

The Catholic.

Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus

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AMICABLE DISCUSSION.

Continued.

LETTER V.

ON THE DOCTRINE TAUGHT BY THE CHURCH.

I cannot refrain from giving you in conclusion the satisfaction of reading your difficulty and the reply drawn out with a master-hand. "Protestants reproach us with investing the Church with an infallibility, for which we can find no subjects, since some place in the pope alone, others in the general council, and others in the whole body of the Church spread throughout the world. They are unwilling to see that these sentiments, which they suppose to be contrary to each other, accord perfectly together. since those who acknowledge infallibility in the pope even alone, acknowledge it with greater reason when all the Church is agreed with him; and those, who place it in the council, place it with much more reason in the Church which the council represented. This then is the catholic doctrine, perfectly agreeing in all its parts: Infallibility resides originally in the body of the Church. Whence it follows that it resides also in the council, that represents it, & which virtually contains it that is, in a council, which, publicly acting as œumenical, remains in communion with the rest of the Church and of which also the decisions are for this reason regarded, as decisions of the whole body. Thus the authority of the council is established upon the authority and the consent of the whole Church, or rather it is nothing else but this authority and this same consent."

"As for the pope, who is bound to give the common sentiment of the whole Church, when it cannot assemble or when it does not judge it necessary to do so, it is very certain with us, that when he delivers, as he is bound to do, the common sentiment of the Church, and when all the Church consents to his judgement, it is in effect the judgment of all the Church, and of course an infallible judgment. Whatever is said more than this on the subject of the pope is neither of faith, nor is it necessary, because it is sufficient that the Church has a means unanimously recognised, for deciding controversies, that might produce disunion among the people."

LETTER VI.

ON THE EUCCHARIST.

We have seen that revelation, confided immediately to the apostles, had been transmitted by them by word of mouth and writing; that by them the twofold deposit of scripture and tradition had been committed to their disciples, to pass from

to the pope in the things both of heaven and of earth. If they had confined themselves to proving that those pretensions were novel, that they ill-accorded with the spirit of the gospel, with the doctrine of the fathers and with that of the most holy and illustrious sovereign pontiffs, we should then have only had to praise their zeal in the support of true principles. But, far from shewing this spirit of moderation and wisdom, they railed against the successor of St. Peter with the most disgraceful coarseness: they put forth against the Holy See, insults so low and disgusting, that one would blush to transcribe them indeed they would be revolting to creditable persons of all countries. Men of God would never have spoken as they did. But a man who is not an apostle to possess it, does adopt the time of one, he must be an apostle. Were there no other reproach to be made against the Reformers, who would not judge, by their passionate and furious expressions, that God could never raise up for the reformation of his Church a set of brutish and furious characters uttering the language of demons!

If we may be allowed to judge of the sentiments of the Greeks by one of their able and moderate writers, here is what Helias Meniates bishop of Zerniza said towards the close of the seventeenth century "I consider the dispute upon the supreme power of the pope to be the principal cause of our division: it is the wall of separation between the two Churches. . . . If it were possible to understand one another upon this single point, it would be difficult to adjust the others, and to arrive at a perfect re-union." Placing himself afterwards between the Protestants and the ultramontanists, this learned man shews to the former that the pope, far from being antichrist, is the legitimate successor of the apostles, and that he is at the head of the hierarchy of the universal Church. Against the latter, he maintains that the pope is not an all-powerful monarch in the Church, that the bishops derive not their authority from him, but from Jesus Christ he willingly allows that he is the first among his brethren, and that he occupies in the midst of them, the first place of honour; he maintains moreover, that he is neither sole judge nor sole interpreter of revelation: that he is not above the council, nor invested with the privilege of infallibility; but that these prerogatives belong to the universal Church: that it is above the pope, with the right of judging his conduct he maintains moreover, that Jesus Christ has not conferred upon him any power in temporal things, far from having put sceptres and crowns at the feet and the disposal of his vicar, whom he made a bishop in his Church and not an emperor of the world.

We say to our mistaken brethren of the protestant Churches: Join us in throwing a veil over the abuse with which the see of Saint Peter has been covered. Enter into the sentiments of the informed and

hand to hand, and from age to age to their successors whose office it would be to seek in them exclusively and no where else, the articles of the christian doctrine, and whose privilege, to deduce them from these sources, without ever being in danger, collectively of going astray. We have seen that the duty and obligation of the faithful were to submit to the uniform instructions they should receive from

moderate ones among you. You have already heard Melancton: "There is no dispute about the superiority of the pope and the authority of the bishops. . . . the monarchy of the pope would extend very much to preserve agreement doctrine among many nations!" And forget not the saying of Grotius: Let the bishops, says he, preside over the priests, the metropolitan over the bishops, and above all, the bishop of Rome. This order ought always to remain in the Church, because a cause for it always remains—the danger of schism."

We say to our separated brethren, the Christians of the Greek Church: How can you prolong a schism, the most direful of all evils, and the most unpardonable of all crimes, for opinions, which you are permitted not to adopt? They seem to you inadmissible? They seem so to us also. Faith never commanded them: do not therefore take fright at them, but become united with us. The concessions already made by the learned of your body are almost sufficient for us. Without doubt they would not have refused the little that remained for them to do, after the example of their ancestors in the councils of Lyons and Florence. Let us unite: we were united for nine successive centuries; and our Churches then were both of them more holy and flourishing.

We say in fine, with all the respect that we profess for our superiors and brethren of the Ultramontanist Churches, we say to them; You, would still be imbued with the exaggerated principles which in modern times have taken birth among you, reflect on all the evils they have brought upon the Church, and that, instead of giving to the holy see a power which it did not possess, they have deprived it of that which it really had: reflect upon the calumnies they have occasioned, upon the inquietudes that even friendly powers have often conceived from; them reflect upon the jealousies; and aversion they have fostered in protestant states, on the pretences they still furnish to the Greek Churches, to continue and justify their schism. Do not motives so manifold and powerful imperatively command the sacrifice, or at least the silence of some arbitrary maxims? Maintain with us the authority of the head of the Church. Let us maintain it all entire To retrench from it would be to wound faith; but let us not forget that in its plenitude even the ocean itself has its bounds.

Will you say that, regarding the question as not yet decided, it is lawful for you, as in every undecided question, to support the opinion that you prefer? The principle is assuredly very catholic: it is object only to its application, which I should find in this case to be blind, and even reprehensible. Whenever from any opinion there result consequences fatal to the Church, and to the salvation of souls charity and justice require it to be sacrificed. It is certain that by pressing the ultramontane princi-

*Œuvres posthumes de Bossuet, t. I, p 217. Edit. in 4to) the Reformers attacked the exorbitant power which in their time, was more generally attributed