

Christian spirit, and with a sincere anxiety to arrive at truth. Want of unity in the Christian world unhappily exists; the fact is a sad one, but it is still a fact. Is it according to the will of God, that *disunion* should continue? We earnestly think not—any more than it is the will of God that *vice* should continue. God permits, but does not approve of either disunion or vice. He would, assuredly, have us all brought to unity of belief, as well as to virtue in practice; but *how* does He design that this unity should be effected?

Time was, when it was thought that unity was to be brought about by ecclesiastical authority wielding the arm of the secular power, extirpating heresy by the extirpation of heretics. Those days are gone by, and we think no good or wise man would wish for their return. The religion of Christ was not founded by the sword, nor can any part of it be defended or inculcated by the sword. Every attempt to do so inflicts a grievous wound on Christianity itself.

Men's minds cannot be coerced. Pains and penalties, denunciations and calumnies may coerce men into silence, but can never convince the understanding or soften the heart. The secular arm may be invoked to punish the body, but it is powerless to convince the intellect of a single mind. Christianity was never advanced by violence, and it would be against its essential character that such a mode of propagation should be attempted. And if Christians were never allowed even to persecute Pagans into Christianity, surely *a fortiori* it must be unlawful, and against the first principles of true Christianity for any one set of Christians to persecute another. The folly, indeed, of such religious persecution is as great as its wickedness, and almost always recoils upon the persecutor, by creating sympathy and popularity towards the cause of the oppressed.

All men can admit this when it comes to be their own case—the minority are always for toleration. It has been well said by an acute observer, "that no man who was himself under the rod did ever think it lawful to have opinions forced or heretics put to death, and yet many men, who have themselves escaped the danger of the fire and faggot, have changed their opinion just as the case was altered, and their party uppermost."

The wickedness and folly, however, of religious intolerance remains the same, whether the dominant party holds true or incorrect opinions; and the history of mankind demonstrates that persecution never put down a single error, and has ever been found rather to encourage the persecuted in holding fast the proscribed opinions than to deter them from it.

But, then, we may be asked, though violence and force cannot conquer religious error, may not less extreme pains and penalties do so? Experience proves, too, that this is not the case, for such expedients are either despised and set at nought by those against whom they are directed, or they drive men into mere external profession, and make them hypocrites; they cannot, and never did *convince* a single mind.

What, then, remains but the gentler and nobler resources of Christian wisdom, and the mildest toleration? If we would have true unity, we must *persuade* and not *coerce*. Let men but once adopt this golden rule, and they will find it equally applicable to all men, in all places, at all times. Let men but speak the truth (or what each man thinks truth) in love, and as sure as the God of the Christian is a God of truth and love, he will give success to those who advocate *His* cause, and Truth will prove mighty and prevail. This we feel persuaded is God's way of producing unity; and the only way in which it can ever be approximated to. Man's way has been tried long enough, and has

egregiously failed; and the differences which have sprung from its path of blood and shame, are as lamentable proofs of human frailty, as the rancour and animosity of religious differences, are proofs of the fallen nature of our race.

These are the grand principles on which we have striven to act, and which we shall never cease to inculcate, in our endeavours to promote the cause of truth and real unity; and they will be found equally applicable in favour of our Roman Catholic brethren when they are in the minority, as to those who differ with the Church of Rome, when it is in the ascendant.

But it will be said, might not unity be effected more simply still, if all men would but voluntarily yield their private views and opinions to those of God's Church? We answer, no doubt, *if all* men would but voluntarily yield their private views and opinions to that of any one man, or set of men, of course there would be unity, but it would not necessarily be the unity of truth. But what prospect is there that men will voluntarily give up the privileges of thinking beings, and delegate to any other the power to think for them. They would not if they could. We doubt whether they could if they would. A blind man may be content to be led by one who can see, a weak man may consent to be carried by a strong one, an ignorant man may save himself trouble by acting on the knowledge of the wise, especially if he be too indolent or stupid to acquire knowledge for himself; but that men who are not blind, or weak, or indolent, or stupid, should ever agree, as a body, absolutely to yield their right to think, and learn, and judge for themselves, to any other, is to suppose that the nature of the human mind is totally different from what it is actually and practically found to be. Education has been progressing for several centuries; and is it possible to expect that as the world gets more advanced in civilization and general education, men should become more passive and subservient to authority, instead of more active minded and independent? All history proves the contrary; and though improved and enlarged education, and fair and free discussion may, and we trust will, bring active-minded men to agree together better as to what is truth, and thus advance the cause of unity, the result of enlarged and diffused education can never render men more willing to submit to mere authority in matters of either reason or religion. If the existence of an infallible guide was a self-evident truth, or a matter easy of proof to any fair mind of ordinary capacity, it would, of course, be only perverse and wicked men who could dispute it. The difficulties, however, of *proving* any Church to be infallible, and of persuading seriously-disposed religious men voluntarily to submit to mere Church authority as the regulator of their belief, are necessarily great, and we are convinced that the amount of proof necessary to establish the infallibility of any Church to a mind not previously *determined to take it for granted*, must and ought to be greater than would be sufficient to establish any other religious opinion, simply because the subject of inquiry is in its consequences immeasurably of more importance than any other single opinion could be. We may follow any ordinary guide of good recommendations confidently, who will allow us, at the same time, to use our own ears and eyes to assist us in our faith, but we must be well assured indeed of the character and powers of the extraordinary guide, who would ask us to shut our eyes and stop our ears, that he might lead us by the hand with more security. We do not say that men may not reasonably wish for, and examine whether there be an infallible guide, to follow whom would lead to unity; but we do say that the claims of any set of men to such infallibility require the clearest proof and closest scrutiny, if men in their search for unity would escape the risk of ruin. At any rate until it can be established to the

satisfaction of all intelligent and candid men, that God has delegated to an infallible church the exclusive right to judge of religious truth, as His means of producing unity of belief, the practice of toleration is obviously an indispensable duty, and the right to inquire into, and discuss freely the preliminary question, whether God has or has not constituted such a tribunal for the settlement of controversies, and what that tribunal is, and what are its limits and nature, must be a right inherent in, as well as a duty incumbent upon, every rational being.

We have already partially discussed this deeply important subject, but purpose recurring to it again, and we trust, in a perfectly impartial and candid spirit.

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A CORRESPONDENT writes to us that several Roman Catholics in his neighbourhood meet to read the CATHOLIC LAYMAN; but that they do not give us full credit for telling truth. For instance, he says, "in the February number for 1854, page 18, column 3, there is a story about one Wimar, who murdered his three sons!" This, they say, is all a lying fabrication of the LAYMAN, and of Labbe and Cossart, to whom reference is made.

Now, Labbe and Cossart were two French Jesuits, not very likely to enter into a plot with the CATHOLIC LAYMAN; especially as they lived 180 years ago. But we took that story from a letter written by Pope Nicolas II. We call on the Roman Catholic priests to tell those Roman Catholics, in our pages, whether Pope Nicolas *did* write that letter, or *not*. If the priests say Pope Nicolas *did not* write that letter, we will discuss that with them. If the priests say Pope Nicolas *did* write that letter, very good. If the priests say *nothing*, let Roman Catholics judge of that for themselves.

#### Correspondence.

##### POPE LIBERIUS AND INFALLIBILITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—I have reconsidered the subject of the alleged heterodoxy of the Pontiff Liberius, in the fourth century, and am fully convinced he did not wilfully lapse into Arianism, but was entrapped into the reception of the *Sirmium formulary* by the sophistry of the Arian bishops and the emperor's other satellites, as the Council of Rimini had been. This appears more evident by the use of the words, "to expound the true Catholic faith," &c., which occur in his letter of reconciliation. He was evidently a weak-minded man, and, in great measure, destitute of moral courage, and fond of ease and peace. Gibbon expressly says—"Liberius, Osius, Paulinus, Dionysius, Eusebius of Vercellæ, Lucifer, and Hilary of Poitiers, were banished by the Emperor Constantius; and refers to Ammianus, xv. 7; Theodoret, 1, ii., c. 16; Athanasius, tom. i., p. 834-837; and Hilary, Fragment i. I am fully convinced this is the correct position of events. His or the heterodoxy of the Rimini Council cannot be proved; as, though they made a false step, it was obtained by sophistry and fraud, which mistake they BOTH repudiated when the Arian party published the creed in the Arian sense, to which sense neither had agreed. The real question is, if a Pontiff or a Pontiff and Council be INFALLIBLE in matters of doctrine, can either or both be deceived in the manner they evidently were? If INFALLIBILITY is not sufficient to prevent their understandings from such or similar deceptions, on such or similar subjects, can there be such a thing as infallibility at all? Is it not mere delusion, and the mere creation of a deceived fancy? My individual opinion is, that out of the region of the mathematics, absolute certainty, such as would amount to infallibility, is unattainable by mortal man. I send this as a postscript to my former, and am, sir,

Your obedient servant,

A TRUTH-SEEKER.

Moira, February 23, 1854.

##### THE SENTIMENTS OF THE PRIMITIVE FATHERS AND DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—In the second age, St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch a disciple of the apostles, who suffered martyrdom about the year 107, in his epistle to the Christians of Smyrna, calls the Eucharist "the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ,