

from the written, all of them would have been authors. Besides, in writing, the Apostles nowhere give a complete summary of what is necessary to be believed. They address themselves to individuals or to local churches in order to strengthen them in the doctrine received from their mouths, or from ministers ordained by them. St. Mathew was the first to take pen in hand. His Gospel was written seven years after our Lord went back to heaven; so that the poor Church of Christ had to exist seven years without a single line of the Rule of Faith! St. Mark wrote about ten years after the Ascension. St. Luke about twenty-five. St. John did not finish writing till the ten last years of the first century: that is about forty years after the period when St Paul wrote to the Romans: "Your faith is spoken of in the world." So the Church established by Christ had lived nearly one hundred years before the Gospel was completed. Now allow me to ask you, dearly beloved brethren, can any one have so little heart, or judgment so perverted as to deny the title of Christians to those followers of the Saviour who lived between the establishment of the Church, and the finishing of the Gospels? I hope not, for they are the first fruit of the blood of Jesus, and sealed their believe with their lives. The primitive Christians were in all respects our models. But how did they acquire the knowledge of what was necessary for Salvation? Not from the Gospel; for as we have seen they were not yet completed. They knew it precisely, beloved brethren, in the same manner that you and I know it. They knew it from the teaching of the infallible Church of God, divinely commissioned by the spirit of truth to give testimony concerning the doctrine of the Redeemer, and not only vested with the power of laying certain written matter before us as the word of God, but enjoying as well the exclusive privilege of defining its true meaning. But let us go further up the path of history, and we shall see that for over three hundred years the faithful did not know what writings really made up the Gospels, and hence could not take the Bible for a rule of Faith. In the first ages of the Church many false Gospels and spurious Epistles were written. No one could testify to the inspiration of this or that book. Even the learned were at a loss to know whether the preference should be given to the Gospels of Nicodemus or to that of Matthew, to the Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus or to that of St. John. They needed some witnesses outside of the Gospels