

# The Catholic.

Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus.

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## SELECTED.

### INDEFECTIBILITY OF THE CHURCH.

WE, purpose, in the following article, to prove the indefectibility of the Church, from the Apostle's creed: \* *I believe the Holy Catholic Church.* Before we make our own remarks on the subject, we will cite the words of a learned Protestant Divine, Dr. Pearson, Bishop of Chester, in his exposition of the creed: "when I say," writes that prelate, "I believe the Holy Catholic Church," I mean, that there is a church, which is holy; and which is Catholic—it is not only an acknowledgement of a church which shall be, but also of that which is—That, which was, when the creed began, and was to continue till the creed shall end, is proposed to our belief in every age as being; and thus, ever since the church was constituted, the church itself as being, was the object of the faith of the church believing. The existence, therefore, of the church of Christ—is the continuation of it in an actual being, from the first collection of it in the time of the Apostles, unto the consummation of all things. A collection uninterruptedly continued in an actual existence of believing persons and congregations in all ages unto the end of the world.

"Now this is, indeed, a proper object of faith, because it is grounded only upon the promise of God. There can be no other assurance of the perpetuity of this Church, but what we have from him that built it. The Church is not of such a nature, as would necessarily, once begun, preserve itself for ever. Many thousand persons have fallen totally from the faith professed, and so apostatized from the Church. Many particular Churches have been wholly lost, many candlesticks have been removed.—But though the providence of God does suffer many particular churches to perish, yet the promise of the same God will never permit that all of them at once shall perish. When Christ spoke first particularly to St. Peter, he sealed his speech with a powerful promise of perpetuity, saying: *thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* When he spoke generally to all the rest of the Apostles, *go teach all nations baptizing them &c.* he added a promise to the same effect, *and lo! I am with you all days even unto the end of the world.* The first of these promises as-

\* Was this creed, which, at this day, is common to all religious denominations, composed by the Apostles? St. Leo, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and several others quoted by Mr. Nicole, in his exposition of the creed, assert that it was. Its antiquity cannot be questioned, and it was never doubted, that the twelve articles of which it is composed, contain nothing but revealed truths.

sures us of the continuance of the church, because it was built upon a rock—the latter of these promises gives not only an assurance of the continuance of the church, but also the cause of that continuance, which is the presence of Christ.—Wherefore, seeing Christ does promise his presence unto the church, even to the end of time, of which his presence is the cause. Indeed this is the city of the Lord of Hosts, the city of our God: *God will establish for ever,* as the great prophet of the Church has said. Upon the certainty of this truth, the existence of the Church, has been propounded as an object of our faith in every age of christianity, and so it shall be unto the end of the world.—Whoever then professes to believe the Holy Catholic Church, is understood to declare this much. I am fully persuaded, and make a free confession of this, as of a necessary and infallible truth, that Christ, by the preaching of the Apostles, did gather unto himself a church consisting of thousands of believing parsons, and numerous congregations, to which he daily added such as should be saved, and will successively add to the end of the world. So that, by virtue of his all-sufficient promise, I am assured that there was, has been hitherto, now is, and hereafter will be, as long as the sun and moon endure, a church of Christ, one and the same. This church I believe in general, holy in respect of the author, end, institution, and administration of it. Particularly in the members here, I acknowledge it really holy, and in the same hereafter holy. I look upon this church, not like that of the Jews, limited to one people, confined to one nation, but by the appointment and command of Christ—to be disseminated through all nations, to be extended to all places, to be propagated in all ages.—And thus, I believe the Holy Catholic Church."

I shall content myself with inferring only one consequence from the words of Dr. Pearson, viz: that the indefectibility of the Church is an article of faith, invincibly proved from the Apostle's creed. Whoever recites that creed, makes an acknowledgment, "not only of a Church which has been, or of a church which shall be, but also of that church which is." Which is the same as to say, that when we repeat the creed, we profess it to be an article of faith, that the true church of Christ is indefectible: that it has subsisted in all ages since its first establishment, and will continue through all succeeding ages to the end of the world.

Christ, therefore, has always had, and always will have, a true and orthodox church upon earth; the essential and unchangeable attributes of which consist in her being one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The Church must, consequently, have been

at all times visible. Otherwise she would have become destitute of true Bishops & pastors; the succession descending from the Apostles, would have been extinct; the promises of Christ would have failed; and the article of the creed now under consideration would have been false.

For, take any given time, when the primitive Church degenerated into "damnable idolatry," suppose for instance, that time to have been the sixth or seventh century, that is, eight or nine hundred years before the mis-named Reformation, who then could have recited the creed? What then would have become of the article: "I believe the Holy Catholic Church?" Where was that *Holy Church*, if she was plunged in superstition and idolatry? where was that *Catholic church*, if she was not visible! Now the creed was made to be said by all christians in every age; and therefore it follows beyond the possibility of doubt, that in every age, there existed a *Holy Catholic Church*; in the sixteenth century, as well as in the days in which the creed was composed. Who then would dare "reform" what was holy? This is a subject of infinite importance, and it is earnestly recommended to the consideration of those who value truth, and feel an interest for their salvation.

## RELIGION.

"If men have merely reason to suspect, that a religion may be true, it is their duty to examine it"

[BUTLER'S ANALOGY.]

FOR fifteen centuries there existed in the civilized world but ONE RELIGION: which, from the character of its founders, the nature of its government, the union of its members, the piety of its professors, even its very name, should awaken the curiosity, and claim the attention of every reflecting mind. The first pastors, according to the acknowledgment of several protestant writers, were not only distinguished for the sanctity of their lives, but for the splendor of their miracles: the government was apostolical: consisting of laws, and regulated by institutions, which preserved the harmony of the CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Admirable in its union: all obeyed the same authority, all believed the same doctrines, all cultivated the same practices. Magnificent in its establishments: they were superior to all, that had been erected by the ambition of Pagan Rome; they were edifices and institutions, adapted to every want, and sufficient to impart every benefit; and such were their numbers, that they arose in every country that had received the gospel, like so many triumphal arches: even their very ruins, form the noblest features of the Christian world. Considerable portions of its members in every sphere of life, were remarkable