

St. Vincent of Lérins ‘Commonitorium’ Part I

Editor’s Comment:

St. Vincent of Lérins ‘Commonitorium’ is reproduced as a sure guide of the rule, yardstick, measure if you will which must be applied to discern the truths of Faith, the correct path to follow, if we are to remain faithful to the One, Holy, Roman, Catholic and Apostolic Church as darkness, apostasy and novelties spreads over world.

**“We hold that faith
which has been believed
everywhere, always, by all”**



**St. Honorat: The island of Lérins on which St. Vincent wrote his
Commonitory in AD 434**

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St. Vincent of Lérins ‘Commonitorium’

Feast on 24 May, an ecclesiastical writer in Southern Gaul in the fifth century. His work is much better known than his life. Almost all our information concerning him is contained in Gennadius, “*De viris illustribus*” (lxiv). He entered the monastery of Lérins (today Isle St. Honorat), where under the pseudonym of Peregrinus he wrote his “*Commonitorium*” (434). He died before 450, and probably shortly after 434. St. Eucherius of Lyons calls him a holy man, conspicuous for eloquence and knowledge.

The “*Commonitorium*” is Vincent’s only certainly authentic work extant. The “*Objectiones Vincentianae*” are known to us only through Prosper’s refutation. It seems probable that he collaborated, or at least inspired, the “*Objectiones Gallorum*”, against which also Prosper writes his book. The work against Photinus, Apollinaris, Nestorius, etc., which he intended to compose (*Commonitorium*, xvi), has not been discovered, if it was ever written. The “*Commonitorium*”, destined to help the author’s memory and thus guide him in his belief according to the traditions of the Fathers, was intended to comprise two different *commonitoria*, the second of which no longer exists, except in the *résumé* at the end of the first, made by its author; Vincent

complains that it had been stolen from him. Neither Gennadius, who wrote about 467-80, nor any known manuscripts, enable us to find any trace of it.

It is difficult to determine in what the second “Commonitorium” precisely differed from the first. The one preserved to us develops (chapters i-ii) a practical rule for distinguishing heresy from true doctrine, namely Holy Writ, and if this does not suffice, the tradition of the Catholic Church. Here is found the famous principle, the source of so much discussion particularly at the time of the Vatican Council, “Magnopere curandum est ut id teneatur quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est”. Should some new doctrine arise in one part of the Church, Donatism for example, then firm adherence must be given to the belief of the Universal Church, and supposing the new doctrine to be of such nature as to contaminate almost the entirety of the latter, as did Arianism, then it is to antiquity one must cling; if even here some error is encountered, one must stand by the general councils and, in default of these, by the consent of those who at diverse times and in different places remained steadfast in the unanimity of the Catholic Faith (iii-iv). Applications of these principles have been made by St. Ambrose and the martyrs, in the struggle with the Donatists and the Arians; and by St. Stephen who fought against rebaptism; St. Paul also taught them (viii-ix). If God allows new doctrines, whether erroneous or heretical, to be taught by distinguished men, as for example Tertullian, Origen, Nestorius, Apollinaris, etc. (x-xix), it is but to test us. The Catholic admits none of these new-fangled doctrines, as we see from I Tim., vi, 20-21 (xx-xxii, xxiv). Not to remove all chance of progress in the faith, but that it may grow after the manner of the grain and the acorn, provided

it be in the same sense, *eodem sensu ac sententia*; here comes the well known passage on dogmatic development. “*crescat igitur. . .*” (xxiii). The fact that heretics make use of the Bible in no way prevents them from being heretics, since they put it to a use that is bad, in a way worthy of the devil (xxv-xxvi). The Catholic interprets Scripture according to the rules given above (xxvii-xxviii). Then follows a recapitulation of the whole “Commonitorium” (xxix-xxx).

All this is written in a literary style, full of classical expressions, although the line of development is rather familiar and easy, multiplying digressions and always more and more communicative. The two chief ideas which have principally attracted attention in the whole book are those which concern faithfulness to Tradition (iii and xxix) and the progress of Catholic doctrine (xxiii). The first one, called very often the canon of Vincent of Lérins, which Newman considered as more fit to determine what is not than what is the Catholic doctrine, has been frequently involved in controversies. According to its author, this principle ought to decide the value of a new point of doctrine prior to the judgment of the Church. Vincent proposes it as a means of testing a novelty arising anywhere in a point of doctrine. This canon has been variously interpreted; some writers think that its true meaning is not that which answered Vincent’s purpose, when making use of it against Augustine’s ideas. It is hardly deniable that despite the lucidity of its formula, the explanation of the principle and its application to historical facts are not always easy; even theologians such as de San and Franzelin, who are generally in agreement in their views, are here at variance. Vincent clearly shows that his principle is to

be understood in a relative and disjunctive sense, and not absolutely and by uniting the three criteria in one: *ubique, semper, ab omnibus*; antiquity is not to be understood in a relative meaning, but in the sense of a relative consensus of antiquity. When he speaks of the beliefs generally admitted, it is more difficult to settle whether he means beliefs explicitly or implicitly admitted; in the latter case the canon is true and applicable in both senses, affirmative (what is Catholic), and negative or exclusive (what is not Catholic); in the former, the canon is true and applicable in its affirmative bearing; but may it be said to be so in its negative or exclusive bearing, without placing Vincent completely at variance with all he says on the progress of revealed doctrine?

The ‘Commonitorioium’ Of Vincent Of Lérins, For The Antiquity And Universality Of The Catholic Faith Against The Profane Novelaties Of All Heresies.

Chapter 1.

The Object of the Following Treatise.

[1.] I, Peregrinus, who am the least of all the servants of God, remembering the admonition of Scripture, “Ask your fathers and they will tell you, your elders and they will declare unto you,” Deuteronomy 32:7 and again, “Bow down your ear to the words of the wise,” Proverbs 22:17 and once more, “My son, forget not these instructions, but let your heart keep my words:” Proverbs 3:1 remembering these admonitions, I say, I, Peregrinus, am persuaded, that, the Lord helping me, it will be of no little use and certainly as regards my own feeble powers, it is most necessary, that I should put down in writing the things which I have truthfully received from the holy Fathers, since I shall then have

ready at hand wherewith by constant reading to make amends for the weakness of my memory.

[2.] To this I am incited not only by regard to the fruit to be expected from my labour but also by the consideration of time and the opportuneness of place:

By the consideration of time,— for seeing that time seizes upon all things human, we also in turn ought to snatch from it something which may profit us to eternal life, especially since a certain awful expectation of the approach of the divine judgment importunately demands increased earnestness in religion, while the subtle craftiness of new heretics calls for no ordinary care and attention.

I am incited also by the opportuneness of place, in that, avoiding the concourse and crowds of cities, I am dwelling in the seclusion of a Monastery, situated in a remote grange, where, I can follow without distraction the Psalmist's admonition, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Moreover, it suits well with my purpose in adopting this life; for, whereas I was at one time involved in the manifold and deplorable tempests of secular warfare, I have now at length, under Christ's auspices, cast anchor in the harbour of religion, a harbour to all always most safe, in order that, having there been freed from the blasts of vanity and pride, and propitiating God by the sacrifice of Christian humility, I may be able to escape not only the shipwrecks of the present life, but also the flames of the world to come.

[3.] But now, in the Lord's name, I will set about the object I have in view; that is to say, to record with the fidelity of a narrator rather than the presumption of an author, the things which our forefathers have handed down to us and committed to our keeping, yet observing this rule in what I write, that I shall by no means touch upon everything that might be said, but only upon what is necessary; nor yet in an ornate and exact style, but in simple and ordinary language, so that the most part may seem to be intimated, rather than set forth in detail. Let those cultivate elegance and exactness who are confident of their ability or are moved by a sense of duty. For me it will be enough to have provided a Commonitory (or Remembrancer) for myself, such as may aid my memory, or rather, provide against my forgetfulness: which same Commonitory however, I shall endeavor, the Lord helping me, to amend and make more complete little by little, day by day, by recalling to mind what I have learned. I mention this at the outset, that if by chance what I write should slip out of my possession and come into the hands of holy men, they may forbear to blame anything therein hastily, when they see that there is a promise that it will yet be amended and made more complete.

Chapter 2.

A General Rule for distinguishing the Truth of the Catholic Faith from the Falsehood of Heretical Pravity.

[4.] I have often then inquired earnestly and attentively of very many men eminent for sanctity and learning, how and by what sure and so to speak universal rule I may be able to distinguish the truth of Catholic faith from the

falsehood of heretical pravity; and I have always, and in almost every instance, received an answer to this effect: That whether I or any one else should wish to detect the frauds and avoid the snares of heretics as they rise, and to continue sound and complete in the Catholic faith, we must, the Lord helping, fortify our own belief in two ways; first, by the authority of the Divine Law, and then, by the Tradition of the Catholic Church.

[5.] But here some one perhaps will ask, Since the canon of Scripture is complete, and sufficient of itself for everything, and more than sufficient, what need is there to join with it the authority of the Church's interpretation? For this reason—because, owing to the depth of Holy Scripture, all do not accept it in one and the same sense, but one understands its words in one way, another in another; so that it seems to be capable of as many interpretations as there are interpreters. For Novatian expounds it one way, Sabellius another, Donatus another, Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, another, Photinus, Apollinaris, Priscillian, another, Iovinian, Pelagius, Celestius, another, lastly, Nestorius another. Therefore, it is very necessary, on account of so great intricacies of such various error, that the rule for the right understanding of the prophets and apostles should be framed in accordance with the standard of Ecclesiastical and Catholic interpretation.

[6.] Moreover, in the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all. For that is truly and in the strictest sense “Catholic,” which, as the name itself and the reason of the thing declare, comprehends all universally. This rule we

shall observe if we follow universality, antiquity, consent. We shall follow universality if we confess that one faith to be true, which the whole Church throughout the world confesses; antiquity, if we in no wise depart from those interpretations which it is manifest were notoriously held by our holy ancestors and fathers; consent, in like manner, if in antiquity itself we adhere to the consentient definitions and determinations of all, or at the least of almost all priests and doctors.

Chapter 3.

What is to be done if one or more dissent from the rest.

[7.] What then will a Catholic Christian do, if a small portion of the Church have cut itself off from the communion of the universal faith? What, surely, but prefer the soundness of the whole body to the unsoundness of a pestilent and corrupt member? What, if some novel contagion seek to infect not merely an insignificant portion of the Church, but the whole? Then it will be his care to cleave to antiquity, which at this day cannot possibly be seduced by any fraud of novelty.

[8.] But what, if in antiquity itself there be found error on the part of two or three men, or at any rate of a city or even of a province? Then it will be his care by all means, to prefer the decrees, if such there be, of an ancient General Council to the rashness and ignorance of a few. But what, if some error should spring up on which no such decree is found to bear? Then he must collate and consult and interrogate the opinions of the ancients, of those, namely, who, though living in various times and places, yet continuing in the communion

and faith of the one Catholic Church, stand forth acknowledged and approved authorities: and whatsoever he shall ascertain to have been held, written, taught, not by one or two of these only, but by all, equally, with one consent, openly, frequently, persistently, that he must understand that he himself also is to believe without any doubt or hesitation.

Chapter 4.

The evil resulting from the bringing in of Novel Doctrine shown in the instances of the Donatists and Arians.

[9.] But that we may make what we say more intelligible, we must illustrate it by individual examples, and enlarge upon it somewhat more fully, lest by aiming at too great brevity important matters be hurried over and lost sight of.

In the time of Donatus, from whom his followers were called Donatists, when great numbers in Africa were rushing headlong into their own mad error, and unmindful of their name, their religion, their profession, were preferring the sacrilegious temerity of one man before the Church of Christ, then they alone throughout Africa were safe within the sacred precincts of the Catholic faith, who, detesting the profane schism, continued in communion with the universal Church, leaving to posterity an illustrious example, how, and how well in future the soundness of the whole body should be preferred before the madness of one, or at most of a few.

[10.] So also when the Arian poison had infected not an insignificant portion of the Church but almost the whole world, so that a sort of blindness had fallen

upon almost all the bishops of the Latin tongue, circumvented partly by force partly by fraud, and was preventing them from seeing what was most expedient to be done in the midst of so much confusion, then whoever was a true lover and worshipper of Christ, preferring the ancient belief to the novel misbelief, escaped the pestilent infection.

[11.] By the peril of which time was abundantly shown how great a calamity the introduction of a novel doctrine causes. For then truly not only interests of small account, but others of the very gravest importance, were subverted. For not only affinities, relationships, friendships, families, but moreover, cities, peoples, provinces, nations, at last the whole Roman Empire, were shaken to their foundation and ruined. For when this same profane Arian novelty, like a Bellona or a Fury, had first taken captive the Emperor, and had then subjected all the principal persons of the palace to new laws, from that time it never ceased to involve everything in confusion, disturbing all things, public and private, sacred and profane, paying no regard to what was good and true, but, as though holding a position of authority, smiting whomsoever it pleased. Then wives were violated, widows ravished, virgins profaned, monasteries demolished, clergymen ejected, the inferior clergy scourged, priests driven into exile, jails, prisons, mines, filled with saints, of whom the greater part, forbidden to enter into cities, thrust forth from their homes to wander in deserts and caves, among rocks and the haunts of wild beasts, exposed to nakedness, hunger, thirst, were worn out and consumed. Of all of which was there any other cause than that, while human superstitions are being brought in to supplant heavenly doctrine, while well established antiquity is being subverted

by wicked novelty, while the institutions of former ages are being set at naught, while the decrees of our fathers are being rescinded, while the determinations of our ancestors are being torn in pieces, the lust of profane and novel curiosity refuses to restrict itself within the most chaste limits of hallowed and uncorrupt antiquity?

Chapter 5.

The Example set us by the Martyrs, whom no force could hinder from defending the Faith of their Predecessors.

[12.] But it may be, we invent these charges out of hatred to novelty and zeal for antiquity. Whoever is disposed to listen to such an insinuation, let him at least believe the blessed Ambrose, who, deploring the acerbity of the time, says, in the second book of his work addressed to the Emperor Gratian: “Enough now, O God Almighty! Have we expiated with our own ruin, with our own blood, the slaughter of Confessors, the banishment of priests, and the wickedness of such extreme impiety. It is clear, beyond question, that they who have violated the faith cannot remain in safety.”

And again in the third book of the same work, “Let us observe the precepts of our predecessors, and not transgress with rude rashness the landmarks which we have inherited from them. That sealed Book of Prophecy no Elders, no Powers, no Angels, no Archangels, dared to open. To Christ alone was reserved the prerogative of explaining it. Revelation 5:1-5 Who of us may dare to unseal the Sacerdotal Book sealed by Confessors, and consecrated already by the martyrdom of numbers, which they who had been compelled by force to unseal

afterwards resealed, condemning the fraud which had been practised upon them; while they who had not ventured to tamper with it proved themselves Confessors and martyrs? How can we deny the faith of those whose victory we proclaim?”

[13.] We proclaim it truly, O venerable Ambrose, we proclaim it, and applaud and admire. For who is there so demented, who, though not able to overtake, does not at least earnestly desire to follow those whom no force could deter from defending the faith of their ancestors, no threats, no blandishments, not life, not death, not the palace, not the Imperial Guards, not the Emperor, not the empire itself, not men, not demons?— whom, I say, as a recompense for their steadfastness in adhering to religious antiquity, the Lord counted worthy of so great a reward, that by their instrumentality He restored churches which had been destroyed, quickened with new life peoples who were spiritually dead, replaced on the heads of priests the crowns which had been torn from them, washed out those abominable, I will not say letters, but blotches (*non literas, sed lituras*) of novel impiety, with a fountain of believing tears, which God opened in the hearts of the bishops?— lastly, when almost the whole world was overwhelmed by a ruthless tempest of unlooked for heresy, recalled it from novel misbelief to the ancient faith, from the madness of novelty to the soundness of antiquity, from the blindness of novelty to pristine light?

[14.] But in this divine virtue, as we may call it, exhibited by these Confessors, we must note especially that the defence which they then undertook in appealing to the Ancient Church, was the defence, not of a part, but of the

whole body. For it was not right that men of such eminence should uphold with so huge an effort the vague and conflicting notions of one or two men, or should exert themselves in the defence of some ill-advised combination of some petty province; but adhering to the decrees and definitions of the universal priesthood of Holy Church, the heirs of Apostolic and Catholic truth, they chose rather to deliver up themselves than to betray the faith of universality and antiquity. For which cause they were deemed worthy of so great glory as not only to be accounted Confessors, but rightly, and deservedly to be accounted foremost among Confessors.

Chapter 6.

The example of Pope Stephen in resisting the Iteration of Baptism.

[15.] Great then is the example of these same blessed men, an example plainly divine, and worthy to be called to mind, and meditated upon continually by every true Catholic, who, like the seven-branched candlestick, shining with the sevenfold light of the Holy Spirit, showed to posterity how thenceforward the audaciousness of profane novelty, in all the several rantings of error, might be crushed by the authority of hallowed antiquity.

Nor is there anything new in this? For it has always been the case in the Church, that the more a man is under the influence of religion, so much the more prompt is he to oppose innovations. Examples there are without number: but to be brief, we will take one, and that, in preference to others, from the Apostolic See, so that it may be clearer than day to every one with how great energy, with how great zeal, with how great earnestness, the blessed successors

of the blessed apostles have constantly defended the integrity of the religion which they have once received.

[16.] Once on a time then, Agripinnus, bishop of Carthage, of venerable memory, held the doctrine— and he was the first who held it— that Baptism ought to be repeated, contrary to the divine canon, contrary to the rule of the universal Church, contrary to the customs and institutions of our ancestors. This innovation drew after it such an amount of evil, that it not only gave an example of sacrilege to heretics of all sorts, but proved an occasion of error to certain Catholics even.

When then all men protested against the novelty, and the priesthood everywhere, each as his zeal prompted him, opposed it, Pope Stephen of blessed memory, Prelate of the Apostolic See, in conjunction indeed with his colleagues but yet himself the foremost, withstood it, thinking it right, I doubt not, that as he exceeded all others in the authority of his place, so he should also in the devotion of his faith. In fine, in an epistle sent at the time to Africa, he laid down this rule: “Let there be no innovation— nothing but what has been handed down.” For that holy and prudent man well knew that true piety admits no other rule than that whatsoever things have been faithfully received from our fathers the same are to be faithfully consigned to our children; and that it is our duty, not to lead religion whither we would, but rather to follow religion whither it leads; and that it is the part of Christian modesty and gravity not to hand down our own beliefs or observances to those who come after us, but to preserve and keep what we have received from those who went before

us. What then was the issue of the whole matter? What but the usual and customary one? Antiquity was retained, novelty was rejected.

[17.] But it may be, the cause of innovation at that time lacked patronage. On the contrary, it had in its favor such powerful talent, such copious eloquence, such a number of partisans, so much resemblance to truth, such weighty support in Scripture (only interpreted in a novel and perverse sense), that it seems to me that that whole conspiracy could not possibly have been defeated, unless the sole cause of this extraordinary stir, the very novelty of what was so undertaken, so defended, so belauded, had proved wanting to it. In the end, what result, under God, had that same African Council or decree? None whatever. The whole affair, as though a dream, a fable, a thing of no possible account, was annulled, cancelled, and trodden underfoot.

[18.] And O marvellous revolution! The authors of this same doctrine are judged Catholics, the followers heretics; the teachers are absolved, the disciples condemned; the writers of the books will be children of the Kingdom, the defenders of them will have their portion in Hell. For who is so demented as to doubt that that blessed light among all holy bishops and martyrs, Cyprian, together with the rest of his colleagues, will reign with Christ; or, who on the other hand so sacrilegious as to deny that the Donatists and those other pests, who boast the authority of that council for their iteration of baptism, will be consigned to eternal fire with the devil?

Chapter 7.

How Heretics, craftily cite obscure passages in ancient writers in support of their own novelties.

[19.] This condemnation, indeed, seems to have been providentially promulgated as though with a special view to the fraud of those who, contriving to dress up a heresy under a name other than its own, get hold often of the works of some ancient writer, not very clearly expressed, which, owing to the very obscurity of their own doctrine, have the appearance of agreeing with it, so that they get the credit of being neither the first nor the only persons who have held it. This wickedness of theirs, in my judgment, is doubly hateful: first, because they are not afraid to invite others to drink of the poison of heresy; and secondly, because with profane breath, as though fanning smouldering embers into flame, they blow upon the memory of each holy man, and spread an evil report of what ought to be buried in silence by bringing it again under notice, thus treading in the footsteps of their father Ham, who not only forebore to cover the nakedness of the venerable Noah, but told it to the others that they might laugh at it, offending thereby so grievously against the duty of filial piety, that even his descendants were involved with him in the curse which he drew down, widely differing from those blessed brothers of his, who would neither pollute their own eyes by looking upon the nakedness of their revered father, nor would suffer others to do so, but went backwards, as the Scripture says, and covered him, that is, they neither approved nor

betrayed the fault of the holy man, for which cause they were rewarded with a benediction on themselves and their posterity. Genesis 9:22

[20.] But to return to the matter in hand: It behooves us then to have a great dread of the crime of perverting the faith and adulterating religion, a crime from which we are deterred not only by the Church's discipline, but also by the censure of authority. For every one knows how gravely, how severely, how vehemently, the blessed apostle Paul inveighs against certain, who, with marvellous levity, had "been so soon removed from him who had called them to the grace of Christ to another Gospel, which was not another;" Galatians 1:6 "who had heaped to themselves teachers after their own lusts, turning away their ears from the truth, and being turned aside unto fables;" 2 Timothy 4:3-4 "having damnation because they had cast off their first faith;" 1 Timothy 5:12 who had been deceived by those of whom the same apostle writes to the Roman Christians, "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not the Lord Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple," Romans 16:17-18 "who enter into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with diverse lusts, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth;" 2 Timothy 3:6 "vain talkers and deceivers, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake;" Titus 1:10 "men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith;" 2 Timothy 3:8 "proud knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, destitute of the truth, supposing that godliness is gain," 1 Timothy

6:4 “withal learning to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle, but tattlers also and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not,” 1 Timothy 5:13 “who having put away a good conscience have made shipwreck concerning the faith;” 1 Timothy 1:19 “whose profane and vain babblings increase unto more ungodliness, and their word does eat as does a cancer.” 2 Timothy 2:16-17 Well, also, is it written of them: “But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.” 2 Timothy 3:9

Chapter 8.

Exposition of St. Paul’s Words, Gal. i. 8.

[21.] When therefore certain of this sort wandering about provinces and cities, and carrying with them their venal errors, had found their way to Galatia, and when the Galatians, on hearing them, nauseating the truth, and vomiting up the manna of Apostolic and Catholic doctrine, were delighted with the garbage of heretical novelty, the apostle putting in exercise the authority of his office, delivered his sentence with the utmost severity, “Though we,” he says, “or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:8

[22.] Why does he say “Though we”? Why not rather “though I”? He means, “though Peter, though Andrew, though John, in a word, though the whole company of apostles, preach unto you other than we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Tremendous severity! He spares neither himself nor his fellow apostles, so he may preserve unaltered the faith which was at first

delivered. Nay, this is not all. He goes on “Even though an angel from heaven preach unto you any other Gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” It was not enough for the preservation of the faith once delivered to have referred to man; he must needs comprehend angels also. “Though we,” he says, “or an angel from heaven.” Not that the holy angels of heaven are now capable of sinning. But what he means is: Even if that were to happen which cannot happen—if any one, be he who he may, attempt to alter the faith once for all delivered, let him be accursed.

[23.] But it may be, he spoke thus in the first instance inconsiderately, giving vent to human impetuosity rather than expressing himself under divine guidance. Far from it. He follows up what he had said, and urges it with intense reiterated earnestness, “As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel to you than that you have received, let him be accursed.” He does not say, “If any man deliver to you another message than that you have received, let him be blessed, praised, welcomed,”—no; but “let him be accursed,” [anathema] i.e., separated, segregated, excluded, lest the dire contagion of a single sheep contaminate the guiltless flock of Christ by his poisonous intermixture with them.

Chapter 9.

His warning to the Galatians a warning to all.

[24.] But, possibly, this warning was intended for the Galatians only. Be it so; then those other exhortations which follow in the same Epistle were intended for the Galatians only, such as, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the

Spirit; let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another,” etc.; Galatians 5:25 which alternative if it be absurd, and the injunctions were meant equally for all, then it follows, that as these injunctions which relate to morals, so those warnings which relate to faith are meant equally for all; and just as it is unlawful for all to provoke one another, or to envy one another, so, likewise, it is unlawful for all to receive any other Gospel than that which the Catholic Church preaches everywhere.

[25.] Or perhaps the anathema pronounced on any one who should preach another Gospel than that which had been preached was meant for those times, not for the present. Then, also, the exhortation, “Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh,” Galatians 5:16 was meant for those times, not for the present. But if it be both impious and pernicious to believe this, then it follows necessarily, that as these injunctions are to be observed by all ages, so those warnings also which forbid alteration of the faith are warnings intended for all ages. To preach any doctrine therefore to Catholic Christians other than what they have received never was lawful, never is lawful, never will be lawful: and to anathematize those who preach anything other than what has once been received, always was a duty, always is a duty, always will be a duty.

[26.] Which being the case, is there any one either so audacious as to preach any other doctrine than that which the Church preaches, or so inconstant as to receive any other doctrine than that which he has received from the Church? That elect vessel, that teacher of the Gentiles, that trumpet of the apostles, that

preacher whose commission was to the whole earth, that man who was caught up to heaven, 2 Corinthians 12:2 cries and cries again in his Epistles to all, always, in all places, “If any man preach any new doctrine, let him be accursed.” On the other hand, an ephemeral, moribund set of frogs, fleas, and flies, such as the Pelagians, call out in opposition, and that to Catholics, Take our word, follow our lead, accept our exposition, condemn what you used to hold, hold what you used to condemn, cast aside the ancient faith, the institutes of your fathers, the trusts left for you by your ancestors and receive instead—what? I tremble to utter it: for it is so full of arrogance and self-conceit, that it seems to me that not only to affirm it, but even to refute it, cannot be done without guilt in some sort.

To Be Cont’d.