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FROM

Gratis.

3 Apr. 1895

OF

THE CONVERSION

III, 8636

OF

THE REVEREND JOHN THAYER,

FORMERLY

A PROTESTANT MINISTER OF BOSTON.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A LETTER TO HIS BROTHER,

AND

HIS CONTROVERSIAL WRITINGS.

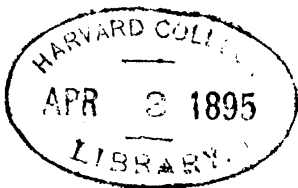
BY THE EDITORS OF THE U. S. CATHOLIC PRESS.

HARTFORD, CONN.

MDCCCXXXII.

~~III 8636~~

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THE CONVERSION
OF
THE REVEREND JOHN THAYER,
OF BOSTON.



The Public Papers have already announced the Conversion of a Protestant Minister wrought at Rome, at the time of the miracles of the Venerable Labre. I am that Protestant converted to the faith: and being led to it by a very special providence, like the blind man in the gospel miraculously healed, it gives me pleasure, and I think it my duty, to publish the goodness of a bountiful God, to whom I am indebted for the light and life of grace. Both my conversion, and my solemn abjuration at Rome, were public. Passing afterwards into France, I related my story, or rather that of Divine Providence in my regard, to a great number of respectable persons, who wished to learn the particulars of it. I was afterwards strongly solicited by some friends, to send it to the press, for the edification of Christians, and for the greater glory of God. Yielding to their reasons, and their authority, I now, *by their advice*, give it both in English and French, in favor of those who only understand one of those languages.

I was born in Boston of a family in easy circumstances. I was brought up there in the Protestant Religion, the only prevailing and almost the only known in New England. At first I had refused to study, but at the age of sixteen, by reflection, and a certain desire of improvement, I intreated my pa-

rents to put me to school. By dint of application I repaired lost time, and by the help of a good teacher, made a tolerably rapid progress. At the conclusion of my studies, I was made a Minister of the Puritan sect, and exercised my function for two years, applying myself to the study of Holy Scripture, and to preaching. In the mean time, I felt a secret inclination to travel; I nourished the desire, and formed a resolution of passing into Europe, to learn the languages which are most in use, and to acquire a knowledge of the constitution of states, of the manners, customs, laws and government of the principal nations, in order to acquire, by this political knowledge, a greater consequence in my own country, and thus to become more useful to it. Such were my human views, without the least suspicion of the secret designs of Providence, which was preparing for me more precious advantages. I embarked for Europe, and arrived in France at the end of the year 1781. I remained there ten months, totally taken up in studying the language, in reading the best authors, and instructing myself in the principles of the Government: I was there attacked with a fit of illness, and as I feared, that it would be attended with serious consequences, my first concern was to forbid, that any Catholic Priest should be suffered to come near me; such was my attachment to my own sect. After my recovery, I spent three months in England, attentive as in France, in observing the manners and customs of the country. I was desired to preach; I complied, but it being observed that my doctrines did not agree with that of the persons before whom I spoke, I replied that I had taken it from the gospel. It is on this that all the sects, however opposite to each other, establish their various systems; a striking proof of the necessity of a living authority to fix its true sense! I returned to France, with the intention of passing thence to

Rome, constantly bent on the same pursuits; and as it may easily be imagined, strongly prejudiced both against the nation and religion of that country, which had been represented to me in the most odious colours. However during my stay in France, I had formed a more favorable idea of the Catholic Religion, and my intercourse with the Italians contributed also to remove my prejudices against them. In our passage from Marseilles to Rome, we were becalmed, and obliged to stop some days at a little port called *Port Ercole*. The Marquis D'Elmoro, a respectable old Gentleman, received me without any recommendation to him, and treated me with the kindness and affection of a father: his house, his table, his library were at my service, and when we parted, he made me promise to correspond with him. I had the happiness wherever I went, to meet with Italians of the same character, and all with whom I have been concerned, have shown the same eagerness to oblige me, especially the worthy and virtuous family, in which I lodged at Rome, and in which I found myself as in the centre of my own family. Such goodness, such cordiality to a stranger, to an avowed Protestant, at once touched and surprised me. This Religion, said I, is not then so unsociable, and does not, as I have been told, inspire sentiments of aversion and intolerance to those of a different persuasion. Thus, from day to day, I condemned the unjust prejudices, which had been suggested to me, and God disposed matters at a distance to bring me insensibly to the happy term, at which I have arrived. My first concern at Rome, was to visit the most celebrated master-pieces and monuments of antiquity, which attract the notice of strangers; among others the Rotunda or Pantheon, a temple formerly consecrated to the worship of all the false deities of Paganism, but at present dedicated to the honor of the Blessed Virgin,

and of all the Saints. At the sight of this superb edifice, I was struck with an idea which appeared to me sublime, and which I thought might furnish the subject of an elegant discourse, if the Catholic Religion were true. The following is, in substance, the idea which occurred to me at that time. "This Temple, formerly consecrated to the worship of false gods, now become the Temple of the true God; the cross of Jesus Christ raised on the wrecks of the idols, collected to form for it, as it were, a more glorious trophy, and from thence exhibited to the whole world; this city, formerly the mistress of the universe, and the capital of the Pagan world, now become the Capital of the Christian world; these, I say, are living and lasting monuments of the triumphs of Jesus Christ over the *strong-armed*, and of the establishment of his Empire upon the ruins of that of Satan. Yes, it was worthy of God, to make the centre of idolatry, the centre of the true faith; the first city in the world, the capital of his kingdom; in short, this famous school of all arts, this celebrated city, which draws the attention of the curious and strangers from all parts of the world, the school of truth, and the common centre of union among all those who believe in Jesus Christ: then nothing would be wanting to the exterior glory of his Religion, and to the visibility of his church, which he undoubtedly intended to exhibit to the eyes of all mankind; it would then be truly a *city built upon a mountain*, so exposed to the sight of all the world, that it could not be concealed." This idea pleased me much, and as I was fond of the eloquence of the pulpit, I wished it were true, to be able to treat so beautiful a subject. This first ray of light should have led me farther; but as yet, it was no more in my eyes than a pleasing fancy, which I relinquished to attend to the purposes I had formed.

I learnt Italian much sooner, and with much more

facility, than French ; and in a short time was able to read the best authors in that language. According to my intention, I studied at the same time, the constitution and actual state of Rome. From time to time however the Catholic Religion returned to my mind ; and although it made no part of my plan of studies, I was desirous nevertheless of instructing myself thoroughly in its principles, during my stay in that city ; for the same reason that I should have wished to know the Religion of Mahomet, had I been at Constantinople: I was far from suspecting that my own was false, or at least from thinking of embracing another ; I only wished to know the doctrine of Catholics from their own lips, that I might not impute to them what they did not avow themselves. In this design I addressed myself to several Ecclesiastics, and according to my custom of adapting my conversation to each one's profession, I entered on the topic of Religion ; but they had more piety than light, and seeing me a determined Protestant, they condemned me without informing me, and we parted equally discontented, they with my attachment to my errors, and I with their zeal, which did not appear to be according to knowledge. On the whole, my only intention was to learn their opinions, not to be disabused of my own ; and I thought of nothing more than to satisfy my curiosity ; but thanks to that admirable Providence which made all conduce to my good ; as the desire of travelling had led me to the centre of light, without my knowledge, so the desire of instructing myself, brought me to the knowledge of the truth without my intention. After having often sought for an opportunity of conversing with some person well informed, both able and willing to instruct me thoroughly in the Catholic doctrine, I met with two Ecclesiastics in a place which I was accustomed to frequent. I entered into conversation with them, and declared who I was and what I wanted.

At that time I thought with respect to the Jesuits, as all other Protestants do ; but yet I told them I should be glad to form an acquaintance with some of them. I know, said I, that they are cunning, designing men, but they are celebrated for their learning ; and while I profit by their lights, I will carefully guard myself against their subtily. The two persons with whom I was then conversing were of the Society of Jesus : my frankness did not displease them ; they declared themselves what they were, adding that they would not undertake to give me the instructions I desired, but would refer me to an able man, who could satisfy my inquiries. In effect they introduced me to one of their brethren, who was well known in Rome, and much distinguished for his learning and piety.—“ Sir,” said I, when introduced to the gentleman, “ I may possibly have conceived some false notions of your Religion, as all the knowledge I have of it, is taken from the report of its enemies ; if this be the case I wish to be undeceived, for I would not entertain a prejudice against any person, not even against the Devil.—Yet do not think of converting me, for certainly you will not succeed.” This blunt introduction did not prevent him from receiving me with a gentleness and affability which could only be the effect of true charity. He consented to have some conferences on Religion. At first he exposed in order all the articles of the Catholic doctrine ; which exposition lasted some days. I listened with attention, and without interrupting him ; but on my return home never failed to set down in writing the difficulties and arguments which seemed to combat each one of these dogmas and articles. Though many difficulties occurred to my mind, I could not but remark a wonderful harmony through the whole system of the Catholic Religion, and wisdom which seemed to have something divine. When he finished his exposition, I proposed in my turn, my difficulties and doubts ;

and we spent above three months in discussing these articles. I was oftentimes at a loss for a reply, because I was candid in the discussion, and sincerely meant to instruct myself, and not to cavil: yet many obscurities and embarrassments still remained, which I was anxious to remove; and as this respectable man could only give me a few leisure hours, and at intervals, to fill up the vacant time between our conferences, I had recourse to another Jesuit, who had not less zeal or less knowledge. He began with me in a manner which surprised me. "We will not," said he, "enter on this subject at present: go, say the Lord's prayer thrice, and return to me on such a day." I could not refrain from smiling at the singularity of this reception, and replied, I am not yet a member of your Church, and already you impose on me a penance." We parted; but reflecting afterwards, that prayer, far from misleading, must be of real service to me, and that a Religion which teaches to begin by prayer an enquiry into its tenets, must be confident that they are established on solid proofs. I complied with what he had prescribed, and met him on the day appointed. I was already acquainted with the Catholic doctrine; he had nothing more to do, than to clear up those points, concerning which I still had my doubts. As I proposed my difficulties on each of these heads, he pointed out the passages in the best Theologians and Controvertists, where they are treated at large; he procured me their works, and I read them with attention. I had an opportunity of examining thoroughly each one of the articles contested between Protestants and Catholics, and of weighing the reasons which the latter allege to support their sentiments. I derived likewise much help from an Augustinian Friar, to whom I addressed myself at the same time; he took particular pains to shew me the difference which Catholics make between articles of faith and simple opinions, which the Church permits

to be treated in schools, without either adopting or rejecting them. This distinction threw a light on the subject, and contributed greatly to put clearness in my ideas : for Protestants, by blending these two objects, are accustomed to create confusion in the whole system. There is a perfect unity of faith among Catholics ; it is true that there are different opinions on many undecided points. It is from mixing together these two things which are so widely different, that our adversaries take occasion to attribute to *faith*, what only belongs to free and indifferent *opinions*. The care which I thus took to consult several Doctors, proved doubly useful to me : for at the same time that I profited by the lights of each of them, I had an opportunity to remark that they agreed perfectly in matters of faith ; which indeed must be *one*, as truth is *one*. This uniformity, which has subsisted among Catholics, through all ages, made a lively impression on me, because I had never discovered it among Protestants. I had been connected with the heads of our sects ; I had often conversed with them ; I knew their sentiments ; there were not two among them who agreed in the most essential articles ; what is more, there was not one who had not varied in his doctrine. I recollect that one of our most celebrated Preachers once made the same declaration to me. When I preached in such a place," said he, "I passed for heterodox ; I was so at that time, for I had very erroneous sentiments ; but I have changed since, and were I to preach there at present my doctrine would be judged pure and orthodox : but this is common to all our Preachers ; I do not know one who has not, like myself, varied in his doctrine." This declaration made no impression on me at the time he was speaking ; but it has occurred since, and has given rise to many reflections. Another proof which verifies the common saying, that good or evil principles imbibed in

youth produce sooner or later their effect. This instability of our leading men in their doctrine caused me much pain : I saw that it was an inevitable consequence of the fundamental principle of Protestants, which constitutes each one the judge of his own belief. By this principle there can be no fixed rule of faith. It is this which causes the eternal contradiction of ministers among themselves, and the frequent variations of each of them in their doctrine. I had endeavoured to conciliate their systems together, but could find no other way, than by supposing it sufficed to believe in Jesus Christ, and to intend to honor God ; but I soon found that this method, with which I was much pleased, tended equally to reconcile the most opposite and monstrous sects ; I consequently from day to day gave myself greater scope, and fixed no bounds to the liberty of thinking. I had friends among the Quakers, the Anabaptists, the Arminians and others, and in a short time I should have adopted a system of toleration in its greatest extent. Protestants vainly pretend that they admit Scripture for the rule of their faith, since they acknowledge no living authority to determine its sense ; since each one is suffered to give it a private interpretation, it is impossible to convince them of error ; and when the Socinian, for instance, says, that he cannot find in Scripture a demonstrative proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ, no one has a right to require that he should believe this dogma, or to condemn him because he rejects it. This principle goes farther, and leads the man who reasons justly, to an indifference of all Religion, and saps the very foundation of christianity, by establishing the private judgment of each individual the supreme arbiter of his creed. This reflection, and a thousand others which occurred, had not, at that time, all the effect which they ought to have produced : however in the end they did not a little contribute to open my eyes to the truth. My

researches had already carried me much farther than I had designed : at first I had only intended to form an exact knowledge of the Catholic doctrine, and I was insensibly come to such a state, that I discovered nothing in it, but what was reasonable : When I began my enquiry, I had not the least suspicion that my own sect was false, I already found it deficient, and had my doubts, though I was very far from being determined to abandon it. The prejudices in which I had been educated had still too much influence over my mind, and my heart was not yet disposed to make the sacrifice which this change required. I thought I had done a great deal by resolving to take with me to America the best works of controversy which had been written by Catholics, and to read them on my return, with a determination of then changing my Religion, if after mature reflection I could not answer their arguments : for I was resolved, whatever proof was brought against me, not to make my abjuration at Rome, for fear of taking a precipitate step. Providence, ever watchful over me, did not suffer these delays which might have been fatal, but ordered various events which hastened my conversion : A work of Father Segneri on the Guardian Angel fell at that time into my hands. This pious belief, that each of us has a tutelar Angel, the witness of all his actions, was not new to me ; it had been inspired into me from my infancy, but till then had had little or no influence on my conduct. The perusal of this work renewed the impressions which had formerly been given me on this subject : I reflected on my past life ; I reproached myself for having so often failed in the respect which I owed to my Guardian Angel, and I formed a resolution to be careful in future to avoid every thing which could displease him.* This at-

* One of the most solid and rational devotions is certainly that which respects the Angels, since it has for foundation the immense benefits which we have in all times received from these

tion to preserve myself from sin undoubtedly contributed to my conversion ; at least it removed an obstacle to the grace which God was about to bestow. Such was my situation, when the death of Venerable Labre, and the Miracles which were said to have been obtained through his intercession, began to make a noise at Rome, and to become the subject of every conversation. Notwithstanding the instructions which I had received, and the lights which I had acquired, I was nowise disposed to credit the public reports concerning this truly extraordinary person. Of all my prejudices against Catholics, the deepest rooted was a formal disbelief of the miraculous facts which are said to have happened among them. I had been brought up in this persuasion common to all Protestants ; who never having been able to attain the gift of miracles, like the Fox in the Fable, disdain it, and deny its existence. Not content with denying those which were published at that time, I made them the subject of my raillery, and in the Coffee houses passed some very unbecoming jests on the Servant of God, with whose poverty and uncleanness I was shocked ; and on this head I went farther than any even of my Protestant friends.— However the number and weight of the evidences increasing daily, I thought that it was my duty to examine the matter myself. I frequently conversed with the Confessor of the deceased, from whom I learnt a part of his life. I visited four persons, who were said to have been miraculously cured ; I was convinced by my own eyes of the state in which they then were ; I questioned them concerning the state in

benevolent Beings. But this devotion ought to be peculiarly tender towards those who are appointed as our Guardians, and from whom we continually receive an infinity of temporal and spiritual favors.—This, therefore, after the devotion to Jesus and his blessed Virgin Mother, is what I most warmly inculcate on all my friends, particularly those who are young, as an excellent preservative against sin, and as a means of advancing in virtue.

which they had been; I informed myself of the nature and continuance of the illness with which they had been attacked, and the circumstances of their cures, which had been operated in an instant. I collected the evidence of those to whom they were known, and after all these informations, made with the greatest care, I was fully convinced that the reality of each one of these miracles was at least well proved as the most authentic facts. One of these persons, a Nun in the Convent of St. Appollonia, had burst a blood vessel; she daily grew weaker and weaker for the space of eighteen months: and at length was so reduced that she could bear no nourishment: she invoked Venerable Labre; took with a lively faith a draught into which one of his relics had been dipped, and was cured in an instant; the same day she went to Choir with the rest of the religious, ate without feeling any pain, and with ease performed the most painful offices of the Convent. This was attested by the superior and six other Nuns of the same Community. I often saw the Nun who had been cured, spoke to her, and found her in perfect health and strength. Not content with these proofs, I visited the Physician who had attended her during the whole course of her illness: he confirmed all that the Community had said, and added, that he was ready to take his oath on the Gospel that the illness was naturally incurable. I continued to see the Nun during the rest of my stay at Rome, that is, for about four months. I had time to convince myself that her cure was lasting, and at my departure I left her in perfect health.* Persuad-

* When Mr. Thayer had published the first edition of this narrative, a Minister of the Protestant Episcopal Church wrote to him that he was astonished that he should mention in this enlightened age, the miraculous cure of a Nun. To whom he answered: Facts, Sir, are facts in an enlightened as in an ignorant age and the proofs of facts, which we have not seen ourselves, are always the same; that is, human testimony. Observe that in an enlightened age, such as ours, miraculous facts, are with more

ed that there was something supernatural in these cures, I could not refrain from turning my thoughts on myself, and from considering the risk I ran by remaining in my own sect. These reflections involved me in much perplexity; I can hardly express the violent state in which I then was. Truth appeared to me on every side; but it was combated by all the prejudices which I had sucked in from my infancy. I felt all the force of the arguments which Catholics oppose to the Protestant doctrine; but I had not the courage to yield: I clearly saw that the Catholic Church is established on innumerable and unanswerable proofs, and that her replies to the reproaches of Protestants are solid and satisfactory; but I must abjure errors in which I had been brought up, and which I had preached to others: I was a Minister in my own sect, and I must renounce my state and my fortune: I was tenderly attached to my family, and I must incur their indignation: interests so dear kept me back: in a word, my understanding was convinced, but my heart was not changed. I was in these circumstances, fluctuating and undeter-

difficulty imposed on the world, because of the facility of detecting their falsity.—Yet, at this very time our Church proposes to the Public an infinity of such facts, and this at Rome, the resort of the curious and inquisitive of all nations, Protestant and Catholic; Rome, where open and hardy discussion, even in public Coffee houses, is as free as in any other part of the world; (for this I appeal to all Englishmen who have been on the spot;) and she defies the most scrutinizing critics to invalidate their truth. Such facts, Sir, are to be believed, or there is an end to all human faith.

Since Protestants thus question the greatest possible human testimony on such public and momentous facts, I am not at all surprised that one of your great men undertook to prove false all the miracles of the Gospel. He was at least more consistent than his Brethren, for he thus reasoned:

The Catholic Church boasts of miracles as great as those recorded in the Gospel, and proves them by numberless competent witnesses: We reject these; therefore, to be consistent we must also reject those of the Gospel, which equally lean on human testimony.

mined, when a little book, intituled *Manifesto di un Cavaliero Cristiano convertito alla Religione Catholica*, (which it would be good to translate into several languages, and to spread wherever there are Protestants) was put into my hands. The author gives an historical account of his conversion, and briefly discusses the points which are controverted between Catholics and Protestants. He places in the beginning a prayer which was communicated to him by a Catholic to invoke the light of the Holy Ghost, and which the reader perhaps will not be sorry to see.

“Almighty and eternal God, Father of mercy, Saviour of mankind, I humbly intreat thee by thy sovereign goodness, to enlighten my mind, and to touch my heart, that by true faith, hope and charity I may live and die in the true Religion of Jesus Christ. I am sure that as there is but one true God; so there can be but one faith, one religion, one way of salvation, and that every other way which is opposite to this, can only lead to endless misery. It is this faith, Oh my God, which I earnestly desire to embrace, in order to save my soul. I protest therefore before thy divine Majesty, and I declare by all thy divine attributes, that I will follow that Religion which thou shalt show me to be true; and that I will abandon, at whatever cost, that in which I shall discover error and falsehood: I do not deserve, it is true, this favor on account of the greatness of my sins, for which I have a profound sorrow because they offend a God so good, so great, so holy and worthy of my love; but what I do not deserve, I hope to obtain from thy infinite mercy, and I conjure thee to grant through the merits of thy precious blood which was shed for us poor sinners by thy only begotten Son Jesus Christ. *Amen.*”

When I received this book I had a secret presentiment that it would give me the finishing stroke, and

it was with extreme difficulty that I could prevail on myself to peruse it. My soul was, as it were, rent by two contrary emotions. What combats, what assaults did I not at that time endure; I cast my eyes over the prayer, but could not prevail upon myself to say it: I wished to be enlightened, yet feared being too much so. My temporal interest, and a thousand other motives, crowded upon my mind, and counter-balanced the salutary impressions of grace. At length the interest of eternal salvation prevailed. I threw myself on my knees, I excited myself to say the prayer with the greatest sincerity I was capable of, and the violent agitation of my soul with the conflicts it had sustained drew from me an abundance of tears: I began then to read the book; which is a short exposition of the principal proofs which establish the truth of the Catholic Religion.— The whole of those different proofs which till then I had only viewed separately: so many rays of light, collected as it were into one centre, made a lively impression on my mind. Besides I did not make the same resistance as formerly to the divine grace: God spoke to my heart at the same time that he enlightened my understanding, and gave me grace to surmount the obstacles which had hitherto retarded me. I had not entirely finished the book, when I exclaimed, “My God; I promise to become a Catholic.”— The same day I declared my intention to the family with which I lodged: it gave them joy, for they were truly pious. I went in the evening to the Coffee-house, where I imparted my change to all my Protestant friends; and to repair, as much as I could, the scandal which I had given, I defended the sanctity of Venerable Labre, and declared that I had more proofs of the truth of his miracles, than I would require for any fact whatever. Moreover, not to be ashamed of Jesus Christ, I invited a great number of friends to be the witnesses of my abjuration. Many lament-

ed my weakness, others made a jest of it; but God who called me to the faith, supported me, and I have a firm confidence that he will support me to my last breath.

I must acknowledge that before my abjuration, I had struggles for some time with my imagination respecting the worship of the Blessed Virgin and of the Saints. I had nevertheless been sufficiently instructed on this article, and did not doubt, but that it was profitable to employ with the Son, the intercession of his holy Mother, and that far from doing an injury by honoring and loving her whom he had so tenderly loved himself, it was the mean of honoring him the more; yet my ancient prejudices returned and disturbed my mind in spite of myself. The reproach of idolatry, which I had heard a thousand times brought against Catholics on this subject, still alarmed me, though I knew it to be ill-founded. I resembled those persons, who in their infancy, having had their imagination strongly impressed with the ridiculous stories of apparitions, at a riper age involuntarily shudder, where the same ideas recur, in spite of their reason, which wholly disowns them. I was obliged to offer violence to myself, and when I began to invoke the Blessed Virgin, I did it with trembling. I first addressed myself to God, protesting that I had no other design than to honor him, and that I desired to do it more perfectly by the intercession of his Blessed Mother, entreating him not to impute to me idolatrous intentions, which I disavowed with all my soul. Then addressing myself to the Blessed Virgin, "Oh, tender mother," said I, "if it be lawful for me to implore thy succor, help me in the miserable state in which I am; it was through thee that the Saviour came to us, it is through thee that I desire to go to him. The Scriptures teach me, that by thy means was wrought the first miracle of the evangelical law in the order of grace, (the

sanctification of St. John the Baptist) and the first in the order of nature, (the change of water into wine.) Here remains another to be performed; do not refuse to employ thy credit; I do not deserve it: too long have I not known thee; but now, though with fear and trembling, I begin to address thee; intercede for me with thy Divine Son." Then returning to God, "Oh Lord," said I, "I implore thy light; thou hast promised to listen to those who invoke thee; I do it from the bottom of my heart; thou art my witness that I seek truth at whatever expense: I cannot err in addressing my supplications to thy blessed Mother; Thou thyself wouldst be the cause of my error." Confidence and tranquillity were the fruits of this prayer. From that time I have always had recourse to the Blessed Virgin, and I am confident that I have received grace through her intercession: gratitude obliges me to make this acknowledgment. I endeavor to join in every institution which tends to her honor, and I have pledged myself, and study as much as can depend on me to extend the devotion to this dear Mother of God.

A very natural reflection here occurs: Can God suffer a person to be deceived in the choice of a Religion, when after exact watchfulness over his own conduct, after fervent prayer, after long and toilsome investigation, he determines to embrace it at the expense of all that is most dear to him on earth,—family, state, fortune, reputation? If this religion be false, may he not say, with a celebrated divine, "Lord, it is thou who hast deceived me." This reflection will acquire a new degree of force, if I add the prodigious change which is made in me by conversion. I hesitate to publish it; but think it my duty so to do, in order to glorify the mercy of God, and to render homage to the Catholic religion, which I have now the happiness to profess. What difference between my present and former state! My

thoughts, my taste, my views are wholly changed; I do not know myself again. As soon as I had taken my determination, I renounced the profane studies in which I had been hitherto employed; I left my books half read; I parted with those which belonged to me. From that time my passions have had little influence over me; my projects of ambition and settlement in the world are entirely laid aside. I have no pretensions on earth: I take no pleasure but in the things of God: I feel within my heart, a peace which I had never known; not, as formerly, the deceitful security of a stifled conscience, which presumes on the mercy of God, without seeing the danger to which it is exposed: it is the sweet confidence of a child who finds himself within the arms of a father, and has reason to hope that nothing can tear him from them, notwithstanding the dangers with which he is surrounded. Yes, this religion is adapted to the heart: however powerful and solid the proofs are which convince me that it is the True Religion of Jesus Christ, the satisfaction, the pure joy which accompanies it, is for me another kind of proof, not less persuasive. The truths, which I had most difficulty in believing, are those in which I now find the greatest consolation. The mystery of the Eucharist, which appeared to me so incredible, is become an ever flowing source of spiritual delight: Confession, which I had considered as an insupportable yoke, seems infinitely sweet, by the tranquillity which it produces in the soul. Oh! if Protestant and unbelievers could taste those sweets which are felt at the foot of the Altar, they would soon alter their sentiments! Oh! that I could be heard by them all, I would cry out to them: "Taste and see how sweet and good is the Lord to those who serve him in the holy society, which he has formed himself, which he vivifies by his spirit." This is the prevailing wish, this is the only desire of my heart.

to extend as much as lies in my power, the dominion of the true faith, which is now my joy and comfort. I desire nothing more; for this purpose I wish to return to my own country, in hopes, notwithstanding my unworthiness, to be the instrument of the conversion of my countrymen; and such is my conviction of the truth of the Catholic Church, and my gratitude for the signal grace of being called to the true faith, that I would willingly seal it with my blood, if God would grant me this favor, and I doubt not but he would enable me to do it. I entreat all those who shall peruse this narrative, to pray with fervor the Father of Lights, and the God of mercies, to bless the designs of his unworthy servant, and to open an easy access to the faith in my country, and to cause it to shoot forth and to fructify in a land in which it has as yet but imperfectly been known. Perhaps, and I dwell with pleasure on the consoling thought, perhaps, I say, he who raises up, and casts down empires, as he pleases, who does all for his elect, and for the interest of his Church, has only permitted and brought to an end, the surprising Revolution* of which we have been witnesses, in order to accomplish some great design, and much more happy Revolution in the order of grace. *Amen.*

JOHN THAYER.

AD MAJORAM DEI GLORIAM:

FOR GOD'S GREATEST GLORY.

* The Independence of the United States of America.

**REV. MR. THAYER'S LETTER TO HIS BROTHER,
IN ANSWER TO CERTAIN OBJECTIONS.**

My dear friend and Brother. I received with the greatest pleasure your letter by Mr.——, in which I have the satisfaction to find, that the friendship and tenderness which you have had for me, from your earliest age, still continues : be persuaded that on my side there it not only continues but has acquired new force from time, absence, and much more from the heavenly religion I have embraced, whose peculiar property it is to perfect the moral virtues it finds in us.

After a tender effusion of heart, you declare your sorrow that I have embraced a Religion (as far as you are acquainted with it) fraught with bigotry and superstition. You did well to add, my dear brother, "as far as you are acquainted with it;" for let me tell you that it is entirely unknown to you. Surely nothing but the false representations and calumnies of our enemies, who have disguised what in itself is holy, reasonable, and worthy of all your respect, has made you give to our religion the odious terms of bigotry and superstition. This your ignorance however is common to most Protestants (for I can suppose but few capable by wary malice of imputing to us what they know in conscience to be false) I confess that I was entirely surprised myself when I heard the exposition of the Catholic faith from the lips of its professors, because I found it totally different from what I had been taught to conceive it. Believe me, my dear Brother, for I have no interest to deceive you. I desire nothing so much as your salvation and that of my dear relations, for which I would gladly suffer the most cruel death. This I declare before God who sees the sincerity of my heart. Before you read my answer to your objections, I beg

you to retire a moment in secret, and there heartily and on your knees, solemnly promise God to renounce all your passions, and ask his grace to avoid every thing your conscience shews to be sin ; and then say the prayer p. 16, in the narrative. If such be your dispositions, and if you faithfully cultivate them, my answers, though short, will leave no clouds in your mind ; if you be not thus disposed, you do not sincerely seek the truth.

Your *first* objection, taken from the persecutions that Catholics have excited against their enemies, only proves that there have ever been bad Catholics, who under pretext of Religion, have vented the malignity of their heart. Our Religion, far from approving, highly condemns all such Christians, and knows no other instrument of defence than mildness, patience and charity. There have been, and still are, cruel and persecuting Catholics, as there are also cruel Protestants ; but neither the one nor the other are so in consequence of their principles, but because they deviate from them. We do not pretend that all Catholics are Saints ; we unhappily see the contrary, and it is this that afflicts all the good. This, however I can assure you, after a vast acquaintance among Catholics of several different kingdoms, that I never yet saw a single one express any bitterness or animosity against Protestants ; on the contrary, they pity them, and pray for them, as deluded and deceived. Examine whether such be the sentiments of your different sects towards us, and even towards each other, and afterwards decide, who have a persecuting spirit, we or you.

2. As we lay great stress on the unity of doctrine that ever has prevailed among Catholics, you think to weaken this our argument by opposing to us the unity that reigns among Mahometans. But let me tell you, that this unity of belief, which you attribute to them, is wholly imaginary ; for according to the

best historians, the Mahometans are first divided into the two great sects of Omar and Ali. These last, who are called Schiites, form five principal sects, which, like so many trees, shoot into seventy branches. Among all these different societies there is a vast variety of belief. Some doubt of their religion, and are pure Deists; others admit the *Metempsychosis*; others absolute predestination, &c. They give each other the titles of orthodox, and heterodox, and carry their mutual hatred to such an extremity, that in their pilgrimage to Mecca, they form so many bands apart, refusing to pray together. There can be then no question between us about Mahometan unity, but only about that of Protestants. Now I assert that if you were all perfectly of the same opinion this would be the work of chance, and not the consequence of your principles. There is nothing in your fundamental principle that necessarily produces this unity; on the contrary, your principle, that "every one is to examine for himself," must be naturally a source of division, whereas the constitution of our Church is such, that it is impossible there can be division concerning articles of faith. Remark, I say, *concerning articles of faith*; for in matters of opinion, each one is free to hold what he pleases: but as soon as the Church has decided, that such a point belongs to the faith, all true Catholics, because they hold her infallible, necessarily submit to the decision. Those that refuse to submit by this very refusal really separate themselves from the church, since they renounce her fundamental principle, *i. e.* that she is the infallible "basis of truth," 1 Tim. iii. 15.

3. This individual unity of faith, is evidently marked in Scripture, and was certainly Christ's intention in founding his church, It is said, Ephes, iv. 4. 5. there is "one body and one Spirit;" to animate it, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," *i. e.* our faith ought to be *one* in the same sense as our Lord Jesus

is **ONE**, i. e. strictly and absolutely so. Christ prays John xvii. 20. 21. that those who believe in him may be united in the faith in a manner resembling, as far as possible, the union between the persons of the Holy Trinity, and gives this union as the mark by which the world is to know that he received his mission from his father; for without such a unity of faith among the Disciples, the world would never have believed that their Master was sent from God. Perhaps you suppose that Christ there only prays for union of hearts, and gives the union formed by mutual charity as the distinguishing mark of Christians; but even this explanation demonstrates the necessity of sameness of faith, since nothing so much destroys that charity, as difference in religion. Witness the wars that have taken place in the world on this account, and the coldness with which different sects ever regard each other. Our Church alone can pretend to this *unity*: which of itself suffices to convince the unprejudiced that she alone is Christ's spouse; yet we do not pretend to assign this as the only note to discern her: there are three others marked in the creed, which you admit as well as we, viz, **HOLINESS, APOSTOLICITY, and CATHOLICITY**. Examine whether all or any of these marks belong to your sects.

4. Observe that all the Fathers of the Church had our idea of the necessity of the unity of faith in Christ's Church; you as well as we regard them as Saints; and certainly by their nearness to Christ's and the Apostles' times, they must have known their mind. I could cite volumes of texts from their works to prove this, as well as the other articles of our faith; but the bounds of a letter forbid.

5. What seems to give you the most pain in our doctrine is, the *infallibility* which we attribute to our church. A simple explanation of this point must remove, I think, whatever in it appears alarming. Observe *first*, that we attribute this infallibility to the

20

whole church, *i. e.* to the majority of Bishops joined to the Pope, and not to the Pope alone. If some particular Divines regard the Pope alone as infallible, this their opinion cannot be justly imputed to the whole Church, which has never defined any such thing. But in order to put our doctrine of infallibility in a clear light, let us recur to that moment when Christ revealed "all truth" to his Apostles, and established them, and the pastors their successors, as depositories of these truths. This body of pastors, thus established, have, in all ages, declared every rising novelty to be contrary to the sacred deposit committed to them by Christ. Thus when Arius denied the divinity of Christ, the church condemned him, and declared that she had received the contrary: Thus when Pelagius denied original sin, the Church declared his doctrine contrary to her deposit, and brought baptism, which had ever been practised in her bosom, as a standing proof of our corrupt origin. Her infallibility consists then in the public and perpetual testimony that she ever renders to truths of fact. For what is the Christian religion, my dear brother? It is a public fact. Whether Christ has existed, taught such and such doctrines, wrought such miracles? Whether the Bible be written by such and such authors? &c. All these points are matters of fact that have fallen under the senses, and that can only be known by eye or ear witnesses. The teaching church, *i. e.* the majority of Bishops united to the Pope, is this body of hereditary witnesses: and you cannot surely refuse her an infallibility, (*i. e.* a capacity of exactly relating facts) which you readily grant not only to whatever considerable society, civil or religious, but even to individuals. When the Mahometans, who are composed of different nations, and consequently of different interests, unanimously attest that at such a time they received such a doctrine from Mahomet, no one of common sense

can dispute a public fact of this nature. Why men should you refuse the testimony of the Catholic church, that is composed of various nations directly opposed in their interests, and often at war; when all her pastors, as unanimously *at least* as the Mahometans, declare, that they have received such doctrines from Christ and the Apostles, and all agree in the exposition of all the articles that belong to the faith, and deny that there has ever been the least change in their Church? And how is it possible to suppose any change? There is in the first place a body of pastors, as we have said, established to prevent all innovations: the perpetual return of our holidays put continually before the eyes of the faithful, our mysteries, many of which are and ever have been daily practised. For instance, Christians ever communicated. Is it reasonable? Is it possible to suppose, that when their pastors presented them what appeared to be bread, they did not ask what they were to receive in this sacrament, whether mere bread or the real body of Christ? Christians then, in all ages, must have known what they were to believe in so important a matter, especially the nearer they were to the Apostles' times, when pastors were certainly exact to instruct their flock. Whatever you suppose to have been their faith in this point, it must have continued without any alteration: for if there had been the smallest change, mankind, who are naturally turbulent, would have cried out in a matter so vastly important. If you say that they did so, but that it has not come to our ears; I answer that this is truly strange, since we have cotemporary historians, that have recounted the minutest disputes about words and letters, that have happened in every period of the church, (not excepting the times of the grossest ignorance) and so essential a change as this they would have passed in silence! How incredible!

6. Besides, what interest could the church have had to change her doctrine? How could all the different nations that compose it, have combined to make this change, since their interests are all different. If the French, for example, had attempted this change, would not the English have opposed them? And even, if all her parts had united to form this change, would not heretics, who have at all times existed round about the church, have reproached this alteration, and thus have transmitted it to posterity? Form the same reasoning for all the other articles of our faith, where you suspect a change, as for this of the real presence of Christ in the holy Communion. Thus you see, my dear friend, that common sense forces us to receive the church's testimony, when she declares that she has received such and such truths from Christ and the Apostles, and that she has preserved them unaltered. Now when we are arrived to admit her testimony concerning what Christ and the Apostles delivered her, from that moment, if consistent, we are Catholics; since all Christians hold that what Christ and the Apostles taught is certainly true. This *moral infallibility*, which you are obliged to grant to the church, as to all other great societies, becomes *divine* in virtue of the promise of Christ, who has expressly communicated to her his own immutability.

7. This second sort of *infallibility*, far superior to the first, because supernatural, appears in a striking manner in the words of Christ to his Apostles: "Go and teach all nations, and behold I am with you" (i. e. teaching) "until the end of the world." Now a church, that has Christ present while it teaches, must certainly be infallible; and this presence is *surely* promised to the successors of the Apostles; to whom the words, "until the world's end," must be applied, since the Apostles themselves were all dead, except St. John, before the end of the first century. Again

Christ promised his Apostles, *John xiv. 16, 17*, "the Spirit of truth to remain with them for ever," *i. e.* to the end of the world. This text, for the same reason as the preceding, must also be applied to the Apostles' successors, the pastors and teachers of the church; which, having thus for guide "the Spirit of truth," must necessarily avoid all errors in faith, *i. e.* must be infallible. I was then supported by reason and scripture, and not merely, as you say, "*on the legends of our church*," when I said, *that the Pope, with the majority of our Bishops, are directed by the Spirit to decide what we are to believe*; for it is as public and incontestable a fact that the Pope is the successor of St. Peter, and that the other Bishops are successors of the other Apostles, as that Lewis XVI. is successor of St. Lewis.

8. Again, reason persuades us that Christ's church ought to be infallible. Christ declares, "that he that hears her, hears himself:" He commands us to obey her, under pain of "being regarded as heathens." God surely cannot order us to *obey* one that is capable of teaching us error; otherwise he would be himself the author of them.—Besides why did God establish the church? "In order," says St. Paul, *Ephes. iv. 21*. "that we may not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine;" *i. e.* that we may never be *in doubt* concerning what we ought to believe. But you Protestants, can you ever be free from doubts? This is impossible, since you have no infallible authority to settle them. However a visible and infallible authority distinct from scripture, (which is the law) is absolutely necessary to decide the contentions that arise among Christians. Where this authority is not admitted, there is no fixed rule, no invariable articles of faith. The proof of this is the increasing multitude of sects among you, which frequently end in Socinianism, Deism, &c. But what is the most palpable demonstration of what I advance, is, the late altera-

tion that those of the Church of England among you have made in the articles of faith. What are articles of faith? They are eternal truths revealed by God, and founded on his veracity: As the divine veracity is unchangeable, the truths that depend on it must remain the same; for "heaven and earth will pass away before one of God's words shall fail," and therefore it is not only absurd but impious to attempt to change them, since this is making God a liar. Experience then proves, that you need an infallible judge.

9. Nor can you reply that the bible is this unerring judge; for the bible is the law; it is a mute book, and the subject of dispute: we need a sovereign and visible judge to declare who is right and who is wrong. I repeat it, the bible cannot be this judge: for without the decision of the church, we must always have some of these doubts: 1. Whether the bible itself be a canonical book, the production of the Holy Spirit; 2. Whether it be entire and unaltered. This second doubt is reasonably founded on the various readings of different manuscripts; 3. Whether it be faithfully translated; and 4. Which is the most important, Whether we have ascertained its true meaning. Amid so many doubts and incertitudes, where can be the certitude of faith? Yet our faith ought to be so firm and unshaken, that we should be ready, like the Martyrs, to die in its defence; otherwise we are unworthy of Christ and of the name of Christians. We Catholics can have none of the incertitudes, because we submit to the church which we believe to be infallible.

10. Further, what evinces the necessity of an infallible church, is that such a one *alone* is adapted to the bulk of mankind. Is not God, according to St. Paul, "the Saviour of all men?" Does he not will and even show the most tender solicitude for the salvation of his children, of the poor and ignorant?

Are the poor artizans and laborers, who are continually occupied by the cares of life ; and women, who do not apply to study : are they, I say, capable of that eternal discussion and examination which your principles demand ? No, for this the longest life of the most learned would not suffice.

11. This article of the infallibility of the church once established, a Christian's doubts immediately vanish ; for if once sure that God cannot permit the church to deceive me, from that moment I am obliged in conscience to receive all her decisions, even in things that appear the most incredible to reason.

12. The first consequence drawn from the church's infallibility is, that she has never erred, and that Luther, Calvin, &c. who have pretended it, have made Christ a liar, who has declared, *Matt. xvi. 18*, " That the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church." Now if error has infected her, the gates of hell *have* prevailed, and Christ *has not* fulfilled his promise.— The second consequence is, that all those, who *knowingly* and *wilfully* follow those pretended Reformers are in evident danger of eternal ruin. Those persons can never give a satisfactory answer to the following argument : In Luther and Calvin's time, either the Catholic church was Christ's true spouse, or some other society was so ; or else, Christ's true church had ceased. If the Catholic society was at that time Christ's church, no one could separate from it without risking his salvation, since there is no salvation for those that are separated from Christ : If any other society was then Christ's true church, they were obliged to join it under pain of damnation : If they say that Christ's church had ceased, they make Christ a liar, who has promised its perpetual duration in spite of the combined rage of earth and hell.

13. What I have said on *Infallibility* will give you a just idea of what we mean by *Tradition*, which the Protestants so greatly misrepresent. By this word

we mean nothing else than the *general, unanimous and constant testimony* of the church of all ages about the truths revealed by Christ, and taught by the Apostles.

14. To show you the necessity of a supreme authority in the church, in order to decide all contests that arise, I reminded you that there was never yet in the world any state which had not its high tribunal from which there is no appeal. This you allow to be necessary in all civil governments, to prevent anarchy and confusion; but you add, "that there is no parity between civil and religious societies:" I wish that you had pointed out the difference; for both are bodies of men, *i. e.* of beings governed by reason and passions; and taking men as they are, (for we are not speaking of an imaginary order of things) there is no other means of forming any kind of society than that of authority and submission. Law and subordination are absolutely necessary, without which there can be no union, and each will do what he pleases. All the individuals will be so many members separated and dispersed, that will no longer form a body. It is true, that ecclesiastical laws must be different from civil ones, in this sense, that the one oblige the mind, and the other the body; the one impose spiritual pains, and the other corporal ones. The end proposed by these two societies is also different: that of the first is the good of the soul: that of the second is the good of the body; but still both are visible societies composed of men; and consequently it is as absurd to pretend to form a church without imposing laws on the mind, as to pretend to form a state without imposing laws on the body. This absurdity is so manifest, that there has never yet been among you, or elsewhere, any ecclesiastical body, that has not imposed some sort of laws on the minds of its members. Why then blame that which obliges to submit our minds to the doctrine and decision of the church.

15. You say, that "we are accountable to none but God for our belief;" and intimate, that you think all religions equally conduct to salvation. This opinion is the necessary appendix to the Protestant principles. If the compass of a letter would permit, I would fully set before your eyes the horrid consequences of this dreadful principle. I could demonstrate, that it tends directly not only to introduce all Christian sects, but Mahometanism, Deism, and even Atheism, and consequently that it tends to overturn entirely the Christian Religion, which Christ has established at the expence of his blood. Is it possible that the Son of God could have descended from heaven to establish such an *indifference* of Religion? Is it consistent with the infinite wisdom of God to act thus entirely in vain? By this system you accuse the Apostles, the Apostolic men, and all the Martyrs, of the greatest imaginable folly, for having suffered and died to establish a Religion that was useless, since man could be saved without it. Are not these few reflections capable of giving horror for this system, to one that still retains the smallest spark of faith, and respect for the gospel of our adorable Jesus? Consider this horrible precipice on which you hang, and *that* in consequence of Protestant principles, and shudder at your danger.

16. I now pass to your other difficulties.—If you take literally the words; "Call no man Father," you must then conclude that is a sin to give this name to those, who, after God, are the authors of our being. Christ in that passage evidently speaks of the Supreme Father, since he adds "for one is your Father in heaven," that is, God, who according to St. Paul is the Author of all Paternity. If any thing can be inferred from these words, it seems so me that it must be this: "Do not quit the true pastors whom I establish to govern you, to follow innovators who become fathers and authors of new sects."

17. When St. Paul says, "We do not lord it or domineer over your faith," he does not certainly pretend that it is lawful to examine and reject his decisions, since he anathematizes even an Angel that should preach a doctrine different from his. (*Gal. i. 8, 9.*) If St. Paul had been a Protestant, he would have held a different language: "If any one announce to you a different doctrine from mine, examine it without prejudice, and if it appear more correct than mine, embrace it and reject mine." So far from this, he declares that its being different from his is a sufficient reason for rejecting it. Is it possible to exercise a more absolute authority (or if you please, *domination*) over consciences? The sense of this passage must then be; "Though we exact an absolute submission, we do not domineer over you, because we are only the instruments and organs that God employs to establish his just reign over your consciences;" which certainly is not *domination*. Thus when the church demands our acceptance of her decisions, she does not domineer because she does not act in her own name, but in that of Christ.

He does not domineer that uses a power received from lawful authority, unless he use it in a tyrannical manner. The church is so far from this tyrannical exercise of her power, that, like a tender mother, she consults the wants of her children, and she never punishes till after having tried in vain all mild means.

18. As to the Bereans, who are praised for searching the scripture, they were not as yet in the church. Not only do we permit examination to those that are in the same state; but we even press, exhort and conjure them to examine.

But when we have once professed the church's infallibility, and entered her bosom, she forbids, *not all examination*, but all that proceeds from *real doubt*. This her conduct is evidently just and wise.

since all *doubtful* examination, after conviction that she is infallible, is absurd, and practically contradicts our profession.

This your objection comes from your belief, that we lock up the Bible from the hands of the people. It is true that we are obliged in conscience to explain it in the sense of the church; but this is not locking it up. Have lawyers ever pretended that the study of the laws was prohibited, because they are obliged to explain them in the sense generally received in the state? Does a mother forbid the use of knives to her children, because she teaches so to employ them as to prevent their cutting themselves?

19. Let me mention to you a strong presumption, that ours is the only true religion, viz. that it is the only one which inspires the most heroic sacrifices. I have seen, and often see, persons of the first rank in life, delicate ladies, &c. renounce all the pleasures, riches and honors of this world, and devote themselves, some to serve the sick and dying in infected hospitals, others to the most rigorous penance in convents. Among these last holds the first rank Madame Louisa, aunt to the king of France. She was the darling daughter of Lewis XV. She quitted the most brilliant court of Europe in the vigor of life; and entered the order of the Carmelites, among whom are practised the most excessive austerities. There she performs the lowest offices among the Nuns her Sisters; and all this to honor and imitate the humility of her Divine Master, Jesus, who, though Lord of all, took upon himself the form of a slave, and became obedient even to the death of the Cross." She has assured me with her own lips, that she never tasted, amid the pleasures of the world, any of those pure delights that she now tastes amidst the poverty, obedience and humiliations of a cloister.

20. Permit me also to add a word upon the Catholicity, i. e. universality, of the church. This at

tribute, which you admit in the Apostles' creed as well as we, is expressly marked in the prophecies; see Gen. xxii. 18. Malac. i. 11. Psal. ii. 8. Acts i. 8. This universal extent does not certainly agree to any other church except ours, which is so spread throughout all the *notable* parts of the world, that it cannot be hid from any sincere searcher of truth. We have an infinity of Bishops and Missioners in the East Indies. There are many millions of Catholics in China; and we have a spacious church within the bounds of the Imperial Palace at Peking. It would be the greatest folly to dispute all these public facts, since we have seminaries for the education of foreign missioners, and one particularly at Rome called *Propaganda Fide*, where I myself have seen a vast number of youth from various nations, who are there ordained priests, and afterwards sent home to preach to their friends and countrymen. We have in Paris the only son of the king of Cochin-China, who was conducted thither by one of the Bishops of that country;

21. If the reasons, by which I have endeavored to defend our religion, convince you of its truth, do not blush to own it openly and boldly. It is noble to confess and correct an error. Besides, your error, if you do not make it personal, by a wilful adherence to it after it is known to be such, is rather the fault of your education than yours. Remember that Christ threatens to renounce before the assembled universe, those who refuse to confess him before men.

22. O my dear brother, would to God, I could express to you all the sensations that I have felt with respect to you and my family, since the hand of God has deigned to draw me from those errors in which I was engaged, by birth and education! Your unhappiness has ever been so strongly impressed on my mind, that my prayers for you have been continual. I cannot think without shuddering, that if

we continue separated from each other in our belief, one of us must *necessarily** perish forever. Yet this is what I must conclude from comparing this text of St. Paul, "*One faith*," with that other of the same Apostle, "*Without faith it is impossible to please God*," and consequently to be saved. There can be but one of us in the right, since our faith is entirely opposite. If it be you who are in error, as I am fully and intimately persuaded, give me the ineffable consolation of seeing you return to the bosom of the Catholic church, which *alone* is the *true spouse* of Jesus. United together in the arms of this tender mother, we will then use every means to obtain of God the conversion of him to whom we owe our being; yes, we will employ all our zeal to become in some sort the fathers of our father, by procuring him a life infinitely more precious than that which we have received from him.—This, my dearest brother and most cherished friend, is what I desire with the greatest possible ardor. I conjure you by the bowels of the charity of our Heavenly Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ, to think as seriously, as if at the eve of your death, on what I have written, and to beg God's light to guide you. Give this mark of tenderness and friendship to a brother, who lives only for you, for our father, relations and countrymen.—I am, with all possible cordiality and affection,

Your tender and loving
Friend and Brother,

Paris, ——— 1787.

J. THAYER.
MR. NATH. THAYER,
Boston, Mass.

* Mr. Thayer supposes there can be no place for invincible ignorance in his brother, since he writes to him as to one in some measure acquainted with the points which separate Protestants from Catholics.

P. S.—If you communicate this letter to any of your ministers (which I should wish) I beg you not to be content with whatever answers they give; but write them down together with your own objections, and on reflection you will find the answer to all in the little that I have written. The more you read and meditate the Bible, the more you will see the harmony and consistency of our principles, and the inconsistency and contradiction of those of your ministers. When I say, *the inconsistency and contradiction of the principles of your ministers*, I do not speak from any bitterness or animosity. If I were present among them, I trust they would soon see how sincerely I love them in Jesus Christ, and that neither passion nor party-spirit guides my pen, but the sole love of truth and the light of faith.

I am, &c.

J. T.