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PASTORAL CHARGE

OF

MONSEIGNEUR AUGUSTIN LOUIS DE MONTBLANC,

ARCHBISHOP OF TOURS,

FOR THE LENT OF 1840,

ADDRESSED TO THE CLERGY AND FAITHFUL OF HIS DIOCESE.



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PASTORAL CHARGE.

THE first duty of the pastors established by the Holy Spirit as rulers over the church of God, is that of guarding with fidelity the flock confided to their charge.* Unwearied sentinels, their eyes should be fixed day and night upon the camp of the Lord, in order to detect the slightest movement of the enemy, and to utter the cry of alarm in case of a sudden and unexpected attack.

This duty we are now called upon to fulfil, dearly beloved brethren, even at the risk of wounding certain susceptibilities—but when the defence of the faith is in question, a minister of the gospel must exclaim with Saint Paul, “Do I now persuade men or God, or do I seek to please men? If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”† This, dearly beloved brethren, is our apology, if indeed we need any in your eyes, for it is not probable that our desire to announce to you the truth should induce you to consider us your enemy.

“There are some among you,” said Saint Paul to the Galatians, “who are zealous in your regard, not well—they would exclude you that you might be zealous for them—they would call you unto another gospel, which is not another, only there are some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”‡ These words of the great apostle are perfectly applicable to the circumstances in which we find ourselves placed, and justify the task we have imposed upon ourselves, of establishing one of the most essential points of Catholic doctrine against the assertions of its Protestant opponents.

We conjure our separated brethren not to consider this apology of our faith a direct attack against their persons. Doubtless we must employ the term “Protestant,” the doctrine we defend being opposed to that professed by Protestants and attacked by them; but by this term we imply Protestantism, without in the slightest degree intending to designate personally the members of that communion. We entreat them, therefore, to be convinced that rancour and bitterness are far removed from our hearts, and that we are actuated by no other desire than that of levelling the wall that separates us, and of contributing if possible towards the cessation of divisions which are equally prejudicial to the prosperity of the church and the tranquillity of society.

All parties agree in admitting the necessity of some religion. Infidels themselves are forced to allow, that, in the absence of this principle, there exists no check to vice, no encouragement to virtue; that oaths and engagements have no guarantee, society no solid basis. But if a religion is necessary, there must be *one true* religion, for we may as well deny the existence of God as pretend that he offers us falsehood for our direction, and that he has placed an insurmountable barrier between the truth and man. Such could not be the intention of an infinitely just and holy God. There *is*, therefore, one true religion, and there can be but one, for truth is never in contradiction with itself, and religions that propound doctrines diametrically opposed to each other cannot all be equally true.

* Acts, c. xx. v. 28. † Galat. c. i. v. 10. ‡ Galat. c. iv. v. 17; c. i. v. 6, 7.

Now if we compare Christianity with the religions that do not acknowledge Jesus Christ, it is easy to see that it alone possesses all the characters of truth: no other religion can produce so many vouchers, accumulate so many proofs, or present a system so admirable in all its parts. Thus far there is no ground for discussion, and, Catholics and Protestants, we are agreed in admitting these preliminary articles. But where are we to find Christianity such as it was promulgated by our Lord, such as it was taught by the apostles? This is the important question which we have undertaken to examine and resolve.

There exists a society which claims to be the sole depository of the doctrine of Jesus Christ.—This society is the Catholic church. She alone being enabled to trace back her existence through an uninterrupted succession of pastors to apostolic times, proves that she alone has likewise inherited the succession of the apostles. She appeals to a prescription of eighteen centuries, and fifteen centuries of peaceable and undisputed possession. By the side of this society there exists another, much less ancient, which strives to combat these pretensions. The Protestants say to the Catholic church:—It is not true that you are the church of Christ. You may have been so during a certain length of time, but the treasure of faith has not been safe in your hands. You have corrupted the doctrine of the apostles, and mingled innumerable errors with the truths you received from the Divine Founder. Such is the reproach made by Protestants to the Catholic church—such the pretext of their separation. The accusation is as serious as it is injurious. Those who object to a church that she has imposed upon the world during a period of fifteen hundred years, and that the many illustrious men she has produced have been cheats and impostors, should be provided with strong and incontestable proofs. Besides, this accusation, were it founded in truth, would be more dangerous to Protestantism itself than its supporters imagine. Suppose a man to examine the question coolly and dispassionately, he would say that if Christianity was corrupted almost in its very origin, it could not possibly be of divine institution; for had it been so, God would undoubtedly have provided for the durability of his work; that if those who lived near the times and places where its mysteries were accomplished misunderstood and mistaught religion, it is much to be feared that those who have come later have neither understood nor taught it better; in fine, that if the fathers and doctors of the church, who were equally celebrated for their virtue and learning, did not apprehend the true meaning of the Scripture, it is possible that Luther and Calvin have not succeeded in doing so either; and, therefore, that the second have no greater claim to our confidence than the first. With this argument, which is certainly not deficient in force and reason, he would hold both Catholic and Protestant in equal contempt, and his infidelity would be perfectly justified in his own eyes.

What then are the errors with which the Catholic church is reproached by Protestants? The principal, and indeed the source of all the others, is that of having substituted her own doctrine for that of the Holy Scriptures. To this objection the Catholic church replies, that her doctrine is sure, that her authority is irrefragable, and that there can be no opposition between the Scriptures and her decisions, because she alone is their legitimate and infallible interpreter. This, therefore, dearly beloved brethren, is the principal question between Catholics and Protestants; for if we prove that the church cannot err in matters of faith, it

is needless to object to such and such doctrines as being erroneous. Why discuss transubstantiation, purgatory, confession? These are merely secondary questions. The one upon which they all depend is this:—"What is the rule of faith?" Protestants say, the Scriptures alone. Catholics maintain that it is the authority of the church, the natural interpreter of the Scriptures. This is the subject of the present discussion—but before entering upon it, we beg you, dearly beloved brethren, to remark, that even if the Protestants succeeded in proving that the Scripture *is* the sole rule of faith, they would not yet have advanced one single step, since there is not one of the dogmas they reject that we do not establish by clear and formal passages of Scripture; whereas, if *we* succeed in shewing the insufficiency of this rule, and the necessity of recognising an authority, supreme Judge of Faith, the cause is finished, and the truth of this one point guarantees that of all the others.

The perfection of beauty consists in unity. Therefore it is that man endeavours to give this character to all his undertakings. In works of art, the great essential is, that all the parts, co-ordinate and corresponding with each other, should form but one *whole*, harmonious in its effect, equal in its proportions. Incoherence is the mark of weakness and mediocrity; Unity, that of genius. Now if man, whose conceptions are so imperfect, seeks to impress the stamp of unity upon his works, this rule has certainly not been violated by God; and in religion, which is the greatest of His works, we must necessarily perceive not only a fixed and invariable plan, but also that character of simplicity and unity, in which consists at once its strength and beauty.

When we find our Saviour inculcating on all occasions the new dogma of charity, giving this virtue as a watch-word and rallying signal* to his disciples—announcing his intention of re-uniting all mankind in the same fold†—above all, when we hear him address this beautiful and touching prayer to his Father: "Holy Father, not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me—that they all may be one as thou Father in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us."‡ We cannot doubt that the great object of his mission was that of concentrating all in unity, and of forming the human race into one family; but, dearly beloved brethren, if Jesus Christ wished to establish this perfect unity, he doubtless intended also to avoid all that was of a nature to introduce disunion and discord into the bosom of the great family he came to found, and to employ at the same time every means calculated to ensure its peace and unanimity. Now we contend that the Catholic principle tends surely towards this object, and that the Protestant one diverts from it. We maintain that the invariable result of private examination is to divide, while that of submission to authority is to re-unite; and thus we see that these have been the means chosen, the plan followed by God from the very day that he laid the foundation of his church in the terrestrial paradise, until that eternally memorable one on which Jesus Christ perfected his work, by transmitting to his apostles the magnificent investiture of power that he had himself received from his Father.

When God created the first man, he did not burthen him with precepts. One single prohibition served to make him feel his dependence, and to try his fidelity. Adam, led astray by perfidious suggestions,

* John, c. xiii. v. 35.

† Ibid. c. x. v. 16.

‡ Ibid. c. xvii. v. 20, 21.

wished to analyze his duties, to examine the grounds of his obedience, and to discover the reasons that had determined the Creator to forbid him to eat of the fruit of one only tree. You know what was the result of this principle of examination thus applied for the first time. Adam, despising the authority which he measured by the rules of his own weak intelligence, threw off the yoke; transgressed the limits within which he had been commanded to remain, and entailed his disgrace upon his immense family. Then, for the first time, appeared the mercy and goodness of our God; he placed the remedy beside the evil, and promised a superabundant redemption to the very race he had just cursed. He denounced everlasting enmity and eternal war against the devil, and showed in the futurity of ages the Liberator who should crush his head.* Jesus Christ appears to us already as the Saviour of the world, and to date from this day, "there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved."†

But, dearly beloved brethren, what are the means employed by Providence for the preservation and perpetuation of this precious hope, this consoling dogma, in the world? What is to be the rule of faith in the first ages? The Scriptures? but they did not as yet exist. Nevertheless, if faith was to rest alone upon the evidence of the Scriptures, if all tradition was to be liable to error, the Almighty would never have deprived mankind of the only means of discovering and preserving the truth; and if the sacred deposit of revelation could only be preserved intact in books, he would have endowed the first man with the faculty of writing as well as with that of speech, and would have traced with his finger in ineffaceable characters, the solemn promise he had just made him.

At a later period God chose Abraham—after him Isaac and Jacob—to their hands he committed the trust of tradition, in order that by them it might be faithfully transmitted to their posterity. Here again, every thing rests on testimony; the covenant made with them is neither committed to writing nor formed into a code, and nevertheless it is perpetuated from generation to generation until Moses writes the law; that is to say, during the space of more than two thousand years. Thus we are already authorized in rejecting the Protestant principle, "that the Scripture is the sole rule of faith," since we find that during so long a period fundamental truths were not only confided *to* tradition, but preserved and transmitted *by* tradition.

We shall be doubtless told that this tradition has been sanctioned by Scripture, and that it is the authority of Scripture that guarantees its authenticity; but this objection, far from weakening, imparts yet greater force to our reasoning, for the subsequent sanction of Scripture proves that the Divine truths had been faithfully transmitted, and thus guarantees the certainty of tradition.

But let us continue our progress through the succession of ages. Amongst all the people of the earth, God selected one to be the depository of his promises. Among this people he chose one tribe to be especially devoted to his service, and in this tribe he chose one man to be invested with the supreme sacerdotal power. Thus at a later period he chose twelve apostles from among his disciples, and among these twelve, one privileged apostle, to whom he said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this

* Gen. c. iii. v. 15.

† Acts, c. iv. v. 12.

rock I will build my church."* The system continues always the same, that of concentrating authority, instead of weakening by dividing it.

To return to the ancient priesthood, he must be little versed indeed in Scripture who imagines that this institution had no other aim than that of superintending the immolation of its victories and organizing the pomp of its ceremonies. What was the inscription worn by the High Priest upon the rational? *Doctrine and Truth.*† Did not this imply with sufficient clearness that he was the guardian of doctrine and truth, and that to him all were to resort for the intelligence of the law? And this rational of judgment was it not the emblem of the supreme power that had devolved upon him in matters of religion?

Again, observe with what care the Almighty seeks to raise his sovereign authority in the eyes of the people, and note the miracles that he performs in order to confound all rival pretensions. Now, the rod of Aaron bears flowers and fruit, while those of the other tribes remain dry and barren. Now, Nadab and Abihu are devoured by fire from heaven for having usurped the functions of the priesthood, and offered strange incense upon the altar of the Lord. Elsewhere it is Core and his accomplices, whom the earth swallows up alive. What, then, was the crime that merited so terrible a punishment? Had they, like Nadab and Abihu, usurped the censer and offices of the priesthood? No, but they endeavoured to introduce a dangerous error; they disputed with Moses and Aaron the authority with which they were clothed by God; they contended that their government was an absolute tyranny, and that a holy people, such as the Jewish nation, ought no longer to submit to so hard and so humiliating a yoke. The words they uttered, in order to excite the people to revolt, are too remarkable to be omitted here:—"Let it be enough for you," said they to Moses and Aaron, "that all the multitude consisteth of holy ones, and the Lord is among them. Why lift ye up yourselves above the people of the Lord?"‡ Thus their crime consisted in transferring to the multitude a right inherent in the priesthood; in exhorting the people to withdraw themselves from the authority divinely established, under the pretext, that, being a holy people and having the Lord in the midst of them, they were competent to guide themselves without the interposition of any authority between the Lord and them. An absolutely similar doctrine is professed at this day by a numerous section of Protestants. Now this doctrine, judged and condemned by God himself at the distance of so many ages, cannot possibly have since become the expression of truth.

It is, therefore, incontestable, that the ancient priesthood was invested by the Almighty with a sovereign authority, to which all were required to yield, and all to obey. It is to the Levites that Moses confides the tables of the law—it is the priests who are to be consulted on all difficult questions relating to religion. Their judgment in these matters is decisive, and the pain of death is pronounced against whomsoever shall refuse to abide by it.§ The law, therefore, was not always so clear as to be understood in the same manner by all persons? God provided against this difficulty, by establishing an authority from whose decisions there should be no appeal. This tribunal always existed among the Jews; Jesus Christ himself recognized its authority; and although the lives of the Scribes and Pharisees were not irreproachable, our Saviour considered

* Matt. c. xvi, v. 18.

‡ Numbers, c. xvi. v. 3.

† Exod. c. xxviii. v. 30.

§ Deut. c. xvii. v. 12.

their sitting on the chair of Moses a sufficient reason for enjoining the people to receive and to submit to their decisions.

We have proved, dearly beloved brethren, that before the written law, the truths of revelation were preserved and transmitted, not by Scripture, but by a faithful tradition; that under the law of Moses these truths were never submitted to individual discussion, but confided to the priests and Levites, to be by them proposed and explained to the people; that authority was the supreme law, and that the judgments emanating from the sanctuary settled all doctrine and terminated all doubts. Let us now examine whether the order established under the old law has been preserved under the new?

Before replying to this question, let us refer to a doctrine alluded to in innumerable passages of the Holy Scriptures, which teaches that all things that happened to our fathers were so many figures of what was to be realized at some future day.* Thus, in this vast and magnificent system, all is so connected and linked together, that it is impossible for us to perceive the slightest interruption of continuity. The church draws her first existence in the terrestrial paradise, when a Saviour is promised to guilty man; her earliest steps are made with the patriarchs; she is cherished in the bosom of Abraham, and Melchisedeck is her high priest; she grows and strengthens under the law of Moses; we see her wandering with the Israelites under the tents of the desert; combating with Josue; reposing in the promised land, and sharing the spoils of the vanquished nations. It is always the same church, built upon the foundation of the prophets before she has her apostles, Jesus Christ being the corner stone of the edifice; always the same faith more or less developed; the same Holy Spirit ever animating and directing the members of this vast body; the same Mediator pacifying Heaven with earth, even before the effusion of his blood; always the same spiritual house, the ancient just Being, the eldest of the family. "Jesus Christ," says St. Paul, "is the end of the law,"† the bond of the two Testaments. "Our fathers were all baptized in Moses, in the cloud, and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, and they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.‡" And to recur to a yet more imposing authority, Jesus Christ declares that he is not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil.§ If this is the case, dearly beloved brethren, if the church is but the continuation and the plenitude of the law, its plan must certainly be analogous, and the prerogatives granted to the first spouse have doubtless been continued to her successor. If God provided so carefully for the preservation of unity in the ancient church—if he established a permanent, visible authority for the guardianship of sound doctrines—we must conclude that he has taken the same precautions under the new law. We may even infer, that these precautions have been the greater, and the means the more efficacious, in proportion as the object was of more difficult attainment; for it was not now the maintenance of similar rites and doctrines among one "peculiar people" that was in question, but the reunion in the same religion of all the people of the earth.

Let us now proceed to prove that the order of things established under the old law has been continued under the new—that Jesus Christ has per-

* 1 Cor. c. x. v. 11.

‡ 1 Cor. c. x. v. 1.

† Rom. c. x. v. 4.

§ Matth. c. v. v. 17

fecting his church upon a plan previously drawn out, and that the principle of authority has never ceased to constitute the rule of Faith. We have two descriptions of proof to produce: the one founded upon the precepts of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and upon the practice of the primitive church—the other deduced from the difficulty, or rather the impossibility, of applying the Protestant principle, and the danger of the results it carries with it.

All the public life of our Saviour was passed in the exercise of preaching. All the truths he revealed he imposed from authority; he did not write, nor did not he at any time insinuate the necessity of writing down his words. The forty days that he passed with his apostles after his resurrection he devoted to conversing with them upon the new kingdom he had come to found. Had he intended them to consign his divine precepts to a book for the rule of future generations, this was the proper moment for him to command them to collect with care his different instructions, and to form them into one body of doctrine. But in the whole course of his preaching, did our Lord even once make this recommendation to his disciples? Listen to the solemn words he addresses to them, his feet already upon the luminous cloud that is to bear him to heaven: “All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. As the Father has sent me, I also send you. Go ye, therefore, and teach 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.* These last words, which constitute the foundation of Catholic doctrine, explain to us why our Saviour did not command his apostles to write. The precaution was needless, as he formed the engagement to remain with his church to the end of ages, and with such assistance it was impossible that his doctrine should experience the slightest change.

But if Jesus Christ said nothing on the necessity of regulating our faith by the Scriptures, he exacted an absolute submission to the authority with which he invested the apostles, and to leave no pretext for disobedience, he identified himself with them on all occasions. The power which he gives into their hands is the same that he has received from his Father—who hears them, hears him—who despises them, despises him†—he binds what they bind, he loosens what they loose.—If they remit sins, he remits them—if they retain them, he retains them.‡ As Jesus Christ has given so extensive an authority to his apostles, say, dearly beloved brethren, is it necessary to seek for any other rule of faith? Is it even possible that any other should exist? Is not the Scripture itself submitted to this supreme authority (in the sense that to authority alone belongs the right of its interpretation), and do not those who refuse to receive this interpretation fall under this terrible anathema: “If he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican?”§

And let it not be said that this immense power was limited to the apostles; for the apostles could not live for ever, and Jesus Christ speaks of a power that is to be perpetuated even to the consummation of the world. He included, therefore, their successors in this promise. He declares elsewhere that the church that he is come to found shall never perish, and that at no time shall the gates of hell prevail against

* Matt. c. xxviii. v. 18, 19, 20; John, c. xx. v. 21.

† Luke, c. x. v. 16.

‡ Matt. c. xviii. v. 18; John, c. xx. v. 23.

§ Matt. c. xviii. v. 17.

it.* We must, therefore, necessarily admit that the promised infallibility has passed from the apostles to the pastors who have succeeded them; and as, in another passage, Jesus Christ announces to the apostles that the Holy Spirit that he will send them will remain eternally with them,† we cannot avoid acknowledging that the same spirit continues to direct those who have succeeded to their inheritance. It was thus that Saint Matthias entered upon all the rights and prerogatives of the apostleship, although he was not present when his brethren received their mission from the Saviour. The fathers have been replaced by sons educated in the same school, guardians of the same doctrine, destined to become in their turn princes and leaders in the church of God.

Certainly, dearly beloved brethren, if the texts we have cited in support of our doctrine are not clear, there is nothing clear in Scripture.

Let us suppose a man of sound judgment and good sense, and perfectly neutral in the questions that divide us. Shew him the passages we have just read; assuredly he will not conclude that the Scripture is the sole rule of faith, but he will comprehend without difficulty that there exists a church, eternal in its duration, infallible in its precepts—a church against which the powers of hell may chafe and fret, but never prevail—a church, in fine, invested with the power of Jesus Christ himself, which says with confidence to mankind, I can neither err nor fail; for Jesus Christ is with me unto the consummation of ages. I am entitled to your respect and veneration, for he who despises me, despises Jesus Christ himself—I have a right to exact your submission and your obedience, for all the judgments that I pronounce on earth are ratified in heaven.

And is not this, dearly beloved brethren, the church such as the prophets represent her to us? Listen to David: “The Most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle—God is in the midst thereof, it shall not be moved. Nations were troubled and kingdoms were bowed down, the Highest himself has founded her; He is our God, our God unto eternity, and for ever and ever: He shall rule us for evermore.”‡

Isaiah is neither less clear nor less sublime: “The mountains shall be moved, and the hills shall tremble; but my mercy shall not depart from thee, and the covenant of my peace shall not be moved.” You here clearly see the divine assistance promised for ever to the church. The prophet continues: “Thou shalt be founded in justice, and every tongue that resisteth thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.” Do you not here recognise the features of a church infallible in her decisions? “My spirit that is in thee, and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.”§ Is it possible to express more clearly the transmission of infallibility?

When we appeal to the Scripture we must take them as they are. Now, in the passages cited above, and in innumerable others that we could further produce, it is impossible to avoid recognising a fixed, invariable, infallible authority. But if this authority exists, we must seek no other; and the rule you wish to introduce of examining faith by the Scriptures is not only insufficient but useless, since after you have seriously reflected, maturely examined, you must necessarily return to this sovereign authority (the church), and decide whether the sense you

* Matt. c. xvi. v. 18. † John, c. ixv. v. 16. ‡ Ps. 45, 47, 86.

§ Is. c. liv. v. 10, et. seq. Ibid c. lix. v. 21.

attach to such and such passages is in accordance with her interpretation. Should her decisions be different from yours, will you dare say that she is in error? That cannot be, as Jesus Christ is always with her. Will you despise her decisions? Then you despise Jesus Christ himself, and place yourself at once in the ranks of unbelievers.

We have, therefore, clearly shewn that the principle so boasted of by Protestants was never laid down by Jesus Christ; that never did he utter one word from which we can conclude that the Scripture forms the sole rule of faith—but, on the contrary, that he formally and explicitly established the principle of authority. Let us now examine the course followed by the apostles.

If the Scripture alone is to form the ground-work of faith, they will doubtless hasten to collect, to write with the utmost care all the words and actions of our Saviour. They will leave copies of these books wherever they form congregations of Christians; above all, they will particularly recommend their perusal to the faithful, and as each person is to be the interpreter and judge of the doctrine they contain, rules will be given for the understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures. Now the apostles do nothing of the sort. In all their discourses to the people, they never allude to the necessity of referring to the Bible. Of the Jews and Gentiles who are converted in crowds they ask, not if they have well studied and examined the Scriptures, if they are satisfied as to the conformity of the faith proposed to them with that of the divine books. They inquire if they believe, and they baptize them. If a few among them undertake to write, it is some time after the ascension of our Lord, and in consequence of local and particular circumstances; nothing indicates a resolution previously formed, a premeditated design of tracing a complete course of doctrine. In their epistles we find neither fixed order nor determinate plan; whereas, according to the system we combat, they should have given a methodical exposition of Christian doctrine, with its series of proofs and their connexion with each other. We see that they treat now one truth, now another, just as the occasion occurs, without concerning themselves with the order in which they come, or to their bearing upon one another. They appear to regret every moment not devoted to preaching; they write as quickly and briefly as possible, and Saint Paul even is so eager to conclude, that he reserves half of what he has to say for personal explanation: "The rest I will set in order when I come."* This despatch, this voluntary omission of rules and regulations which were to be of such importance to the church, is a sufficient proof that the apostles calculated upon some other means than the Scriptures for the transmission of their doctrines. These means are clearly indicated by Saint Paul in his epistle to the Thessalonians: "Stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle."† There are, therefore, truths not recorded in Scripture which are to be received and preserved with care, and the apostle recommends the same submission, the same respect for tradition as for Scripture. "The things which thou hast heard of me before many witnesses," says he to Timothy, "the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also."‡

* 1 Cor. c. xi. v. 34.

† 2 Thess. c. ii. v. 14.

‡ 2 Tim. c. ii. v. 2. Protestants themselves admit truths and retain practices that it would be very difficult to justify by formal passages of Scripture. Where, for ex-

We have here, dearly beloved brethren, the rule of tradition clearly established. That which Jesus Christ confided to his apostles, they confide to their disciples, who in their turn confide it to faithful men, to be by them transmitted to posterity. It is thus, that from hand to hand, from age to age, the doctrine of Jesus Christ has been hitherto, and will yet be, perpetuated. Now to those who say that these traditions may have been corrupted, we have but one word to reply—the powers of hell shall never prevail against the church. In hearing it, we hear Jesus Christ himself, and error could never originate with him. The church is the immovable pillar and ground-work of faith—the immutable kingdom of Jesus Christ upon earth, the city of his predilection, over which he will watch even to the consummation of ages. The enemy may hover round its walls, but never penetrate within its precincts; for who can deceive the vigilant eye of the Lord, or force the gates that he has fortified?

To contend, with advantage, against proofs so clear as those we advance in support of Catholic doctrine, it would be requisite for the Protestants to cite passages as explicit in favour of *their* system. We could wish that they would shew us some page of the gospel in which Jesus Christ has said to his apostles: Go teach all people to read, spread the Bible in all parts, teach the faithful to regulate their belief by the doctrines it contains; and to admit nothing but what they perceive to be in accordance with, to reject all that appears to them to be contrary to, Scripture. In order to establish a chain of reasoning parallel to ours, these are the expressions they should bring forward; but such do not exist, either in the gospel or in the writings of the apostles. All that they can find in support of their system is comprised in two or three passages, which are far from being so conclusive as they pretend.

Jesus Christ, say they, referred the Jews to the Scriptures, and recommended them to read it. To arrive at the true signification of the words of our Saviour, we must recall the circumstances under which they were pronounced. His immediate object was to establish one single point of doctrine, the truth and divinity of his mission. The proofs to which he appeals are the miracles that he has wrought. “The works themselves which I do, give testimony of me that the Father hath sent me.”* If he afterwards says to the Jews, “Search the Scriptures,” it is merely that they may convince themselves according to their own method of reasoning. He avails himself of the respect they entertain for the Scripture, in order to add a proof, which in their eyes must appear incontestable, to that which he had already given them. As they had full confidence in the Scripture, he refers them to this testimony, but the terms that he employs seem to imply that he did not share their opinion

ample, do they find that the Sunday should be substituted for the Sabbath—that baptism conferred by heretics is valid—that the birth, the death, and the resurrection of our Saviour are to be celebrated? What precise passage of Scripture establishes that, although there are two natures in Jesus Christ, there is but one person; and that in this one person there are, nevertheless, two wills? That the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son? These dogmas are doubtless all in Scripture, but are they so clearly expressed as to be intelligible to all persons? and upon all these articles of faith is not tradition their guide, and does it not fix *their* belief as well as ours?

* John, c. v. v. 36.

in this respect: "Search the Scriptures; for you think in them to have life everlasting, and the same are they that give testimony of me."* Thus it is rather a concession that he makes to them than a complete approbation of the principle. He takes advantage of their confidence in the Scriptures to support his mission by the testimony they give of him; but he does not intend that this testimony should be preferred to that of the miracles to which he appeals. Jesus Christ does not here speak according to his own judgment, but according to that of the Jews; and those persons must be strangely pre-occupied with the desire of establishing a system, who see in these words an order and express command to regulate *their* faith by the sole evidence of Scripture.

In another passage Jesus Christ reproaches the Jews with having neglected the law in order to follow their traditions: "For leaving the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, the washing of pots and of cups, and many other things you do like to these. Well do you make void the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition."† Now is not this, say they, the practice of the Catholic church?

Tradition, according to the Catholic church, is the unwritten word of God, transmitted by Jesus Christ to the apostles, and by them to their successors. This tradition she receives with respect and submission, not as the word of man, but as (what it really is) the word of God. Traditions that have not this origin and that cannot be traced to this sacred source, have neither value nor authority in her eyes. Now what are the traditions here alluded to by our Lord? Arbitrary practices which it was impossible to justify, because it was impossible to prove either their origin or their continuity. Even these our Saviour does not absolutely condemn; he merely reproaches the Jews with preferring these traditions to the law, and he gives them clearly to understand that they might better follow these traditions and not neglect the law: "These things you ought to have done, and not to leave those others undone."‡ It is besides evident that Jesus Christ never intended to censure authentic traditions, transmitted by those who were the guardians of the law, for he prescribes the most absolute submission to all the decisions emanating from this tribunal: "The Scribes and the Pharisees," says he, "have sitten on the chair of Moses; all, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do.§

Our adversaries quote further from St. Paul: "All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice."|| But is not this what we likewise say—what the Catholic church likewise teaches? Yes, without doubt all Scripture is profitable, it is of great help in correcting and instructing; therefore it is that we cite it in all our discourses, that we support by its evidence all the truths that we announce to the people; but we do not conclude that it alone is necessary, because it is good and profitable. This is what Saint Paul never said, and what we can never admit.

Having thus laid down the foundation of Catholic doctrine, it remains for us to examine the principle of the Protestants. The Scripture, say they, is the sole rule of faith, and we are to believe nothing that is not

* John, c. v. v. 39. † Mark, c. vii. v. 8, 9. ‡ Matt. c. xxiii. v. 23.
§ Matt. c. xxiii. v. 2, 3. || 2 Tim. c. iii. v. 16.

therein contained. This principle is easily stated: but it is not so easy to remove the difficulties to which it gives rise.

Doubtless, dearly beloved brethren, the law of God is light and truth; but man, the sport of darkness and error, has he always the eyes of his intelligence open for its comprehension? Read, if you can, the innumerable commentaries made by Catholic fathers and doctors upon the sacred text; read those of Protestants themselves, and then venture to assert that the Scripture clearly explains itself, and that we have only to read to understand it! Certainly, if so many men of studious lives and profound erudition have frequently given dissimilar explanations of the same text, it is a proof that the Scripture is not always explicit, and that it is not always easy to seize its true meaning. What is clearer, for example, than this simple narration of the Evangelist? "Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke, and gave to his disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat: this is my body. And taking the chalice he gave thanks; and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins."* It seems impossible to mistake the meaning of these words; and one might believe that on this subject at least there should exist but one opinion. Yet, as you know, this passage is explained differently by the Catholics and the Lutherans, who themselves do not understand it in the same manner as the Calvinists; and these two great factions of Protestantism are subdivided into a multitude of sects, each giving a different signification to the same passages of Scripture.†

The Bible is clear, you say. If Jesus Christ had thought so, he would not have given the example of explaining it himself. You remember the two disciples who were going from Jerusalem to Emmaus: they had read in the scriptures that the Messiah would re-establish the kingdom of Israel, and this was precisely what troubled and disconcerted their faith. They now clearly see, they say, that they must no longer rely upon this. But Jesus Christ joins in their conversation:—expounded by this divine commentator, the passages that were before ambiguous, become clear and luminous; their faith is aroused, their hope revives, their charity is inflamed anew in proportion as Jesus Christ discovers to them the meaning of the sacred texts.‡

Again,—let us remind you of the officer of the Queen of Ethiopia; he was returning from Jerusalem, sitting in his chariot, and reading the Prophet Isaiah. The passage which at that moment made the subject of his reflections was this—"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter: and

* Matt. c. xxvi. v. 26, 27, 28.

† Extract from a sermon of the Protestant Archbishop of Sunden in Sweden:—

"The unanimous evidence that presents itself to us on all sides, no longer permits us to call in question the deplorable truth, that the Protestant church of Germany is on the eve of dissolution, or rather that there is no longer a church (in the sense of one uniform confession of faith); an assembly of Christians, certain of what it should believe and profess, no longer exists. This disunion is now arrived at such a point, that if the Governments would allow the members of their churches to form themselves into Rationalist churches, but a small number would remain faithful to the Evangelical religion."

Here the Archbishop traces the picture of this frightful defection, and concludes by this sentence:—

"Catholicism is at hand, and has already received into its bosom a crowd of distinguished men, who no longer found primitive Christianity in the Protestant church."

‡ Luke, c. xxiv. v. 32.

like a lamb without voice before his shearer so opened he not his mouth." Philip drew near, and inquired if he understood what he read. "How," replied the Ethiopian, "how can I, unless some man teach me?"* To how many persons, in whose hands the Bible is placed, might we not say with Philip to the Eunuch:—"Thinkest thou that thou understandest what thou readest?" It is because all do *not* understand that the Protestant pastors themselves do not cease to interpret the Scripture, to explain it from their pulpits, and it is for this reason, that they endeavour to press their interpretations on the minds of their auditors.

Nevertheless, we cannot too often repeat to them: if the Scripture be clear, we have no need of your interpretations; but if it must necessarily be interpreted, we have as much right to interpret it as you have, and you cannot prove that your interpretation is better than ours. In order to establish the meaning we attach to Scripture, we appeal in support of our belief to the testimony of ages; you, in order to justify your interpretation, merely assert that it appears to you to be clear. You can invoke no authority but your own: you appeal from yourself to yourself, and your ultimate reason is no better than that given by the Jews to Jesus Christ and rebuked by him: "But now you say—We see."† Let others judge which of the two systems has the better guarantee.

It must be allowed then, that the Scripture is not always clear. Saint Peter complained formerly of the abuse made by the Heretics in his time of the Epistles of Saint Paul, "in which," says he "there are some things hard to be understood which the unlearned and unstable strew, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.‡ Heretics have never ceased to do what they then did. It has always been in the name of the Scripture that they have introduced their errors, and there is no system, however absurd, which they have not endeavoured to prove by the authority of the holy books. Thus the Gnostics, the Arians, the Macedonians, the Eutychians, the Pelagians, whom Protestants condemn, as we do, all pretended to find in Scripture texts in support of their errors.§

This Society, that the Protestant bishop would wish to see established, has existed for more than eighteen hundred years. It is the Catholic church. No other Society can offer the same guarantees.

That the Protestant rule is not always clear, is already a serious objection—but this obscurity gives rise to yet greater difficulties. Who has the right of interpreting and fixing the sense of obscure passages? Here there are but two courses to follow—either to acknowledge the authority of the Catholic church, or to decide in favour of individual examination. Protestants reject the first, and adopt the second: thus each person is

* Acts, c. viii. v. 31.

† John, c. ix. v. 14.

‡ 2 Pet. c. iii. v. 16.

§ From a discourse of Dr. Isais Tegner, Protestant Bishop of Wexgoe, in Sweden, at the diocesan Synod of 1836:—

"It is said that the Bible explains itself; doubtless it does so; but for whom? for those pure and pious minds in which Christianity has budded forth in some degree with life itself; for those virtuous men who bear in their own breasts the surest key of the true hidden science. But the multitude is no where composed of these chosen spirits. The majority is always made up of those who require to be led, taught, directed. To propagate the Bible, to read the Bible, is too little. To explain the Bible is the great necessity of the church, and a Society formed for this purpose would constitute a Bible Society capable of fertilizing the Association known under that name."

This Society, that the Protestant Bishop would wish to see established, has existed for more than eighteen hundred years. It is the Catholic church. No other Society can offer the same guarantees.

bound to examine whether that which is proposed to his belief be conformable to Scripture or not. Now this examination, to be conscientious, requires a degree of study and research to which the great majority cannot apply themselves. In the first place, all must learn to read. Saint Paul has said, "Faith cometh by hearing:"* in this case, it would have been more correct to say, "Faith cometh by *reading*." Thus, for the greater portion of the human race, examination is impossible, and nevertheless, this portion seems called to the faith in preference to the other. It is to the low and simple that the Heavenly Father reveals his greatest mysteries;† and Saint Paul tells us that among the first Christians there are not many wise; but that God had chosen the weak and foolish things of the world, to confound the wise and the strong.‡ This is not all: each person must carefully examine the authenticity of the Scriptures. His duty is to convince himself that the books that have been transmitted to him by the Catholic church are really by the authors whose names they bear, and that these writers have neither deceived nor been deceived. He must further satisfy himself that these works are really inspired, and as it is always to be apprehended that the translations have not been faithful, and that the original text has not been preserved in all its purity, he should study the languages in which they were composed, in order to be sure that he possesses the word of God as it proceeded from his mouth.§

When the Scripture is thus falsified, can it form a sure rule of faith? and can he who only knows it through the medium of these unfaithful translations be ever sure of possessing its true meaning? And let it not be said, that these difficulties are of our invention; for if we are to admit nothing as an article of faith that we do not find clearly taught in Scripture, it is a duty, and indispensable obligation, for every Protestant to devote himself to these investigations, and to take all the precautions we have mentioned. Should he not do so, he infringes the rule he has laid down, and does not act up to the fundamental principle of his belief. Let it not be said, either, that the Catholics have the same difficulties to contend with, since they prove the authority of the church by the Scripture, and that of the Scripture by the church. One of these authorities has doubtless a reaction upon the other, but there is no "*vicious circle*" such as we are reproached with—our method is simple and logical. In reading the Scriptures with attention, we soon perceive that they combine all the motives upon which human certainty can be founded, and following the rules of ordinary criticism, we arrive at the conviction of the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Now, in studying the gospel by

* Rom. c. x. v. 17.

† Matt. c. xi. v. 25.

‡ 1 Cor. c. i. v. 26.

§ Luther made a version of the Scripture in the vulgar tongue; Zuinglius, after having examined it, published that it was a corruption of the word of God, and the learned Emser, doctor of Leipsic, discovered in it more than a thousand errors. The Lutherans taxed the translation of Zuinglius with the same errors. Ecolampadius and the theologians of Basle made another version, which, according to the famous Beza, is impious in several passages. The theologians of Basle made the same objection to that of Beza. Dumoulin, another learned minister, reproached him with having altered the text of Scripture, and speaking of the version of Calvin, he says that Calvin does violence to the letter of the gospel, that he transposes and adds as he chooses. The divines of Geneva thought themselves obliged to make another version, which they offered as exact; but James I. declared, in the conference at Hampton Court, that it was the worst and least faithful of any that had hitherto appeared. (Trevern, p. 154.)

the light of reason, we find that Jesus Christ has established a sovereign and infallible authority, destined to perpetuate his doctrine unto the consummation of ages. At this point we have no further need of study, and we rest with security under the shade of this tutelary authority. We receive with the utmost confidence the books she gives us, as containing the word of God ; we believe even that we cannot possibly arrive otherwise at the certainty of their inspiration, and like Saint Augustin, we should not believe in the gospel, if the church did not guarantee its authenticity.

But to continue our examination of the Protestant system. If no other rule of faith be provided for each one of the faithful than the Scripture, God would at no time have refused the knowledge of this single and indispensable rule : and yet it is only since the discovery of printing that it has been possible to distribute the Bible with such profusion ! We should deceive ourselves strangely, if we imagined that in the early ages the Scriptures were in the hands of all believers. Saint Irenæus, who lived in the second century, testifies that a great number of churches were not even in possession of a single book of the Scriptures. Thus, in the most glorious days of Christianity, the rule so boasted of by the reformers was unknown. Will they then venture to assert, that a rule dependant upon an accidental discovery of industry, was that given to man as the sole means of arriving at the truth ?

Let us suppose, nevertheless, that all the difficulties we have spoken of are overcome ; that each individual has, of himself, acquired the certainty of the authenticity and the divine inspiration of the Scriptures—let us suppose that there no longer exists a doubt as to the fidelity of the translation ; and, yet further, let us suppose that all have the means of purchasing a Bible, and all the ability to read it. Now then each person must begin to study, to examine word by word, text by text, all the oracles of the sacred book. And do not say that this is merely a *right* possessed by all—say rather that it is a *duty* of the strictest obligation ; for each person has to establish the foundation of his faith, and this foundation must be laid upon his personal conviction, not upon the teaching of others. Now what would be the consequence of this proceeding ? Unity would thenceforth be impossible : and yet we have seen that the establishment of unity was the great object of the mission of Jesus Christ. Each individual will have his own creed, his own dogmas, even his own system of morals. Strike the shepherd in his authority, the flock is quickly dispersed. Instead of meeting, as the apostle desires, in the unity of faith, we should wander without any certain path, be carried about with every wind of doctrine, and be ignorant whether we shall believe on the morrow that which has been our faith to-day. The church, the new Jerusalem, the beauty of which was to form the admiration of all the nations of the earth, would be the object of bitter scorn and derision, and the passers by, to use the expression of a Prophet, would assail her with the hisses of contempt.* Instead of the peace which should reign within her walls, no sounds could be heard but cries of revolt and menaces of war. Instead of all uniting to bless the Lord with one heart, and one mouth, there would be as many religions as individuals, and like the children of the proud Babel, each would speak in a strange tongue, and be unintelligible to his brother.

In this disorder, this state of anarchy, this confusion of all ideas, endea-

* Laménais, c. ii, v. 15.

your if you can, to recognise the glorious and cherished spouse of Christ;—the church, not only exempt from spot or wrinkle, but even from the slightest stain or blemish!*

No—it is impossible that this should be the work meditated by God during eternal ages. It is impossible that Jesus Christ should not have taken precautions that have never been neglected by the obscurest legislators, that he should not have established an authority, to be the infallible interpreter of his doctrine, and guardian of the truths that he came to bring upon the earth.

But to continue.—In Scripture, sects and heresies are often noticed. The Apostles speak of those which existed in their times; they foretell others that were to arise at a future day and divide the church. Saint Paul enjoins Titus to avoid “the man that is a heretic;” and Saint John goes so far as to forbid the interchange of greeting with him.† But in the system we combat no heresy is possible, and consequently the apostles condemned mere phantoms of the imagination! In fact, if there were no immutable rule from which to go astray, no infallible authority to resist, there could be no heresy. This rule, this authority, you say, is the Scripture—the Scripture examined and interpreted according to the views of each individual. Now who shall judge between the Scripture, and the interpreter of the Scripture? In whatever way you understand it, you must either admit a controlling power, independent of the Scripture, or, you must allow that there are no heretics, and that there never have been any; that those of whom the apostles speak deserved this appellation as little as others, as in interpreting the Scripture they exercised no more than their right—nay, you must even say that they fulfilled a duty, and that they merely applied the rule that you now wish to introduce.

But, dearly beloved brethren, if each person be free to interpret the Scripture as he chooses, why should Protestants refuse this privilege to Catholics? for if the opinions of individuals appear to them so respectable, the uniform and unvarying belief of the most numerous Society of Christians in the world must be of some value. In vain do they pretend that we have mingled errors with the ancient faith—as there is not one of these pretended errors unsupported by passages of Scripture, the question is, whether they or we have apprehended the true meaning. Now we have an imposing majority in our favour, besides the constant tradition of eighteen centuries. Perhaps they will say that the Scripture is no rule for us, as we submit its interpretation to a supreme authority. But what does this prove, excepting that we have a guarantee the more; and that the sanction of ages gives us a greater certainty, than they can possess, of being in the right in our own interpretation: the decisions of a jurisconsult, however learned and exalted he may be thought, have certainly much greater force, when he can produce the judgments of all the upper courts in strict accordance with his opinion. Now this is the whole question between the Protestants and us. They appeal to the testimony of Scripture—we do so likewise. They give such and such interpretations of such and such passages, they say it is their right—but we give a different interpretation of these very same passages, and we contend that it is *our* right, as well. Now, which is the best of these interpretations? The Protestants support theirs upon individual opinion: we, ours, upon the constant tradition of the church, and we maintain that private interpretation can never have the

* Eph. c. v. v. 27.

† Tit. c. iii. v. 10. and 2 John, v. 10.

same right as that which has been received in all ages, and corroborated by the testimony of the fathers and doctors from the first centuries to the present time.

But now we come to another difficulty, which is not less embarrassing. Protestants themselves are obliged to admit as a truth, that there exists a church, charged with the instruction of the people; a church upon which our Saviour has conferred incontestable power and privileges, which he has commanded us to hear as himself; that in this church there is a regularly constituted hierarchy, "of pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."* But, according to the views of those who pretend that each person is the arbiter of his faith, this power, these privileges, this hierarchy of the church is but a fiction—the church itself a chimera. In fact, why give the mission of teaching to this church if no one is bound to follow her teaching? Why command us to hear her, if we may brave her censure with impunity? Of what advantage are pastors and teachers, if each person has the right of building his own faith upon the Scriptures? Such an institution is not only useless, but even dangerous; for the pastors, whoever they may be, Catholics or Protestants, will influence, by their instructions and explanations, opinions that should be free, impose their views upon the faithful, who should follow only their own, and impress a foreign direction upon the researches and examinations that every one should make for himself. Thus, according to your system of free-examination, the church is a word totally devoid of meaning; you take from her hands the sceptre of authority placed in them by Jesus Christ, when he said, "Go and teach all nations;" you break the weapons that were given to her, "unto the pulling down of strongholds, destroying counsels, and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ."† In the doubts, in the discussions, that arise the church can have no voice, for she can no longer give a conclusive decision; and certainly if the great apostle returned among us, we should not now hear him cut short all difficulties by these words, so full of apostolic liberty and severity: "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the church of God."‡ Such lofty language would ill-become the powerless state to which the Protestants would wish to reduce this church.

But, say they, "We acknowledge that the church is invested with the power of ordaining rites and ceremonies, and that authority belongs to her in controversies of faith." True; but to what do you reduce this authority, when you lay down this other principle—that the Scripture is the supreme rule, and that the church may not order any thing that is contrary to the written word? § By this additional article you reduce the church to the state of complete nullity from which you had at first appeared to withdraw her. For, of what weight in controversies of faith can be an authority capable of ordering things contrary to Scripture? and how can this authority set others right, if she require correction herself? Here the alternative is inevitable: either the church can teach nothing contrary to Scripture, and then you return to the Catholic doctrine; or it may happen, as you suppose, that she does teach things con-

* Eph. c. iv. v. 11. † 2 Cor. c. x. v. 4. ‡ Articles of the Church of England. § 1 Cor. c. xi. v. 16.

trary to Scripture, and then say no longer that authority belongs to her in controversies of faith; for if she can err, her teaching is absolutely null, and the moment she loses her infallibility she loses all her influence. You say that the church may not ordain any thing contrary to the written word. But how are you to know that she has committed this error? Who is to judge between the church and the Scripture? Who is to decide that in such and such cases the church teaches things contrary to the sacred text? It is you that claim this right for yourself; and, according to your principles, there can be no other judge than you. But of what value is your judgment? After having denied infallibility to the church, will you assert infallibility for yourself? You make no such pretension. But then, if you are not infallible, you may deceive yourself; if your opinions are liable to error, you cannot guarantee the signification that you attach to Scripture: your faith has, therefore, no solid foundation—you are consequently reduced to doubt; and being unable to cast into the sea of human opinions the firm and sure anchor of which the apostle speaks, you must necessarily be tossed to and fro, from rock to rock, at the caprice of the winds and of the tempest.

Let us conclude, dearly beloved brethren. The authority conferred by Jesus Christ upon his church is a sovereign and infallible authority. As we have already remarked, this is the whole question between the Protestants and us: all the objections they make, all the difficulties they bring forward against particular dogmas of the Catholic church, do not advance the controversy one step. The whole inquiry turns on this point: Whether Jesus Christ has given infallibility to his church? We believe that we have proved that he has; and that, in following this church, we do not walk in darkness; for that He who is the way, the truth, and the life, is with her, and will continue to be so to the consummation of ages. The Scripture is as dear, as sacred, to us as to Protestants. It avails not to show that it is our rule; that it is so, we know, and knew before their time: it is incumbent on them to show that it is our *only* rule. It is out of respect for Scripture that we refuse the right of interpretation to individuals; and our refusal is grounded on these words of Saint Peter: "That no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation." The reason given by this apostle is conclusive: "For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost,"* and therefore it should not be interpreted by man's caprice.

We shall conclude, dearly beloved brethren, by repeating to you the counsels addressed by Saint Paul to the first Christians: "Stand fast and hold the traditions which you have learned; knowing well that the church is the pillar and the ground of truth. Having faith and a good conscience, which some rejecting have made shipwreck concerning the faith. The desire of money is the root of all evils; which some coveting, have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows. Do not forsake our assemblies as some are accustomed. As we said before, so now I say again, if any one preach to you a gospel besides that which you have received, let him be Anathema."†

What sayest thou, great apostle! and whither art thou carried by thy zeal for the truth? Ah! rather let us hear thee express this other sentiment, dictated to thee by thy charity for the children of the dispersion

* 2 Pet. c. i. v. 20.

† Epis. St. Paul, *passim*.

of Israel: "I have great sadness," sayest thou, "and continual sorrow in my heart, for I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ for my brethren."*

Such are also our feelings towards you, who, although our faith is no longer the same, we love to call our brethren. Where, alas! is the time when we all walked together in the same path; when we inhabited in unanimity the paternal house; when we were sheltered in the same fold—protected by the staff of the same pastor? You well know, beloved brethren, that *we* have not quitted you—that it is you who have separated from us. Why then prolong this cruel separation? Return, return to the Catholic church, the house of the living God. Your estrangement has saddened her heart, but has not destroyed her maternal affection. You do not surely think of us more severely than did your fathers; they allowed that all the conditions of salvation were to be found in the Catholic church. What then can deter you from joining us, since your most celebrated divines have agreed that we are not in the way of perdition? In returning to us you do not change, you merely again become what you once were. It is only on the mountain of Sion that you can adore in spirit and truth. Oh, return! and let us again meet in the unity of faith—let us embrace to part no more—let us form together but one heart and one soul!

As for those who have abandoned our communion, we are sure that their own judgment has already condemned them. We call on them to meditate upon this awful sentence of the apostle: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, have tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; have, moreover, tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance;"† and upon these not less alarming words of Saint Peter: "It had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them."‡ We leave to their own consciences the task of accusing and condemning them. The altar that rejoiced their youth, where they were nourished with the flesh and blood of the Lamb; the sacred tribunals, witnesses of their tears and contrition; the stones even of the sanctuary, will one day rise up against their apostasy. The remorse that already is their portion will revive with greater terror at their last moments, and the faith that they have betrayed will accuse them at the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge. Nothing, therefore, remains for us but to pity and to pray for them.

* Rom. c. ix. v. 2.

† Heb. c. vi. v. 4.

‡ 2 Pet. c. ii. v. 21.