

rather to undergo the most cruel punishment and death itself than betray their proper office, and violate the laws of their most holy religion in obedience to impious commands of persecuting Princes. Of a truth, Venerable Brothers, if no other laws than the laws of a civil empire existed, and laws indeed of a higher order which it is a duty to obey and sin to violate; if, moreover, these same civil laws could constitute a supreme rule of conscience, as some impiously and absurdly contend, the primitive martyrs, and they who afterwards followed them in shedding their blood for the Faith of Christ and the liberty of the Church, would be rather worthy of blame than of honor and praise. Nay, it would not even have been possible, in the teeth of laws and against the will of Princes, to preach and propagate the Christian religion, and to found the Church. The Faith however teaches, and human reason demonstrates, that there exists a two-fold order of things, and at the same time two powers are to be distinguished on the earth—the one natural, which provides for the tranquillity of human society and secular affairs; the other, the origin of which is above nature, supreme over the City of God, that is the Church of Christ, divinely instituted for the peace and eternal salvation of souls. And the officers of twofold power are in wisdom ordained that the things of God should be rendered to God, and that, in obedience to God, the things of Cæsar should be rendered to Cæsar, who is “therefore great because he is less than heaven; for he himself belongs to Him to whom belong the heavens and every creature” (4). From this divine command the Church assuredly has never been turned aside, for it has always and everywhere labored to impress on the minds of the faithful the obedience which they ought inviolably to maintain towards sovereign Princes and their laws in secular things, and it has taught with the apostle, that “Princes are not a terror to good works, but to evil, commanding the faithful to be subject not only for wrath’s sake, because the Prince bears the sword, as an avenger in wrath for him who does evil, but also for conscience sake, because in his office he is the minister of God” (5). This fear of Princes the Church itself restrains to evil deeds, and excludes it expressly from the observance of the divine law, being mindful of that which the blessed Peter taught to the faithful: “Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a railer, or a coveter of other men’s goods, but if as a Christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name” (6).

Since these things are so, you will easily understand, Venerable Brothers, with what sorrow of mind we must have been affected when we read in a letter lately sent to us by the Emperor of Germany in person an accusation not less cruel than unlooked for against a part, as he himself says, of his Catholic subjects, and especially against the Catholic clergy and Bishops of Germany. Of which accusation this is the cause, that they, fearless of bonds and tribulations and not “counting their life more precious than themselves” (7), have refused to obey the aforesaid laws with the same constancy, with which, before they were passed, they had protested by denouncing their injustice, which was unfolded in grave, luminous, and solid expostulations, amidst the applause of the whole Catholic world, and of not a few even of non-Catholics, before the Sovereign, his Ministers, and the supreme legislature of the kingdom. For that cause they are now accused as of the crime of treason, as of consenting and conspiring with those who are endeavouring to overthrow all orders in human society, without regard to innumerable and notable proofs which evidently bear witness to their unshaken faith and allegiance to their Sovereign and their fervent patriotism towards their country. Yea, and we ourselves are asked to exhort those Catholics and sacred pastors to observe the aforesaid laws, which is to ask that we also ourselves should lend our help in oppressing and scattering the flock of Christ. But, trusting in God, we are confident that the most Serene Emperor, when he has better ascertained and weighed these things, will reject a suspicion so empty and incredible against his faithful servants, and will no longer endure that their honour should be assailed by so foul a calumny, and that an unmerited prosecution should be continued against them.

We should indeed have gladly passed over in this place the letter of the Emperor, if it had not been made public by the official journal in Berlin altogether without our knowledge, and in a manner certainly unusual, together with another letter written by our hand, in which we appealed for the Catholic Church in Prussia to the justice of the most Serene Emperor.

The things which we have thus far recounted are before the eyes of all: wherefore, while Religious and Virgins dedicated to God are deprived of the common liberty of citizens, and are exiled with cruel harshness; while public schools, in which Catholic youth are educated are day by day further withdrawn from the wholesome teaching and vigilance of the Church; while societies founded for the nurturing of piety, and even the seminaries of the clergy, are dissolved; while the liberty of preaching the Gospel is hindered, while it is prohibited in certain parts of the kingdom to teach the elements of religious education in the mother-tongue, while the priests are forcibly taken away from the parishes over which they were set by the Bishops, and the Bishops themselves are deprived of their revenues, coerced by fines, and menaced by threats of imprisonment, while Catholics are disturbed by vexations of every kind, is it possible that we should receive into our mind that which is laid before us, viz., that neither the religion of Jesus Christ nor the truth is called in question.

Nor is this the end of the wrongs which are inflicted upon the Catholic Church. For to this must be also added the patronage which has been openly taken up by the Prussian and the other Governments of the Germanic Empire in behalf of those new heretics, who call themselves *Old Catholics* by the abuse of the name, which would be truly ridiculous, if it were not that so many monstrous errors of that sect against the chief principles of the Catholic faith, so many sacrileges in Divine worship and in the administration of sacraments, so many gravest scandals, so great a havoc of souls redeemed in the Blood of Christ, did not rather draw abundant tears from our eyes.

(4) Tertullian, Apolog. cap. 30.

(5) Rom. xiii. 3.

(6) 1 St. Peter iv. 15, 16.

(7) Acts xx., 24.

The attempts indeed, and the airs of these unhappy sons of perdition appear plainly, both from other writings of theirs, and most of all from that impious and most impudent of documents which has lately been published by him whom they have set up for themselves as their so-called Bishop. For they deny and prevent the true authority of jurisdiction which is in the Roman Pontiff and the Bishops, the successors of the Blessed Peter and the Apostles, and transfer it to the populace, or, as they say, to the community; they stubbornly reject and assail the infallible teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff and of the whole Church; and, contrary to the Holy Spirit who has been promised by Christ to abide in His Church for ever, they audaciously affirm that the Roman Pontiff, and the whole of the Bishops, priests, and people, who are united with him in one faith and communion, have fallen into heresy by sanctioning and professing the definitions of the Œcumenical Vatican Council. Therefore they deny even the indefectibility of the Church, blasphemously saying that it has perished throughout the world, and that its visible head and its Bishops have fallen away: and that for this reason it has been necessary for them to restore the lawful Episcopate in their pseudo-bishop, a man who, entering not by the gate, but coming up by another way, has drawn upon his head the condemnation of Christ.

Nevertheless, those unhappy men, who would undermine the foundations of the Catholic religion, and destroy its character and endowments, who have invented such shameful and manifold errors, or rather have collected them together from the old store of heretics, are not ashamed to call themselves Catholics, and *Old Catholics*; while by their doctrine, their novelty, and their fewness, they give up all mark of antiquity and of Catholicity. Truly with a stronger right against them than in former days, by the mouth of St. Augustine against the Donatists, the Church which is spread abroad among all nations, which Christ the Son of the living God has built upon the rock, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, and with which he, to whom all power has been given in heaven and upon earth, has promised that he will remain all days to the end of the world,

cries out to the Eternal Spouse: “Why do those who have gone from me murmur against me? Why do those who are lost declare that it is I who have perished? Announce to me the fewness of my days: how long shall I be in this world? Tell it to me for the sake of those who say that she was and now she is not; for the sake of those who say that the Scriptures have been fulfilled, the nations have believed, but the Church has apostatized and perished from all the nations.” And it was answered; nor was the voice an empty one. In what words was it announced? *Behold I am with you until the consummation of the world.* That is, moved by your words and your false opinions, the Church asks of God to make known to her the fewness of her days; and she finds that the Lord has said, *Behold I am with you until the consummation of the world.* Here you will reason thus: “Of us it is said that we are, and we shall be until the end of the world. Let Christ be asked: *And this Gospel, he says, shall be preached in the whole world, in testimony to all nations, and then shall the end come.* Therefore, until the end of the world is the Church among all nations.” May heretics perish; may they perish as they are, and be found to become what they are not (8).

But these men, going on more boldly in the way of iniquity and perdition, as by a just judgment of God it happens to heretical sects, have wished also to form to themselves a hierarchy, as we have said, and have chosen and set up for themselves as their pseudo bishop a certain notorious apostate from the Catholic Faith, Joseph Hubert Reinkens; and, that nothing might be wanting to their impudence, for his consecration they have had recourse to those Jansenists of Utrecht whom they themselves, before their falling away from the Church, regarded with other Catholics as heretics and schismatics. Nevertheless, this Joseph Hubert dares to call himself a Bishop, and, incredible as it may seem, the Most Serene Emperor of Germany has by public decree named and acknowledged him as a Catholic Bishop, and exhibited him to all his subjects as one who is to be regarded as a lawful Bishop, and as such to be obeyed. But the very rudiments of Catholic teaching declare, that no one can be held to be a lawful Bishop who is not joined in communion of faith and charity to the Rock on which the one Church of Christ is built; who does not adhere to the Supreme Pastor to whom all the sheep of Christ are committed to be fed; who is not united to the confirmer of the brotherhood which is in the world. And, indeed, “to Peter did the Lord speak: to one, that he might by one establish unity.” (9) To Peter “the Divine authority has given a great and wonderful share of His power; and if that authority has washed anything to be in common between Him and other princes, it is only through Him, that it has been given.” (10). Hence it is that from this Apostolic See, where the blessed Peter “lives and presides, and dispenses the truth to all who seek it,” (11) “the rights of holy fellowship extend to all”; (12) and it is certain that this same See is “to the churches throughout the world as the head to the members, and that if any one cuts himself off from it, he becomes an outcast from the Christian religion, since he is not in the same bond of union.” (13).

Hence the holy martyr Cyprian, speaking of the schismatic pseudo-bishop Novatian, denied to him the very name of Christian as being separated and cut off from the Church of Christ: “Whoever he is and whatever he is, *he is not a Christian, who is not in the Church of Christ.* Though he boast himself and talk of his wisdom and eloquence in proud language, he who has not retained either brotherly love or ecclesiastical unity has lost even what he before possessed. Since the one church has been divided by Christ into many members throughout the whole world, and also one Episcopate has been over-spread therein by the manifold unity of many Bishops, that man in spite of the tradition of God and in spite of the closely compacted unity of the Church is endeavouring to make the Church human. He, therefore, who maintains neither the unity of the Spirit nor the brotherhood of peace, and severs himself from the bonds of the Church and from the fellowship of the priesthood, can possess neither the power of a Bishop nor the honour, unity, and peace of the Episcopate.” (14).

We, therefore, who have been placed, undeserving as We are, in

(8) August. in Psalm 101, enarrat. 2, num. 3, 9.

(9) Pacian, Ep. iii. n. 11.

(10) St. Leo, M. serm. 3, in sua assumpt. Optatus, lib. ii. n. 2.

(11) St. Peter Chrys. ep. ad Eutycho.

(12) St. Jerome ep. 14 and 16 ad L. mas.

(13) Boniface. I. ep. 14 ad Episcopos Germanie.

(14) Cyprian, contra Novatian, Ep. 52, ad Antonian.