

## TRACT 24.

[PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF THE CATHOLIC  
INSTITUTE OF GREAT BRITAIN.]

---

## A SEARCH

MADE INTO

**Matters of Religion,**

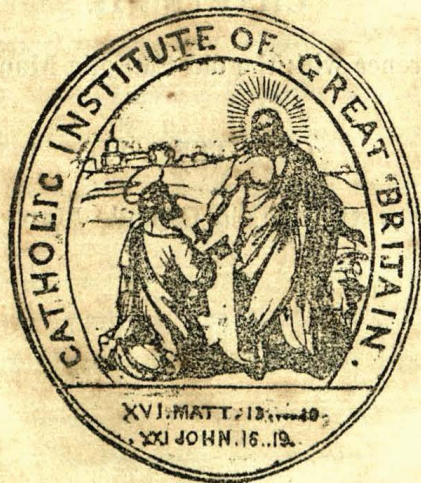
BY

FRANCIS WALSINGHAM,

DEACON OF THE PROTESTANT'S CHURCH,

BEFORE HIS CHANGE TO THE CATHOLIC.

*Extracted from the Edition of 1609.*



[Stereotyped for the Catholic Institute of Great Britain.]

---

LONDON:

Sold by all Catholic Booksellers; price two pence, or ten  
shillings per hundred for gratuitous  
distribution.

# CONTENTS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

	Page
Of my Doubts, my Acquaintance and first Conference with an old Catholic Man .....	3

## CHAPTER II.

Of my second Conference with the old Catholic Man.....	16
--	----

## CHAPTER III.

Of my third Conference with the old Catholic Man .....	26
--	----

# A SEARCH

MADE INTO

## MATTERS OF RELIGION.

---

### CHAPTER I.

#### *Of my Doubts, my Acquaintance and first Conference with an old Catholic Man.*

To the end, gentle reader, that thou mayest better understand the nature of the case that fell out to me, I have thought it expedient to lay down a brief relation of my state and condition, before I fell into any doubt about religion at all. Thus then, in brief, the matter passed with me. I was brought up from my tender years in London, by the care of my very good patron Sir Francis Walsingham, councillor and secretary to the late Queen (Elizabeth), under the father-like tuition of Mr. Humphrey Walsingham, my near kinsman. I was by him placed for several years in St. Paul's School, where I had my first beginnings both of learning and religion, never once doubting of the truth of any position held by the Protestant's Church.

When I came to sufficient years to be able not only to follow sermons, but to read books of controversy written by Protestant authors, I was not negligent therein, as my often and diligent reading in the writings of Fox, Jewell, Calvin, and Beza may bear me witness. By which readings and conferences with others of the same religion, I became so fervent, that I resolved to make myself one of the Protestant clergy; and for the accomplishment thereof, I procured myself, in the year 1603, to be made deacon, by the hands of my Lord Bishop of Ely; and having taken that degree, I thought it incident to the same not only to confirm myself, in that way, but others also whomsoever I could.

For this purpose, I was wont gladly to lend books to any that would read them, inducing them also earnestly to the same. On one occasion it fell out, that one of my acquaintance, to whom I offered a Protestant book, was content to receive the same, on condition that I should promise him to read another book that he would lend me; and this condition I gladly accepted. But finding myself strangely troubled in my judgment and conscience, and having very unexpectedly conceived many doubts by the perusal of this Papistical book, I was moved at length (after the failure of other means which I attempted for my satisfaction) to repair unto his Majesty (James I.), as head of the Church, to whom I had before taken divers oaths of obedience in spiritual affairs. By his Majesty I was referred to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and had sundry conferences with him and his chaplain, and sundry other learned men assigned by him. I read also sundry books which his lordship appointed me, but received no sufficient contentment of mind in the doubts I had entertained. I resolved, therefore, to read more both of Protestant and Catholic books, with greater attention than I had done before, especially to try which side dealt the more sincerely in quoting authors for proof of their opinions: but, after much examination, I could find no reasonable satisfaction to my doubts and difficulties, but rather increase of them both. I could not tell what to do; but resolved to go forward in reading more books, both Protestant and Catholic.

At length I was obliged to interrupt this course of reading, by reason of a long journey that I was compelled to make; in which journey (among other things not necessary to be mentioned here) I became acquainted, by means of friends, with a certain old man of the Roman religion, who soon appeared to me to be not only learned, but also to have been, in times past, in the very same doubtfulness wherein I now found myself; and this gave me the more encouragement to deal frankly and freely with him. Accordingly, I recounted to him all that I have already stated, at large, and with sundry circumstances which I have not thought fit or necessary to put down in writing.

I recounted unto him more in particular what accidents had fallen out unto me; where, and with whom I had been; what I had done; what I had thought; what I had discoursed with myself; what I had read and sought; what I had found; and in what perplexity I was to see myself entangled in mind, as for the present I was: for that,

having found so many things so contrary to my expectation and former opinion of men and matters as I had done, by looking into their writings, I could not tell what to think or what to say, and much less what to do or resolve; but yet very loath to break off this search wholly, and yet more loath to make such a resolution of change in religion as many reasons seemed to induce me unto, and therefore I said I meant to take a mean way between both, which was to suspend my judgment for some more time, and to continue my search and reading of books in the same manner as I had done before.

All which being heard by the old man, he smiling, told me, that he knew where the end would be, but yet seemed not wholly to dislike my determination, though he told me that it was a long way about, and not sufficient, secure, or possible for all men; notwithstanding, if I would do it profitably, and to the true quieting of my conscience indeed, he said, it was necessary I should observe certain notes and animadversions about the manner of my reading, which he had partly fallen upon in his younger years, when his case perhaps was not far unlike unto mine, but much more had observed them since that time, by longer use and experience in such affairs. Whereof I accepted willingly, and desired him to let me know what they were, for that I was earnestly set upon the matter; and I apprehend, said I, that the very state of my salvation doth depend much upon the event of this search.

Whereunto he answered, saying: And that is the very first advice of all that I was to give unto you (but I see God hath prevented me), that you should apprehend this matter as a point of singular moment and importance, and not read lightly—either for curiosity, as many do; or negligently, for recreation or to pass the time; nor with the spirit of contradiction, to find out faults whereon to quarrel without just occasion—but sincerely and in conscience, making God himself the judge, and proposing for that end the only knowledge and finding out of this truth for your direction and instruction, and his glory and service; for that by this way you shall, as it were, oblige him to give you light and assistance to discern the same. And you must make account (quoth he), that if the true comprehension or error in any one principal article in controversy between us doth draw with it the peril of everlasting damnation if we miss therein, how much more in them altogether, whereof you intend to make judgment by this your reading; for which cause you have great need to stand attent,

The first note of the old man about profitable reading of books of controversy.

be humble, devout, indifferent, pray much, and be earnest with God to enlighten you in this behalf. And this is the first advertisement, whereof in effect all the rest dependeth.

**The second note.** Another is, that when you begin to read about any controversy, you endeavour first to apprehend well and briefly the true state of the question, not believing one side only, but searching out what each side sayeth and holdeth therein; for that in this point, above others, you shall find fraud oftentimes to be used by your Protestant writers of divers sorts and sects, every one proposing the state of the question advantageously, as himself would have the reader to understand it, and not as his adversary doth hold it indeed. As for example, in the controversy about good works, Protestants propose the question thus: *Whether a man may be saved by works without grace?* which is easy for them to impugn, for that it is false. But the true state of the question is—*Whether by grace, and good works that proceed from grace, and are dignified thereby, Christians be saved?* And so in all the rest, if you be vigilant, you shall find much fraud used commonly in proposing the true state of the question, in some untrue sense and meaning. And though I could here allege you almost infinite particular examples, yet, for avoiding prolixity, I think best to remit you unto John Fox, who, in his Acts and Monuments, setting down the differences in doctrine between his and our Church, is convinced to have made about one hundred and twenty lies in three leaves, and especially in this point, about misrelating the true state of the question. Wherefore I would advise you (sayeth the old man) that this point be diligently looked unto.

**The third note.** Thirdly (sayeth he); when you have the true state of the question, you must be very careful to hold the same continually in your mind, making often reflection and recourse thereunto about the discourses which you shall read in your author, considering well and attentively whether they be to the purpose in hand, and do level right at the mark proposed, or no; or run aside to impertinent matters, as often you shall find they do, and fill up leaves with things that are far from the principal substance of the question; so as this must serve you as the plummet or square doth to the mason or architect, to tell you whether the building go straight or no. And whatsoever you find that inferreth not or concludeth not the principal point in question, that you must lay aside for the time, though it be otherwise never so witty, pleasant, or probable, until you have considered that which toucheth the purpose

directly, for that you shall find many authors in these our days who, pretending to prove directly some conclusion in controversy, will afterwards slip aside, and draw you into so many by-matters, as will either confound your judgment and memory, or weary your patience, and thereby make all your reading unprofitable, and to no purpose. And this is a kind of falsehood, no less hurtful, though not so shameful as that of wilful falsifications; for this also is both wilful and witting, the writer knowing well enough that it proveth not his purpose, but deceiveth and abuseth the reader by drawing him to impertinent matters; but yet he useth it, either for ornament and some show of furniture, or to weary the reader, as before I said. And the only way to discover this, and to avoid the inconvenience thereof, is to recal often to mind the true state of the question.

The fourth note may be, to ponder well the weight of all such arguments as are alleged; for albeit they be to the purpose, and not wholly impertinent, yet may they be weak and feeble, and not able to infer so much as is required. And these may be of two sorts, either out of Scripture or ancient Fathers. As for the Scriptures, forsomuch as not the sound of words, but the true sense and meaning thereof, is that which most importeth the securest way, and most reasonable to assure ourselves of this true meaning, you are to look and consider how the same was understood and interpreted by ancient Fathers before these our controversies did arise. As for example: when we of our side do allege for proof of purging fire after this life the place of St. Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (c. 3, v. 15). *He shall be saved, but so as by fire;* and the Protestants allege on their side the saying of Solomon, *Where the tree falleth, there it lieth:* no man shall ever find that this latter place was alleged in this sense by any ancient Father whatsoever. But for the other to the Corinthians, that it was understood and interpreted so of purgatory in the next life, may be showed by the clear testimony of many ancient Fathers, as namely, St. Augustine most expressly in sundry places of his works, and before him out of Origen, and after him out of St. Gregory, and other expositors in different ages. And this may serve for a note concerning the Scriptures, forsomuch as that every man pretendeth to allege them for himself abundantly, and to make his chief stay therein, whereas being rightly understood, they can make but for one part only.

As for the Fathers themselves, when they are alleged by any party,

it is to be considered in what age they wrote, and whether that which they say, was ever found to have been contradicted or reprehended by others of that age or after them. For that when this is not found, though any Father's sentence doth not make a matter fully *de fide*, or of necessity under sin or heresy to be absolutely believed: yet is it a weighty proof that the thing, which he affirmeth was so believed by the whole Church of his days, and consequently were great temerity to discredit the same; for so much as that Church being acknowledged by all to have been the true Catholic Church, it must needs be presumed to have held nothing generally, that the Catholic known Church of the precedent age did not also believe and teach: and so from one age to another both upward and downward may this demonstration be made, which ought to be a great motive to a discreet man to think seriously hereof.

The fifth note.

It is much also to be considered, when the testimony of any ancient approved Father is brought forth, whether it be conformable to the rest of his doctrine or no, containing a conclusion purposely treated by him, and not some particular saying wrested from him by violence, as oftentimes your men use to do. And therefore when the matter is of importance, his whole discourse is to be seen and perused with that which goeth before and ensueth, to see how they hang together. And this I advertise you in particular, that whensoever you see any clear or pregnant authority of any one ancient Father alleged by your men for their own side, there do you stand attent and examine the place exactly, and I do assure you, you shall find either fraud used in misalleging or misconstruing, or that the place itself well considered will answer itself; for that truth cannot be contrary to truth. And forso-much as the same truth in substantial matters of religion was holden then, which is held now, the self-same Church with the self-same guidance of God's holy spirit, having passed down by them, and now come to us: these doctors and Fathers could not be, in any real point of doctrine, of a contrary judgment either to themselves or to the teachers of our Church now, except it can be evidently shewed where and when, and upon what occasion the disagreement and falling off began. Neither must words of creeping in, or secret entrance of errors be admitted in this point, except the fact may be proved and convinced: for that the Church's governors in every age as they were vigilant in noting the very first and least beginnings of errors and heresies in other points, and did both condemn and cast forth the same.

so would they have been also in these which now Protestants object unto us for errors and heresies, if they had been taken for such, or had been discrepant from the doctrine of former times. And with the observance of this only note you shall be sure to have all the rank of ancient holy Fathers with you.

This also is worthy the weighing, that your Protestant writers by all The sixth note. apt occasions do seek, as it were, by anticipation or prevention, to diminish the credit of the ancient Fathers, when they shall be brought against them, making comparison between them and Scriptures (wherein notwithstanding there is no comparison at all) and telling their readers, that they are not to be believed as judges in controversies, except they bring Scriptures; and those you must think understood and expounded in such sort, as your men like the exposition. And this I doubt not, but you have observed already, both in M. Jewell and other Protestant authors, that you have read, and may do in others hereafter; which is an argument, that they have no confidence indeed in the Fathers, though for a shew they make fair weather for a time with them; and this is one notorious difference between them and us, that when they do allege any places out of ancient Fathers sounding to the favour of any doctrine of theirs, that is in controversy with us, if you demand them whether they will stand absolutely to the Fathers' determination in that and all other controversies that he handleth, they will refuse it, but we not, if it be a matter not contradicted or censured by any other ancient Father, or by the Church of that time. As for example: When they allege St. Augustine, as often they do, against *Free-will*, and do cite divers particular sentences for the same, if you ask them whether they will stand absolutely to St. Augustine's judgment in this point, and in all other points of controversy between us, as *Purgatory*, *Prayer to Saints*, *Prayer for the dead*, *Merit of good works*, *Sacrifice of the Mass*, and the rest, they dare in no wise accept thereof; but Catholics have no difficulty to admit the same; for that they know, that St. Augustine in his doctrine, allowed by the general Church of his days, could not probably contradict either himself or the doctrine of the same Church in our days; and so consequently our men may securely join with him in all, and so they do.

And lastly, I would advertise you, that when you have read all that The seventh note. you can read in your Protestant writers, which you shall always find to be of one and the same spirit in the thing you most mislike and

complain of, I mean in false and slippery dealing; yea, and when you have read all the books of our side also, if it were possible for you to read and ponder them all, you shall hardly find any certain rule to resolve upon by much reading, for that the one saying, and the other unsaying, and the one accusing the other of falsehood, and protesting truth themselves, will always hold your mind in suspense. And the controversies be so many, and the discourses so large upon every controversy, and the shifts of them that mean not simply are so innumerable, as in part you have proved, that it will be impossible for you to quiet and settle your judgment without some more certain rule than reading at random. And albeit it were possible for you that are learned and studious, and patient of so much labour, and have commodity of books to inform yourself thoroughly in every particular controversy by this mean of reading; yet, is it not possible for thousands of others, who have not these means nor helps. And yet must we think that God hath kept some way for them also, both to inform and resolve themselves securely in matters of Religion, that concern their salvation: of which means it may be, we shall have better occasion to treat more hereafter.

Now for the present I do not mislike your purpose of reading more books; for it will serve at least as a weak medicine that moveth humours, though it bring them not forth; or as the sun in March, that raiseth vapours, but dissolveth them not; and so this your reading will serve to fill your head full of doubts at least, though not so soundly to resolve, as will be needful to the settling of your understanding and judgment, which God will supply afterwards, I doubt not, by some other way; and so do you proceed in God's name to follow the search by reading, as hitherto you have done. For these are the few notes that now come into my mind for your better direction; and it may be, that hereafter upon further conference, I may think upon more.

When the old man had said all this, I could not but thank him for his friendly and careful dealing with me, acknowledging that I had discovered some of these observations in my own reading before, and very desirous I was to have understood more largely and particularly of that compendious way, and more certain, which he mentioned for resolving a man's judgment. And albeit I guessed what he meant thereby—to wit, the resolution of the universal Christian Church in every age; yet, not to suffer myself over much to be pressed that

way, I passed over the matter slightly for that present, that I was desirous to go forward in reading of more books; and so we parted, and went to bed.

But having thought better that night of the matter, and foreseeing, and partly also feeling, that which he told me, that by much reading of books of different spirits, style, and doctrine, I should but increase my own doubts and difficulties, and put myself to more pain and affliction of mind, I began to desire to be informed more particularly of that briefer way or mean insinuated by him, of resolving myself by the authority of the Church; which desire of mine, when I had well thought of, and imparted it to the old man, he said, that he did ever think so, that I would fall upon that in the end, or else remain restless; for that it is more easy (quoth he) to gather doubts than to resolve them, as it is more easy to raise up dust than to lay it again. And moreover he said, that this was indeed properly to seek to be a true Catholic, for that the principal difference between a *Catholic* and an *heretic* is this, that the one embraceth *traditum non inventum*, to use old *Tertullian's* words, that which is delivered unto him by authority and succession of the Church, and not invented of himself, as the heretic doth, who thereof is called a *chooser*, for that he followeth not that which is delivered, but preferreth his own choice, either in things devised by himself or by others.

And by this occasion he entered into another short discourse, but very substantial, as to me it seemed, of the folly of the one and true wisdom of the other; showing, first, that there could be nothing more fond than the temerity of an heretic or sectary that will govern himself in matters belonging to his everlasting salvation or damnation by his own head, or by some few of that sect which he is of, in respect to the universal Catholic Church. And this he made to seem very ridiculous indeed, by bringing in the example of some four or five of different sects in Germany, though all against the Catholics, as Lutherans of both sorts, Zuinglians, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Trinitarians, and others; whereof, if you take one of their learned men of each side (sayeth he), and demand him why he hath left the Roman religion, he presently will say,—that he followeth the Scriptures, and they not. And if you demand him again why he differeth from each of those other sectaries who allege Scriptures as fast as he, and do divide themselves from the Catholics by the same reason of Scriptures that he doth, and yet disagree from him, he will say,—that albeit they

My perplexity about my continuance of reading books of controversies.

The folly and temerity of heretics and sectaries.

allege the same Scriptures, and are copious therein, yet that they do err in the interpretation thereof. And the same will they say of him, and each one of his fellows. And when you come to the proof, no one of them hath any more but his own head, imagination, and opinion for his ground and assurance, and yet will each one adventure his soul therein; which, in truth (said the old man), is a very madness indeed, if you consider it well.

The Catholic Roman Church a guide and direction to all men.

But on the other side (sayeth he), the man that leaveth his own judgment relieth upon the authority and determination of the universal visible Christian Church, as commended and proposed by Christ himself to be obeyed, descending down from age to age, for a public direction to all, until the end of the world. This man, besides the merit of obedience, deserveth also the praise of highest wisdom, for that to prefer the judgment of so great a number of learned, holy, and virtuous men, as have been and be in that Church from time to time, before his own private judgment, is most evident and apparent wisdom, even considered according to the principles of human wisdom; but much more, if we respect Divine reasons, as namely, that our Saviour himself hath promised to be with that Church, and assist the same with his holy spirit unto the world's end, insomuch as the gates of hell shall never prevail against it to bring it into error. And the Apostle St. Paul doth assure us that it is and shall be such a pillar and foundation of truth, as we may build and rely upon the same without fear of falling; which thing the holy Father St. Augustine considering, gave this general direction in his book against Cresconius the heretic: *Quisquis falli metuit hujus obscuritate quæstionis, Ecclesiam de ea consulat.* Whosoever feareth to be deceived by the obscurity of this question (whereabout we two do contend), let him go and ask the Church thereof: which St. Augustine must needs mean, of the governors and chief pastors of the Church.

Matt. 16.

Aug. lib. cont. Cresc. cap. 33.

This counsel gave St. Augustine to Cresconius (said the old man), and the same do I give to you, which is a more compendious, easy, and certain way, than to weary yourself by reading so many books, whereof one doth impugn and contradict the other. And you may think that if Almighty God had left no more sure and certain means to find out the truth in times of controversies than this of examining particular books, he had left us and our salvation in a very doubtful and uncertain case, and for infinite people it were wholly impossible for them to be saved; for that some cannot read, some cannot understand,

some cannot buy books, some have no leisure, some cannot judge of what they read, and much less resolve doubts that may arise thereon; and yet must all have means to be saved. But by the other way of following the visible Church and known pastors thereof, all men may be directed, both learned and unlearned, rich and poor, young and old, idle and occupied; wherein is seen Almighty God his holy providence and provision for all, leaving no man or woman without sufficient means of direction for their salvation, if they will accept thereof and use the same, and if they do not, they must needs be inexcusable. Neither can there be any other reason more effectually alleged of that admirable and dreadful sentence of the holy Apostle St. Paul, whereby he pronounceth all heretical men to be subverted and pulled up, as it were, by the roots from all life and nourishment of God's grace, and damned by their own judgment, than this, that they having so clear and infallible direction left unto them upon earth, as this: *Dic Ecclesiæ*—tell the Church of it; and, *He that will not hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican*: yet do these kind of men choose rather to be their own directors, judges, and arbiters in matters of religion, than to subject themselves unto the judgment and direction of this pillar of truth left unto them by our Saviour.

The means left by Christ to instruct all men in the truth, that will.

Tit. 3.

And this in effect was that which the old man spake unto me at that time, though with somewhat more large discourse, showing me also by some examples and testimonies of the primitive Church, how presently after the Christian Church was founded, and began to rely upon her, and cite her authority for resolution of matters, as when St. Paul said to the Corinthians in a certain controversy, *Si quis videtur contentiosus esse, nos talem consuetudinem non habemus, nec Ecclesia Dei*. If any man will seem to be contentious in this point, and not to admit that which I say, I do give him this resolution, that neither we nor the Church of God hath any such custom: where we see the custom of the Church alleged by St. Paul for a final resolution. And the like the old man affirmed, that I should find in other most ancient authors, that lived in the next age after the Apostles, as namely, Tertulian, in his book *De Præscript. adversus hæret.* of prescribing against heretics; which in effect was nothing else but the alleging of the faith, practice, and custom of the universal visible Christian Church from Christ to his time against the innovations of those heretics. The holy martyr and B. St. Irenæus, in like manner, in five books written

1 Cor. 11.

against the same heretics, doth use the very same kind of argument (sayeth he) of convincing the truth by the authority of the Church, as may be seen, among other places, by the first four whole chapters of his third book.

In all which four chapters (said the old man) you may see in what order that most ancient blessed martyr thought best to confute the heretics, that is, the choosers of his days, immediately after the Apostles; to wit by shewing first, how the Christian Church, now spread over the world, received the Gospel: that is to say, partly by writing, and partly by tradition. And, secondly, that heretics did obey neither of these exactly, but made choice of this or that, and abusing them both at their pleasure. And for that there might some question be made, which was this Church that had so received and conserved the Gospel by these two means? he doth thirdly demonstrate the same in his third chapter by the orderly succession of bishops, from the Apostles' time to his which conserved also their tradition. And lastly, for more certain confirmation of all, he addeth the testimonies also of such as lived with the Apostles, and saw them in flesh. And then the said holy father con-

Irenæus, l. 3, hæ-  
res. c. 4.

cludeth thus (quoth the old man):—*Tantæ igitur ostensiones cum sint hæc, non oportet adhuc quærere apud alios veritatem, quam facile est ab Ecclesia sumere: cum Apostoli quasi in depositorium dives plenissime in ea contulerint omnia quæ sint veritatis: ut omnis quicumque velit,umat ex ea potum vitæ. Hæc est enim vitæ introitus. Omnes autem reliqui fures sunt et latrones, propter quod oportet devitare quidem illos. Quæ autem sunt Ecclesiæ, cum magna diligentia diligere, et apprehendere veritatis traditionem.* “Whereas then these things are so great and evident demonstrations” (to prove that which we have said) “we must not seek the truth from others, than from those that be in the Church, from which Church it is easy to take the same: forso much as the Apostles did most fully place in the same Church, as in a rich treasure-house, all things that belong unto the truth of Christian religion, to the end that every man that would might take from thence (to wit, from the said Church) the drink of life. Forsomuch as this Church is the gate of life, and all others (that are not of her) are thieves and robbers, and therefore we must avoid and fly them. But whatsoever the Church delivereth, we must, with great diligence, love the same, and receive from her the tradition of truth.” So St. Irenæus: which the old man exhorted to consider and ponder well.

And truly this place being read again and again by me, seemed very forcible to persuade me to abbreviate my course in reading so much by myself (though I told not the old man so much presently) and to take the other way so much recommended here by St. Irenæus, of relying upon the Church. For I thought with myself, that if in that very next age after the Apostles, wherein St. Irenæus lived, he made so great account of the succession and tradition of this visible Church, as he doth well shew by setting down in the precedent chapter, all the names of the bishops of the Roman Church, from Linus, that succeeded St. Peter, unto Eleutherius, that lived with Irenæus, being twelve in rank and number, and that in those days there was so great authority ascribed to the tradition of the Church: much more might there be now, after more than fourteen hundred years' continuance of the said Church since Irenæus' time; whose earnest admonition here given, to take all direction of truth from the said Church, as from a rich treasure-house, did greatly move me; as did also his straight prohibition, not to seek the same elsewhere, or by other means. For that, as he said, all out of her, are thieves and robbers; which words sticking in my mind, I purposed with myself to think better of them.

See Irenæus, cited before, part 3, c. 7, nu. 9.

And besides this the old man had before counselled me in this point to read in St. Augustine somewhat more largely and fully what he writeth in several places of his works: and upon sundry occasions concerning this sure means of relying upon the Church; and how the said father, though otherwise never so learned, did himself in all his greatest difficulties and controversies with heretics, and counselled other men to do the same, making this ever his surest bulwark for all kind of defence against the impugnations of heresy and heretics, for the final determination of all controversies: as namely, what books, and which are Scriptures, when any question was made thereof: and which are the true originals, traductions, interpretations or expositions: which the true sense and meaning of the Holy Ghost, and other like difficulties. And I gave my promise that I would perform the same. And so taking time for the said performance, I took my leave of him for some two or three days.

To rely upon the Church, a sure way to salvation.

## CHAPTER II.

*Of my second Conference with the old Catholic Man.*

ALBEIT I had proposed at my taking leave of the old man, to have returned unto him again within some three or four days; yet did I find so many things to think upon, by reason of the former speeches he had with me, that I could not well put myself in order to talk with him again in eight or ten days. For first I went to read over the book named by him of *Tertullian de Præscript. adversus hæreses*, wherein I found so many observations set down by him against heretics of his time, agreeing also just to the different professors of new religion in our time, as they might seem to have been written now, and not so long ago; I mean for the matter, and not for the style, which easily sheweth itself to be very ancient.

Next I took into my hands to peruse the foresaid work of Irenæus, written in like manner against heretics of the same age, though somewhat before Tertullian, but especially his third book and chapters before mentioned, wherein I found in like manner great matter to muse at; sundry points and passages offering themselves very opposite, and prejudicial to the cause of Protestants in our days, if we will believe them, as I saw no reason why we should doubt thereof; and, consequently, I did wonder at myself, how I had been so earnest and resolute in times past against many things as false, superstitious, and wicked, which I saw to be very familiar to the ancient Fathers.

But principally did I persist and spend more time in perusing a certain collection of St. Augustine's works by Hieronymus Torrensis, not sparing also to go now and then to read the places themselves in St. Augustine, his own larger volumes, and ever found faithful dealing in quotations and allegations: but that many things of good moment I perceived to be left out by the collector, for brevity's sake, which seemed to me to serve no less to this purpose than those which he had cited. And this made me see that he dealt not ambitiously to ostentation, but only that he had care, lest his collection might grow to over great a bulk.

And as for the particular argument recommended unto me by the old man about the authority and infallibility of the Church's direction,

I found it so fully handled by St. Augustine in many parts of his works, as I remained fully satisfied of his sense, belief, and judgment therein, he esteeming no way sure and secure but that; which was a great cooling to my hot desire, that I had before, in going forward to resolve myself by my own labour, in reading books of controversy on both sides. For I did evidently seem now to see, that no certainty could be gathered by a man's own wit and discourse, except he joined it with the sense of the Church, and submitted it to the judgment thereof; which Church, according to St. Augustine, Christ our Saviour hath appointed to be judge and umpire of all controversies, as well out of the Scriptures, as others belonging to faith. And this he proved at large both in his writings against Manichæus, and to Honoratus *de utilitate credendi*, as also in his book *de doctrina Christiana*. He affirmeth also against Cresconius, and elsewhere, *Quod ex sola Catholica Ecclesia veritas conspicitur*, that truth is only seen, or discovered from, or by the Catholic Church: and in this he goeth so far as he sayeth: *Ego vero Evangelio non crederem, nisi me Ecclesia Catholicæ commoveret autoritas*. I truly would not believe the Gospel except the authority of the Church did induce me thereunto.

The high authority of the Church with St. Augustine.

And finally, not to stand any longer upon this point, I fell upon a certain devout speech or prayer made by St. Augustine to the Church after his conversion, wherein asking her humbly forgiveness for leaving her in his youth to follow heresies, he sayeth: 'That if Christ her spouse had not been infinitely merciful unto him, <sup>1</sup> *absorbuisset me vorago fallaciæ*. The gulph (sayeth he) of heretical deceit had swallowed me up: and then, continuing his speech, sayeth further: *Noli decipi nomine veritatis, hanc sola tu habes*. Be not deceived with the name of truth (which Faustus and other heretics do pretend), thou only hast this truth in thee. By all which, and much more which I found in St. Augustine, I did easily see his mind to be, that there is no certainty or security in matters of faith, but by the direction of the visible Catholic and universal Christian Church in every age. Whereupon I was resolved also at length to seek out this Church, and follow the same.

<sup>1</sup> Lib. 15. Cont. Faust. Manich. c. 3.

But now for the finding out of this Church, and what signs and proprieties she hath, as that she is one only, and can not be many: that she is visible, and visibly dispersed over the whole world, and thereby also universal: that she is infallible, and cannot be deceived nor deceive, being assisted with Christ's promise of perpetual presence of the Holy

Points held by St. Aug. of the Catholic Church.

Ghost with her, and consequently can never fail, or fall into error; that she containeth not the good or the elect only in this life, but also divers wicked, as the barn doth wheat and chaff: that she have continued perpetually and visible from Christ to our days, by manifest succession of bishops known to the world, and shall do so to the end: that there is no hope of salvation out of her, though a man live otherwise never so well, and give never so much alms, yea, give his blood, or suffer never so much for the profession of Christ's name; all these points, I say, I found so copiously and clearly determined by St. Augustine in the very same sense that the Roman Church doth hold them at this day, and Protestants deny them; and the same avouched so constantly, and proved so copiously out of Holy Scripture, and evidency of logical reasons, as I was wonderfully convinced in my mind thereby.

Other heads of doctrine taught by St. Aug. against these our Protestants:

1.  
Traditions.

And furthermore, I must tell you also, that whilst I was in search of these things about the authority of the Church, I fell upon many other points belonging to the controversies of our days, so effectually handled, disputed, and resolved by St. Augustine against the Sectaries of his time, which were above twelve hundred years gone, and the same also so forcible against the Protestants, that they seemed as if they had been written in these our days; as, namely, about tradition of the Apostles in the Church, come down unto us by continual succession: that they are to be followed, and greatly esteemed: that the Evangelists themselves in writing the Gospel did follow tradition: that all things which are to be believed are not in the Scriptures, but many are to be believed by only tradition, and the like.

2.  
St. Peter.

About St. Peter, the Apostle, and succession of Roman bishops in that seat, and supremacy of the same see, St. Augustine discourseth and proveth largely St. Peter was *head of the Apostles*; that he was the foundation of the Church: that he was both *Bishop of Rome*, and *martyred there*, and that from him unto St. Augustine's time the succession of Roman bishops continuing, made it a most certain sign of that to be the true Catholic Church.

3.  
Justification.

About *Justification* St. Augustine holdeth *sola fide impium non justificari*, that a wicked man is not justified by only faith, which he urgeth so much in divers of his works, as he sayeth the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John, St. James, and St. Jude, were expressly written against that heresy of only faith, falsely founded, in the very Apostle's time, upon the words of St. Paul, evil understood, *that a man is justified by faith with-*

Rom. 3.

out the works of the law; which words St. Augustine doth expound at large in sundry parts of his works, there gathered and laid together, and overlong here to be repeated. But all his discourses seemed unto me so fully to agree with the opinions of the Roman Church of this day (for this was my principal search) as I could find no difference at all, though I read twenty-four paragraphs of places, of St. Augustine, laid together of this only point concerning justification, which contain above an hundred several testimonies of his.

I perused also greedily what the said doctor writeth of the necessity of observing the ten Commandments and of doing good works, wherein I find him to hold expressly, *that the said Commandments are not impossible to be kept, and that faith without good works is not sufficient to salvation*; that the contrary was the heresy of the *Eunomians*: that there is great difference between the precepts of Christ, and his counsels; the former being of necessity unto salvation to be observed, the other appertaining only to perfection.

And I pass over here many other points of controversy which I read very largely disputed by St. Augustine, as about the sacraments of the new law, their nature and number, the custom of the Church in baptising infants, of the ancient ceremonies of baptism, the sign of the cross, exorcism, exsufflations, thrice dipping in the water. And the like of the sacrament of confirmation and chrism; of the eucharist and real presence, very largely; of the external sacrifice of the mass, how it was held for propitiatory for the quick and dead in St. Augustine's time, and offered also specially for the dead, and in the memory and honour of saints, though not unto saints, but only to God; that it was held *for an apostolical tradition* in St. Augustine's time, to offer wine in the sacrifice mingled with water; that the said sacrifice was *to be offered* upon altars, and only by them that were fasting, and other like points.

Furthermore, I examined what St. Augustine held concerning the sacrament of penance, which is very much, showing that after baptism this sacrament is the only refuge and remedy for sins, which, as he teacheth, are of necessity to be confessed unto the priest, and absolution to be had from him, and satisfaction to be made according to the judgment of the said priest, which I leave to be seen by the reader more at large.

Divers other controversies I ran over also, as that of purgatory, wherein St. Augustine is very large and resolute, proving out of the Scriptures the necessity of the purging fire in the next life, and terrify-

4.  
Of keeping the  
Commandments.

5.  
Sacraments.

6.  
Baptism

7.  
Confirmation.

8.  
Realpresence and  
Mass.

9.  
Penance.

10.  
Purgatory.  
Ib. l. 4, 3, 1.

ing Christians by setting down the grievousness thereof: and yet that venial sins, and not mortal (except first the guilt thereof be forgiven), be to be purged therein. Then about *praying to saints* and *prayer for the dead*, set fasts of the Church, especially that of the Lent, to be an apostolical tradition, as also the choice of meats upon certain days. The high privileges of virginity, the sole life of priests and bishops, institution of monks, and religious orders, and other such points of controversy, I found so distinctly and perspicuously handled by St. Augustine, in so many books of his works, and so clearly in favour of the Roman religion, at this day; as I began to imagine that the Roman writers could scarce set down matters more evidently for proof of their cause, than these testimonies, discourses and resolutions of St. Augustine do make for them: whereby my admiration was yet more increased of mine own former blindness, folly, and simplicity, that, notwithstanding my often reading over sundry ancient fathers, did think for many years together, papistry to be a new device, and most of their opinions and positions never heard of in the old Christian Church.

Wherefore, coming to talk again with the old man, I could not tell well what to say unto him, but only this,—that I had read as he willed me, and had found much more than ever I thought to find, so that now my appetite of reading more and more Protestant books of controversy was quite taken from me, for that I did see that it was but breaking of a man's brains indeed, there being nothing to subsist in but a wild wandering field to weary a man's self. Wherefore I told him that now I was ready to follow his advice, and to resolve myself upon the direction of the Church, according to St. Augustine's counsel, praying him, that as he had been the persuader thereof unto me, so he would give me some particular advertisements how I might best proceed therein. To this he answered,—that he was glad of this my resolution, whereby he did assure me, notwithstanding, that I should not loose the freedom of my own judgment in subjecting it to the Church, but rather perfect the same; for that Catholic men (said he) do allow as great a latitude unto their reason and discourse as Protestants can do, though for the conclusion they have far greater helps than the other to make it well, which is the direction of the said Church, which direction, besides the multitude of almost infinite learned men that are of that Church, being privileged by the most certain assistance of God's holy spirit, as hath been said, is a happy restraint, if it be a restraint. For as a temporal prince (sayeth he), though never so wise, doth not think it

11  
Prayer to Saints,  
and for the dead.

12.  
Set Fasts.

13.  
Virginity, &c.

My former error  
of judgment about  
the antiquity of  
the Roman posi-  
tions.

My resolution to  
follow the Church.

The assurance of  
infallibility in the  
Catholic Church.

an abridgment or prejudice to his wisdom to follow the opinion of his counsel, though divers of them perhaps be more unlearned than himself, nor have assurance of infallibility in their determinations; so much more may a private man justly subject his judgment to so many hundreds, yea thousands, of learned men that are in the Catholic Church, having this also assurance given them by the word of God, that besides their learning, wit, prudence, and experience, there is superadded also, superior rule of infallibility by the perpetual assistance of the Holy Ghost; whereof, unto us that live in these days, there is added yet further an experiment also of sixteen hundred years past, wherein this visible Christian Catholic Church having been thus guided and directed throughout infinite tempestuous storms of errors and heresies that have molested the same, yet were they all overcome by her at the last, and her Catholic and obedient children led through all those storms with safety and security of faith; whereas other far more unfortunate in this behalf, *nafragaverunt circa fidem*, have made shipwreck of their faith, to use the Apostle's metaphor and comparison. And the chief reason hereof is, that they, lacking this guide and sure pilot, which is the Church's rule, could not be constant and firm in any one thing, but ran into variety of opinions, with often changes and alterations of the same, as all sectaries were wont to do; and you cannot, sayeth he, but remember the note given thereof by old Tertullian, in his foresaid book of Prescriptions, which you said upon my motion you had read over, for he handleth the matter most excellently.

Now then (quoth he), if you have fully made this resolution not to follow your own judgment any more hereafter, but that of the universal Church, I see no cause why you should not be accounted a true Catholic, and of our religion; for that the natural essence of being a Catholic standeth principally in this,—that a man, forsaking particular opinions of these or those men, or of particular conventicles or congregations, as also the mastery of his own wit, will, or fancy, doth subject himself to that which the common known universal Church, that hath come down by succession of bishops unto our time, doth hold, teach, and believe. Wherefore, if you have won yourself in this point (quoth he), I see no difficulty in the rest, for that in particular controversies, and the proofs and reasons thereof, you may inform yourself afterward with more commodity. Neither do we hold that all Catholics are bound to know the grounds and reasons of all controversies, as neither all conclusions and positions in divinity; but

The essence of a true Catholic.

it is enough that they do believe them *fide implicita*, as schoolmen say—that is, in believing the Church that teacheth them, and all that the Church holdeth; so this doth not exclude their obligation to know and believe the most principal points, as namely, the articles of the common creed, *fide explicita*—that is to say, expressly and in particular. When I had heard this, I demanded of the old man whether there were nothing else required to make me a good Catholic but only to subject myself to the judgment of the Church, in believing all that she believeth and rejecting all that she rejecteth? Whereunto he answered, No, for matter of faith; but for matter of works and good life, which we hold, sayeth he, to be necessary with faith, there are divers other points to be performed by you to make yourself a good Catholic.

A question of mine to the old man about being saved in both religions.

Upon this, I told him that I had thought with myself, and heard other men also of good account for their learning affirm, that supposing the Roman Church were or be the true mother Church, and consequently that religion good, or at least not so evil as some others do make it, yet that the Protestant religion seemeth but a reformation only of those defects and abuses which were presumed to be in the other; and therefore, albeit this reformation should pass somewhat too far, and, as they say, launch too deep, and cut off some things for superfluous or superstitions which are not evil, yet that all this may be tolerated and excused by fervour of zeal and good intention of the Protestants' behalf: how say you to this, sir, quoth I? For as on the one side I would be loth to leave undone any thing which is necessary to my everlasting salvation, so on the other side I would not easily go further than absolutely is needful, nor make any change without precise necessity; for that you know what dependeth thereon, for my whole estate of life in this world at least.

The old man, his answer.

To this demand the old man answered,—that for my temporal state which I last mentioned, he could say little; but that he thought it both least and last to be considered or esteemed in respect of eternal life in the world to come, depending of the right profession of true religion in this; and that the promises and threats of Christ our Saviour in this behalf, for gaining or losing a man's soul, for confessing or denying him before men, were sufficiently known unto me, and consequently he left that as an irrefragable conclusion with every true Christian man, that for any least point of true religion, yea, for any one syllable (as St. Basil said to the heretical emperor, his deputy),

both life and lands, and all other temporal respects, are to be neglected.

Now, whereas you say that divers do presume Protestant religion to be but a reformation of abuses in the Catholic, and that they do agree in substantial points of Christian faith; first, for the pretence of reformation, it is common unto them, with all other heretics, from the beginning of Christianity, who ever began, and must do, with the same pretence of reformation; for that otherwise (retaining the name of Christians), they could have no justifiable cause to contradict the Catholic Church, but only to say that she was out of order, and they were sent to reform. And this is to be seen in all books, Fathers, histories, and other authors that ever wrote against heretics.

Whether Protestants have reformed the Church.

Secondly, it seemeth a very absurd position, that Catholics and Protestants at this day do not disagree in substantial points of Christian faith; for that their disagreements being known to be perhaps in above one hundred points, great and small, partly about the God-head of Christ, his Church, head, members, and authority thereof; his descent to hell, and remission of sins, all which are articles of the common creed; partly also about Sacraments, both of their nature, number, force, and efficacy; about the real presence, the effect of baptism, external sacrifice, mass, purgatory, praying to saints, prayer for the dead, faith and works, manner of justification and the like, all which are known to be very substantial points; it is (I say) very absurd, and plainly tending to a secret kind of Atheism, so often to allege and urge, as some good fellows do, that Protestant and Catholic religion do not differ in substantial points; whereas we read in the ancient Fathers, and especially such as wrote by name against heretics and heresies, as St. Irenæus, Tertullian, Epiphanius, Theodoret, and St. Augustine, that many were condemned for heretics by the ancient Catholic Church, and so ever held, for much fewer, and far lesser differences from the known Catholic Church than these are, yea, if it were but a discrepancy maintained with obstinacy in some one only point; whereof infinite examples might be given, but one shall suffice out of the last Father mentioned, to wit, St. Augustine, and this in the very last lines of his book *de hæresibus ad Quod-vult-Deum*, where having reckoned up all the known condemned heresies in his days to the number of eighty-eight he sayeth,

Difference of doctrine between Catholics and Protestants.

*Possunt et hæreses aliæ, quæ in hoc opere nostro commemoratæ non sunt, vel esse, vel fieri, quarum aliquam quisquis tenuerit*

Aug. l. de hæresibus. ad Quod-vult-Deum, to. 6.

*Christianus Catholicus non erit.* There may other heresies be, or spring up, besides these which in this work are recounted, whereof whosoever shall hold any one, cannot be a Catholic Christian. Whereupon I do infer, that if the holding of any one lesser heresy than are propounded in St. Augustine's book, be sufficient to deprive a man from being a Christian Catholic, how much more will so many heresies and sects as before are said to be between Protestants and Catholics in grave matters, be able to work the same? Especially for so much as sundry of them also, which are here recounted by St. Augustine, in his work, as notoriously condemned by the Church of his days, are in the foresaid number of Protestant's opinions, as that of Aerius against prayer and oblation for the dead, against set fasts of the Church, and the like. Those also of Iovinian and Vigilantius against the distinction of mortal and venial sins, against fasting and abstinence from certain meats, against the merit and privileges of virginity, and other such points.

Heres. 53.

A desperate opinion that Catholics and Protestants may be saved together

Wherefore this seemeth to be but a refuge of a very careless conscience, if not devoid of all true faith, to hold that Protestants and Catholics, differing as they do, may be of one Church, or saved together; which refuge divers do fly unto, as I understand now in these later days, I mean of Protestants (for that no Catholic of judgment can ever hold the same), partly as it seemeth out of the mistrust of their own cause, partly of sloth and unwillingness to labour for seeking out the truth, partly that having determined with themselves to hold fast the worldly commodities which they possess, or hope to have, they would be gladly eased of that care of pursuing differences in religion; but this cannot be, as now you have heard, for that there is but one faith, one God, one baptism, one truth, and one reward, for defence and profession of the same; so as in this I would not wish you to flatter or deceive yourself.

About abuses pretended to be reformed by Protestants.

Now as for abuses pretended to be reformed by your Protestants, it is as deceitful a pretence as the other, that every man may be saved in his own religion. For as on the one side no man can deny, that in so great a house and kingdom, as the visible Catholic Church is, spread over all nations, divers abuses might creep in, worthy to be reformed; so on the other side we must consider, whether the Protestants had authority, or intention, or means to reform them truly, or not. For first these abuses must be reduced to doctrine, or manners, or both. And as for doctrine, if there were any superstitious thing that was

privily taught or practised in some particular place, by some particular men without approbation of the universal Church, then was not the admonition of the Protestants in that point reprehensible, if they had made it orderly, that is to say, unto the bishops and pastors of the Church to reform those abuses; which course yet I think they did practise in very few places at their beginning. But if the doctrine misliked were generally held by the Church, then was it no abuse, but a lawful use, and it belonged not to the Protestants to condemn, or control the same, having no authority thereto.

But if the abuses were about manners, and ill life, either in the people or some pastors thereof, then albeit both sides must confess that reformation was to be wished, and ought to be procured by all lawful means; yet whether the Protestants did take the right way thereunto by tumultuous impugning, as well doctrine as manners (as at their first entrance they are known to have done) is by indifferent men discreetly to be considered. As also, whether in the places they have reformed (not to say deformed) they have brought forth better manners; more virtuous life, more sincere and severe Christian discipline, more abundance of good works, more faithfulness and charity in conversation than was before. For if these effects do not appear, then is it but fraud and deceit, to cover all these breaches and broils in the Church of God with the cloak of *reformation of abuses*, wherein for the most part, if you stand attent, you shall find one of these two points commonly to be true; first, that the abuses objected by them, for the most part, are either feigned, or exaggerated, or called abuses where they are good uses; or if they be abuses indeed, yet by disorderly going about to reform the same, it appeareth they have been rather increased than amended, for that the pretenders of reformation were not assisted by God's spirit to that work, as by the event is seen. And so much of this matter.

Thus much and somewhat more being discoursed by the old man, about the point by me proposed, he returned again to the point mentioned by him, but intermitted upon my new demand, that I being settled once in faith by the sure and compendious way of believing the universal visible Church, and relying upon her authority (as before hath been declared), there was necessary another care, no less important than the former, which was, of conforming my life and actions according to the prescript of the said Catholic faith, wherein, he said, that there was much more labour and length of time to be bestowed than in

The old man's  
doctrine and  
counsel about  
good life.

the other. For that our evil affections were harder to rule, and to be subdued to good life, than our judgment and will to true belief; yet (sayeth he) the Catholic Church, with the assistance of God's holy grace, doth prescribe also to this matter so many sweet and effectual remedies, as, with a little good-will and industry, all difficulties are easily overcome. Whereat, when he saw me somewhat moved, and to desire to know what these means were, he told me that this should be for another conference; counselling me, in the mean space, to commit the matter very seriously unto Almighty God, as a business of the greatest importance that ever hitherto I took in hand, or ever should. And with this we ended our speech for that time.

---

### CHAPTER III.

#### *Of my Third Conference with the old Catholic Man.*

SOME days having been spent by me in the cogitation and consideration of the former points recommended unto me by the old man, in the end of the precedent chapter, and some earnest prayer in like manner having been offered up by me to the same end, according to the coldness and weakness of my devotion, I repaired again unto him, desiring that he would proceed in that argument, which before he had touched, concerning the manner and particular means, how a man that was resolved to strive or contend no more about his faith, but rather to believe and rely upon the Church, might go forward in that work, and build good life upon this foundation, and thereby receive both rest and peace of mind in this life (which hitherto I had not done) and some pledge or earnest-penny for everlasting salvation in the next.

The way of obtaining peace of mind.

Whereunto the old man answered, that the way to arrive unto this was already known, and set down by the Holy Ghost in these words: *Declina a malo, et fac bonum*; Decline from evil and do good. Of which two members the first comprehendeth all the means that God hath prescribed unto us to deliver us from sin, either already by us incurred, or for time to come to be avoided. The second containeth the different ways, how to do good, and exercise ourselves in all kind of Christian justice, piety, and other virtues. Neither doth (quoth he) the Catholic Church prescribe these things only in generality of words, as your Protestants do, but doth come to the immediate particulars; teach-

eth how, and when, where, and what you must do, and taking you, as it were, by the hand, leadeth you from step to step, till, by assistance of God's grace, you arrive to the perfection of a Christian life, she proceeding in this matter, as a true mother indeed with her children, by restraining them, first from things that are hurtful and noisome, and then giving them wholesome nourishment and instruction.

Wherefore the first cause of declining from evil, according to the spirit and meaning of the Catholic Church, is, for a man that hath offended Almighty God by sin after his baptism, to be heartily sorry for the same, to seek means to understand and apprehend truly the grievousness thereof, as also the high offence that it hath given and giveth to Almighty God, provoking his just wrath against the offender, and severe punishment in the next life if it be not prevented by us through sorrow and repentance in this. By which considerations is wrought in us both a great detestation of our sins already committed, and also a resolute and firm purpose to avoid the same and other like for the time to come, so as a man maketh a resolute determination with himself (so far forth as human frailty may by the assistance of God's grace be presumed of) never to offend again, either by consent of heart, word, or deed (for by these three means especially sin may be committed) the majesty of Almighty God: and if by frailty he should do, yet to rise again by the same means of faith and repentance, by the benefit of the holy sacrament of penance, containing in it both this wholesome sorrow already mentioned and the absolution of the Church, left by Christ our Saviour, to this effect, to the pastors thereof, with his authority for binding and loosing of sins, as also the pious disposition of mind in him, that hath offended, to concur wherein he may, to some reasonable satisfaction on his part, for the hurts already done and committed.

This, quoth the old man, is the sum of our doctrine and practice, concerning the first step of our new building, which is to dig down deep, and cleanse the foundations, that a new edifice of good works may be erected after, and the old loathsome rubbish shall once be cast out and removed. And whereas I have named two points here (quoth he) the one of doctrine, the other of practice in this affair; it may be the one is known to you in part by our books, but of the other, which is practice, I suppose you have had little experience; and therefore I could wish that you would take some particular time to attend thereunto more exactly. For I do not doubt, but that according to the good disposition of mind, which it seemeth to me that God hath bestowed

What it is to decline from evil.

upon you, you will take both great profit and comfort thereby. And if you do not (quoth he) then say that I have deceived you, which I would be loth to have you think, especially for so much as the time will be so short, wherein you shall make the trial, whether I have deceived you or no.

My resolution to confess my sins to the priest.

Hereupon I demanded him, what he meant by this trial, and by this particular diligence, which he would have me to use; for I confessed unto him, that having now settled my mind, and satisfied my understanding for matters of faith, I felt a good desire also in myself to accommodate my life for the time to come to a more diligent observation of God's commandments, so far forth, as by human frailty I should be able to perform. I told him, moreover, that for cleansing the foundations which he speaketh of, I felt in myself no evil disposition, for that I had resolved now, and won myself, as I thought, in the principal point of repugnance, which was, as he called it, sacramental confession to the priest, having read so much and so effectual doctrine touching this point, both in the places of St. Augustine before alleged and other Fathers, concerning the absolute necessity of that manner of confession, as I deemed it a point of great folly to adventure the loss of a man's eternal salvation (if they teach true) upon the natural repugnance which men have to utter their sins to another.

You say truth (quoth the old man); you are in a good way, and I make no doubt but God Almighty will assist you to the attaining of your heart's desire in this behalf; but yet, to perform this matter more soundly and substantially, as it is a matter of the greatest weight that possibly can be, I would wish you should retire yourself for some eight or ten days from the common conversation of men, and attend wholly to this matter alone, between God and you, and your ghostly Father; for I dare assure you, that you will think them afterward the best bestowed days that ever you spent in your life. Wherein shall I spend them? quoth I. In this very matter which you now treat, said he; of clearing the rubbish of sins past, and laying a new foundation of good works and a more perfect Christian life for the time to come. But yet, as this may diversely be done with more or less perfection; so I desire much that you should do it, if it may be, in this retired order which I have mentioned; for you shall discover many things thereby which now you cannot see, and hardly can be inculcated by me, but God himself will teach them you, and that in so clear and sweet a manner, as you will afterward wonder at his goodness toward you.

But, sir (quoth I), I would gladly know in particular what is to be performed by me in this retirement which you persuade? Your particular employments (quoth he) in these days are certain considerations or meditations of heavenly things, thereby to make deeper impression in your mind and memory about these two points so much stood upon by St. Augustine in his meditations and prayer to Almighty God; *ut cognoscam te, ut cognoscam me*—that I may know thee, and what thou art; that I may know myself, and what I am. For that in these two knowledges consisteth all our happiness. And to come to this knowledge, you shall have certain practical directions given you, both by the meditations which you are to make, and counsel of the spiritual Father, that assisteth you therein. The labour is not great, though somewhat it will be, especially in the beginning, until you be somewhat inured with such manner of mental prayer, for which they will prescribe you ordinarily, if your health will permit it, four or five several hours in the day—the one at midnight, the other early in the morning, the third a little before dinner, and the other two after noon. They will prescribe you also manners and particular observations how to make this meditation and mental prayer with fruit and benefit, how to prepare yourself for every hour of prayer, what and how much to read of spiritual books, how to discourse, how to note good motions of God towards you therein, how to discern between the suggestions of good and bad spirits, how to stir up your own affections, how to deal with God in your petitions, and other such particularities, which now you can hardly think of, and they will be both precedents and instructions unto you for your whole life afterward.

And for that, the whole purpose of these spiritual exercises (for so they are called) do tend to the two main points before mentioned, of declining from sin and doing good, the first days of this retirement are principally bestowed upon the first point for clearing the foundations (as hath been said), prescribing sundry ways and means how to stir up true sorrow for our sins, by sundry considerations, examples, comparisons, sentences, and precedents out of holy Scripture, and other such like motive contemplations, which being seriously and earnestly treated at some more than ordinary length in solitary manner between God and our souls alone, do make far deeper impression than can be imagined by them that are accustomed to handle these things but slightly, or in haste.

The end, then, of these first days, is to look into our own defects, to know our own unworthiness, to detest our own wickedness and pro-

The spiritual exercise which is used among Catholics.

pension to sin, to rue in our hearts that we have offended so good and so merciful a God, to confess the same first to his Divine Majesty, as principally injured thereby; and then, for his sake, and in his name, to his servant and minister, the priest, who sitteth in his place, and hath his authority for hearing, discerning, and absolving our sins, to make a firm purpose to live more warily for the time to come, by avoiding occasions and other enticements of our infirmity, to inure ourselves with some sorts of temporal satisfactions by penal works, whereby our sensual appetites may the better be restrained, and our inferior man be brought into more subjection, so as it dare not again so easily rebel, being put in fear of the severity of our spirit and superior man against him. These, I say, and some such other, are the effects of the first days' labours, which spiritual writers do call the purgative part of these spiritual exercises.

How we may learn the other part, which is to do good.

The other days that do ensue are applied to some other effects; for that, having now made up the accounts, as it were, with God Almighty for the time past, we begin to make and follow a new reckoning; wherein, first, we attend to procure new light and illustration of our minds, darkened before by the multitude and frequent use of sin, to behold the bright face and countenance of virtue in all sorts of Christian piety, which are principally taken out of the most excellent sampler of the life and actions of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Whereunto we are exhorted, both by himself, and his holy examples, and by all good men, to conform ourselves (by imitation) whereinsoever we may: whereby it cometh to pass, that we, seeing our own defects, and lack of true virtues for the time past, and discerning, by little and little, the seeds of these most excellent heroical virtues, exercised by our said Saviour, and left unto us as a pattern to follow, we do enkindle, by little and little, our desires, and inflame our affections to a new and far more perfect endeavour to the obtaining and practising, with the assistance of God's holy grace, of so many of those virtues, some more, some less, as the same holy grace, joined with our own endeavour and co-operation, shall enable us unto. And this is that *facere bonum*, which before I mentioned, comprehending, indeed, all sorts of good, by exercising all sorts of virtue which are incident to a Christian life; than which life (being well performed) no one thing created can be imagined more excellent, consisting of the two parts before-mentioned, of *declining from evil, and doing good*.

For if the former part, which is *to decline from evil*, do compre-

hend in effect, that a man is heartily sorry for all the evil that ever he hath done, and that he will never wittingly commit any more, either in thought, word, or deed, forsomuch as lieth in him, and that the doing of good containeth the exercise of all good works whatsoever that lie in our power, the practice of all virtue, all good desires, wishes, all fear and obedience towards Almighty God, all love and charity towards our neighbour, all justice and equity towards ourselves. If this, I say, be so, as now in part we have declared, what more excellent thing can be imagined than this kind of life, if it be well fulfilled; for inducement whereunto the later days of this retirement are deputed, and divers rules, directions, helps, and means are prescribed, as well for the attaining of several virtues, as for resisting, repressing, curing, and healing the opposite vices, and instigations to the contrary. Wherefore (sayeth he) I can say no more unto you, but *veni et vide*, come and see, and prove a little, whether this be so or no; and take some few days for your retirement, and commit yourself to the guidance of some skilful spiritual man for that purpose: and after you have done, we shall talk together again, and I hope to find you very well satisfied, and contented with your labour and time spent therein.

And now, when this speech of the old man was uttered, I found myself in effect so obliged to follow his counsel and earnest exhortations, as I could not well say no to the same, though I felt some little repugnance at the beginning, to be solitary so many days together. But afterward, my desire increased again to make experience of the thing so much commended, and so I retired myself for some ten or twelve days, leaving all human company and conversation for the time, but only with my spiritual Father, that came at certain hours to visit me, talking only of the matter we had in hand, and that briefly also, and with the party that served me, and brought me necessaries, who in like manner was abridged in his speech with me, but only such necessary words as belonged to matters of his charge. All the rest of the time I passed over alone in solitariness, and some little desolations at the beginning, which perchance arised out of the novelty of the thing, and my being unaccustomed to pass without company; but afterward, I confess, I found a new world, and felt so many inward consolations, and most sweet visitations from the Father of Mercies, as I neither needed or desired more company, but thought myself most happy when I was most alone, and remembering often

The manner of  
my spiritual exer-  
cise.

that saying of Scipio, recorded by Cicero: *Nunquam minus solus quam cum solus*, I was never better accompanied than when I had no company. And methought I did both see and read more of myself, as also of Almighty God, in that solitary darkness (for oftentimes I shut also my windows, for more recollection of my spirits together) than ever I had done before in all the books that I had read over by light. And I found the occasion fit indeed, and very effectual, for the two points before mentioned by St. Augustine, *Ut cognoscam te, ut cognoscam me*: to look into Almighty God, his omnipotency, everlasting power, mercy, clemency, severity, benignity, providence, patience, love, and other such like excellences, with the contemplation of all the contraries in myself, as of myself, and thereby to exalt him most infinitely, and to debase myself most worthily.

These things (I say) the opportunity of that time and place did offer unto me, whereby I might much have profited myself, if my diligence had been correspondent thereunto: and therefore, returning to the old man again, after the days before-mentioned, I could not but confess, that I was greatly bound and beholden unto him for the counsel and direction he had given me; and that I found the commodity itself to be such indeed as he had described unto me, or rather more; and that I had seen so much thereby, and conceived such purposes for the order of my life to come, as I hoped by God's holy grace, that they would stay me from ever sliding back again to my former supine and careless manner of living; for the everlasting salvation of our souls should be preferred before all other respects human whatsoever. And this I desire thee (good Christian reader) to believe, and assure thyself to be most true, as at the last day, when we shall appear before the tribunal of our Saviour, and all hearts made known, will evidently appear. Christ Jesus make thee partaker of his holy grace, and of the heavenly light of his only saving truth of the Catholic Religion. Amen.