

From the Catholic Advocate.

THE TRUE CHURCH.

[CONTINUED.]

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

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

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

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

Of this great visible society the prophet, Isaiah, foretold, 11 c. 2 v. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the fountain of the house of the Lord shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." Daniel, also, alludes to its visible propagation, 11 c. 35 v. 1. "And the stone that smote the statue become a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

In Micah, it is said, 4th c. v. 1 and 2. "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and the people shall flow unto it"—And many nations shall come and say: Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths, for the law shall go forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

These prophecies are understood by all, to have reference to the reign of Christ, and to describe the extent of his Kingdom. The house of the Lord, thus lifted up, like a mountain upon the top of mountains, was to be seen far and wide, since "the nations of the earth were to flow unto it," to receive the law and listen to the word of God. And we find that Christ, who came to be "the light of the world," tells us that his chosen followers and apostles should also "be the light of the world," and his Church be as "a city seated on a mountain," which "cannot be hid," St. Math. c. 5, v. 14.

To suppose that the Church became invisible, is to say that the light was obscured, that "the city seated on the top of the

mountain" was concealed, which Christ declared impossible.

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

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

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

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

If men become members of a church, it should be because they consider it the church of Christ. If they consider the church which they join, to be the true Church of Christ, they must believe its doctrines, or else suppose that the church of Christ can teach erroneous doctrines. They

enter the church of Christ not as superior but as inferiors, they join in fellowship, not to teach the church, but to be taught by the church. If there be in the church an authority to teach, there cannot be in the individual member a right to constitute himself a superior judge of the doctrines, and select or reject at his own pleasure. Hence, the very nature of the church implies the existence of a teaching tribunal, whose decision is absolute, and hence all sects have, in practice, been forced to adopt the principle of authority, which they rejected at first, merely to justify their revolt against the Universal Church.

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

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

Whether the Church of Christ has been invested with the authority to teach positively and unerringly the truths of Christianity, is a question of fact susceptible of proof and numerous and conclusive are the arguments drawn from every source, by Catholic writers, to set this fact in the broadest light of evidence.

1. That Christ established a church is a point conceded by all.

2. That he instituted in this church a teaching tribunal, is also admitted.

3. That the duty of this tribunal, was "to teach all nations, to observe all those

things which he commanded," will also be admitted.

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

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

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

To be Continued.

THE POPIISH CHURCH IN ENGLAND.

The *Journal des Debats* contains the speech delivered by Cardinal Pacca at the Academy of the Roman Catholic Religion at Rome, which may be considered as a kind of Papal manifesto on the state of the Roman Catholic religion all over the world. Speaking of Great Britain and Ireland, the Cardinal says:—

"It is with a feeling of pleasure that I contemplate what is passing in another country, with regard to the Catholic Church, where it once suffered the greatest persecution. Now, by a marvellous change, we see raised to the honour of God fresh temples and magnificent cathedrals; we see them construct convents and monasteries for the religious of both sexes, and a generous hospitality is offered to priests of other nations, whom persecution has driven from their own country. It must be clearly seen that I speak of England. These facts are highly consolatory. It must not, however, be thought, as some over-sanguine people are apt to do, what is called the Anglican sect is about expiring.

It is true that it every day loses, from numbers enlightened by Divine grace leaving it, and returning into the bosom of their mother the Catholic Church, which has never ceased to love them tenderly. The Anglican Church is however, built on firm foundations—the power of the aristocracy and the opulence of the clergy.

"England thus offers us consolation in the midst of the griefs of the Church. As long as it is permitted to the great Lords of the country to distribute to their brethren, their children, their nephews, the opulent revenues, of the Church, their can be so