St. Anthony Mary Claret

PASTORAL EXHORTATION ON PROTESTANT BIBLES

Exhortación pastoral

From the Spanish of the first printing (Santiago de Cuba, 1854)

English translation

Contributed to Mind of the Church by a friend of the library who wishes to remain anonymous

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this translation · 3
Pastoral Exhortation · 3
Circular for a Novena for the Definition of the Immaculate Conception · 7

About this translation

Translated from the *Exhortación pastoral que el Excmo. … Antonio María Claret y Clará dirije a todos sus diocesanos* (Santiago de Cuba, 1854), with the *Circular* for a novena for the definition of the Immaculate Conception. Both are complete.

The notes give the references to Claret's sources and the notes he printed himself; the modern editors' commentary and the translator's own remarks are not reproduced.

Pastoral Exhortation

Addressed by the Most Excellent, Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Lord Archbishop Don Antonio María Claret y Clará to all his diocesans.

Cuba, 1854. Printing house of D. Miguel Antonio Martínez, Calle baja de San Gerónimo no. 8.

WE, DON ANTONIO MARÍA CLARET Y CLARÁ, by the grace of God and of the Holy Apostolic See Archbishop of Cuba, Primate of the Indies, Prelate Grand Cross of the Royal American Order of Isabella the Catholic, of His Majesty's Council, etc.

To our most beloved diocesans, health, grace and peace in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

With the deepest sorrow we have learned that the enemies of the true Faith, and of our most holy Religion, which by the goodness and mercy of God we profess, have recently brought into this and other ports of our Diocese a very considerable number of copies of the New Testament and of Bibles in the vernacular. Their title page falsely claims that the version is the same one written by Father Felipe Scío. The imposture gives itself away. That illustrious minister of the true God accompanied his translation with many very learned notes, indispensable for grasping the genuine sense of the sacred text. Without such notes our Holy Mother the Church, with ample reason, forbids under severe penalties the translation of Scripture into the vernacular tongues.[1] But besides suppressing the notes entirely, these Protestant publications omit several books of the Sacred Scriptures that the Holy Council of Trent, in its fourth session, declared canonical. They pass over whole chapters of others. They change, suppress and add words so as to alter and corrupt the true Catholic sense. And in spite of all these fraudulent innovations, they do not fear to print at the head of such unfaithful versions that these are Father Scío's own. They do this to dazzle Catholics and to attack their orthodoxy by stealth, hiding behind so respectable a name.

From all this follow the bad faith of these Protestant Bible societies and your obligation to abstain from reading and keeping such books. To this end we remind you of what the Holy Council defined on this matter in the fourth session already cited: "If anyone receive not, as sacred and canonical, these said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate edition; and knowingly and deliberately contemn the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema" (Council of Trent, *De canonicis Scripturis* \[On the canonical Scriptures\]).[2]

Therefore, dearest brethren and well-beloved children, if you wish to read the Holy Bible as translated by Father Scío, well and good. We especially exhort the clergy to do so, as we have so often directed by word and in writing. But read the genuine version with its notes, not the one adulterated and truncated by the Protestants. All are bound in conscience, under most severe censures, to hand over every copy of this latter kind that comes into your hands, by whatever means. Give them to us, to our Vicar General, or to your confessors so that they may hand them over to us.

You are under the same obligation to hand over to us many other books and loose leaflets, should they come into your hands. These have lately been brought in by fraudulent means, some of anonymous origin and others from the neighboring republic of the American Union. They are infected with the errors of the

Protestants, and it is greatly to be feared that reading them will contaminate your faith. When there is a corpse, people are horrified and send for the priest to bury it. You must do the same with these corrupt books and wretched pamphlets: hold them in horror and hand them over to the Church to bury. If you do not, their stench will kill your faith. That is to say, your faith will not be accompanied by works, and faith without works, says Saint James, is a dead faith.[3]

So that you may be forewarned and know these evil spawn at first sight, we will give you a sign that serves, among others, to tell them apart. Let the sign be the very word *Faith*. Watch for books that heap great praise on Faith and say that faith alone suffices for salvation. They require no good works, no penance for bad ones, no mortification of the passions, no recourse to the holy Sacraments of the true Catholic Church, the fountains of all graces. They do not demand obedience and submission to this Holy Mother, and they teach other errors of this kind. When you see such books, booklets or pamphlets, you may judge with certainty that they are bad and forbidden. Therefore you may neither read them nor keep them. They are a poison that will infect you, a viper that will deal death to the soul. Finally, in just obedience to the Church who forbids you to read them, you must respect her precept, in which your own good is at stake.

The faith so praised by the Protestants is not the faith by which the just man lives.[4] It is the faith that the devils have, as Saint James says: *daemones credunt, et contremiscunt* \[the devils also believe and tremble\].[5] For just as the devils have faith without good works and without penance for evil works, so is faith taught in those forbidden books they give you as presents. This faith is a body reduced to a skeleton. It has no mortified flesh and no spirit of life; it is all bone, all dryness and coldness. It lacks the spirit of life because it lacks good works, and it is corrupt because it does no penance for evil works.

We would wish that those who write these books, which they suppose so firmly grounded in faith, would practice what they themselves proclaim in the motto or text they usually reprint in their writings and bibles: *Search the Scriptures.*[6] If they did so, they would find there that faith is not enough for salvation without good works. At every step they would stumble on the most forceful expressions, which would undeceive them, if they were capable of being undeceived.

In Saint Matthew they would read that a young man asked Jesus Christ, “Good master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?” And Jesus Christ answered him, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”[7] In the same Gospel of Saint Matthew we read that when Jesus Christ comes to judge us all, he will say to some, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”[8] He will recount the good works they have done. And to those who failed to do them he will say, “Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire.”[9] In his epistles the Apostle Saint Peter exhorts everyone thus: “Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election.”[10] And in his own epistles Saint Paul, whom the Protestants so abuse to support their errors, would show them the Apostle of the Gentiles, with his characteristic zeal, declaring to all that God will reward the good for their good works and punish the wicked for their evil ones. To the Romans he says, “Who will render to every man according to his works.” And to the Corinthians: “Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour.”[11] In that same epistle he adds, “Do not err: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor liers with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God.”[12]

But they would be utterly confounded, if they searched the Scriptures, in the Epistle of Saint James, chapter two. “What shall it profit, my brethren,” says the Apostle, “if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him? And if a brother or sister be naked, and want daily food: and one of you say to them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit? So faith also, if it have not works, is dead in itself. But some man will say: Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without works; and I will shew thee, by works, my faith. Thou believest that there is one God. Thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O

vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, offering up Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou, that faith did co-operate with his works; and by works faith was made perfect?”[13]

These and other texts found in the Holy Bible would be more than enough to convince them of their errors. Yet neither the whole Bible nor a thousand bibles, if there were so many, would suffice to undeceive them. The remedy would not be applied where the wound is, and the wound is in the heart, not in the understanding. The Prophet hinted as much: *Dixit insipiens in corde suo: Non est Deus* \[The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God\].[14] He says *in his heart*, and does not even mention the understanding.

So that you may understand this important truth more clearly, dearest brethren and well-beloved children, you must note that there are two kinds of faith. One is true and comes from above. As Saint James says, “Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration.”[15] And Jesus Christ himself says of this true faith, through Saint John, “No man can come to me,” that is, through true faith, “except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him.”[16] The Father draws him by an interior grace that enlightens the understanding and gently attracts and draws the will. The other faith is false. It does not come from above but rises upward from below. It passes from the corrupt heart to the understanding, goads it, and fills it with willful errors.

The history of every generation reveals the truth we are about to show you. Men have always known that they needed faith to rule their works by it. But when their works were evil and they would not correct them, they abandoned the true faith and followed a false one to suit their bad conduct. Epicurus wanted to follow pleasures and delights, so he forged for himself faith in a God without justice, so that he and his followers might count the delights of this life as happiness. Muhammad was lewd, and therefore his faith is belief in a heaven full of lewdness.

The masters of the Protestants, Luther and Calvin, were two dissolute, idle and slovenly men. They did not want to celebrate or hear Mass, so they suppressed it. They refused to administer and receive the sacraments, so they denied them. Praying wearied them and mortifying themselves was repugnant to them, so they despised it all. They ended by saying that good works are not necessary for salvation and that faith alone suffices. Their faith is as pampered as the lives they led, a faith that takes as many forms as there are vices and passions they wish to cover and excuse under its cloak. It may be said of these comfortable believers-after-their-own-fashion that they stand at the last step before losing religion together with faith. Mastered by that fatal indifference, they live like brute animals, and in them is fulfilled the Apostle’s sentence: “The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God.”[17] This is why God himself exhorts us through the prophet in Psalm 31: “Do not become like the horse and the mule, who have no understanding.” And then he adds, “With bit and bridle bind fast their jaws, who come not near unto thee. Many are the scourges of the sinner, but mercy shall encompass him that hopeth in the Lord.”[18]

Here, then, dearest brethren and well-beloved children in Jesus Christ, is the explanation of the word *Mystery*. It is written on the forehead of the false faith that holds a golden cup in her hand, full of abomination, invites all to drain it, and makes those who follow her eternally wretched. She is clothed in purple, but it is purple like that worn by the rich glutton[19] of whom the Gospel speaks, and whom it gives us as an example of those who go to hell.

We will conclude, then, with the words of the Apostle writing to the Ephesians: “I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation,” the dignity of Catholics, “in which you are called, with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity, careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one Spirit; as you are called in one hope of your calling” to eternal life. “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.”[20]

One is the Lord who created us, one the Lord who preserves and governs us. Therefore we must keep his law and his precepts, because he commands and we must obey, without shirking this sweet yoke, this light burden. One is the Christ who redeemed us, one he who sanctified us, and one he who will glorify us. He will glorify us if we follow in his footsteps with the cross of mortification and self-denial, and if we receive the holy Sacraments he instituted to apply to us his merits, which are of infinite value. Even the most effective medicine would produce no effect if it were not applied or if the sick man did not take it. In some way the same may be said of the merits of Christ, the heavenly physician. He is the medicine he prescribes, and in the dose of the holy Sacraments he gives us the most effective remedy for curing all our infirmities. There is no doubt, dearest brethren, that every season is good for receiving the holy Sacraments. But one is more fitting than another, and that is precisely Lent.

Of it may be said that it is the *acceptable time* of which the Apostle speaks.[21] The days of Lent are days of salvation. We therefore hope that, as good Catholics, you will fulfil these sacred duties laid on you by the most holy religion you glory in professing. Remember that it is not enough to bear the name of Catholics if by your works and omissions you live like Protestants, without keeping the commandments, without hearing Holy Mass, without receiving the holy Sacraments and fulfilling the other obligations that the Church our Mother lays upon you. That sacred name would then serve only to make you more guilty before God and men. To anyone who lived so, one could say what is written in the Apocalypse: “Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead.”[22]

To all of you, then, we wish the life of grace and afterward the life of glory. This desire, and the love we bear you, have moved and obliged us to address to you this pastoral exhortation. It shall be read on three feast days at the offertory of Holy Mass. Meanwhile we give you our fatherly blessing, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Given in our Archiepiscopal Palace of Santiago de Cuba, 22 March 1854.

Antonio María, Archbishop of Cuba.

By order of His Most Illustrious Excellency the Archbishop, my Lord,\ Felipe Rovira, Priest, Secretary.

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[1] The present norm is CIC 1983, can. 825.

[2] Council of Trent, Session IV (8 April 1546), decree *Sacrosancta*; DS 1504.

[3] James 2:17.

[4] Hebrews 10:38.

[5] James 2:19.

[6] Cf. John 5:39.

[7] Matthew 19:16–17.

[8] Matthew 25:34.

[9] Matthew 25:41.

[10] 2 Peter 1:10.

[11] Romans 2:6; 1 Corinthians 3:8.

[12] 1 Corinthians 6:9–10.

[13] James 2:14–22.

[14] Psalm 13:1; 52:1 (Douay numbering).

[15] James 1:17.

[16] Cf. John 6:44.

[17] 1 Corinthians 2:14.

[18] Psalm 31:9–10 (Douay numbering).

[19] Luke 16:19.

[20] Cf. Ephesians 4:1–5.

[21] 2 Corinthians 6:2.

[22] Apocalypse 3:1.

Circular for a Novena for the Definition of the Immaculate Conception

WE, DON ANTONIO MARÍA CLARET Y CLARÁ, by the grace of God and of the Holy Apostolic See Archbishop of Cuba, Primate of the Indies, Prelate Grand Cross of the Royal American Order of Isabella the Catholic, of His Majesty's Council, etc.

To our venerable Dean and Chapter, to our Vicars Forane, Parish Priests and other members of the Clergy, and to all the faithful of our Diocese, health, grace and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

At this very moment the capital of the Christian world offers a great spectacle, watched with religious wonder by all the faithful of both hemispheres. They foresee that its outcome will serve the greater glory of God and of his Most Holy Mother and the good of the Church. Our Most Holy Father Pope Pius IX, in his ardent devotion to the Virgin Mary, hopes through her powerful mediation for a remedy to the evils that in our unhappy age afflict not only the Church but the whole of society. He has resolved to decide what the Holy Spirit shall communicate to him concerning the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY.

This holy thought has occupied him since the beginning of his Pontificate, so happy for the Spouse of the Lamb. To proceed with all maturity and sureness, he first stirred up the devotion of the faithful to raise their prayers to the Most High, uniting their intention with his. He consulted all the Bishops of the Catholic world. Now he has called to Rome two from each nation to solemnize the act in which he is to define this most important matter.

Nothing is more fitting for true Catholics, and above all for those who, like you, are distinguished by their devotion to the Mother of our adorable Redeemer and Lord Jesus Christ, than to unite themselves in spirit with the common Father of the faithful. Let them have recourse to the Divine Son and to his Most Holy Mother, that the Spirit of wisdom and understanding may descend upon him.

To this end we have ordered a Novena to the Immaculate Conception of Mary for the intentions stated. It is to be held in our Holy Cathedral Church and in all the Parishes and other churches of towns of any size. Elsewhere a Triduum is to be held.

In Cuba \[Santiago\] the Novena shall begin on the thirtieth of the present month. In the rest of the Diocese it shall begin as soon as the Vicars Forane and Parish Priests receive this Circular, if that is not before the said day. The Triduum shall take place on the 6th, 7th and 8th of next December. So that we may all be united not only in spirit and intention but, as far as possible, in the very form of prayer, the exercise of the Novena shall be as follows.

At half past six in the morning the votive Mass of the Most Pure Conception shall be celebrated, sung or said as circumstances allow. We hope the respective priests will apply it without stipend for the intentions stated. The Mass shall be followed by the third part of the Most Holy Rosary, in which the glorious mysteries are meditated. The morning exercise concludes with the Novena of the Immaculate Conception or, failing that, with that of the Most Pure Heart of Mary.

In the evening, after the bell for the Angelus, the exercise shall begin with the same third part of the Rosary, meditating the glorious mysteries. The Novena prayers shall be repeated, followed by a sermon or moral instruction. If he thinks it fitting, the preacher may adapt it to the purpose of the novena or to the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. If there is no sermon or instruction, its place shall be taken by a spiritual reading, which may be chosen, for example, from *The Glories of Mary* or another such book. The exercise shall end with the *Salve Regina* sung and the *Santo Dios*.

In the Triduum the same order shall be followed. The only difference is that the Parish Priests shall choose three days of the Novena at their discretion.

All the faithful of either sex who attend these holy exercises, uniting their prayers with those of the common Father of the faithful, and who confess and receive Communion on the day of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Holy Virgin, may gain a plenary indulgence. We grant in addition eighty days each time they visit their respective parishes with the same intention.

Santiago de Cuba, the twentieth of November, eighteen hundred and fifty-four.

Antonio María, Archbishop of Cuba.

By command of His Most Illustrious Excellency the Archbishop, my Lord,\ Felipe Rovira, Priest, Secretary.