writings. Because, had the sacred writings collected together, been the only way for leading persons to faith in Christ, and to a knowledge of his doctrines, copies thereof, would not only have been carefully multiplied by the Apostles themselves, and left by them in the principal Churches which they founded, but even would have been procured and studied by heads of families and individuals, so that, being so widely and numerously diffused, and retained so carefully by so many Churches, congregations, and individuals, no book or leaf of them could have perished altogether.

But there are still further reasons to show that the sacred writings were never, either in the time of Christ or of his Apostles, designed as the only means of leading men to a knowledge of the doctrines of Faith. Several years after the death of Jesus Christ passed away, before any scripture of the New Testament was written, and many years passed, before all the books, that we now have, were written. During all this time, the way of oral tradition was used, and used successfully. This way lost none of its efficacy by the appearance of the first written book of scripture, nor was it weakened, but rather confirmed as others of these sacred writings were produced, since some of them expressly commended tradition. Besides, it was many years before any one local congregation had all these books together, and still many more years, before all the congregations of Christendom had a perfect and entire collection. Centuries had passed before a decision was made concerning the canonicity of the several books, by a Council of the Universal Church, and in settling this canon, many writings, pretending to the rank of inspired scriptures, had to be excluded by the judgment of the Church. During these centuries, the way of tradition for the preservation and propagation of faith, continued to be relied on, as it had been by the Apostles themselves. The mere ascertaining and declaring the canonicity of the several books of scripture, which was done by the authority of the Church under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and by the evidence which tradition itself furnished, could not set aside the authority of tradition, which had hitherto been so salutary and successful.

We have still further proofs, from *facts*, the most invincible of all arguments, to set forth the safety of this way, for securing the integrity, purity, and entire preservation of religious doctrines.

It is a fact that the way of tradition was used successfully, among the favoured people of God, until the time of Moses. It is a fact, that the Catholic Church has used this way successfully from the revolt of Luther in 1517 to the present year, 1862.

It is a fact, that the present doctrines of the Catholic Church, have in *this way* been preserved *unchanged*, by the admission of Protestants, through all those ages, prior to Luther's revolt against the Church, and which are technically termed the dark ages, embracing ten or eleven centuries. Protestants very clearly see in those ages all the present doctrines of the Catholic Church, which they are pleased to condemn under the general head, Popery.

It is then a fact, that the way of tradition has operated, securely and certainly, from the present year 1862 back through past centuries, up to (we are at a loss to ascertain the period, which Protestants fix upon as the precise time, when the Church of Christ fell into Popery, but we will say) the fourth century. During fourteen centuries, therefore, the *way of tradition*, as contended for by the Catholic Church, has secured her faith, one and unchanged, through every part of the world. And those who separated from that faith, during these fourteen centuries, have been compelled to spurn, contemn, and decry the conservative authority of tradition, upheld as it now is, and has been, by the supreme authority of the Church.

To this add, what we have hitherto demonstrated, that Christianity was established by oral tradition; that for the first four centuries, from the time of the Apostles to the authoritative decision of the Church in settling the canon of scripture, the way of tradition remained in full authority and exercise; that finally, this way was commended by scripture; and you have the whole eighteen centuries of the Christian era, by means of tradition and the authority of the Church, safely preserved in the knowledge and practice of Christian doctrine, as first delivered by Christ and his Apostles.

This way of tradition, linking as it does generation with generation, and causing those who depart from the theatre of present things to leave the deposite of faith as they had received it, to those who succeed and take their places, could never lead to falsehood in faith, and superstition in practice, unless, as some writer quaintly remarks, "*all Christians should retire at night to sleep, and forget the faith they believed and the things they practiced, and all wake up next morning, with a new faith and novel observances.*"

The three considerations, which we have proposed, and which we think have been sufficiently proved, give great force to that

venerable testimony, furnished by the unanimous consent of the great fathers and doctors of past ages, who, from their works, still tell us the faith believed in their own times, and in the times which preceded them. They convince us that, the Christians of primitive times, believed that the Church of Christ was invested with a *supreme, unerring* authority to propound faith, to determine disputes, and to govern and guide the faithful.

CHAPTER X.

The Infallibility of the Church is secured by Divine promise and protection—But the principle, upon which it is exercised, of handing down nothing but what has been delivered, would insure a sort of human infallibility—A Divine revelation needs an Infallible teacher—Individual inspiration was not promised, nor has it been given—The Bible, with private judgment, has engendered all kinds of heresies and sects—All points are debated—The Catholic doctrine confirmed by the principles and avowals of the first reformers—Summary and Conclusion.

The true Church, as we have shown, is demonstrated by the tradition of ages. And the same tradition declares the existence of a supreme, infallible authority in the Church. By the way of authority, Christians of all times have been able to distinguish Apostolical doctrines from human opinions. At all times, it was to the divinely constituted tribunal of the Church that questions concerning faith were brought. By this tribunal such questions were judged and decided. Thus fell Sabellianism, Donatism, Arianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism, Pelagianism, Semipelagianism, Monothelism, Iconoclasm, Berengarianism, Lollardism, and all heresies. By the same authority, Protestantism has been condemned.

Moreover, we maintain that if this authority were not by God protected from error and made infallible, it would still, of its nature, be most venerable and respectable. It would possess a kind of human infallibility, so that men would be more certain of being right and of believing truth, while submitting to its teaching and guidance, than they could possibly be, in obeying any other authority on earth, even that of their own, presumed infallible, private judgment.

When the Apostles constituted pastors to teach what they had themselves learned from their master, they must have instructed these pastors well and thoroughly. These pastors taught others as they had been taught themselves, and again the others taught their successors. Each class could not possibly forget, or cease to know, what they had learned from their predecessors. They

had received a deposite of doctrines identified with observances, which it was their duty to transmit to faithful men. The Apostles had, in different countries, adopted the same means for transmitting this deposite. In these different countries, there were pastors and Christian people, associated together for the preservation of the same holy and cherished deposite. These countries were separated by distance, by manners and customs, by local prejudices and interests, by difference of political government, but all conscientiously recognized the same sacred duty to preserve and transmit, in its purity and integrity, the holy deposite of faith. Could all the pastors at once forget the doctrines of faith? Could all be guilty at one time of an attempt to corrupt them? Could all unanimously conspire to deceive the faithful, and to impose doctrines not transmitted by those who had preceded them? Could the faithful, every where dispersed, and so separated by distance, difference of language, and other circumstances, forget what had been delivered and believed, previously to such presumed conspiracy? And could all this have taken place without any protest from any part of Christendom, and without any evidence of such a revolution being found in the pages of history? There was an impossibility of such an event in the very nature of things; and this impossibility has been the same in every age, from the times of the Apostles down to our own. For at any given epoch of times past, the Church, both the teachers and believers, must have known the doctrines then believed, and the doctrines believed by their immediate predecessors.

The moral impossibility, of a unanimous conspiracy to corrupt faith, is apparent to every reflecting mind. And even were all the pastors able to conceive a design to commit so heinous a crime, there was a practical impossibility to destroy, from among the Christian people every where dispersed, the then prevailing faith, revered, because held by their forefathers, and even because professed by themselves up to the very period when this supposed attempt was made to induce them to believe something never before known. A unanimous conspiracy to change the doctrines of faith was then morally and practically impossible, and history attests that whenever partial attempts were made to effect such innovations, an alarm was immediately sounded; on every side the faithful denounced the novelty; and the Church, when she could not by gentle measures apply a remedy, and win back the innovators to the true faith, fearlessly and firmly used the sword of excommunication, and cut them off as rotten branches.

Error, then, could not reach the whole body of pastors, receiving and transmitting the doctrines of faith as a traditionary deposite. And, therefore, there was in the nature of things, an authority infallible, or not subject to error, in the Universal Church, because of her universal and firm adherence to the traditionary

doctrines of faith. The way of tradition assured her the greatest possible degree of historical certitude, which, though it still be termed *human*, was nevertheless in its result infallible. A proper appreciation of this argument will cause us more willingly to admit the claim of the Church to that Divine prerogative of infallibility which is grounded on the express incontestible promises made to her by Jesus Christ, as recorded in the scriptures.

Another strong proof, that Jesus Christ designed the authority of his Church, thus secured by his promises against the danger of error, to be the means of preserving the unity of faith and Christian communion, is also deduced from the insufficiency of any other means known to mankind.

For, *first*, the way of individual inspiration by the Holy Ghost, to which some sectaries have impiously pretended, never was promised by Almighty God. And that it never was given, as a general means for securing the unity of faith and Christian communion, is sufficiently evident from the varying and contradictory sentiments, opinions, and views of those who pretended to have received the benefit of such divine illumination.

Secondly, That the scriptures, as mere writings, left to individual judgment, cannot secure the unity of faith and Christian communion, is more than evident from the thousand contradictory sects, churches, and creeds, which divide Protestants, who all alike profess to be guided and instructed by the written word. All sects, and even individual Protestants, understand the scriptures in their own sense. Their interpretations are various and contradictory. And amid the noise and fury of disputation, the scriptures themselves are unable to interpose, and say "I will decide these controversies." They are dumb and silent, till each speaker lends them his own voice, and then they are forced to speak his sentiments, and not their own. "The Lutherans admitted one only person in Christ, Calvin and Beza admitted two persons, with Nestorius. Luther and his followers maintained that the divine nature suffered and died; Beza pronounced this a blasphemy. Calvin advanced the impiety that God is the author of sin; the Lutherans pronounced this an abominable error. Luther pretended that the humanity of Christ is *ubiquitous*, or in all places; this was denied by Zuinglius. Calvin maintained that the children of the Saints are saved even without Baptism, Luther contended for the contrary. Luther discovered in the scriptures three sacraments, viz: Baptism, the Eucharist and Penance; Calvin admitted the first two, rejected the last, and discovered in the scriptures another: viz, *orders*, which last Luther rejected. Zuinglius denied that *orders* and penance are sacraments, but admitted Baptism and the Eucharist. Luther maintained that in the Eucharist, Jesus Christ is to be adored as really and truly present, at the moment of communion; and

Calvin loudly contended that this is idolatry. Melancthon, who was afterwards an associate of Luther, said that good works are necessary for eternal salvation; the followers of Calvin strenuously opposed this doctrine.**

Some Protestant sects maintain the necessity of baptism, others say it is only a ceremony, useful but not necessary. Some say that grace is really conferred by the sacraments, others that the sacraments are not channels of divine grace. The Quakers will use no water in baptism; other denominations of Protestants rely greatly upon *water*, and insist on immersion. Some Protestants teach the divinity of Christ, others teach that Christ is not God. Some inculcate the advantage of confession; others ridicule it. Some advocate Apostolical succession; others laugh at this, and maintain that the people can choose, appoint and empower their own ministers. Some speak of the necessity of Christian unity in doctrine and discipline; others look upon this as altogether unnecessary, and think it unimportant with which class of Christians a person communes, provided he is not a member of the Catholic Church. But all of these speak of the doctrines of Christ; of the truths of the gospel; of Faith; of the ordinances of Christ; of salvation; of the Church; of damnation; of the day of judgment; of the good and the bad; of the different destinies to which saints and sinners are reserved; and all affectionately, boldly, and eloquently appeal to *the written word of God*. And still *the written word of God* is not able to silence their disputations, or reconcile their contradictions. Why so? For the simple and apparent reason, that Christ did not select "*the scriptures alone*," as the means of making known to mankind his revelations. Had he selected *this way* he would, in his infinite power, have made it adequate to the task. The diversity of sects, all appealing to scripture to authorize their contradictory doctrines, proves that *scripture alone* is not able to induce men to embrace the same doctrines of faith, and to practice the same religious observances. and, therefore, manifests that Christ could not have intended, and did not intend, this as "the only rule of Faith and judge of controversies."

But if he did not intend, either the way of individual illumination, and divine inspiration to each believer, or the way of *scriptures* interpreted by *private judgment*, he must have designed that way, contended for by Catholics, viz: The *unerring* teaching authority of the Church, expounding the written and unwritten revelations of God. For it is plain, that these three, are the only means, known to men, which he could have selected, and if he did not select either of the first two, he must have chosen the last, or none at all.

* These facts are set forth in the work of Cardinal Cotti, sur La Vraie Eglise, cited by Delauro-Dubez, in his address of The Converted Atheist.

We might further confirm the Catholic tenet on this subject, by an exposition of the principles and express avowals, of the first reformers. We have not space, however, in a brief tract, for a detailed exposition, and can only direct the reader's attention to some, of the many, proofs of the Catholic doctrine, which might be gathered from the admissions express, forced, or unguarded, which may be seen in Protestant writers.

The early reformers maintained that the essential form of the true Church, consists in a pure preaching of the true doctrines, and a right administration of the sacraments of Christ, and consequently, error must destroy the Church, by destroying its essential form. Hence *Whittaker* represents Luther, as giving seven marks of the true Church, of which the first is "the sincere and pure preaching of the gospel." This only, of all the seven, Luther made *essential*.*

But if the pure sincere preaching of the gospel was to be a mark of the Church, of course then Christ designed the Church always to preach the gospel *purely* and *sincerely*. To do this she must have the attribute of infallibility, contended for by Catholics.

Calvin said in his epistle to Francis 1st:

"We assert that the form of the Church is contained in the pure preaching of the word of God, and in the legitimate administration of the sacraments."

Du Moulin, in his first book against Cardinal Perron, said—

"Since the true Church is opposed to schismatics and heretics, it is certain that, as heretical Churches have no other mark by which they may be discerned but false doctrine; so the true Church is discerned by true doctrine."

The same writer said:

"That is the true Church which is held together by the profession of the true Faith, and communion of the sacraments."

Again:

"True faith and doctrine enter into the definition of the Church, and make part of its definition."

Duplessis, in his treatise of the Church, chapter fourth, says,

"To administer the word and sacraments purely, are essential marks of the Church."

Although these reformers pretended that the preaching of *true* doctrines, and the *right* administration of the sacraments, were the *marks* of the Church, in order that they might evade those arguments advanced by Catholics to show that they were cut off from the Church, because, having no claim to Unity, Catholicity, Sanctity, and Apostolicity, the *real marks* of the Church, yet, inasmuch as they made *the form* of the Church to consist in the true faith and right administration of the sacraments, we avail

* *Whittaker*, Cont. 2 qu. 5. Cap. 17.

ourselves of their avowal to show that the Church enjoys the prerogative of infallibility. For, if true doctrine and true faith be the *essential form* of the Church, the Church must be infallible as long as she exists. Because by the loss of true doctrine, she perishes in her very essence. Either then she always possesses and teaches true doctrine, or perishes totally, as soon as she adopts and inculcates error.

If then the Church, which Christ established, has persevered down to our times, she has also continued to possess and preach *the truth* infallibly. But if, at any time, she adopted and taught error, she essentially perished, and now Christ has no Church upon earth. Luther made a Church, and so did Calvin, and so did the King of England, and so did John Wesley, and so did Mr. Campbell, and many others have undertaken the same great work. Yet certainly none of these was *the Church* which Christ founded. We know positively who made them, and when, and where, they were first established. We know their history, and are fully acquainted with their various vicissitudes, and contradictory proceedings. We have no evidence in *scripture* that men should hear and obey the Church founded by Luther or Calvin, or by the King of England, or by John Wesley, or by any modern founder of Churches.

If the Church which was founded by Jesus Christ, could adopt and teach error, and thereby *essentially* perish, by a stronger reason, the Churches which men have founded can teach errors. If the Church which Jesus Christ founded has thus perished, no true Church now exists, and we are neither wise nor secure, in yielding obedience to any of these Churches, which men have established to suit their own peculiar fancies.

So that, if Christ founded a Church and wished it to persevere and be perpetuated till the end of time, and if its essential form consist, as the first reformers maintained, in the *pure* preaching of *true* doctrines, and the *right* administration of the sacraments, then the Church is essentially infallible. The perpetual preservation of true doctrine, and perpetual preaching of the same, is infallibility.

Why did Luther say: "Hereticus ero, si postquam ecclesia determinaverit, non tenuero,"—"I will be a heretic, if after the Church shall have determined something, I will not hold it"*—unless he admitted the unerring authority of the Church?

And further, he admitted that the Cardinal of Cambray, had "very learnedly proved that the Universal Church cannot err."

Calvin said,

"When we are in the bosom of the Church we are secure of having the truth with us."†

* Luth. in Resp. ad. Diolag. Sylv.

† Inst. 4. Cap. 1.

The same author declared, that "The highest reverence is due to the Church." *Summa Ecclesiæ reverentia debetur.* And he confesses that "together with the genuine doctrine of the law and gospel, is so to be joined the sense of the Church, that she may deservedly be called the keeper and interpreter of that faith."*

Calvin must have believed that the Church could not err, when he made these avowals.

Beza, in his book on the marks of the Church, says that "the Church of Christ is a school, in which the word of the Lord is to be learned that it may be rightly understood," and this avowal supposes the Church to teach with unerring authority.

Du Moulin, in his work already referred to, against Cardinal Perron, says :

"Whosoever is assured that he is in the true Church, is assured that he has the true faith and doctrine."

How can he, who is in the true Church, be assured of *true doctrine*, unless the true Church *infallibly* teaches true doctrine?

It seems to have been the intention of God to make the reformers condemn their own rash work, and to say to them individually, *ex ore tuo, te judico, serve nequam*—"out of thy own mouth I judge thee, wicked servant."

Hear Luther, in his contest with Zuinglius and Ocolampadius :

"If the world is to subsist much longer, I declare, with all these different interpretations which they give us upon the scriptures, that there remains no other way for us to preserve the unity of faith, but to receive the decrees of Councils, and to take refuge under their authority."

Hear Calvin, in his epistle to Melancthon :

"It is important that no suspicion, of the divisions that are amongst us, should pass to future ages. For it is ridiculous beyond what can be imagined, that after having made rupture with the whole world, we agree so little among ourselves in the very commencement of our reform."

Listen to Duditius exclaiming :

"How are ours, dispersed, agitated by every wind of doctrine, driven hither and thither on every side. What their religious sentiments are to-day, you may perhaps learn; what they will be to-morrow, it is impossible to divine. In what, if you please, do all those agree, who make war against the Roman Pontiff? From first to last, run through their articles, you will see nothing advanced by one of their doctors, that immediately is not by another denounced as impiety. They make a new symbol every month, *menstruam fidem habent.*"

Hear Melancthon saying that :

"The Elbe could not furnish him with water enough to weep over the misfortunes of a divided reformation."

* Calvin. de scand. p. 102.

The Calvinists were also forced to recognize and admit the necessity of a definite authority. In their *discipline*, they required all to submit to the decision of a national synod, and settled, "that if any one refused to acquiesce in this decision in all points, publicly abjuring his errors, he should be cut off from the Church." Men, who left the Catholic Church, where the authority is Divine, were compelled to submit to authority professedly human and fallible.

And in point of fact, all those who belong to any of the sects, and *submit* to be taught and governed by the Confessions of Faith and standards of those Churches, do really yield obedience to authority. We cannot see what such have gained in throwing off the authority of the Catholic Church. It is certainly no consolation to know that the authority, to which they now willingly submit, is, by its own admission, a human, fallible, erring authority. It is no consolation to know, that in believing its doctrines, they may believe errors, and in submitting to its guidance, they may be conducted "into the ditch." All Protestants who submit to any Church, not the Catholic Church, by that *very fact* condemn themselves. Because their ancestors first became Protestants, in contempt of the authority of the Catholic Church, and assumed to judge for themselves; but by submitting to any other Church, they no longer judge for themselves, but let such Church judge for them. They condemn themselves, because by submitting to any Church, they show that they cannot judge for themselves as they had undertaken to do, when they threw off the authority of the Catholic Church. In yielding obedience to a Church, they show the necessity of submission to authority, and consequently show, that they should not have revolted against the authority of the Catholic Church. For if the authority of any Church should be respected, it is evidently the authority of that Church only, against which Protestants revolted in the beginning.

How can we sufficiently admire the wisdom and goodness of the Divine Saviour, in having, amid the mighty ocean of human thought, theory, and opinion, placed that immovable rock upon which his Church stands, whose base rests solidly as the earth's foundations, and whose top rises among the clouds of the upper Heavens!

How can we admire sufficiently that astonishing knowledge of the human heart, that perfect acquaintance with the passions, the weaknesses and wants of man, displayed by the Redeemer, in thus entrusting him to the care of his Church! Well did he understand that love of variety and change, that desire for a name and reputation, which urge men forth upon the world to achieve new, unheard of deeds, to erect or subvert, to stir and agitate, to theorize and execute, to do something, good or bad, that may distinguish them from the common mass, and raise the bubble of

their personal glory upon the elastic breath of popular applause. He would not trust his divine religion to the corrupt influence of human passions and desires, but while these might sport as they please with human institutions and theories, he placed religion under the protection of an authority, which was always to receive his support. This is the eternal "pillar of truth" which amid the desert of present things, rises more firmly and solidly than everlasting pyramids, whose strength can be shivered by the lightnings of no tempest, whose base can be upheaved by no earthquake, and against which the corroding tooth of time will be powerless. For eighteen centuries and more this pillar has stood firm and solid, amid the heavings of change and revolution. Dynasties and empires have arisen and fallen—nations have been born and perished—crowns and sceptres have, through long lines of races now extinct, passed from prince to prince—nations have become Christian and again relapsed—new countries have been discovered—change has passed over the face of the physical, political and social world—all has been in commotion. And still the Catholic Church, "the pillar and ground of truth," with her unerring authority, has continued to stand, and prosper.

This miracle is of itself enough to point the inquirer to the *True Church*. It is a thing evident—a light which cannot be hid—a city on the top of mountains, to which nations have continued to flow, demanding to have their names inscribed on the book of life.

We will briefly resume, and conclude :

1. Christ established his Church to teach his religion.
2. He intended this Church to exist visibly and perpetually.
3. It could not exist visibly and perpetually as *his Church*, without perpetually teaching his true doctrines.
4. It could not perpetually teach his true doctrines without being infallible.
5. We have proved, from plain texts of scripture, that the Church founded by Christ was invested with the attribute of infallibility.
6. We have shown from the uninterrupted practice of the Church, that she always considered herself in possession of this attribute.
7. We have shown that the fathers, and eminent writers of the first ages, recognized infallibility as the undisputed attribute of the Church of Christ.
8. The Catholic Church only, claims the possession of this attribute, while others admit that they are without it.
9. The present Catholic Church shows an uninterrupted existence, from the present period, back to the times of Christ and his Apostles.
10. Protestant Churches have all been founded since the period

of Luther's revolt against the Catholic Church. They have all been cut off from her, because they refused submission to her authority.

11. Protestants were forced to deny the existence of an unerring authority, in order to justify their schism from the Catholic Church. But the reformers, in some avowals of their writings, and all Protestants who submit to any Church authority, have virtually condemned themselves, and shown that they should have submitted to the just, the divinely constituted, and time-consecrated authority of the Catholic Church.

Therefore :

If there be upon earth, a Church founded by Christ, as all Christians admit there is, it must be the present Catholic Church. She, and no other, is the TRUE CHURCH.

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