

MONTREAL, THURSDAY, FEB. 22, 1844.

At one time it must have seven commandments strictly observed; at another only six.—Some bishops are forbidden, under a heavy curse, to eat fat during such weeks, at least, without a dispensation; others use it at all times until Palm Sunday. Sometimes eggs are authorized to be used till Wednesday of the holy week; at other times, not until the eve of Palm Sunday. In some churches it is considered an indispensable ceremony to wash the feet with great solemnity; in others it is omitted. In one place it is common for persons of both sexes, to go along the way of the cross, during certain days, in fulfilment of a vow; in other places this is not usual. While in one parish the fête of some saint is celebrated with great pomp, all labour prohibited, and the people obliged, under fear of committing mortal sin, to attend mass, the neighbouring parishioners may continue with impunity their ordinary occupations, and are not required to attend mass. In some places, by visiting a number of churches, so many times, an indulgence for many days may be procured; at others this cannot be done, at least without a dispensation.

The ceremonies vary according to the time and place, and rank of the officiating priest. The costume of the minister varies from day to day, like that of an actor on the stage: red, blue, green, or yellow. They employ numerous officers of frankincense, deacons and sub-deacons; one carries the mitre, another the cross, others the missal; some on the right, some on the left of the altar. They perform genuflexion, bending the body, and other feats of dexterity.—Those who seem most dexterous and most grave during those evolutions are considered the most pious. Sometimes the priest is assisted only by his less nimble and less flexible church warden.

But we find an infinity of religions, little resembling their parent, and differing from each other, arise from the bosom of the Church of Rome. She seems to acknowledge this, when the Council of Trent says, "Men and women of whatever religion they may be." The language of Rome is, "I am of the religion of St. Bernard, St. Augustine, or of the Dominicans." St. Paul says, "Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollon, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptised in the name of Paul?—1 Cor. i. 12, 13. The reproofs of Paul, however, seem to make little impression on the Romish Church; for, from its own bosom have arisen many strange fanatics, who have established erroneous systems of religion, and called them by their own names.

This Church places its claim to unity, in its great head, the Pope; but the Pope himself should remember what St. Paul says, in speaking of Christ: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church."—Eph. i. 22. The Pope would vainly claim what is the right of Christ alone; and how can a Church, thus contrary to the word of God, placing at its head a man, be truly Christian. Even the unity of the Popedom has experienced many severe assaults. History tells us, vanity, policy, and ambition, have produced at the same time, several heads of the Church, all equally infallible, though they were continually excommunicating and devouring one another: I must come to the conclusion, then, that this Church is not one, and not Catholic.—But were its pretensions to catholicity ever so well founded, would that prove it right? Error may be unanimous as well as truth. Jesus did not say, when all men are assembled together, there will I be in the midst of them; but where two or three are met. If history affords sad examples of this, when the Romish Doctor said, "All the universe was but one temple of idols, he declared that all men were unanimous in error;" the wanderings of human reason, our passions which blindly lead us forward, prove that any religion not founded on the infallible word of God, must fall!

I must say a few words in regard to the indulgences, of which the Church is at times prodigal, and at times chary. If it has power thus to make new laws, it must also have the power to dispense with them, but Scripture clearly shows it has no right to frame laws to bind the consciences of men. But suppose it had the right, that would be no reason for such abuses. Were any earthly legislator to act a similar part, framing laws, and declaring them obligatory, and

then, for a sum of money, dispensing with the obedience required, he would be regarded as most unreasonable and tyrannical. How, then, can we regard this shameful traffic in the church?—The Council of Trent expressly orders these dispensations to be given gratuitously, yet the fixed rate which regulates the expense is very high—so much per thousand. Did the Council really intend they should be given gratuitously, or that they thereby gave this decision in order to stop the scandal and clamours such a proceeding gave rise to? However that may be, the church is certainly in this respect disobedient to its own laws, which they declare to be sacred and inviolable, even more so than the Scriptures themselves. Persons who wish to marry, and are related in a collateral line, require a dispensation, from as far as the fourth degree inclusive. To the poor, dispensations are given gratuitously except a sum payed to the bishop, the minimum of which is 36 francs. Sometimes people are married without being aware of any existing relation within the prohibited degrees. When this is discovered, should it be fifteen or twenty years after, the curate reports to the bishop. The married people are ordered immediately to separate; are declared to be living in sin, and informed, unless they procure a dispensation, their marriage, in the sight of God, is not valid, and they are liable to all thunders of the church, and are in a state of eternal damnation. The poor people are overwhelmed by these menaces, still unless they can pay the sum demanded, the dispensation is withheld. I have been an eyewitness to such a case. According to rule, a marriage should be preceded by three proclamations on three consecutive Sundays or festivals; but the bishop may, for a sum of money, dispense with all these, though a statute says, "Except in this time it cannot be done."

In short, as all the statutes and ordinances of the church are its own offspring, she treats them like a mother in a barbarous land, who sells her children to whosoever will purchase them.

As these remarks have extended beyond the limits I had prescribed to myself, I will conclude with one observation. A common accusation for the Church of Rome to make against the Reformed Church is, that they pay no respect to the memory of the saints. True—the Reformed Church allows the ashes of those men, who, by their extravagances and hypocrisies, have been celebrated in the ages of fanaticism, to repose in peace. She presents neither prayers, vows, nor invocations to the saints,—raises neither temples nor altars to their honour,—does not prostrate herself before their pictures to implore their succour,—and renders neither homage or religious worship to their relics; for if she did so, it would be contrary to Scripture;—it would be returning to pagan idolatry. But the Reformed Church always speaks with respect of men whose real piety is justly admired in all ages—who have been renowned for their virtues, their intelligence, and goodness, and who have been benefactors of mankind. The Romish Church is in great danger of paying this devotion to men, whom, perhaps, the judgment of God has consigned to the place of punishment, while they may be condemning to eternal flames those who are enjoying a blessed eternity. If were an outrage to men, whose piety and humility were their greatest ornaments on earth, to render them honour, due only to the Supreme Being, and equalling them to Christ, making them his rivals in merit.

Another accusation is that the Reformed Church is lax in its morality. But to whom should this reproach be most justly addressed? What Church can be more lax in its morality than that which sells pardon for sin, and dispenses with its more sacred duties? To the weak this Church shows no pity; the great it exalts and flatters unceasingly. The Reformed Church, strong in its foundation, does not require at all times to have a bull in its hands, an anathema in its mouth. Like a tender mother she mourns over those who wander from her, but never seeks to recall them by other means than the force of truth and persuasion. Where there is flattery or violence there can be no love. I conclude then, the doctrine of Jesus Christ is the only true doctrine. The only true Church, where this doctrine is taught in purity.

"SEARCH the Scriptures—for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me."

We have always entertained a most decided aversion to polemical divinity; indeed, an intuitive shrinking from whatever approached the semblance of controversial or scholastic theology, has been so freely indulged, that we are not altogether satisfied with the neutrality that has resulted from it. Circumstances to which we need not distinctly advert, have at once elicited this admission, and convinced us, that any further yielding to the force of habit or inclination would involve recreancy and guilt. Under the influence of these impressions, we subjoin the following remarks.

The doctrine of a trinity of persons mysteriously subsisting in the Godhead, is, we think, distinctly revealed in the Sacred Scriptures. The fact is a very remarkable one; we repeat it—the fact is a very remarkable one; and it should sink deep—deep into every heart. This is it:—The name of God occurs for the first time in the very first line of the Bible; and there, where it is first mentioned and first recorded, it means absolutely, and to all intents and purposes, a plurality. The original word is ELOHIM, and this word is declared by the most eminent biblical scholars, to be the plural form of EL—thereby indicating the existence of a plurality of persons in the Divine nature. In our translation of the Bible, the passage reads thus: "In the beginning God created;" but according to the stringent law of grammatical accuracy, it should be rendered, "In the beginning Gods created;" but this, being repugnant to our belief in the unity of God, the previous construction is adopted.

Now as ELOHIM is plural, and as two form the lowest plural number; and as creation is exclusively the work of Deity, the occurrence of this term, under such remarkable circumstances, is no mean proof that the two divine persons here mentioned, are God the Father and God the Son, called by St. John, the Logos, or Word of God. The doctrine here stated, we are of opinion, is contained in the very first verse of "the lively oracles;" and we have more than a conjectural warrant for saying, that the beloved disciple, in the very first verse of his Gospel, seems to confirm this opinion. Hear his own words,—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Our souls bow down with reverence and gratitude before "the Father of Lights,"—Blessed be his name; blessed be his name for ever; his word is indeed "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path." In the very first verse of his precious book, the co-existence of himself and his adorable Son is revealed to our hearts; but Oh how shall we praise him for what we feel, for what we enjoy, through being enabled to behold the blessed Spirit manifested in the very next verse, and there exercising its own peculiar office for "the Spirit of God," it is here said, "moved upon the face of the waters. To us at least, the doctrine of a Trinity—and of a