

ciples engendered; and in the time of Crammer such were the disorders arising from the unrestricted use of the Bible, that even a *reformed* parliament, with the approbation of the *reformed* archbishop just mentioned, prohibited the reading of the Scriptures among those of the laity who were supposed incompetent to understand and explain it.

It must be observed also that, as the use of the Bible among the people generally is not essential for the formation of their religious belief, or for the regulation of their moral, the restriction of this use is far from depriving them of any necessary means of salvation. They still possess the true and the only sure method of acquiring the knowledge imparted by Christ and his apostles; the method of tradition, without which the Scriptures themselves would be of little or no avail. This was the method by which Christianity was originally established; and in the same way it is to be maintained among those who now profess its doctrines. The teaching of the church, or the authoritative declaration of its pastors, has always been, and still is an indispensable guide to the Christian. To set this aside would be at once the shipwreck of his faith, whatever may be his biblical knowledge; because he is at all times under the obligation of hearing the pastors of the church as the representatives of Christ himself; while on the other hand, he may not have read the inspired volume, and still receive from its duly authorised interpreters the doctrines of eternal life. Thus does the church become a living and infallible Scripture to the laity;

“A scripture distributed amongst them, in a way of all others the best adapted and proportioned to their capacities and wants. It is under the impression of these feelings that St. Austin says to the faithful, ‘attend to the Scriptures; we are your books.’ Men do indeed read the Scriptures when they listen to the voice and instructions of their pastors who explain them, and who inculcate and deliver to them those parts of the sacred volume, which are adapted to their respective duties and obligations.”

The idea that every individual should study the sacred volume as a matter of necessity or obligation, has no foundation in the constitutional form which Christ gave to his church; but entirely subverts it. When he commissioned his apostles to preach the gospel, he appointed them teachers of mankind: “Go, teach all nations;” he established them and their successors in the ministry, witnesses of the truth which he had revealed: “You shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth;” or, in other language, their office is to watch over the deposit of faith, to guard it from error, and this testimony to which they are bound to give in reference to the doctrines of Christianity,

necessarily supposes in them a judicial authority. But this authority vanishes at once; it has no meaning, if the laity are also to be judges of the faith. This hypothesis, is not only opposed to the express declarations of the Scripture, it is at variance with the practice of the Christian church from its very origin to the present day. Hence, even were the inspired volume possessed or read by few individuals, they would still be amply provided with the sources of religious knowledge, and with all that is necessary for the purity of faith and of morals. These means are furnished in the teachings of the church, and it is therefore plain that, although for prudential reasons she were to restrict the use of the Holy Scriptures among the laity, she could never be justly charged with hostility to the word of God, or with a design to keep the people in ignorance of the Bible. It might, with equal reason, be alledged against the construction of our country, that it is tyrannical in its character, because it does not suffer every man to interpret the law according to his own views. The explanation of the law belongs to the judicial authorities; so in the church of God does the interpretation of Scripture devolve upon its duly appointed pastors; and as the body of the people consider it perfectly unnecessary that they should go through a course of legal study, so in the church which Christ has established, the study of the inspired volume is by no means essential to the laity, though it may be very beneficial.

We have thought it useful to place before our readers some remarks in relation to the prohibition of the church regarding the indiscriminate use of the sacred writings, though this discipline no longer exists. At a time when the storm of religious innovation threatened a serious injury to the faith of Christendom, by the diffusion of false versions of the Bible, and the proclamation of principles diametrically opposed to the conservative authority of the church, she raised her voice in defence of the sacred deposit confided to her keeping, and regulated the use of the Scriptures among the laity by a salutary restriction; but as it was only a disciplinary enactment, and designed to take effect under particular circumstances, it was not universally adopted; and now, there being comparatively little cause for apprehending the evil consequences which gave rise to this discipline, it has become obsolete in the church, and the faithful are no where prevented from using the authorized translation of the sacred books. The enemies of Catholicity have, indeed, discovered in the recent encyclical letter of the pope, sufficient matter for the indulgence of their hostile feeling, and have not failed to sound the alarm, as if a new assault had been made upon the Bible by the chief pastor of Christendom. But as usual, it turned out that the only real ground of