

ADDRESS

TO HIS

ROMAN CATHOLIC BRETHREN,

BY

A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

BRETHREN—The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ would ever make him to whom it was given anxious to declare it to others. I have been deeply anxious concerning you from the day I came amongst you ; and as I did not know how to leave the labour I was engaged in to turn to you, I cannot but see the hand of God in thus taking me from it for a while. I shall be glad to discharge in some measure my conscience towards you ; but I desire to do much more, making known to you the riches and power of God's redeeming love.

You all know how carefully you have been kept and warned from intercourse with those who have been anxious to bring the word of God amongst you, and to show you what the Spirit of God has taught us concerning the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ : you are taught to look upon them as heretics, as if we were not in the right faith at all. I shall make no observation on these things, for the Spirit of the Lord Jesus has taught us in His word, and teaches the heart of every real disciple, that the true and only answer to these charges, and this prejudice which they put into your hearts against is, is the exercise of unwearied patience and love towards you ; and this is our duty, brethren, and I pray God to enable His servants ever thus to walk, that you may see the sincerity of our hearts towards you in love.

I shall now proceed to set before you those blessed truths of the gospel, which we hold as the refuge and salvation of our souls. If you refuse altogether to enquire into them, I beg of you only to consider on what ground you will justify yourself if God shall call you in question for having despised His truth. Brethren, my heart's desire to God for you is, that you might know the peace and power of the gospel of Christ which is kept from you ; no other enmity have I against those who keep you in darkness but this, that they deprive you of the gospel. Would to God they would hear it, and not be heaping up judgment for themselves against the day of wrath ! Would to God they would ! Gladly and thankfully would every zealous Christian see their work ended, by those who exercise authority over you, themselves ministering the gospel, joined in one mind with us in furthering the glory of the Saviour, and our common hopes ; but while they will not, it is the bounden duty of every one to whom the grace of the gospel has been committed, as far as he is afforded opportunity, nay, to seek opportunity, to warn you earnestly that you are kept in darkness, and to hold up the gospel before you, that you may see the light. It is a work of unfeigned love, and I beseech you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to receive it so.

I join with my whole heart those who urge the reading the scriptures ; and I do not conceal from you, that I judge it the manifest work of Satan to keep them from you, and the proof of the power of Antichrist ; and all the history of the Church shows me this. But I shall not enter on this now ; I shall first plainly state the blessed gospel, in the hope that, by the blessing of God, its glory and its grace may reach some soul ; and if any amongst you be mourning over their sin, they may find the perfect comfort it was meant to give ; and I shall then show you, that that in which the priests make their boast over us, is an invention only tending to rob Christ of His glory, and you of your comfort, and I must add, to keep you in sin and impenitence.

Forgive me this, brethren. Would to God I had opportunity of simply stating the gospel to you, and you had ears to hear it with desire. Little need I then trouble you or myself with opposing what is contrary to it. But if your souls are endangered by it, is it anything but kindness to show you your danger?

I say then, brethren, that the Lord Jesus, by the one sacrifice of Himself once offered, has totally and eternally put away sin, so that it shall never be imputed at all to those that believe on Him, and that every repentant sinner who comes to Him is justified from all things, is accepted of God in Christ, with all the love He bears towards the Lord Jesus, for whose sake He does so accept us; that the glorious love of Almighty God has provided this deliverance for sinners who could not help themselves. You can understand, my friends, what comfort it would give to a soul really burthened and distressed with sin, who would earnestly desire favour and acceptance with God, against whom he had offended, to find that God Himself had freely put it all away, and blotted it out. And He has, if you will believe the Son of God, and His Spirit speaking by the apostles, He has so loved us while *we were sinners*, as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life; so that being justified by faith in Him, we should have peace with God, and rejoice in hope of His glory. And it is Satan's own work to deny this—to say that God did not so love us—that Christ's sacrifice was not sufficient to put away sin—that His blood, through faith in it, does not cleanse from all sin. Brethren, what you want for your peace is to have your conscience cleansed from sin against God; and this the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, once slain for us, alone can do, —and can do altogether. *How much more*, says the apostle, *shall the blood of Christ, who by the Holy Ghost offered Himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* (Heb. ix. 14.)

Brethren, I beseech you to lay this to heart: Has

the Son of God left the glory of His Father, and given His life for you, and will you say, I will not accept your freely offered love, I will not believe that you have wrought a full and perfect salvation for me? And if you do not believe that Christ has altogether and perfectly justified you from sin by His death, you deprive yourself of all the hope of the gospel; for if you are not at peace with God, you can never have the hope of His glory; and if you are not perfectly justified from sin, it is impossible you can be at peace with God; nay, more, you can never serve God here with a free and willing mind, which is the only acceptable service. For if you do not know but that God is still angry with you, if you are still afraid of Him, your service will be no real service, you will go on working in misery, in hope of gaining His favour; and this is what every sincere Roman Catholic is doing, adding work to work, in hope of turning away the anger of God, and gaining His favour; but this is all in vain, and really a great dishonour to God. God is love, and He has proved it by sending His Son to die for you, while you were in your sins. How freely, how devotedly, would you be able to serve God if you knew that He loved you, and had done such wonderful things for you, and that you were fully accepted; and He has, my friends, or we should all have perished eternally.

Oh! that you knew this; oh! that you would believe this, that you might know the comfort and the joy that there is in believing. And how is all this? By the sacrifice of Christ, the one great atonement for sin, the one glorious showing forth of the love of God to sinners, so that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, as St. Paul says, or as our Lord Himself says, "*He who heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath life everlasting, and cometh not into judgment, but is passed from death to life.*" (St. John v, 14.)

"By one oblation," says the Epistle to the Hebrews, "he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Hebrews x, 14.)

And what, on the denial of this, is promised instead, in which you boast yourselves? The pretended absolution of your priests and the sacrifice of the mass.

The effect of these is not to bring the conscience to God, that it might feel the depth of heart sin against Him, and seek for cleansing pardon and renewal of soul through the blood of the cross, and the power of the Spirit of God—but by relieving your conscience at the moment from the fear it was under, to leave you at liberty to go on sinning again. But, my friends, need I solemnly warn you, do not your own consciences tell you, that this is an impious delusion? It takes away the fears of the wicked man, so as to let him go on in his sin, and leaves the poor humbled penitent with his conscience as burthened as ever; and because they are sincere in their sorrow for sin, some additional burthen of penance put upon them. Oh! is this like the grace of God, or the truth of His love? Brethren, if anything would rouse Christian indignation to what is called religion amongst you, it is to see the wicked thus let go free, and still more, the heaping sorrow upon a contrite heart, putting them off with penances, which in their sincerity they will rigidly fulfil, without one ray of that comfort which the blessed God delights to give the humble.—“For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” But I tell the unrepenting sinner, they miserably deceive themselves, and they, and those that deceive them, shall find judgment for their iniquity; and I tell the humbled and contrite in the Lord’s name, fear not, Christ has died for you, God Himself has justified you, there is free and perfect remission by the death of Him who was delivered for your offences. Nay more, that same Jesus who died for you, is now at the right hand of God making intercession for you; able, as the apostle says, “to save them for ever

that come to God by him, always living to make intercession for us."

And this is another point where the great and tender love of God has been hid from you, I mean the mediation of Christ: you are led to look at Christ as a severe judge, or an unapproachable Lord, as if we had need of a mediator to come to Him by; but let the humble soul remember that He is, through the infinite grace of God and His own love, man as well as God; did He not prove to us, that He was ready, nay, desirous to receive all that come to Him, by becoming one of ourselves, though without sin? For what did He pass through suffering and trial in the flesh, but to enter into all our sufferings with us, to understand them all, that they who believe might feel they had a friend who knew thoroughly all our wants and trials; or will they say He has left off to feel for those for whom He suffered so much, nay, whom He purchased at so costly a price.—Brethren, I beseech your attention to this. The very glory of the gospel, the way in which it has pleased the Father to glorify Himself and His Son Jesus Christ, is by the Son's becoming mediator between God and man; and for this purpose, as the apostle speaks, He became man—He acquainted Himself with all the trials of those whom He redeemed to be His children, and whom He ever looks at as such, that He might succour them in all their difficulties. (Heb. ii, 11.) The words of the apostle are these: "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren;" and again, "Behold I and my children whom God hath given me." "Therefore, because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he himself also in like manner hath been partaker of the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil. Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God, that He might be a propitiation for the sins of

the people. For in that wherein he himself hath suffered and been tempted, he is able to succour them also that are tempted."

And it is not merely argument we have for these things; I quoted to you above, He was declared to be "always living to make intercession for us," but the apostle is plainer still.

"Having therefore a great high priest, that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession; for we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin. Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid." In short, brethren, what could our hearts desire more, than that one who so loved us as to give His life for us; one who has a perfect sense and tender feeling for all our wants, by having felt them Himself, should be now exercising that love for us at the right hand of the Father. And so St. John—"But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just, and he is the propitiation for our sins." Acquaint yourselves with the love and gracious tenderness of our glorified Lord. Taste and see that the Lord is gracious. Dishonour Him not in denying His willingness to receive you, as though He were a consuming fire; He is not except to those who deny Him. The Lord, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, has not changed in His love since He said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Open your hearts before Him, ye that seek for mercy; if He redeemed you when you were enemies by sin, how much more will He receive you now that He has reconciled you? But having gone on to say so much for the humble soul, I return to the sacrifice and priesthood.

Some, I know, totally to their own confusion, deny that Christ has thus perfectly delivered the conscience of believers, by putting away sin for them by the sacrifice of Himself. But, perhaps, some of you will

say, who denies it? I answer as to the comfort of your consciences, as to the faith of the soul in it, it is utterly denied to you; and your consciences in consequence kept in bondage.

Christ, the Spirit of God has declared, has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself—if He has, what need of any other sacrifices? He hath made an end of sin, says Daniel, and brought in everlasting righteousness. But in your sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sin as not put away; for if Christ has reconciled us to God, and expiated sin for us, what is the repeated sacrifice for? Does it not directly and expressly take away from the glory of His sacrifice, and say it was not enough, that it was insufficient? And while it robs Christ of His glory, as if He had not reconciled us to God, it deprives us of our comfort by declaring His sacrifice insufficient to clear our consciences. And mark the utter folly of such a thought. As if the sacrifice which the Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself in the shedding of His blood by the eternal Spirit was insufficient to put away sin, or to cleanse our consciences by faith in it, but the sacrifice which men offer without blood does that which the former did not do.

Ah! brethren, why will you be kept from the faith of the Son of God once dying for us?

I further show you, that it is contrary to express testimony of the Spirit of God: not merely as to the sacrifice, but as to their claim of being priests, and that both one and the other are in fact a denial of Christianity. In the epistle to the Hebrews (chap. vii, 22,) the Spirit of God thus testifies, "By so much is Jesus Christ made a surety of a better testament, and the others [referring to the Jewish priests] indeed were made many priests, because by reason of death they were not suffered to continue; but this [that is, Christ as a priest], for that he continueth for ever, hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby he is able also to save for ever them that come to God by him, always living to make

intercession for us, for it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily (as the other priests) to offer sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did *once* in offering himself." Now, brethren, if you feel any interest in how you may rightly come to God, if this be the express teaching of the Spirit of God, is not the claim of Priesthood, and the offering of sacrifice, which is the proper office of a *priest*, (Heb. v, 1,) directly opposed to the truth of the gospel, and the mind of the Holy Ghost?

It is fitting, that we Christians should have a High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separate from sinners, *made higher than the heavens*, who needeth not daily to offer sacrifices, for this he did *once in offering Himself*. What room does this leave to one who believes in it, that accepts the mercies of God in His Son, set forth by the Holy Ghost, to look for constantly repeated sacrifices, and a multitude of priests on earth? For if that which the Holy Ghost declares to be fitting has been done, as it certainly has, there can be no truth in that which is contrary to it; and the supporting the earthly priesthood and sacrifice is not only against the honour, but is really a denial of the sacrifice and Priesthood of the Lord Jesus our Saviour; which is the hope, the support, the comfort, of every believer in Him, and the blessed earnest of their being with Him in glory, seeing, as the apostle speaks, Jesus, in entering into the heavens, has entered for us as a forerunner.

In a word, Jesus Christ is the Priest of the Christian Church and its sacrifice; nor is there the least ground whatever given by God, for any man to assume the character of a priest, that is a sacrificer; and whoever does it, does it on his own authority and in opposition to God and His Christ.

The repetition of the sacrifice shows its total inefficiency to cleanse the conscience from sin. By this the apostle shows the inefficacy of the Jewish sacri-

fices, and afterwards asserts that to which I would earnestly entreat your attention, as the great centre of truth in this matter, I mean, the perfect remission of sins wrought for believers by the death of Christ. Speaking of the sacrifices under the law, he says, (Heb. x, 1,) "the law by the self-same sacrifice which they offer continually every year, can never make the comers thereunto perfect, for then they would have ceased to be offered, because the worshippers once purged would have no conscience of sin any longer; but in them there is made a commemoration of sins every year;" and then verse 10, "In the which will" (i.e., of God) "we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ once." And again, verse 12, "But this man offering one sacrifice for sins, for ever sitteth on the right hand of God. (verse 14.) For by *one* oblation he hath *perfected for ever* them that are sanctified; and the Holy Ghost doth also testify this to us; for after that he said, and this is the testament which I make unto them after those days, saith the Lord, "I will give my laws in their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more. Now, where there is remission of these, there is no more an oblation for sin."

So that, my friends, either there is not remission of sins by Jesus Christ, or there is no more oblation for sin, and if the Holy Ghost hath testified truly that there is remission of sins by Jesus Christ, and that the sins and iniquities of those within His testament, are remembered no more; then the sacrifice which you pretend to offer for sin is false, and not merely a harmless error, but one amounting to a denial of the remission of sins by Jesus Christ, the preaching of which in His name was the great commission given to the apostles. (Luke xxiv, 47.)

I shall copy another passage without any observation. I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what is said. The apostle had said, (Heb. ix, 22,) "Without shedding of blood is no remission of sins," and then, (verse 24,) "For Jesus is not entered into the holies made

with hands, the patterns of the true, but into heaven itself, that he may appear now in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holies every year with the blood of others, for then he ought to have suffered often from the beginning of the world; but now once at the end of ages he hath appeared for the destruction of sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment; so also Christ was *offered once* to exhaust the sins of many, the second time he shall appear without sin, to them that expect him unto salvation."

In a word, my friends, (Romans v, 19,) "as by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one man many shall be made just." And I solemnly warn you, in the name of Him who shall judge the quick and the dead, that if you are not partakers in the righteousness of Christ, you have no hope in you; all your works are vain delusions, unacceptable, nay, an abomination to God; they can give you no peace, nor have they any fruit unto life eternal, while you despise the work which God has Himself wrought in the gift of His own Son.

Brethren, brethren, my heart's desire would be to preach the gospel simply to you, and not touch—why should I desire it?—upon those things in which you are kept in error: my own hope and comfort, and, through the mercy of God, my joy too, blessed for ever be His holy name, who hath called me in His mercy to the faith of His Son, is in the knowledge of the perfect and gracious salvation wrought by Jesus Christ, so that all fear is taken from him that believeth; and in the knowledge we are given of the glory of the Lord, of God our Saviour in it. Of this I earnestly desire that you may be partakers; we are all equally unworthy of it; it is free grace to all. The prayer of my soul is offered up to God for you, that through that grace, you may be brought to the knowledge of salvation by faith in Christ Jesus; but, brethren, it is an awful time for you; your errors in ignorance would be freely for-

given and put out of remembrance, if you repent and believe the gospel: but judgment comes upon those, who when, "light is come into the world, love darkness rather than light." (John iii, 19.) Read the whole chapter down to this. The fear of men will be no excuse in that day; for if you had thought rightly of God, you would rather have feared Him. I have anxiously, according to the grace given to me, thought of the state you are in, and the testimony of the Spirit of God in His word concerning you, and I earnestly and solemnly entreat you to consider in your own souls, to examine what real ground you have for hope of acceptance, which you know God sanctions; you will see you have none, and that the rejection of the gospel now delared to you, is the rejection of your salvation.

You are in the extremity of danger, where you are, of being involved in the judgment which shall fall upon those who, from wilful corruption of the truth, will have their portion appointed with unbelievers: and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

May God Almighty, by the power of the Spirit of truth, deliver you from the power of darkness, and lead you into all truth, that you may know the glory of His grace, whereby He has made us accepted in the beloved, and give you a place in the fold of the great Shepherd, who loved us, and gave Himself for us, and liveth for evermore, our great and merciful High Priest.

Your affectionate friend and servant in Christ Jesus.

I have purposely refrained from controverting errors, but you will find all those things which are peculiar to your system tend to the robbing Christ of His glory, and the denial of the completeness of His work; and this, if any wish, can be shown them. Where I have made any direct quotations, I have quoted from the Douay, to satisfy you; in your translation and ours the sense was the same.