

perfection, by the positive revelation of God. It is in our estimation unlawful, and a criminal act of pride and presumption for man to change what God has declared unchangeable; or in other words, to reform what God has made perfect. Therefore it is, and it has always been, the steady principle and practice of our Church to resist all innovation, all attempts to improve the original deposite of Divine Revelation; and to contend earnestly for that faith, and that only, which was originally delivered to the Saints. *Jude* iii. By a constant adherence to this rule, our faith is transmitted uniform and unchanged from generation to generation. David and Isaiah said, "the truth of the Lord endureth forever." *Psalms* cxvi. *Is.* xl. 8. Our Blessed Saviour announced, with awful solemnity, "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away." *Matt.* xxiv. 35. His apostle, St. Paul, declared: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that we have preached, . . . than that ye have received, let him be anathema," (*Gal.* i. 8.) declaring the Church to be "the pillar and ground of the truth;" (*1 Tim.* iii.) terms by no means emblematical of instability or change. So we freely admit, that we have neither the right nor the authority to make any change in the faith, which we have received, knowing from whom we have received it; much less to believe or teach what we please. Our religion is not like a disputable and improveable system of philosophy: it is not a matter of speculation, but of fact. What God has graciously condescended to reveal, and Jesus Christ has taught, is the measure and rule of our faith.—Where the doctrine of Jesus Christ is in question, we deem addition or retrenchment equally criminal. To this doctrine in its full extent, as understood by the wise, the learned, the great, and the good, in every age of the Christian Church, we adhere, and by this we abide. This faith is a bond of unity, which links us with the Holy Catholic Church, subsisting in all ages, teaching all nations, and maintaining all the truths of divine revelation.

What a striking contrast! While the various and countless sects of Protestantism are ever wavering and unsettled in faith; differing from all others, and dissatisfied with themselves; always seeking, or pretending to seek, and yet never coming to the truth; it is a singular fact, and beautiful as it is singular, that the Catholics all profess, and are all happy and satisfied, both in mind and conscience, with professing one and the same faith. Though our numbers are beyond the power of calculation; though, speaking collectively, we have lived in ages the most distant from each other; though we inhabit climates the most opposite, and countries the most remote; though we differ in language, in manners and customs, in national prejudices and forms of civil government, and in almost every thing else; yet in this one point we all agree. United in the profession of the same faith, we all form but one family in Jesus Christ. I am not declaiming, but stating a fact. What our virtuous and eloquent pastor, Mr. Sherburn, teaches in our chapel, as essential to faith, is taught as such

by all his apostolic brethren. He is under his own bishop, in communion with them. Our bishop, united with his Clergy, is, under that supreme authority which Christ established, in communion with all the bishops and clergy of the Catholic world. In Europe and Asia, in Africa and America, we form but one body, animated by one spirit and united in one belief. But further still. This beauty of Catholic unity is not peculiar to the present age. Our faith is the faith of the ages that are passed—the faith of the Fathers in the Council of Trent—the faith which St. Augustine preached to our Pagan ancestors—the faith which was professed in the Council of Nice—the faith which was preached by the apostles of Christ, and by them delivered to their successors, to be transmitted with religious reverence to all succeeding generations. Not the smallest variation in matters of faith is discernable among the uncountable millions "of ages, and nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues," who profess, or have professed the Catholic belief. Walking stedfastly in this way of unity, no doubts distract our minds, no terrors distress our consciences about the truth of our religion. Satisfied that our church, and no other, follows the perfect rule of truth, our own solicitude in matters of religion consists in our doubts and fears, whether we live up to the sanctity of our profession; and whether the purity of our lives be answerable to the integrity of our faith. And as our faith is not insular, but catholic; as it is a positive, not a negative thing; and consists in believing, not in protesting, or disbelieving; so we are the very reverse of you. You adopt new fashions in religion: we cling with affectionate and reverential attachment to the old. You love to make experiments, and are pleased with new inventions: we, considering that truth in these matters is more ancient than falsehood, reject your experiments in religion, and consider all your new inventions as at best suspicious. Hence you may have observed the fact, but perhaps without considering the cause, that we are so fixed in religion as you are unsettled; because we have found that peace and comfort, which by the wise ordinance of Providence, are, in the by-ways of error, commonly sought in vain.

You see then clearly, Mr. Hardman, how the matter stands. So far from claiming the authority of teaching whatever doctrines she pleases, as matters of faith, our Church cannot, without swerving from her most essential principles, make any alteration in the faith, which she first received from its authentic source, and has religiously preserved pure from all human admixture. She is the faithful witness and guardian, not the inventor of the truth. All that she pretends to is to testify and declare what is the faith, which has flowed to her by a clear and uninterrupted stream of tradition, from this pure source. Taking the Catholic Church therefore abstractedly, as the most ancient, incomparably the most numerous, and for piety and learning the most illustrious society of Christians, professing to adhere to the faith delivered, and to reject all innovations as profane; it is morally impossible that she should ever be capable of departing from the faith

originally revealed by Christ, and preached by his apostles. That individuals should depart from the faith, and introduce "damnable heresies and sects of perdition," it is natural to expect. This is only what Christ foretold. This is what the Apostles themselves had the affliction to behold. This is what the Church which they established and which they commanded us to hear, has witnessed in every succeeding age, and in none more visibly than in the present. But for the universal Church to deviate from the faith requires the consent of so many millions, the revulsion and laceration of so many fixed principles of belief, that such an alteration, I repeat it is morally impossible. But admitting the inspiration and authenticity of the Holy Scriptures; admitting that the Church and the pastoral charge of the church are the work of divine institution, and that faith cometh by hearing; if we proceed a step further, and consider the Catholic Church as that society which was instituted by Christ, formed by his apostles, instructed by his word, supported by the promise of his perpetual aid; and ever guided by the unerring influence of the Spirit of Truth, the impossibility of its altering the original deposite of divine faith is fully established to the satisfaction of our minds. Our faith therefore is not built on the sandy foundation of human judgment and deceitful speculation; but on the solid rock of divine authority and unalterable truth. Our firm conviction of this truth is the real cause of a fact which most of ten have attracted your notice and excited your surprise; that a well-instructed Catholic is never found either unsettled in religion, or wavering in faith. He makes no changes in his religious creed; because he knows that every change is for the worse.

Much has been said, and much has been written by Catholic divines, on this very interesting and very pleasing subject. Their judgment, their learning, and their eloquence, have dispersed the mists of hoary time; and have invested this long chain of Catholic tradition, with an unequalled blaze of evidence. I refer you to them, and only skim the surface of the subject. There are two ways of proving that the faith of the Catholic Church remains unchanged. The first is arguing *a priori*, as I have done, by shewing from the nature of the Church and the rule of its profession, that a change is improbable, if not impossible.—The second way is, arguing *analytically*. In this way we take each separate tenet as it is now actually professed by us, and controverted by you: for instance, the Supremacy of the Pope, the Real Presence, Prayers for the dead, the Invocation of Saints, Confession of sins, and so of the rest. We compare our belief respecting this individual tenet, with what was believed in the age which preceded us; with the faith which prevailed in the five, ten, fifteen ages which preceded that; we compare it with the definitions of past councils, and the doctrine of the primitive Fathers; we compare it with the confessions of ancient and the concessions of modern heretics; with the language of the ancient liturgies, the significance of ancient ceremonies and religious customs; and through this unfallacious medium, trace