

The Catholic.

Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus

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Continued.

ON UNITY.

Let us go back to the time when Jesus Christ invoked upon us the blessing of his Father; let us represent to ourselves the apostles, pressing around their Master, their hearts still burning with the first participation of his body, which they had just received at the institution of the Eucharist, yet in consternation at the announcement of the treachery which one or the other of them was soon to be guilty of, but afterwards consoled by expressions of kindness, and the familiar conversation, which he was pleased to prolong after Judas had abruptly left the assembly; let us represent to ourselves, I say, the apostles, with their eyes fixed upon their master, when all at once, raising to Heaven his hands, and his celestial countenance, which then was lit up more than ever, with the fire of prayer, and the ray of the divinity, he solemnly pronounced that sublime invocation, some passages of which I have quoted above. How must their attention and their hearts have been suspended in silence, in rapture, and extatic delight! How deep must have been the impression made upon their souls by these words proceeding from his divine mouth; "Holy Father, keep them in thy name, whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we also are one.—And not for them only do I pray, but for them also, who through their word shall believe in me; that they may all be one, as thou Father in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou has sent me." Such words could never be effaced from their recollection; never could the apostles have lost sight of the pathetic and enrapturing scene where they had heard them. A thousand times must they have repeated them in the course of their ministry to the rising Churches; a thousand times must they have prepared the faithful against divisions and schisms, and have recommended them to hold invariably the same language and the same faith, and to remain inseparably united in one body and one flock. It would be impossible to doubt of this, should they even have left us no written document on the subject. But it was the will of providence, that upon this fundamental article of unity, we should be supplied with a guarantee of the common doctrine of all the apostles: we find it in the Epistle that St. Jude addressed to all the Christians then in the world. "My dearly beloved, says he, be mindful of the words which have been spoken be-

fore by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; who told you that in the last time there should come mockers walking according to their own desires in ungodliness: these are they who separate themselves, sensual men, having not the spirit." We are then assured by the testimony of an apostle, that all the others, wherever they went, every where insisted upon the necessity of forming but one body, and have carefully cautioned the faithful against false doctors, who might desire to separate and form a distinct sect. This passage is very remarkable: it is the only one of the New Testament, which attributes to all the apostles any point of doctrine whatsoever as universally preached by them. As it contains the dogma that serves for the defence and the rampart of all others, the Holy Spirit no doubt intended to signify to us that all the apostles had taken particular pains to inculcate it, in order that we might see the obligation of keeping ourselves more interested in its preservation.

Without fatiguing you any more with my argumentation, I will hastily and without much premeditation throw before you the various passages that the New Testament presents us on the subject. "And in fine, be you all of one mind—being lovers of the brotherhood." "Take heed to yourselves," said St. Paul to the re-united clergy of Miletus and Ephesus, "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 blood. I know that after my departure ravenous wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock. And of your own selves shall arise men speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." You see that the congregations of christians spread in different places, compose but one church, which Jesus Christ purchased with his blood. You shall now see the same doctrine in the epistle to the Romans, in which St. Paul inculcates first the unity of the body, and then that of doctrine. "So we being many are one body in Christ.—Being of one mind, one towards another.—Now the God of patience and of comfort grant to you to be of one mind one towards another, according to Jesus Christ; that with one mind and one mouth you may glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who make dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learnt, and to avoid them. Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no schisms amongst you: but that you be perfect in the same mind, and in

the same judgment. For it hath been signified unto me—that there are contentions among you—Is Christ divided?" Alas! how often would he have had in after times to repeat this question. And why has it not always been better understood. "God is not the God of dissension, but of peace, as also I teach in all the churches of the saints." And as all the apostles taught with St. Paul, because their doctrine was every where the same, and because upon this article St. Jude expressly tells us so. We must not omit the 12th chapter of the same Epistle, which should be quoted almost entire. "In one spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free: and in one spirit we have all been made to drink. For the body also is not one member but many:—Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member.—For the rest, my brethren, rejoice, be perfect, take exhortation, be of one mind, have peace; and the God of peace and of love shall be with you. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness.—enmities, contentions—quarrels, dissensions, sects.—Of the which I foretell you as I have foretold you that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of heaven." I leave you to your reflections upon this awful oracle.

Hear how the apostle addresses you as formerly he addressed the Ephesians. "But now in Christ Jesus, you who sometime were afar off, are made nigh, by the blood of Christ.—Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God, built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, being framed together, groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are built together into a holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are built together into a habitation of God in the Spirit. Thus all the inhabitants of the earth, both those who had been blessed with hearing our Saviour, and those whom his gospel was one day to reach, should they even be at the extremities of the globe, like your ancestors in their celebrated land all nations have been called to compose one only Church, to become by their concord and union, so many component parts of the grand and majestic edifice, which he came to erect for the world. For ages after, your ancestors were its ornament.—Why must they go out from it to shut themselves up in a temple of modern construction, built apart and separate, by a royal, it is true, but a human and perishable power; whereas the ancient tem-