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REASONS

WHY

A Protestant

Should not Turn

PAPIST:

OR,

Protestant Prejudices

Against the

Roman Catholic Religion;

PROPOS'D,

In a LETTER to a Romish Priest.

By a Person of Quality.

Robert Boyle

L O N D O N:

Printed by *H. Clark*, for *John Taylor* at the Ship in
St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1687.

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Reasons

REASONS

W H Y

A Protestant

Should not Turn

PAPIST, &c.

The Introduction.

S I R,

I Know not well what you meant, when not long ago, after a free Enquiry in a familiar Converse about the Right Choice of Religion, you was pleas'd to call me a *meer Christian*, but sure I am 'twas a better World when all such as really professed Christianity were but *meer Christians*, I mean, believ'd nothing more, under pain of Eternal Damnation, than what Christ and his Apostles had taught them : if this, *Sir*, was your meaning, I am indeed, and with the Grace of God ever shall be a *meer Christian* :

Reasons Why a Protestant

stian: and why should I find my self affronted by being so styled, since the Fathers of the Primitive times were in the afore-mentioned sence *meer Christians*, as believing nothing to be Articles of Divine Faith beyond what Christ and his Apostles had declared to be so. I must not then, as a Protestant, be offended at this uncommon Reproach, because it giveth us the *Idea* of one that professeth the Purity of the Christian Religion, without any mixture either of Error or Superstition, so as I love to take every thing in the best sence it can bear, rather than relapse, I shall be thankful to you for so honourable a Title: Yet if I must take this Expression as somewhat reflecting, I shall revenge my self no otherwise, but by telling you, what I fancy you will readily grant, that you are something beyond a *meer Christian*, since neither the Scripture, nor the three Creeds, contain all the Articles of your Faith: but as I was not at all concern'd at this your odd and unexpected Reproach, which I thought deserved rather an Innocent Smile, than a Serious Reflection; so 'tis not upon this account that I now undertake to write this Letter, but merely because you very confidently said, that I remain'd a Protestant upon no very good Grounds, but upon meer Prejudices, which you could easily take off, if I would declare to you what really they were; which because I could not then conveniently, I promised I would perform at another time, and now to acquit my self of my Promise, I shall offer to your consideration some of what you call Prejudices, and I shall venture to style good and solid Reasons why I cannot resolve upon a Change, would I never so fain, in the present juncture of our Affairs, embrace the Roman Catholick Religion.

First

Should not turn Papist.

Since then you allow me the use of my Reason in the very Primary and most fundamental Article of all, the *Church Infallibility*, you have no reason to deny it to me in other things that depend upon this, and are of no less concern for the welfare of my Soul.

The ordinary Objection against this Doctrine, that it would be the source of an infinite variety of Opinions about matters of Religion, seem'd always to me to be of no force, because, besides that the Scripture says somewhere, That *Heresies*, that is, diversity of Opinions, notwithstanding all pretence to Infallibility must be, if a Man be mistaken in his Judgment, 'tis to be presum'd God will pardon him this Error, since after all possible means us'd to learn the truth, he is still persuaded of his being in the right, and that your Reasons are weaker than his: For to say, such a Man must submit his Judgment upon the account of a Superior Authority, tho' he knows not why, and is moreover satisfied of the fallibility of this Authority, yea, and of its actual Errors too in many things of great moment, 'tis all one as if you bid a Man renounce to common sence, turn a Fool, and not act rationally. 'Tis then evident to all considering Men, that every one must finally Judge for himself in matters relating to his own Spiritual welfare; for sure I am, God shall never condemn me for acting against another Man's Judgment; which certainly he will do, if I act against my own; for this and no other thing can be imputed to me as an actual Sin: Christ himself teacheth this important Truth, by his exhorting the Jews to search the Scriptures, because they gave testimony of him, where he will have them to act like rational Creatures, to make use of that reason he had given them, and to judge of the sense of the Scriptures: He does not tell them, with the Pope in a General Council, You are to remember I am the Infallible Oracle, to be believed by you without any further Examen: But since he desires them to consult the Scriptures, certainly he allows them to judge of their sense, which the Church of *Rome* will not permit us to do, assuming to herself a greater Authority than ever Christ did, who would have the Jews to rely upon their senses in reading the Scriptures, and examining his Miracles.

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Forasmuch as I hate an indiscreet Zeal, I cannot but be somewhat concern'd to hear some *Romanists* say, Christ had been a very unwise and unskilful Law-giver, had he not left behind him an Infallible visible Judge of Controversies; as if he could not govern his Church without an Infallible Lieutenant, as we see (if such a Comparison may be allowed of) that Earthly Princes Govern their remotest Provinces according to all the Laws of Justice and Equity, though their Substitutes be fallible Men; they only Correct them when they do fail, and send others in their room that will perform better their Trust. Where is then the necessity of an Infallible Visible Judge, for the good Government of the Church? Sure they will not say, there can be no true Church, without such a Judge, for the Jewish Church had none, and erred very grossly in condemning of Christ; yea, the very Church of *Rome* itself, till the first Council of *Nice*, wanted such a Judge, and does yet, in the Intervals of General Councils, supposing with them, that these are their Infallible Visible Judges.

Let us not then argue ourselves into an Error, with the *Romanists* thus; *There is a necessity of an Infallible Visible Judge, therefore there is one*: But rather on the contrary, *There is no Infallible Visible Judge in the Church, therefore there is no necessity of such a Judge*. For we ought in reason to suppose, had a Governor thus qualified, been necessary for the preserving of the Church, Christ had no doubt appointed somewhere this Infallible Visible Judge, and told his Apostles, *When I am gone, there will arise great debates and heats amongst you, concerning what is to be Believed, under pain of Damnation, and what not; but for a final Resolution in this case, you must make your Application to the Bishops of Rome, or to a General Council; and whatever they declare to be an Article of Divine Faith, though it be not found in Scripture, is to be look'd upon by you as such*. But where has Christ mentioned any thing of this nature? I find rather the quite contrary decided by him, since he sends the Jews to the standing Revelation of the Old Testament; Search (says he) the Scriptures, for they give Testimony of me. He never told them with the Church of *Rome*, *Believe not your own Scises, trust not to your own Reason in any case*

case relating to your Spiritual concerns, but Believe me, because I am Infallible, and my Decisions are not to be examined, but blindly received. Have we not then reason to wonder that the Church of *Rome* assumeth to herself a greater Authority than ever Christ himself did? and to hear her say in one of her General Councils, That notwithstanding the express Institution of Christ, and Command to take the Sacrament in both kinds, She thought fit, for good reasons, to order it to be taken by the Laity in one kind only, though She Herself had obeyed Christ in this point full thirteen Hundred years and more?

I always fancied no Power upon Earth could change what the first Founder of our Religion, Christ Jesus, had once established. The Church of *Rome* may as well presume to say, That though Christ has forbid Polygamy, and will have every Man to be contented with one Wife at a time, She (for good Reasons, and more plausible too than those She alledgeth for the taking away the Cup from the Laity,) thinks it convenient to allow Men more Wives than one at a time. For if the Church of *Rome* can act lawfully against Christ's Institution in one case, I know not why She may not likewise in another; which setteth the Pope and a General Council, above all that is called God, in a very literal sense, since Christ himself must submit to this Superior Authority, and see his own Orders slighted, as if they had been given out Indiscreetly, and without Judgment, or accompanied with Inconveniences which Christ foresaw not, and for which the *Romanists* think themselves not oblig'd to Obey them.

I hope these few Considerations make it appear to the unprejudic'd *Romanists*, that the Infallibility of the Church of *Rome*, or the being of an Infallible Visible Judge in that Church, is not only an improbable Doctrine, but really false and absurd. Yet this I shall make out more particularly, by answering what chiefly they are us'd to alledge in favour of their imaginary Infallibility.

They say then first, but very unhappily for them, That from the Supreme Court of the Jewish Synagogue, there:

Heb. 6. 6.

was no Appeal. What then? Does it follow from thence, that the Synagogue was Infallible? What connexion is there between there being no Appeal from a Judge, and his being Infallible? I hope the *Romanists* will grant the Synagogue to have fail'd, when She condemn'd Christ. They'll do well then to bring no Argument from this Topick, to prove their own Infallibility: *But a Covenant with better Promises was given to the Church.* But where was it said that Infallibility was promised to Her? I mean, that there should be an Infallible Visible Judge, whom we should consult in all doubtful Cases, and to whose Decisions we were under pain of Damnation to submit, though they were not only above Reason, but against the constant evidence of all Mens Sences.

Isa. 3. 2.

Psal. 13. 4.

Isa. 49. 23.

Secondly, They are wont to raise some dust among the unwary Multitude, with these and the like Passages.

*The Church is like a Mountain upon the top of the Mountains.
Like a Tabernacle seated in the Sun.*

All Nations shall flow unto her, Kings shall be her Nursing Fathers, and Queens her Nursing Mothers.

Luk. 10. 16.

Can any rational Man draw from these Passages any Argument proving the being of an Infallible Visible Judge? Since 'tis clear, they conclude nothing else but that the Church shall be sometimes glorious and visible to most Nations, as likewise protected by Kings and Princes. I say *sometimes*, because there is no Promise made to Her that She shall always be so, and in all Parts of the World. For by the Experience of foregoing Ages, we are sufficiently inform'd that She has been now and then overclouded both by Persecution and Ignorance; and the same thing may happen again, if it please God to permit both Persecution and Error, as he permits Sin, for Ends best known to himself. They lay likewise a great stress upon what Christ said to his Apostles, *Who hears you, hears me.*

As then in hearing Christ, we cannot Err, so in hearing the Apostles and their Successors, we cannot Err: Which is most true of the Apostles, because they delivered nothing but what Christ had taught them, as likewise of their Successors, so long as they Teach nothing else but what was handed down

First then, I am of opinion, that the Church of *Rome*, as 'tis now settled in the World, is founded upon two false Suppositions, *vid.* its pretended *Catholicity*, or universality, and *Infallibility*: I wondred always to hear her styl'd *Catholic* by the *Romanists* in this sense, that whosoever acknowledgeth her not to be the only true Christian Church in the World, out of which there is no salvation, liveth not in Catholic communion: which is such a groundless Proposition as deserves rather to be laugh'd at, than seriously refused, and no less absurd, than if the Church of *England* called herself the whole Catholic Church, tho' she be but a part thereof, and not the greatest neither. The Church of *Rome* then, whesher it be consider'd as the particular Diocess of *Rome*, or as comprehending all those, whatever part of the World they live in, that acknowledge the Pope as supreme Pastor, is no less a particular Church, than that of *England*, of *Greece*, and of the *Abyssins*, yea, if compared to all the Christians throughout the whole World, it is by much the far lesser part of the Catholic Church, especially if we reflect but a moment what vast numbers of Christians, dissenting from the Church of *Rome*, are to be found in *Asia*, *Africa*, and both in the Eastern and Northern parts of *Europe*: So the *Romanists* are at a loss what to say in any Debate about Matters of Controversie, when they are made sensible of their applying to a particular, what is only to be understood of the Catholic, or Universal Church, which I conceive to be nothing else but the *diffusive body of Christians in all Ages under Christ as their invisible Head, and their respective Princes, Superiours, and Bishops, as their visible Governours.* 'Tis easie now, if you remember this Description, to stop the mouths of *Roman Catholics*, who raise so much dust among the unthinking multitude by this very word, *the Church*, but misapplied, or not understood: when then they say, the Church teacheth this, or that Doctrine, as for instance, *Transubstantiation, Purgatory, the lawfulness of Saints, and Image-Worship*, believe them not: for they understand by the *Church*, either the particular Church of *Rome*, or its Clergy, or some General Council, as that of *Lateran, Florence,*

rence, or Trent. Now neither of these three is the Church, and consequently their Decisions are not to be styled the Decisions of the Church, in case they do not agree with the sense of the Universal Church in all Ages: and then I believe them not upon the account of their Authority, but by reason of the General Consent of all Ages, and especially of the primitive and purest times of the Church.

We may give some hints out of this, and the foregoing Considerations, what properly is meant by Heresie, Apostasy, and Schism, and who are to be reckon'd Hereticks, Schismatics, and Apostates, that it may the better appear how unjustly either Heresie, Schism, or Apostasie, is laid to the charge of all other Churches by the Church of Rome.

Heresie then is, an obstinate and wilful denial of what is held by the Universal Church. Schism is a causeless Separation from any Christian Church whatsoever; And Apostasie is an entire desertion of the Christian Faith, to embrace Turkicifm, or any other not reveal'd Religion.

First then, 'tis clear, that all the Dissenters from the Church of Rome are not Apostates, because they still retain the Fundamental Points of the Christian Religion, and reject only those that the Roman Catholics would have us to believe Fundamental upon the account of the Infallibility, which they could never yet prove of the General, or rather Imperial Councils.

Secondly, They are not Schismatics, they had but too weighty Reasons to separate from the Church of Rome: the very taking away of the Cup from the Laity, (to mention no other of its known Errors in this place,) against the Universal Practice, yea, of their own Church too, during Thirteen hundred years, and more, and against the Express Command and Institution of Christ, was a cause sufficient for a just, lawful, and necessary Separation, since that Church became so conceited of its own Power and Authority, as to think it could lawfully alter or change what Christ had so solemnly instituted, and commanded, when he said, *Drink ye all of this.*

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As to Heresie; We are often charged with it by *Roman Catholics*, but without any proof, unless we are to believe all such to be Hereticks as believe not the additional Articles of the Church of Rome. Which is indeed their real meaning, when they call us Hereticks: but their confidence in this Point is grounded on that notoriously false supposition of their Infallibility: for as I always conceived Infallibility to be a no less essential Attribute of the Divine Nature, than Omnipotency; so I thought and think it still a no less contradiction to imagine to ourselves an Infallible Creature, than to conceive an Omnipotent One, and not at the same time God: Tho' I allow that a Creature, how fallible soever, by the intrinsecal Principles of its own Nature, may perhaps never actually fail by a Special Protection from that Unerrable Being above: But I am on the other side very confident, that God has no where promised his Unerring Spirit either to the Pope or to any of the General Councils whensoever they shall undertake to decide Matters of Faith: for as God permits Sin, so why should we think it absurd to say, that he permits Errors likewise, and that in his Church too, for ends best known to himself, and which we are not to dive into. I know indeed, and no Protestant I suppose will deny it, that the Universal Church in this sense only may be called Infallible, that notwithstanding all the Efforts of the Gates of Hell to prevail against it, the True Doctrine of Christ shall be still taught, and held in some part of the World by a particular providence of God over his Church: and this is the only rational meaning of all those Passages to be examined hereafter, which the *Roman Catholics* are us'd to propose as Proofs of the Infallibility of the Church of Rome: But their main drift is, and must be, to shew either by Reason, or Authority, First, That there is in the Church an Infallible Visible Judge of Controversie; And, Secondly, Who is this Infallible Visible Judge: For otherwise his Infallibility would be of no use to us, since we could not consult with him in order to resolve our Doubts.

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But, to come more close to the Point, I would fain know from a *Roman Catholic*, if the Being of this Infallible Visible Judge be an Article of Divine Faith, that he must believe, under pain of Eternal Damnation, or a more probable Opinion, which he may follow, or not follow, as he pleases: If the latter be granted, then the pretended certitude of the Controversies in debate between us and the *Romanists* depends upon the Decisions of Councils, that are but probably true, not infallibly; which if they once yield to, they have no right to force upon any man the belief of their additional Articles, as Purgatory, Transubstantiation, &c. for if it be but probable, that the Council of *Trent*, defining that there is a Purgatory, is infallible, 'tis on the other side as probable, and more too, that 'tis fallible: So I ought to make use of that Reason God has given me, and examine, Whether the Council has not actually fail'd, by comparing its Decisions, to the standing Revelation of God's Will in his written Word, as interpreted by the Fathers of the Primitive Times, or by every Man's Private Reason, where they are silent: for let unthinking and prejudic'd men say what they will, as we are all to stand or to fall by the Verdict of our own Conscience, so we ought to follow its Decisions in whatever relates to our own Spiritual Concerns: and if this be a Crime, the *Romanists* are guilty of it as well as we: for either he believes his Church infallible upon rational grounds, or upon no grounds at all; the latter I suppose he will not say, lest his belief be deservedly called foolish, and if upon rational grounds he believes the Church of *Rome* infallible, then his own Private Reason is Judge of these Grounds, and he finally proves to be for himself both Party and Judge of the Controversie: which if he may do in this Case, I know not why he may not likewise in all others. Thus, when he undertakes to prove to a *Protestant* the same Doctrine of Infallibility, he constituteth him Judge of his Reasons, and of the True Sense of the Scripture he makes use of in order to prove his Opinion.

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down to us from Christ and his Apostles, but we must try the Spirits whether they are of God or not: For if an Angel should propose to us Articles of Faith, others than what the Apostles have taught us, we ought to reject them.

I would then advise here the *Roman Catholic*, never to prove the Infallibility of their Church by Scripture, this being undoubtedly their weakest side, because by this way of arguing, they are concluded in a circle, they could never yet get clear of, whilst they must prove the Infallibility of the Church by the Scripture, and the true sense of the Scripture by the very same Church, which amounts to nothing more, but to your believing the Church upon her own Word, without any Ground for her Infallibility distinct from her own Testimony; than which I can fancy nothing more absurd, and more against common sense and reason, unless we can persuade ourselves, that the Infallibility of the Church is a self-evident Principle; which I am sure no understanding *Romanist* will ever either think or say: For besides that he never goes about to prove it by the meer Exposition of the terms 'tis propounded in, How can any Man take that for self-evident, which all Protestants, though to no purpose as yet, have required a solid proof of? If it were a sufficient proof of any pretended Truth, to say, 'tis Self-evident, it would be easy to prove any falsehood imaginable at this rate. A self-evident Principle, must be evident to all Men understanding the terms we express it in, otherwise it has nothing in it of a real self-evidence.

To shun prolixity, I shall mention but some few passages more the *Romanists* seem most to trust to. 1. *That the Church* 1 Tim. 3. 15. *of the living God, is the pillar and ground of truth.* 2. *That the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it, that he will be with her* Mat. 16. 18. *always, even to the end of the world, that he will send them another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth to abide with them for ever.* Joh. 14. 16. 3. *That when he is come, he shall guide them in all truth.* 4. *That all Persons are commanded to hear the Church, or else to be look'd* and 16. 13. 1. *upon as a Heathen and a Publican.* Mat. 18. 17.

I answer first, That these passages, and all others of this nature, are to be understood of the Universal Church, and and however do not at all imply the necessity of an Infallible Visible

Visible Judge. The Universal Church then comprehending all the Christian Churches of the World, is the pillar and ground of Truth, because Truth is upheld by, and grounded upon the constant agreement of all Christian Churches throughout all Ages, and not upon the authority of any particular Church, such as I take the Church of *Rome* to be, whatever way we consider it. Now the Rock upon which this Universal Church is built, is, the Confession of St. *Peter*, and the constant agreement of all after Ages thereunto, and not his Person; otherwise this Rock and Foundation had fail'd when he fail'd, which I suppose will not be granted.

The never prevailing of the Gates of Hell against the Church, concludes as fairly for her Impeccability, as for her Infallibility, since the Gates of Hell prevail as much, or rather more by Sin, than by Error, which sometimes may be invincible and guiltless. The Gates of Hell then shall never prevail against the Universal Church, because no Persecution whatsoever, whither occasion'd by ignorance or by malice, shall ever exterminate wholly this Church out of the World: For if She be extinguish'd and banish'd out of one place, She will still appear again and flourish in another, and so even to the end of the World, according to Christ's infallible promise; *And the Comforter shall abide with her for ever, and guide her into all truth*, because the whole Doctrine of Christ shall be taught in some corner of the World, even to the consummation of all things, though some particular Churches may not teach all Truth, and others again may add to the fundamental Principles of Religion, fundamental Errors, which I could easily shew the Church of *Rome* to be guilty of.

As to what relates to Christ's Injunction upon all Men, *to hear the Church, or else to be look'd upon as a Heathen and a Publican*, 'twas rather said of the Synagogue, than of the Christian Church, as not being yet established when these words were uttered; or they are to be understood of the Universal Church.

I answer Secondly, that if we may apply the foregoing passages to any particular Church, they relate more to the *Greek Church*, than to the *Romish*: For it is not only ancienter (as all the World knows) than the Church of *Rome*, but at
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this very day of almost an equal extent, if we take in the vast numbers of those that live in the Communion of the *Greek Church*, both in *Asia* and *Europe*: For if we make a just calculation of all the Christians in the vast Empire of the two *Czars* of *Moscow*, in *Greece* itself, and in all its Provinces, in *Egypt*, in several parts of *Asia*, and especially in the large Kingdom of the *Abyssins*, &c. we shall find their number little inferior, if not superiour to that of the *Roman Catholics*: And the *Greek Church* is so confident of Her being in the Right, that She looketh upon the Church of *Rome* as Schismatical. I must not forget in this place, that She can prove a constant Succession of Bishops from the Apostles downwards, more certainly than the Church of *Rome*, since *Calvin*, and several after him, have made it highly probable, that St. *Peter* was never at *Rome*, or at least never Bishop of *Rome*; which I much encline to believe upon this account, that the Scripture is wholly silent about this matter: Yet one would think that St. *Peter's* stay at *Rome* near five and twenty Years, his being all this while Bishop there, and at last Crucified with his head downwards, were Particulars considerable enough to be taken notice of by the Writer of the Acts of the Apostles, by St. *Paul*, or some of the Evangelists. Now to say St. *Peter* was at *Rome* when he wrote from *Babylon*, is to make him guilty of a flat Lye, or of a childish Equivocation; 'tis more natural to think, that he being the Apostle of the Jews, not of the Gentiles, was then either at *Babylon* in *Assyria*, or at *Babylon* in *Egypt*, now thought to be the *Grand Caïre*, there being at that time a great number of Jews in both these Cities, about whose Conversion he was then busied.

I shall only add, since 'tis agreed upon on all hands, that St. *John* outliv'd St. *Peter* many years; if St. *Peter* was Bishop of *Rome*, and succeeded immediately by a new Vicar of Christ, as the *Romanists* do confidently tell us, it follows from hence, that Christ's beloved Apostle and Darling was under the Jurisdiction of the Bishop of *Rome*, which the considering part of *Roman Catholics*, as well as Protestants, will not, I fancy think very proper.

I shall reckon up no more of the Prerogatives of the *Greek Church*, what I have said being only to shew, that whosoever the word *Church* is made use of in Scripture, the *Grecians* may apply it to themselves with a greater appearance of truth than the *Romanists*: but so they can no more prove themselves Infallible, or the necessity of an Infallible Visible Judge in their Church than the *Grecians* from the same places of Scripture can make out the necessity of an Infallible Visible Judge in theirs.

I always wonder'd at the confidence of most *Roman Catholics*, in asserting this Principle, which yet they can give no tolerable account of, when they are put upon the proving of it: for they are not yet well agreed, who is this Infallible Visible Judge, some standing up for the Pope, others for the General Councils, and others again for the Pope and the General Councils, and though they are more generally agreed upon the Pope and General Councils conjunctly, not severally, yet if we consider things impartially, we shall easily conclude, the Pope to be acknowledged by them the sole Infallible Visible Judge, since the General Councils have no authority to declare any Article of Divine Faith, without the Pope's Seal and Approbation; and, on the other side, the Decrees of a Provincial or National Synod, being once consented to by the Pope, are of equal force with those of General Councils, as being Articles of Divine Faith, to be believed by all *Roman Catholics*, under pain of Damnation; which is a certain mark, that the Pope is the only Seat of this pretended Infallibility: as we Judge the King the only Seat of the Sovereign Power, not the Parliaments, because no Act of theirs is of any force, without the King's Approbation and Consent: yet, on the other hand, this Doctrine is flatly contradicted by the *Gallican Church*, yea, this Proposition, *The Pope is not Infallible*, has been often defended at *Paris*, in presence of the Popes Nuncio's and Legates: till then they are agreed among themselves, who this Infallible Visible Judge is, we are free to judge for ourselves, being sure we shall only be censured and punished at the last day, for doing against our own judgment: for nothing else can be imputed to us as a sin.

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But not to dismiss yet this Subject, how can we, says the *Romanist*, be sure of any Divine Truth, without the decision of an Infallible Visible Judge?

To which I answer, First, Besides that we may be as sure of any Divine Truth as they can be of their Infallible Visible Judge; Scripture is plain in all things necessary to Salvation, otherwise it was not written for *Edification*, nor can it make those that read it with a teachable temper of mind *wise unto Salvation*.

I answer, Secondly, We may come to a certain knowledge of Divine Truths by those very Means your Infallible Visible Judge is suppos'd to make use of for attaining to the same: for upon what grounds the first General Council, supposing it Infallible, believed the Articles of Faith, it defined? Sure not upon the Authority of another Council, since 'twas the first of all. Whatever then they shall produce for a sufficient Foundation of their Belief, shall be a sufficient Ground for me to build my Faith upon: Their Decisions then are no Articles of my Faith, but the Grounds they proceeded upon may be Inducements to me to believe. We ought nevertheless to have great respect for General Councils; yet because we are not to suppose them Infallible, without knowing why, we may, and ought to examine their Definitions at the Standard of the written Word, and of the general consent of all Christians in all Ages: for so doing we shall keep up with the Primitive Church, in case a Council in any material thing oppos'd it: neither can we upon this account be thought to presume too much upon our own Skill; for though it be more probable that ten may be less apt to trip, than one, yet because we are certain they may err, we are still in the right, to try if really they have not err'd: their greater number being only an inducement to me to search into the Reasons they rely on, not to receive their final Decisions, without any further examen: I must observe to you in this place, that considering with what zeal the *Romanists* contend for the Infallibility of their Church, I am satisfied some of them are fully perswaded of its being an Article of Divine Faith; for if they thought it but a probable Opinion, they would not be so angry,

angry with those that oppose it, since by the *Rule of Probables* they would allow in some measure of the very contradictory Opinion. I will then, to undeceive those that are of this Opinion, undertake to shew it to be no Article of Divine Faith, and by their own Principles too: for since they are not permitted the use of their own Reason in interpreting the Scripture, or Tradition itself, nothing can be an Article of Faith to them, but what is clearly decided by a General Council, but no General Council ever yet decided the Church to be Infallible, and far less the Church of *Rome*; therefore the Infallibility of the Church is no Article of Faith. I confess indeed, as I intimated in another place, the Infallibility of the Universal Church in this sense, that the whole Church shall never err, not that every particular part thereof, as the Church of *Rome*, or the *Greek Church*; and every private man may not err, but that by especial providence of God over his Church it shall never fall wholly away from the truth: and this cannot be but evident to an unprejudic'd Judgment, from the express Promises in Scripture, of Christ's assistance, even to the end of the World, notwithstanding all the Endeavours of Hell to prevail against it. But the *Romanist* means not only that his particular Church is Infallible in the sense I now mention'd, though I conceive this to be the Privilege of the Universal Church only, but that there is in the Church of *Rome* an Infallible Visible Judge of Controversies, empower'd to tie us up to the belief of his Decisions, under pain of Eternal Damnation; and yet none of the General Councils, yea, not that of *Trent* itself, ever said *Anathema* to such as did not believe the Church of *Rome*, or the General Councils, to be infallible Judges of controversial Debates, though it seems since the Church of *Rome* was accused of gross Errors by the first Reformers, nothing was of so great moment for her, as the decision of this primary and fundamental Article, upon which all the others depended: the Councils I know anathematize such as refuse to subscribe to their Definitions, but hence it follows not that they declared their own Infallibility, since both Provincial and National Synods do the same, which yet are confessed to be fallible by the very *Romanists* themselves.

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Thus I have argued hitherto only *ad hominem*: for though a General Council had declared itself Infallible, this would be no Article of Divine Faith, because the Infallibility of a General Council, when it defines itself Infallible, must be proved by an Evidence distinct from that of the Council itself, and therefore it can be no Article of Faith to a *Roman Catholic*, who must receive no Doctrine, under pain of Damnation, but what is clearly determined by a General Council.

I have dwelt too long upon this first Reason, why I cannot embrace the *Roman Catholic Religion*, which was, that I ever conceiv'd it founded upon a double false supposition, of its being both *Catholic*, and *Infallible*. I shall now go on with a more particular Account of my invincible aversion from the Faith of the Church of *Rome*, though at the same time, I profess none against the Members thereof.

I am then upon another account quite out of conceit with the Church of *Rome*: her *Transubstantiation* I could never believe, and if I did, I should soon doubt of the confessed Fundamentals of the Christian Religion: for I conceive not how a considering man can heartily believe *Transubstantiation*, and not doubt of all our chief Mysteries, which I take to be the very existency of Christ in the World, his Passion, his Death, his Resurrection, and Ascension, &c. and all those wonderful Works he did during his stay upon Earth, in order to confirm Mankind in the belief of his being God as well as Man: now what proof have we of those primary Articles, but the constant Testimony of all Mens Senses, and must we not believe 'em upon the Authority of those that we are assured were eye-witnesses to all those things, which if no body had seen, no body now would believe? but if the eye may be deceiv'd in the contemplation of its proper object, when no condition necessary for its operation is wanting, what certitude have we of any of the fore-mentioned truths? for though I see the Bread in the Eucharist, though I both touch and taste Bread, though I both taste and see Wine, with all the rest of Mankind, yet if I turn a *Romanist*, I must believe what is so evidently contradicted by my senses, and confess my self mistaken. How then shall I
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convince my self, or any other, that there was such a Man as Christ, that ever he arose from the Dead, that he ascended into Heaven, because I have no other evidence for all this, but that of my Senses; which, imposing upon me in one case, I mean in the Mystery of *Transubstantiation*, I know not why they may not deceive me in any other; and so, if I believe *Transubstantiation*, I find my self forced from the belief of Christianity itself, as being founded upon things we know no otherways to be certainly true than by the testimony of the Senses: Thus Christ himself, who knew better than any other how to settle a floating or doubting mind, used no other proof to convince St. Thomas, than what was founded upon the evidence of sense, *Touch and feel*, said he, *for a Spirit has neither flesh nor bones*; which, supposing the truth of *Transubstantiation*, was a very inconsequential way of arguing: for had St. Thomas believed the *Transubstantiation*, he had answer'd our Saviour, since he was so apt to doubt, that as in the consecrated Bread, after the pronounciation of the words, *This is my Body*, he saw, touch'd, and tasted Bread, where yet there was no such thing, but another substance; so though he both felt, and touch'd his Body, his Bones, and his Flesh perhaps, under these appearances, there lay hid some other substance, as that of a Spirit, and not that of either Flesh or Bones, as under the appearances of Bread you must conceive no real Bread, but the same Body and Blood of Christ, which is now at the same time in Heaven.

Since then neither St. Thomas, so very apt to object against whatever he was not certain of, made this obvious Objection, nor Christ gave him any account why he should not believe his Senses in all other cases as well as in this, I do firmly believe *Transubstantiation* to have been planted in the World, as the Tares spoken of in the Gospel, while men were asleep, and in the night of ignorance and superstition. But, says the *Romanist*, you believe the *Trinity*, why then do you not believe the Mystery of *Transubstantiation*? 'Tis a hard case, that because I believe the *Trinity*, so expressly delivered to us in Scripture, I must likewise believe *Transubstantiation*, and that there is no Bread in a consecrated Wafer, against the constant testimony of all mens senses, and though

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the Scripture be wholly silent about the matter; yea, I am very certain, that the understanding *Romanists* rely not upon Scripture in this case, but merely upon the Authority of their Church: they do I know raise some dust with these words of our Saviour, *This is my Body*: but what then? do they imply the destruction of the Bread? no sure, no more than these, *I am a true Vine*; *I am a Lion of the Tribe of Judah*; *The Rock was Christ*, &c. do signify the destruction of the substance of Christ.

I shall not insist upon this Subject, because it has been so often handled by others, especially by Dr. Tillotson, in his unanswerable Discourse against *Transubstantiation*: I must only add, that whatever is said in Scripture, about the eating of the Body, and the drinking of the Blood of Christ, ought to be understood in a spiritual sense, and that we do all this by Faith; for the Body and Blood of Christ being the Food of our Souls, we cannot feed upon them otherways than by Faith, and by Faith alone as opposite to Sense, because we receive not Christ by any of our Senses, since we cannot perceive him by any of 'em. The reception then of Christ, the eating of his Body, and drinking of his Blood, signify nothing more, but that as our Bodies are fed and refresh'd by Bread and Wine, so are our Souls, after a spiritual manner, according to their own nature, refresh'd and strengthened by those Divine Graces, which as we may call the Emanations or Productions of Christ's Body and Blood; so we may say, they are the Body and Blood of Christ, as we sometimes say, *this is the Sun*, *the Sun is in this Room*, understanding only by this Expression, his Beams and Influences.

I shall conclude with a word or two, concerning the silence of all Antiquity about this Matter, whatever the *Romanists* may boast to the contrary. What Fathers of the Primitive Church do assert with our Adversaries, that the substance of Bread and Wine is destroyed in the Eucharist? do they not call the Elements Bread and Wine after Consecration? and assure us of their remaining so still after it? I shall instance but in some few Passages in order to make good what I say.

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Tertullian in his first Book against *Marcion*, cap. 14. proving, that Christ made use of the Creatures, and neither rejected Water, Oyl, Milk, nor Honey, he adds, *neither did he reject Bread, by which he represents his own Body.* And in the third Book against *Marcion*, cap. 19. *Christ calls Bread his Body, that from thence you may understand, that he gave the figure of his Body to the Bread.*

St. Jerome in his Commentary on *St. Mark*, c. 26. has these observable words: *After the Typical Pascha was fulfilled, Christ took Bread, that comforts the hearts of men, and went to the Sacrament of the Pascha, that, as Melchisedec in the figure had done, asserting Bread and Wine, so he might also represent the truth of his Body and Blood.* In all which Passages the Sacramental Elements are called Bread and Wine, and the figure or representation of Christ's Body and Blood.

St. Chrysostom says *Epist. ad Cesar.* *The Bread is thought worthy to be called the Body of our Lord: And on these words, the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, among the improper exceptions of Flesh,* he says, *Comment. in Epist. ad Galatas, cap. 5. The Scriptures use to call the Mysteries by the name of Flesh, and sometimes the whole Church, saying she is the Body of Christ.*

Theodoret to the same purpose, in his first Dialogue says, *He who called his Natural Body Corn, and Bread, and also calls himself a Vine, likewise honoured these visible Symbols with the names of Body and Blood: for things are often called in Scripture that which they signify, as the seven Kine were seven Tears, the Seed is the Word of God; that is, signifieth the Word of God.*

Pope Gelasius, in his Book of the Two Natures of Christ, says, *The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ are a Divine Thing, for which reason we become partakers of the Divine Nature, and yet the Substance and Nature of Bread and Wine does not cease to be: And adds a little after that, their Nature still remains in its own property, as there remains one entire Christ: these things of which he is compounded remaining, to wit, his Two Natures remaining in their Properties.*

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And *St. Chrysostom*, disputing against the *Apollinarists*, *Epistol. ad Cesar. Monach*, confounding by a kind of, confabulation the Two Natures of Christ, argues from this Sacrament to illustrate that Mystery:

As before the Bread is sanctified, we call it Bread, but when the Divine Grace has sanctified it, by the means of the Priest, it is freed from the name of Bread, and is thought worthy of the name of the Lord's Body, though the Nature of the Bread remains in it, and it is not said, that there are Two Bodies, but One Body of the Son, so the Divine Nature being join'd to the Body, both these make one Son, and one Person.

Theodoret again, in his first Dialogue, disputing against a Heretick denying to Christ a True Body, says, among other things, *that, though to the purpose I omit for brevety's sake, he who called his Natural Body Corn, and Bread, does likewise honour the Visible Symbols with the name of his Body and Blood, not changing the Nature, but adding Grace to Nature.* And having forc'd the Heretick to confess, that the Bread and Wine were the Symbols and Types of Christ's Body and Blood, hence he draws this conclusion, *that Christ had a True Body.*

Theodoret in his second Dialogue against the *Eutychians*, who believed Christ's Body to have been swallowed up by its Union to the Divine Nature, representeth to us the Heretick arguing thus:

As the Symbols of the Body and Blood of our Lord were one thing before the Priestly Invocation, and after that were changed, and are different from what they were, so the Body of our Lord, after the Assumption, was changed into the Divine Substance: but he immediately answers, that he was catched in the Net he laid for others: for the Mystical Symbols, after the sanctification, do not depart from their own nature, for they continue in their former Substance, figure, and form, and are both visible and palpable as they were before.

'Tis easie for any impartial man, considering these foregoing Passages, and the Fathers way of arguing against the *Apollinarists*, and the *Eutychians*, who denied Christ to have had a True Body, that they were perswaded that the Substance of Bread and Wine remain'd after Consecration, since

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hence they proved, that the Humane Nature in Christ was not swallowed up after its Assumption, but remain'd after the Union, as the Substance of Bread remains in its own Nature after its Consecration: for had they believed Christ's Body to be under the Accidents of Bread in the Eucharist, by virtue of the Words of Consecration, how easie was it for them to prove the reality of Christ's Body after its Union to the Divine Nature, by saying he could not but have a True Body, since it was in the Sacrament under the appearances of Bread and Wine: which Argument they never made use of, but, on the contrary, proved always the remaining of the Humane Nature after its Assumption, by the remaining of the Substance of Bread after the Priestly Consecration.

From all this it appears, that the Fathers are on our side, unless you'll have 'em to argue like mad-men, after this manner: *The Appearances, or (as you speak) the Accidents of Bread and Wine remain still after the Consecration, therefore the Substance of the Humane Nature remain'd in Christ after its Union to the Divinity.* For had the Fathers believed *Transubstantiation*, had not the Eutychians retorted the Argument, *The Accidents of Bread and Wine remain without the Substance after Consecration, therefore the Properties of the Humane Nature remain in Christ after its Assumption, without the Substance of its Humanity?* But if we suppose the Fathers believed, that the Substance of Bread remain'd after it was consecrated, we shall find they had a great advantage from hence, to illustrate the Mystery of the Incarnation, by arguing thus, as they often did, as the Bleeding of the Bread did not destroy its substance, so the Union of the Humanity in Christ, to the Divinity, was not at all destructive to its Nature: though after all this, no man, not byass'd by real Prejudices, can doubt of the Doctrine of the Fathers.

I shall add one Reflection more for a farther illustration of the Matter.

The Jews, and the Gentiles especially, insulted over the Christians, for believing inconceivable Mysteries, as for instance, the Trinity, and more particularly the Incarnation; upon the account of which, as St. Paul himself intimates somewhere, they

they were reputed Fools, and derided every where by the Gentiles. Now what if the Christians of those Primitive Times had believ'd and profess'd, that a little piece of Bread, after some few words pronounc'd over it, ceas'd to be Bread, and was no more what it had been, though it kept still all the outward appearances of the same being, as colour, figure, shape and taste, &c.

With what scorn, with what disdain, and deservedly too, had they not look'd upon them, and as Men not in their right wits, who denied what they saw and felt, with all Mankind, to be what they really saw, felt, and tasted too? The Gentiles, who neglected no occasion of insulting over the poor Christians in those early times of the Church, had never slipt this which gave them so considerable advantage over them; and their silence upon the whole matter, is to me a demonstration, that no such thing was ever believed by the Christians of the Primitive Church.

'Tis a very weak Evasion of most Roman Catholics, to say, that Transubstantiation not being opposed in the Primitive Church, was therefore generally believed then, because by the same way of arguing one may prove, that every new broach'd Opinion was held generally by all Mankind from the very first Age of the World, upon this account, that no body contradicted it. Which is as unreasonable as if one would argue thus; None of the Ancients, either Philosophers or Physicians, ever opposed the Circulation of the Blood, therefore this Hypothesis was taught and embrac'd by all the ancient Physicians, which no Man of sense will think a legal Conclusion.

The reason then why Transubstantiation was not oppos'd in the Primitive Church, could be no other but because this Doctrine was not as yet broach'd, and in being in those Days. No wonder then, if what no body had so much as dream't of, could not be debated and opposed; yea, since 'tis granted, that in the first seven hundred years of the Church it was not contradicted, we must needs conclude that in all that time 'twas not heard of: For is it conformable to common sense or reason, to think, that none would stand in opposition to a Doctrine, that (to say nothing of its contradiction to the clearest

clearest evidence of sense) drew a long with it so strange consequences as this does; such I take to be the being of a Body, though by Divine Power, in more places at once, or without its natural dimensions, and every crumb of a Wafer, the possibility of its being produced at the same time in several places, it still yet remaining the same body, the actual separation of the accidents, such as Taste, Colour, Smell, Figure from all substance in which they subsist, the inconveniences that every one may fancy to himself in case Christ's Body come into ours, or be eaten by Vermin, its being corrupted, digested, &c.

I know, the eating of Human Flesh, and *Thyestian* Suppers, were reproach'd to the first Christians upon the account of the *Gnostick*, who called themselves Christians, but this related not at all to the Sacrament of the *Eucharist*, as 'tis evident by the Fathers Answer to that Charge, with a flat denial of the Matter of Fact, without offering any Explanation relating to the *Eucharist*; which is a clear demonstration they thought not this charge grounded on the Doctrine of the *Eucharist*.

I am then satisfied, that Transubstantiation being so absurd both in its self and its consequences, could not but be opposed so soon as 'twas openly profess'd: And indeed, from the second Council of *Nice* (as every one knows) to the fourth Council of *Latran*, it met with great opposition from the learnedst Doctors of the *Latine* Church. And since that time it occasioned in every Age the withdrawing of great Kingdoms, and vast numbers of People from the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, and I think it may be sufficient ground for me not to joyn with it now.

But there is as yet another thing, which I fancy you would not expect, that hinders me from being your Convert; which is the Novelty of the *Roman Catholick* Religion, whatsoever may be your boasts and pretences to Antiquity. For sure I am, the Church of *Rome* is no more now what it was of old, than the City of *Rome* now in being, is the same which was known to the World in *Augustus* his time by the same Name. I know indeed, you give us a large Catalogue of your Popes from *St. Peter's* time, to this very day: But besides that, it is highly probable, since the Scripture tells us nothing relating

ting to this matter, that *St. Peter* was neither Bishop of *Rome*, nor ever at *Rome*, you can pretend to no peculiar Prerogative upon this account, which several Christian Churches may not lay as good a claim too as you can do. The *Jewish* Christian Church and the *Greek* were before Yours, yea, the latter can prove her Antiquities by a continued Succession of Bishops down from the Apostles, to our times. The like may be easily made out by the *Abyssins* and *Maronites* of late, partly reconcil'd to the Church of *Rome*: Yea, *England* itself received not the Christian Faith from the Church of *Rome*, as some of your Friends inconsiderately boast of, since 'tis certain that *Augustin* the Monk found the Christian Religion already established in *England*, when he first came into this Island. But what we ought to lay the greatest stress upon, is, the Antiquity of Doctrine, which being the very Soul and Life of Religion, is chiefly to be regarded in this debate. I deny not but that the Name of *Roman Catholick* is of an older date than that of *Protestant*; but new Names being often imposed on very slight occasions, we are only to take notice of the thing itself, not of the Name, which may not be at all times the same.

Let us first then consider the necessary Articles of the *Protestant* Church, by which I mean such as are to be Believed, if known, under pain of Damnation, for these only make up the Essential part of Religion. I find then, that whatever the *Protestants* Believe now, is the same that was Taught by Christ and his Apostles, and Believed by the Primitive Christians, the standard of their Belief being no other but the Apostolick Creed, and the Scripture, as Interpreted by the Christians of the Primitive Church. Whatever then was an Article of Divine Faith in those days, is still so to the Protestants of our times, and nothing else, such I reckon to be the Incarnation, the Trinity, the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, and in one word, whatever is contained evidently in Scripture, or may be by a necessary consequence deduc'd from it; and all this being of the same date with the first and clearest days of the Church, we must of necessity confess, that the *Protestant* Faith is the old Faith, and no new Contrivance of the first Reformers, as the less understanding fort

of *Romanists* seem to believe, when they ask us where our Religion was before *Luther* and *Calvin*? Which Question is easily Answer'd by this obvious distinction, that if by *our Religion*, they meant the primary and fundamental Articles of Christianity, taught by Christ, and held by his Apostles and the Primitive Church, it was before *Luther* and *Calvin*, all these things being believed before *Luther* and *Calvin* by the Primitive Christians: But if by *our Religion*, they understand that distinct Body of Men, who have separated from the Errors of the Church of *Rome*? the Question comes to nothing, as implying only whether they were separated and reformed before the days of *Luther* and *Calvin*, which no *Protestant* affirms. But now on the other hand, if we look narrowly into the Church of *Rome*, and consider it as a distinct Body from other Christian Churches, we shall easily discover it to be compounded of meer Novelties, whether we have regard to its Doctrine, or to its Rites and Ceremonies, or way of Worship: For those additional Articles of Transubstantiation, Invocation of Saints, Image-Worship, Purgatory, &c. were certainly unknown to the first three Centuries, as has been sufficiently made out by *Protestant* Writers, or at least, which makes as well for my purpose, they were not then Articles of Divine Faith, and to be Believed under pain of Damnation; but now they are necessary and essential parts of a *Roman Catholick* Faith, who because of the Decisions of some of the latter General Councils, must believe, against the clearest evidence of sense, the destruction of Bread in a consecrated Wafer, as likewise of Wine after its consecration by a Priest, the lawfulness of Image-Worship, and of the Invocation of the Saints, the being of Purgatory, or of a third Place, where the Souls are to be punish'd before they enter into Heaven: All this I say, and whatever is determined by a General Council, he must believe with the same firmness he believes the Existency of God, the Divinity of Christ, the Trinity, and all the other primary Articles of the Christian Religion; and this I am sure was never done by the Christians of the Primitive times.

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'Tis clear then, that the additional Doctrine of the Church of *Rome* is a new Contrivance of the later Ages, since now 'tis made necessary for Catholicks to believe, and was not then: For to say 'twas believed *implicitly*, besides that this is the greatest piece of non-sense imaginable, because it implieth, that a man believeth he knows not what, it makes not against what I was saying, For what was believed then (to make use of this nonsensical Expression) *implicitly*, is now to be believed *explicitly*, under pain of Eternal Damnation, which is still a Novelty, and a strange one too, if duly examined.

The being of an Infallible Visible Judge was unknown to the purest times of Christianity. For had the first Christians believed any such, without doubt they had appeal'd to him to put a stop to the growth of Errors and Heresies that in those very days disturb'd the Church: But since they never made any such Appeal, we have good reason to say, the Primitive Christians never acknowledged any such Judge.

I should willingly learn from the *Roman Catholicks*, if the Pope had the same Power of old, he has now? Was he look'd upon by the three first Centuries, as the sole Vicar of Christ upon Earth? One need but turn over the Ecclesiastical History, to know how, and by what policy he came by degrees to the present pitch he now is in, though in the first days of the Church, the Bishop of *Rome* was under the Command of Temporal Princes, no less than other Subjects are.

As to the Practices and Rites of the Church of *Rome*, they are but late Inventions, and most part, point-blank contrary to those of the Primitive Church. The denying of the Cup to the Laity, is a convincing Instance of this; it was instituted for all indifferently, *Drink ye all of this*, and was for the space of thirteen Ages and more granted to the People, as well as to the Priests; but by an order of a *Romish* Council, notwithstanding Christ's express Command to the contrary, this Primitive Custom was laid aside upon the slightest and most frivolous grounds imaginable, which upon no occasion, how plausible soever, was to be changed, as being so solemnly instituted by the Founder of the Christian Religion, Christ himself.

The Publick Services in an Unknown Tongue, was the known

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known practice of the Church: *For six hundred years (saith not Origen?) the Grecians in their Prayers use the Greek, and the Romans the Latine Tongue; and so every one, according to his Language, prayeth unto God, and praiseth him as he is able.*

And yet this Ancient and Apostolick Custom is abolish'd by the *Romish* Clergy, as if they had received a greater Power from Christ, than the Apostles themselves, whose Power was only for *Edification*, but not for *Destruction*, as St. Paul tells us, 2 Cor. 10. 8. and proves convincingly throughout a whole Chapter, that the performing of Publick Service, and especially Praying in an Unknown Tongue, is quite contrary to *Edification*.

The Invocation of Saints was not in use in the three first Centuries, which, besides the silence of all Records upon this Matter, may be made out from hence, that the blessed Virgin began to be Prayed to, only in the Fourth Century, as I could shew: now 'tis more than probable, that she being the holiest among Women, was the first of all honoured this way, unless we suppose, against common sense and reason, that the primitive Christians, during the three first Centuries, directed their Prayers to the other inferior Saints, without ever having recourse to the more powerful Mediation of the blessed Virgin.

'Tis well known, that Image-Worship was never the Practice of the Primitive Christians, who could scarce allow of the Art of Painting, so zealous they were of the breach of the Second Commandment, which they generally thought to reach thus far. They were it seems of opinion, that God being a Spirit, was to be adored in Spirit and Truth, and not under any corporal shape, as they might easily gather from the severe punishment of the *Israelites*, for adoring the golden Calf, whom they knew to be nothing else but a meer representation of God, since they themselves had furnish'd the Matter this dull Idol was made of.

Neither can it be made appear, that Prayer for the Dead, the Foundation of Purgatory, was practis'd in the Primitive times, after the manner 'tis now used in the Church of *Rome*: for what is said in the Second Book of the *Maccabees*, to this purpose, is of no moment, because this pretended Scripture

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is not Canonical, and was not received as such by the *Jews*.

As to what relates to such Practices, as are the natural consequences of *Transubstantiation*, they were unknown to the Primitive Christians, because *Transubstantiation* itself was a thing unheard of among them: they knew not what the *Mass* was, if we take it with all those pompous Ceremonies that go along with it; we can shew how it got into this shape, by the additions from time to time of several Popes: and do not most men know the first and late Birth of the *Adoration and Elevation of the Host*, of *Processions*, and the *Doctrine of Concomitants*, and of all the other Rites and Ceremonies lately sprang up from the belief of *Transubstantiation*: 'tis no doubt, upon the account of this strange Doctrine, that the Eucharist is not admistred now as 'twas in the Primitive times.

When 'twas put into the hands of the Receiver, given to Children, trusted to Boys, or Common Persons, to be carried to the Dying, when the Remains were eaten up, and in some places burnt, in other places consumed by Children, or by the Clergy, or made use of in Cataplasms: to which we may add the mixing of the consecrated Chalice with Ink to sign the Excommunication of Hereticks, which would now pass for a great Sacrilege, because of the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, that was not held then: But those are not the only Reasons, though sufficient enough, had I no other, why I cannot submit to the Church of *Rome*. I would fain then go upon sure Grounds if I could, especially in Matters regarding the Eternal Welfare of my Soul: Now, if I turn a *Roman Catholic*, and in case Baptism be necessary to Salvation, as the Church of *Rome* teacheth, I shall always be afloat, and uncertain whether I be baptized, or not; because the Council of *Trent* allows of no valid Baptism, without some foregoing intention of the Priest: but if the Priest or Minister had either a contrary intention, or through forgetfulness not at all; for I conceive nothing of this to be impossible. I am at a loss whether I be in a state of Salvation, or not, as all those Priests may justly question, according to their own Principles, who were Consecrated by a late *French* Bishop, since he ingenuously declared in the Words of a Dying Man, that he never intended the Ordination of any of those

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that he had consecrated Priests: for the intention of the Bishop is thought as necessary to the valid Consecration of a Priest, as to the being of a real and valid Baptism: I should likewise, upon the same grounds, doubt of the Being of a true Pope, of true General Councils, if their Members must be Priests and Bishops, because if they never be Consecrated, (which I can never be certain of) they have no Commission, says the *Romanist*, to decide Matters of Faith.

May not I be allowed to add in this place, that should I go over to the Church of *Rome*, I would have reason to question, If there were any such Book in the World as the Bible, yea, or any thing else? For I can give no surer proof of the being of things that fall within the sphere of my Senses, than my very Senses themselves: yet I am told, that my Eyes do deceive me in the Eucharist, and what I see there, is not really Bread, though I both feel, see, and taste it, and find it likewise a good substantial Nourishment for my Body: now my Head turns round, and I am ready to fancy the whole World to be but a meer appearance, without either solidity or substance; yea, I shall perhaps run myself into greater extreams, and take all Christ's Miracles to be but meer deceptions of the sight, because they cannot be proved otherwise than by the testimony of the Senses, which could be no cogent Argument to a zealous *Romanist*, as I would then pretend to be.

There is yet another thing, in case of my Conversion, I should extremely stumble at, which is this, That I could not believe the Church of *Rome* to be Infallible, upon the account of her own Authority; for she allowing no other Infallible Judge but herself, I must believe her Infallible, because she tells me, she cannot Err, though without giving me any good reason for it: And this I could not easily consent to, as loving to act rationally in every thing, especially in Matters of the Highest Concern.

I am yet frightened from the *Roman Catholic Religion* upon another account, which you will be somewhat concern'd to hear, but that I cannot help; I must tell you freely my mind, since you have desired me to be ingenuous with you:

I was

I was always Loyal to the Royal Family, and with the Grace of God ever shall be, yet if I embrace the *Roman Catholic Religion* heartily, and with all its Tenents, I know not but that I may begin to waver in this main Point of my Duty, by acknowledging another Power upon Earth above that of my own Prince, which I look upon as a disposition at least, if not a full step towards an unnatural Rebellion, in case these two Authorities should clash together, and I were to take party for either.

I pretend not nevertheless to say, that a *Roman Catholic* cannot be a good Subject, God forbid I should think so; but I know so much of their Religion, that I may safely venture to say, they owe their Loyalty to their Generous Temper and Good Nature, rather than to the Principles of the Religion they profess. To be free with you then, were I a *Roman Catholic*, I could not, I fancy, have the same respect for my Prince, that I now have; for I would be oblig'd to acknowledge the Pope above him, but in *spiritualibus* only, you'll say: what then? he is rather more his superiour, than less, by this very restriction: for as the Spirit is nobler than the Body, and the Spiritual Power of a higher order than that which regards only Temporal Concerns, and since the Spirit gives Life and Motion to the Body, whoever is Master of the Spiritual, has likewise a great influence upon the Temporal: So I have reason to fear, should I once believe and grant the Pope's Superiority over Princes in Spiritual Matters, that I should likewise fancy he had at least an indirect Power over their Temporal Concerns, yea, I would of course acknowledge a Deposing Power in the Pope, in case my Prince embrac'd what you call *Heretic*: for could I then reject the Council of *Lateran*, asserting it? Whether it be an Article of Divine Faith among you, or not, I shall not enquire in this place; but sure I am, 'tis a Doctrine allowed of by your Church, and was never yet censured at *Rome*, where many less dangerous Opinions have been condemn'd.

I am then quite out of conceit with your Religion, since I cannot embrace it, without endangering my Loyalty, in case I mind to live up to the pitch of its real Principles: but 'tis all one to me, so long as I remain a *Protestant*, what Religion my

my Prince is of, though I could wish he were of the same I profess, because his Authority over me, and my indispensable Obligation to submit to him, do not depend upon his Opinion or Religion, but upon his Birth-right; yet have we not reason to doubt, if the zealous sort of *Roman Catholics* would not think it lawful to take Arms against their Prince, turn'd a Heretick, since the *French League*, against *Henry the Fourth*, was upon this very account styl'd *Holy*; and had I not been particularly acquainted with the Principles of the Church of *Rome*, I had never conceived how it came to pass, that such great numbers of learned, and well-meaning Men too, could be guilty of such a horrible wickedness, as that was, and forget themselves so far as to pretend Holiness in an open Rebellion against their lawful Prince: This confirms me more and more, though a Council of *Lateran* had not declared the Matter, in the Opinion I was always of, that by the very Principles of your Church, there is some allowance for Subjects in this case.

I am then more satisfied with the Loyalty of a *Protestant*, especially of the Church of *England*, who acknowledgeth the Prince to be Supreme Governor over all his Subjects, and Sovereign Judge in all Cases, than with that of a *Roman Catholic*, who seems to set Limits to his Power, by such Restrictions as neither Reason nor Scripture can warrant.

Thus, *Sir*, I have done with the promised Account of some of those *Prejudices*, (as you was pleas'd to call them) that have kept me hitherto in the Purity of the Christian Faith: if you think still they are not solid Reasons, but meer prejudicate Opinions, and ill grounded Fancies, it will become you to make good the Charge, and free yourself from the Suspicion I may justly entertain of your being guilty of that very Crime you so confidently, and with more Zeal than Knowledge reproach to others.

Your very Humble

Servant.

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