

The Catholic.

Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus

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SELECTED.

Winter Evening Dialogue between John Hardman and John Cardwell, or THOUGHTS ON THE RULE OF FAITH, in a SERIES OF LETTERS, &c. &c. continued from p. 153.

LETTER V.

Concluded.

The sentiments of this Protestant clergyman, expressed in the passages which I have read to you from his pamphlet, are precisely the sentiments which the Catholic Church has ever entertained. At the present day, this Catholic language is, with more confidence than consistency or prudence, pretty frequently adopted by your divines. They have at length learnt from experience what they ought to have learnt from the testimony of the Catholic Church, that the Bible alone, interpreted by private judgment, is not the way to unity, integrity, and stability of faith. They find in their own perplexities the truth of what we have always told them, that the Bible thus interpreted is the source of a continual succession of new sects and new doctrines. They are now as fully convinced, as the Fathers of the Council of Trent, that the Bible is not the sole rule of faith, nor indeed the fittest book for all sorts of readers; that the true interpretation of the Bible is no less necessary than the letter of the Bible: that some doctrines are true, though twenty texts may be quoted against them; add some doctrines false, though twenty texts may be cited in their favour: and that the silent Bible cannot, in all cases, qualify the sincere enquirer to discriminate with certainty between religious error and religious truth. Thus the present generation of Protestants has surrendered and co-operates with us in demolishing the main principles for which their ancestors so strenuously contended; and growing sober, has at length been compelled, in opposing heresy, schism, and biblical delusion, to adopt the language and arguments which the Catholic church has always employed against those who stray from the truth of her communion. In a Catholic this is consistency; in a Protestant, a phenomenon. Certainly it must occur to the writers who employ this kind of reasoning, that they invariably condemn the conduct of the authors of the reformation, and overturn the very foundation on which their own Church is erected. Had Luther, Cranmer, and Jewel, entertained these rational and just sentiments, they never would have forsaken the faith and communion of the Catholic Church, to form new systems of religion according to their own partial, contracted, and often fanatical view of obscure texts, but would have continued to belong to the "One Fold and the One Shepherd."

But, Mr. Hardman, at this late hour it is time to close our discussion. This pamphlet, which you have brought to me with an air of defiance, lays itself open to many other objections, into which I forbear to enter at present. Had you applied to Mr. Sherburn, Mr. Dawson, Mr. Marsh, or any of our neighbouring priests, whose abilities and learning better qualify them for the discussion of topics of this nature, they would have given you text for text, and argument for argument; and would have triumphantly repelled every attack which you could make on our Church. In my plain and humble way, appealing rather to the observations of good sense, than to a multiplicity of obscure and disputed texts, which are too difficult for you and me, I have demolished the foundation of your pamphlet, and the fall of the superstructure follows of course. What effects the invective of this and similar pamphlets may produce on the minds of simple and wavering Protestants; who are better able to count texts of Scripture, than discover the true sense of them, I shall not pretend to determine. But I can assure you, that the faith of a Catholic is built on a foundation too solid to be shaken by volumes of textual sophistry. In spite of your groundless clamours, and uncharitable, as well as unreasonable abuse of Popery, it will ever be the Catholic's glory, delight, and comfort, to hear that *Church, which is the pillar and ground of the truth*, and to follow the Romish injunction of that Papist, St. Paul: "Brethren, stand fast, and HOLD THE TRADITIONS WHICH YE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT, WHETHER BY WORD, OR OUR EPISTLE."

Mr. Hardman, I have only one further observation to make, or rather to repeat. Think not that none have searched the Scriptures, but those whose faith has suffered shipwreck in the search. I love and venerate the Bible. I have perused it often. I have read some chapters of it almost daily, from my youth. In antiquity, in sublimity, in variety of beauty, in holiness, in authority, in the power of enlightening the understanding and improving the heart of the humble faithful, no other book is comparable to it. But still, independently of other considerations, the errors and delusions of every Protestant sect are to me a demonstration, that it is only then a safe and sure guide, when its obscurities are cleared up, and its true sense and meaning declared by the unerring voice of Apostolical Tradition and the interpretative authority of the Catholic Church.

3. My friend paused, and I replied: I thank you, Mr. Cardwell, for the pleasure which I have received from this conversation. It has done me

good. It has given me abundant and interesting materials for thought and reflection. You have proved to my satisfaction, that the author of this pamphlet is both ignorant and bewildered; that he is not a member either of your church or ours; but an artful and pitifull enemy to both. You have convinced me that he is a wild interpreter of the Bible, who gives his own crude construction of insulated texts for the genuine meaning of Holy Writ. But though you have triumphantly evinced against the main principle of our author, that the Bible is, only in a limited sense, the Rule of Faith, you have left some parts of his pamphlet untouched. What will you say to his Letters on the Supremacy of the Pope, Transubstantiation, Prayer to the Saints, or for the Dead, the Antichristian Apostacy, and the Papal Antichrist? To all these, said Mr. Cardwell, I shall at present say nothing. These may be the subject of future consideration and discussion. In fact, the Letters on these subjects contain nothing new—nothing but errors and misrepresentations as old as the age of Luther, and objections which our divines have a thousand times refuted. The arguments are all grounded on the author's ignorance of our doctrine, and his misinterpretation of the Scripture. I have already refuted them in their principle; and at the approach of midnight, you will excuse me from entering upon the easy but lengthened task of refuting them in detail.

On these miscellaneous topics I will, at present, only give you the sentiments of two eminent English Prelates of the archdiocese and diocese in which you and I live—the Most Rev. Dr. Nicholas Heath, the last Catholic Archbishop of York, and the Right Reverend Dr. Cuthbert Scott, his Suffragan, and the last Catholic Bishop of Chester. These learned and virtuous Prelates, with all the other Bishops of England in their places in the House of Lords, February 16th, 1558, the first year of Queen Elizabeth's reign, when the bill for conferring the Ecclesiastical Supremacy and the Headship of the Church, on a woman, was before the House, and the subject of warm and awful debate, unanimously and strenuously opposed the introduction of these innovations: and all the Bishops of England, except one, conscientiously and honorably sacrificed their episcopal sees and palaces, their seats in the House of Lords, their honours, their revenues, their personal comforts, and, in the case of some of them, their personal liberty, rather than exchange the sterling truths of the Catholic Creed for errors coined within their own remembrance. The speeches of the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Chester, in these de-