

CHAPTER V.

CONCLUSION.

THE preceding Discussion is, I trust, fully sufficient to extract its sting from the very plausible though very sophistical, argument of the Bishop of Meaux.

I. Agreeably to the promises of our Saviour Christ, which it has been my object to explain through the medium of an historical verification, there has never been wanting, from the very first promulgation of the Gospel, a spiritual visible Church of faithful worshippers.

Through all the worst and darkest periods, even through that century which Baronius himself calls *the iron and leaden and obscure age*, such a Church has incessantly existed, though often, to all appearance, on the very brink of destruction*.

There was a time, when, in the boasted immu-

* In novum inchoatur sæculum, quod, sua asperitate ac boni sterilitate *ferreum*, malique exundantis deformitate *plumbeum*, atque inopia scriptorum, appellari consuevit, *obscurum*. Baron. Annal. in A. D. 900.

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Though incessantly harassed and persecuted by the tools of the Papacy, yet, through all those middle ages which preceded the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the Vallenses were never, either exterminated by the sword of violence, or enslaved to the unhallowed superstition of the Latin Church. According to the remarkable confession of an Archbishop of Turin in the earlier part of the sixteenth age, though perpetually attacked by an enemy of surpassing power, still, in mockery of all expectation, the Vallensic Heretic of the Alps came off victorious: or, at least, if not absolutely victorious, he shewed himself unconquered and unconquerable*.

II. With the Reformed Catholics of the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the visible united Church of the Vallenses and the Albigenses, now actually existing in the Valleys of the Cottian Alps, agrees, both in all essential points of Scriptural Doctrine, and in a steady opposition to the unscriptural corruptions of the Church of Rome.

Through the medium of the Vallensic Church, which, at the very beginning of the fifth century, not to speak of even a yet earlier period, subsisted

* Quippe, quia, a longè potentissimo hoste invasus, præter opinionem victor, aut omnino invictus, evasit; multo, quam prius, fit insolentior atque audacior: et, quen prius valde formidabat, repulsum facile deinceps contemnit. Idque tunc magis contigit, quum hostis conatus sæpius inanes fuere. Claud. Seyssel. Taurin. adv. Valdens. fol. 1.

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table communion of the Latins, religious knowledge was at so low an ebb, that the Cardinal, during the evolution of his leaden age, is fain to pronounce Christ himself asleep, while the mystic ship of the Church Catholic was overwhelmed by the waves: and, what he thinks even yet worse than the alleged somnolency of the omniscient Redeemer, the ecclesiastical mariners snored so soundly, that the disciples, who might rouse their sleeping Lord, were no where to be found*.

He, however, that keepeth Israel, neither slumbered nor slept. Profound as might be the drowsiness of the whole Latin Church, respecting which Baronius so justly and so honestly complains; widely extended as might be the great apostasy from the faith, which St. Paul has so characteristically foretold: Christ, nevertheless, was not without mariners, both fully awake, and zealously active at their post. What the Cardinal was unable to find throughout the *Vast Obscure* of the Papal Dominions, and the want of which might well nigh seem to have frustrated the promises of the Saviour himself, still continued to exist in the secluded and despised Valleys of Dauphiny and Piedmont.

* Dormiebat tunc planè alto (ut apparet) sopore Christus, cum navis fluctibus operiretur: et, quod deterius videbatur, deerant, qui Dominum sic dormientem clamoribus excitarent discipuli, stertentibus omnibus. Baron. Annal. in A. D. 912.

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where it still subsists, in the region geographically defined by the angry Jerome as lying between the waters of the Adriatic Sea and the Alps of King Cottius, we stand connected with the purity of the Primitive Church. In despite of the lawless innovations of the papacy, innovations which are condemned by the testimony of the earliest ecclesiastical writers, the promises of Christ have been faithfully accomplished.

III. A very subtle problem has been proposed by the Bishop of Meaux. That problem, I am willing to hope, has now been solved. In the Valleys of the Alps, by a pure visible Church, the Ancient Faith of Christianity has been preserved, through all the middle ages of innovating superstition, sound and uncontaminated.

Behold, the bush burned with fire: and the bush was not consumed. The Angel of the Lord was in it: and the arm of the mighty God of Jacob was its protection. Therefore the son of wickedness could not destroy it: and the enemy was unable to wear it out by violence.—ΔΟΞΑ ΕΝ ΤΡΙΣΤΟΙΣ ΘΕΟΙ.