

INFALLIBILITY.

HOW FAR, AND WHERE, MAY CERTAINTY OF TRUTH
BE EXPECTED IN THE TEACHING OF
THE CHURCH ?

By the Bishop of Qu'Appelle.

[CONCLUDED.]

But there are doubtless many other matters not defined in the Creeds, about which we would desire to know the positive truth, and concerning which it is also well for us to be instructed "for our soul's health." (Baptismal Service). Such questions, for instance, as the exact meaning of "Inspiration," "Predestination," the "Future State," the doctrine of "the Sacraments," "Absolution," &c., &c.

But it is certain that on all subjects beyond those contained in the Creed we must be content to have only that ordinary measure of assurance which can be gathered from the teaching of the branch of the Church to which we belong, as expressed in the Liturgy and other formularies, of the Pastors who are set over us in the Lord as the duly authorized exponents of that teaching, from what appears to have been received by the Church "everywhere, at all times, and by all," according to the golden rule of S. Vincent of Lerins, and from the testimony of Holy Scripture read with a mind for the illumination and guidance of which the Holy Spirit has been faithfully sought.

And the truly wise man will assuredly always be ready and willing to defer his own judgment to that of the general body of which he is but a single member, and will further consider that the Church Universal is more likely to be right than any particular branch thereof. It is quite true that, as we said at the beginning, our faith *must* rest ultimately on an act of our private judgment. But that does not mean that we must necessarily exercise that private judgment in every matter, or that we must necessarily decide everything for ourselves. "We have the choice whether we will exercise our private judgment in one act, or in many" (Professor Salmon, "Infallibility of the Church," p. 47). "In claiming the right of private judgment we acknowledge the need of human teaching to enjoin that judgment." And we may determine once for all that it is most reasonable that the individual should submit his judgment to that of the body of which he is a member.

"Submission to the authority of the Church is the merging of our mere individualism in the whole historic life of the great Christian brotherhood; it is making ourselves at one with the religion in its most permanent and least merely local form. It is surrendering our individuality only to empty it of its narrowness" (Gore, "Roman Claims," p. 51). And on the same principle also it is most reasonable that a part of the body—a mere local Church—should submit to the judgment of the whole. The appeal of our Church at the time of the Reformation was from a mere part—the Church of Rome—to the whole Catholic Church. By the judgment of a free council, truly representative of the whole Catholic Church, our Church would be still willing to abide.

But upon questions in regard to which there have always been differences of opinion in the

Church, it would be no part of the duty of even such an Ecumenical Council to give a decisive judgment.

We may, indeed, very earnestly desire that we could have more definite and certain knowledge on all subjects, we may feel that it would be an inexpressible comfort to our souls could we have more clear certainty. But if it does not seem to have been Christ's will to give any means for obtaining that certainty in matters beyond those that were absolutely necessary for the stability of His Church and the salvation of men's souls, we must not only be content with our present state of trial and imperfect knowledge, but believe that it is somehow assuredly good for us.

Where God has not given the help of an infallible living authority, the true Catholic is content with a reliable authority. He accepts Revelation as God hath been pleased to give it in the Holy Scriptures, in the testimony of the Catholic Church, in his own conscience' (Berdmore Compton, "Infallibility"). The real fallacy of the modern Roman position lies in the assumption that because it is necessary for us to know the certainty of the truth on *some* things, e.g. whether our Lord was truly God, therefore it is necessary that there should be a living authority able to teach the truth infallibly on *all* subjects that men desire to have solved.

The Rev. C. Gore, in his late Bampton Lectures (on the *Incarnation of the Son of God*), has admirably pointed out that while Christianity must be authoritative, authority must be of two kinds—the despotic and the fatherly. The former, aiming to produce simply servile acquiescence and obedience, works through explicit commands and dogmas. The latter, seeking to produce "conformity of character, sympathy of mind, intelligent co-operation in action," delights in half-disclosures, stimulating the mind and the will. This is the higher method, and it was that of our Lord. He taught rather by suggestion than by full disclosures of the truth. "Even His triune Being is rather overheard, than heard as a distinct announcement." "He gave few tenets in a formulated shape" (Dr. Latham). He trained His disciples to do a great deal for themselves in the way of spiritual effort in apprehending truth. Christian authority, then, as (1) a higher sort of reason, stimulates and develops in each of its subjects the faculty of reason and free judgment; and (2) as educating men for worship is not satisfied with bare acceptance of dogmas and obedience to rules, "refuses to do too much for men—refuses to be too explicit, too complete, too clear, lest it should dwarf instead of stimulating their higher faculties" (pp. 195-198).

Thus, then, to the taunt (as is supposed) against the members of our Church, of the Romanist, "Where have you an infallible voice to assure you of the truth of what you believe, or to tell you what you ought to believe?" we can answer, "We have it sufficiently in the voice of the Church when it was yet one—still living amongst us the Truth once delivered to the saints is enshrined in the Creeds. The faith and knowledge which was sufficient for the early Christians to live by, and to die with, is sufficient for our guidance. For the rest, if Christ had intended us to have an infallible guide in all things, He would certainly have given us one

very plainly. Since He did not do so, we cannot accept one of man's creation, it is better to have only a dim light than a false light to walk by. And if sometimes we are bewildered and almost overwhelmed with perplexity, we will take it as part of the yoke and the discipline that He intended us to bear for our eternal welfare."

After all, this state of perplexity and doubt in things that we feel that it would be helpful to us to know more clearly, is only similar to our moral trials. Who does not often wish—yes, with deepest agony of soul—that he could be free from the temptations that assail him to do what his conscience knows to be wrong? Who does not feel that it would be inexpressibly good for him if God had made it impossible for him to sin? "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away, and be at rest." But we know that it is impossible; we know even that God can, and does, bless us even through temptation, faithfully endured, "for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life." And so we ask for grace to endure to the end. And so, also, if it is not God's will to save us from the trial of mental perplexities as to the Truth, we are sure that He will bless us as we look to Him, and trust Him, for His guidance amidst them.

WHY AM I A CHURCHMAN.

Qu'Appelle Messenger.

[Continued from Sept. 14th Number.]

I am a Churchman—

V. BECAUSE THE CHURCH STILL HOLDS "THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS," "WHOLE AND UNDEFILED."

Whole—in all its completeness, as distinguished from the broken and partial truths held by the schismatic bodies.

Undefiled—without additions, free from the errors which the Church of Rome has allowed to be added to the Faith.

A sound and true Faith is certainly a necessary mark of the true Church, and of the very essence of its Unity. The Faith is "One" as the "Body" is "One." There have been, before now, bodies of Christians that have had all the organization of the true Church, as duly ordained and commissioned Bishops, Priests, and Deacons yet guilty of schism owing to a departure from the Faith "once delivered to the saints." All the early sects were episcopal in their form of government.

This "deposit" or "form" of the Faith was delivered to the Apostles by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, according to the promise of our Lord that he would "lead them into all the truth." Very early this "Faith" was enshrined in forms called Creeds used by converts in making their profession at baptism. These forms at first differed slightly in expression in different places, but all declared exactly the same truths. In the 4th century (at the Council of Nicea 325 and at Constantinople 381) these various Creeds were collated and made more definite to counteract various errors that had arisen, and the Creed which we now call the Nicene (with the exception of the Filioque clause) was set forth as that which most truly and fully expressed the