St. Anthony Mary Claret

THE TWO STANDARDS: CHAPTERS ON THE CHURCH

Las dos banderas

From the Spanish of the first edition (Barcelona, 1870)

English translation

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

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About this translation

Translated from *Las dos banderas* (Barcelona, 1870). **An abridgement**: the four chapters on the Church are complete, but the prologue on the two standards, the chapters on the last things and the rest of the booklet are not translated.

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.

Of the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church

The first step man must take to draw near to God is to believe, and then he must always persevere in his beliefs, for without faith it is impossible to please God.[1]

Man must believe that there is a God; that this God is one, and three in Persons really distinct, who are called Father, Son and Holy Spirit; that God is the Lord and Master of all created things; that he is infinitely good, wise and powerful; that he is most pure and most perfect spirit, immense, eternal, the beginning and end of all things; that he rewards the good with the glory of heaven, and punishes the wicked with the eternal pains of hell.

He must also believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, as his words, works and sufferings, his doctrine and miracles prove, and above all his having raised himself from the dead.

Likewise he must believe that the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church is the one and true Bride of Jesus Christ. For just as Eve, Adam’s wife, was formed from one of his ribs while he slept, so the Church was formed from the side of Jesus, opened by the lance while he slept in death on the cross. Jesus, as a true, faithful and loving bridegroom, has never separated himself from his bride, nor will he ever do so, but will be with her always, all days, until the consummation of the ages.

The Church is the congregation of all the Christian faithful, united by the profession of one same faith, by the sharing of the same Sacraments, and by submission to their lawful Prelates, principally to the Roman Pontiff, her visible head, whom they recognize as Vicar of Jesus Christ, her invisible Head.

The Church of Jesus Christ, extended and communicated, is Jesus Christ in his fullness. The Church, as a body composed of different members, is subordinate to her head. As Bride, she shares his majesty, exercises his authority and honours him by her fruitfulness. For this reason the title of Bride was necessary for her, so that we might regard her as the faithful companion of Jesus Christ, the dispenser of graces, the true director of the family, the mother ever fruitful through preaching and the sacraments, and the nurse ever charitable and loving towards her children, whom she continually feeds at breasts ever full of doctrine and good works.

He must believe that Jesus Christ has done great things for his Bride the Church. He loved her, and does not cease to love her, and sacrificed himself for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of water and giving her life with the word of life, so as to delight always in contemplating her all full of beauty and glory, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but always holy and immaculate.

He must believe that God has placed various principal members in his Church. Some he has made Apostles, others Prophets, others doctors. Then to others he has given the gift of working miracles, to others the grace of healing and of helping their neighbour, and to still others the gift of governing, that of speaking every kind of tongue, and that of interpreting words.

Likewise he must be persuaded and believe that the Church, the true and worthy Bride of Jesus Christ, will always be persecuted, and that it is fitting she should be; but she will never be conquered, nor will the gates of hell ever prevail against her.[2] Strong winds of passion will stir up the waves of the sea of this world. Many waters of tribulation will strike this mystical bark of Peter from every side, and it will seem that all of us who

are in it are in danger. But we must not lose heart because of this; Jesus Christ is with us. What matters is to go to him with faith and confidence and say to him: Lord, save us, we are perishing! And we may be sure that we shall have the consolation of seeing God's power on our behalf. He will command the winds and the sea, the storm will be stilled, and at once a pleasant calm will follow, a perfect tranquillity that will surprise us so much that we shall scarcely manage to believe it. We must always keep in mind the words of Jesus to Peter: You are Peter (a great rock), and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

This Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic, and finally she is Roman, because Peter fixed his chair in Rome. She is visible, because the faithful are visible, the sacraments are visible, the bishops are visible, and the Supreme Pontiff who governs her is visible. She is that city built on the mountain of which the Gospel speaks to us. She is prefigured in Noah's ark, outside of which there is no salvation. As St. Cyprian says, he cannot have God for his father who does not have the Church for his mother. Finally, the Catholic Church is the true vine of which St. John speaks:[3] Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches. If we remain in the Church united with Jesus Christ, we bear much fruit; but if anyone separates himself from her, he will wither, and will be thrown into the fire and burn eternally. Woe to him!… woe to heretics, schismatics and Protestants!…

It will be good to note here that the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church anathematizes errors and not those who err. For these she grieves, has compassion and prays much, that they may be converted. This expression has been said and repeated in the Vatican Council.

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[1] Heb 11:6.

[2] Mt 16:18.

[3] Author's note (1870). Jn 15:1, 5, 6, *et in ignem mittent, et ardet* \[and they cast it into the fire, and it burns\].

Of the Pope, that is, of the Roman Pontiff

Many enemies of God and of the Church see that they cannot withstand the force of the arguments for the divinity of the Catholic Church, and so they do not dare to attack her openly or face to face. Some of them pretend to praise her, so as to make their blow more sure, and at the same time they aim their shots at her head, who is the Pope, confident that if the head is made to disappear, the body will perish. This is exactly what the sectaries of every colour do, such as the schismatics, the Protestants, the Jansenists, regalists, Freemasons and other wicked men. To finish off the body of the Catholic Church, they strive as hard as they can to take away her visible head, the Supreme Pontiff. We all know that the invisible Head of the Church militant is Jesus Christ, the good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep the eternal Father had entrusted to him. When the work of redemption was accomplished, he was to return to heaven. So as not to leave so beloved a flock without a visible shepherd to guide it, he chose St. Peter from among the Apostles to carry out so noble and sublime a mission on earth.

Here is how and when the God-Man entrusted to him that honourable and superior charge. After his triumphant resurrection, in one of his various appearances, the divine Redeemer asked St. Peter in the presence of the other Apostles: Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? St. Peter answered him: Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And Jesus said to him: Feed my lambs… Feed my sheep.[1] By the name of lambs the Church has always understood the simple faithful, and by that of sheep, the Apostles and their successors the bishops, who nourish, rule and govern the faithful of their respective dioceses. But just as St. Peter's authority was superior to that of the Apostles, the Pope's authority is superior to that of the bishops. They must therefore respect and obey it, because it was established by Jesus Christ himself; and so he said to St. Peter: I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and you, once you have turned back, strengthen your brethren.[2]

The need for a superior authority in the Church is easily and naturally understood, for no society, large or small, can subsist without a head or chief to preside over or govern it. In families we see the authority of the father. In towns, villages, cities and kingdoms we see mayors, governors, and kings if they are monarchies, or presidents if they are republics. The same, consequently, must be said of the society formed by Jesus Christ, that is, of the Church, which cannot subsist without a supreme head; this head is the Pope.

In the Church the authority of the bishops is not enough, because it is limited to their dioceses and cannot extend to the universal Church. Nor are councils sufficient. They are difficult to assemble, and even if they were not, they could not always be in session, for the bishops who compose them cannot always be absent from their dioceses, since their presence there is very necessary. Who, then, would exercise that universal authority which is always indispensable for the good of the Church, as the head always is for the body? Nothing, therefore, is clearer than the need for a supreme Pontiff.

Moreover, in every general council the Pope is always its chief or president, and there is not and cannot be a legitimate general council without a Pope to convoke or confirm it. The Roman Pontiff, as Melchior Cano says, is the one who defines questions of faith. He does so not by new revelations or miracles, but by using human means, that is, by calling consultors, in greater or smaller number according to the gravity of the matters, so that with their lights they may help him find out the truth. For although the assistance of the Holy Spirit is promised to the Church, God does not wish to work miracles without necessity. He therefore wills that human means be used, and takes it upon himself to guide her so that she does not err. The bishops (seated \[in council\]) are also judges who judge in questions of faith, but the Pope is the supreme judge. Their sentence or decision has no force without his confirmation, and if some depart from the truth, it belongs to the Pope to bring them back to the right road, according to what Jesus Christ said to St. Peter.[3]

We must, then, venerate and obey the Supreme Pontiff, and never listen to those who speak ill of the Pope or of the Roman Church, however much religion and zeal they may make a show of. Those who speak so are commonly Protestants, anti-Catholics, antichrists. Finally, I say to all Catholics the same words that St. John the evangelist wrote, that saint so zealous and charitable: if anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house, nor even greet him.[4] Though St. John was all charity, he teaches us that the only way to deal with such bad people is to flee from them, without so much as looking at them or greeting them.

The same evangelist was a fervent lover of Jesus and Mary, and he was likewise a lover of the purity of the faith. In chastity he was a most pure virgin, and as such he was charged by Jesus from the cross to take care of his mother the Virgin Mary, and he faithfully did so. He did the same with the faith, a virtue he kept with complete fidelity, and he tried to make others keep it in the same way. So we read in the words already cited, in which he charges them not to admit heretics into their houses, nor even to greet them. Faithful and fervent Christians, who love the faith as much as they love chastity, have always practised this. For this reason, just as they fear to stain their chastity, they equally fear to stain the purity of their faith. St. Peter Nolasco, even as a child, had such a horror of the Albigensian heretics of his time that, though some were his very close relatives, it was enough that they were heretics for him not to let himself be taken in their arms, nor allow them to caress him, nor consent that any heretic sit with him at table. So great was his fear that they might stain his faith with the filth of their errors! Something similar is read of St. Jane Frances de Chantal.[5] When she was barely five years old, a Calvinist gave her a bunch of flowers. Though that Calvinist was a nobleman, the little girl Jane, full of horror of the Protestants, without human respect and looking only to God, threw the bunch of flowers into the fire with contempt and indignation, saying: So burn in hell the heretics who do not believe Christ when he speaks. Christ said to the Apostles: “Whoever hears you hears me; and whoever despises you despises me.”[6]

According to the *Pontifical Yearbook* published by order of His Holiness, a copy of which I received from his sovereign hands in this present year of 1870, there have been two hundred and fifty-seven Popes.

The infallibility of the sovereign Pontiff when he pronounces some definition of faith *ex cathedra* is not false, either theologically or historically speaking. It is not false theologically, because it is expressly contained in Sacred Scripture, confirmed by tradition, admitted by the Holy Fathers, taught by the almost unanimous totality of the Doctors, and accepted by the whole Catholic world. Nor is it false historically, because in the long period of nineteen centuries that the Church of Jesus Christ has lasted, none of the two hundred and fifty-seven Popes who have sat in the chair of St. Peter has ever erred in faith when he spoke *ex cathedra*. Nothing, then, theologically or historically speaking, could stand in the way of a dogmatic definition of the infallibility of the Pope; and so the Vatican Council voted it on 13 July 1870, and it was proclaimed as such on the 18th of the same month. This definition, so longed for and awaited, will fill the afflicted Church with joy and her enemies with confusion. With a faith that is pure and holy, living, and animated by the works by which the Commandments are kept and the Sacraments received, and helped besides by prayer, there is nothing to fear. God will be for us and with us, and with him we shall be able to do all things. Nothing and no one will be able to separate us from the charity and love of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We must remain steadfast in the holy Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church, signified by that city built \[sic: *edificada en el arca*; read "prefigured by that city built on the mountain and by the ark"\] in Noah's ark, outside of which no one can be saved. Besides remaining in her, we must believe and confess all that she believes and confesses, anathematizing all that she anathematizes and condemns, as has already been shown.

However much Lucifer, the bad angels, heretics, Protestants, Freemasons, materialists, pantheists, rationalists, schismatics, unbelievers and the impious, and the other followers of Satan may shout, shriek and threaten, there is no reason to be cowed. We must not fear even death itself, for that would be the richest gain we could make, dying for Jesus Christ like so many martyrs.

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[1] Author's note (1870). *Pasce agnos meos… Pasce oves meas* \[Feed my lambs… Feed my sheep\]. Jn 21:16, 17.

[2] Lk 22:32.

[3] Cf. Lk 22:32.

[4] Author's note (1870). "*Si quis venit ad vos, et hanc doctrinam non affert, nolite recipere eum in domum, nec ave dixeritis.*" 2 Jn 10.

[5] Author's note (1870). Breviary, 21 August.

[6] Lk 10:16.

Of the Way Lucifer Suggests to His Followers How They Must Behave to Deceive Catholics, and How Catholics Must Conduct Themselves So as Not to Be Seduced and Deceived by Them

By the goodness and mercy of God we are Catholic Christians, and as such we can and must say that God is our Father and that Jesus Christ is our Master and Redeemer, our way, our truth and our life. As Master, already at twelve years of age he wished to teach how we must behave in matters of Religion. Yes, at that tender age he went to the temple and stayed there, to show us by his example how Religion is to be learned: by attending the temple, listening to its ministers and asking them questions.[1] This is the conduct true Catholics must observe, never setting themselves up as masters \[*echarla de maestros*, play the master\], but behaving as disciples of the truth. For, as the Venerable Bede explains very well, Christians who disdain to be disciples of the truth end up as masters of error, and Lucifer uses them to seduce, deceive and lead Christians astray. True believers must avoid this at all costs if they wish to be saved.

The apostle and evangelist St. John, writing to a mother of a family called Electa, congratulates her because her children were persevering in the truth he had taught them. At the same time he lets her know that many seducers have appeared, whom they must not even greet.[2] Such, as we said above, was the practice he himself observed. Once, when the heretic Cerinthus was in a certain place, the apostle St. John would not go in, because that bad man was there. That is the best way to avoid being seduced by perverse men: flee from

them, so that they do not infect us with the contagion of the infernal plague.

St. Paul commands the same to his disciples Timothy and Titus, although they were men already full of knowledge and endowed with fortitude and every virtue. St. Ignatius the martyr, St. Polycarp and various Holy Fathers said to Catholics: Flee from the impious and from heretics. And Jesus Christ himself says and commands that whoever will not hear the Church we must regard as a heathen and a publican.[3]

In ancient times, when Christians heard some discourse contrary to the faith, they stopped their ears and went away, as their elders had commanded them, according to St. Clement, St. Irenaeus, St. Hilary and other Holy Fathers. It is known of St. Anthony the Abbot that at the hour of his death, surrounded by his monks, he charged them not to speak or have dealings with heretics or schismatics. *Venena vitate*, he told them: beware of that poison, of that plague, as you have seen that I have always kept away from them.

The impious are nothing but chatterers and ignorant men. Someone who had not studied mathematics, astronomy or some other science, yet wished to speak of one of those faculties, would say nothing but nonsense; so are the impious, says St. Jerome. Since they have not studied Religion and yet want to speak of it, they utter as many absurdities as words; and, as Sacred Scripture says, they blaspheme what they do not know.[4] Indeed many of them do not even know the children's catechism. The Apostle, writing to the faithful of Ephesus[5] and to the Colossians,[6] warns them not to let themselves be deceived by wicked men with their words empty of sense and their vain philosophy.

The ancient apologists, such as Tertullian, Tatian, Athenagoras and other learned men, point out to us that all the arguments all the heretics raised against Catholicism came from their ignorance and their disordered passions. The chatterers and impious of our day draw their blasphemous and heretical words from the same sewers from which the ancients drew theirs. They must therefore be despised with horror and disgust, as the early Christians despised those of the ancients.

Speaking of that wicked rabble, St. Paul says that they are so proud, envious and lustful that their deeds cannot be told: *Turpe est et dicere* \[it is shameful even to speak of them\].[7]

The words of the impious and of heretics are bad, very bad. But worse and more pernicious are the writings of those bad people who have the boldness and effrontery to publish, in books, pamphlets, newspapers, gossip sheets and other such productions, the most disgusting nonsense and diabolical calumnies, disfiguring Religion, ridiculing its ministers and mocking all that is most holy and sacred. They write not only impious and heretical books but also immoral ones: scandalous novels of dishonest love affairs, defamatory libels, and demagogic or revolutionary pamphlets. Their satanic object is to discredit all authority, divine and human, temporal and eternal. Nor do they stop there; they also use shameless pictures, indecent photographs and ridiculous caricatures against charity, chastity and the other virtues.

But there is no doubt that true Catholics, with the Lord's grace and the effective help of Most Holy Mary, will overcome the words of the impious with the word of God. They will listen to it with devout and filial docility from the mouth of its sacred ministers, for it is written: Whoever is of God hears the word of God.[8] They will overcome bad writings with good writings and books. This is easy to do in Spain, where by the goodness and mercy of God we have the Academy of St. Michael and the LIBRERÍA RELIGIOSA, both abundantly supplied with every kind of very good and very cheap writings and books. Let the faithful consult the catalogues of the said Academy and LIBRERÍA, and in them they will be able to see and choose the books that please and suit them best.

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[1] Author's note (1870). *Invenerunt illum in templo sedentem in medio doctorum, audientem illos, et interrogantem eos* \[They found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions\], Lk 2:46.

[2] 2 Jn 1, 4.

[3] Mt 18:17.

[4] Cf. Lk 22:65.

[5] Cf. Eph 4:14.

[6] Cf. Col 2:8.

[7] Eph 5:12; Rom 1:28.

[8] Cf. 1 Jn 4:6.

Of the Consolations Jesus Christ Gave His Disciples, and Gives to All Who Suffer Trials and Persecutions Patiently for His Love

On the night of the supper, to encourage his beloved Apostles and disciples, and in them all of us, Jesus Christ our Lord set before them many reasons and promises of great consolation. We shall set down some of them here.

First reason: the example of what Jesus Christ himself suffered. Remember, he told them, the words I have said to you: The servant is not greater, or more privileged, than his Lord; if they persecuted me, they will persecute you too.[1] Oh, happy trials suffered for the cause of Christ, by which we are made like Christ! My Lord, I do not want the privilege of exemption from trials; for since I am your servant, it is a very great happiness for me to pass under the law my Lord passed under.

Second: because being persecuted is a sign and pledge that I am not of the reprobate world's party, and consequently that I belong to the sacred party of Jesus Christ and to the number of his chosen ones. If the world hates you, the divine Master said to his disciples, know that it hated me first. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world… therefore the world hates you.[2] O good Jesus, I want to be of your party and not of the world's; and if the world hates and persecutes me, I will rejoice in it, because you will take my part, since I am a disciple persecuted for your cause.

Third: because these very trials I now suffer will soon be turned into joy and gladness, as Jesus Christ himself indicated with this comparison.[3] A woman in labour has sorrow and pain, but afterwards she rejoices; the pain lasts a short time, but the joy a long time, and her gladness is so great that it makes her forget the first pains. So also you will have sorrow at my passion and death, but I will rise again. You will have pains and trials in preaching my law and in doing all I have commanded you, because great temptations and persecutions will rise up against you. But all that will be for you the occasion of great joy, which will make you forget all your past pains and sorrows. O my soul, do not covet the joy of the world, which will last a short time and then be turned into very bitter and eternal weeping! Choose sorrow and pain for Christ, for it will soon be turned into great and eternal joy. Love tribulations and persecutions, and soon you will begin to find joy in them.

Fourth: because in heaven there are eternal dwellings, where those who suffer here for his love will be lodged by Christ.[4] Let not your heart be troubled, he says; believe and trust in God and in me, for in my Father's house there are many dwellings, and I am going to prepare the place you are to occupy. I will come back to you and take you with me, so that where I am, there you may be, enjoying my company and my glory. O my soul, do not be troubled or afflicted in your trials, for the dwelling of this world is only passing, and Christ will come for you at the hour of death to reward what you have suffered in life with the highest joys in his eternal dwelling.

Fifth: because in the midst of the trials of this life Jesus Christ comes to visit and help us, and says to us: I will not leave you orphans and abandoned; I will come to you.[5] Let not your heart be troubled, nor be afraid, for I have told you that I go away and I come to you. A little while, and you will no longer see me; and again a little while, and you will see me; and your heart will rejoice, and no one will be able to take from you the joy I give you.[6] O most loving Father, you never leave your children orphans, even when you seem to be absent from them, because you are never absent from watching over their good! I want not to be troubled by

my trials, pains and persecutions, since you will so soon come to visit and console me in them. Give me, Lord, that interior joy which neither devil nor world nor any creature can snatch away; and possessing this joy, any trial will be sweet to me.

Sixth: because, though we are afflicted, we are loved by the eternal Father.[7] Do I not tell you that I will pray the Father for you? he said to the Apostles. Know that the Father loves you, because you have loved me and believed that I came forth from God. It is as if he said: Do not be troubled or afraid, or lose confidence and courage, amid the trials you will suffer for my sake. They are pledges that my Father loves you, because of the love you show in suffering for me; and if the Father loves you, he will protect and console you, for so loving and powerful a Father cannot fail to console his children. O most loving Father, I want no other consolation on earth than to know that you love me! For if you love me, I can lack nothing, since you do not know how to love and forsake.

Seventh: because of the great pledges of confidence we have that we shall come out victorious over all the enemies who persecute us. In the world, he says, you will have distress; but take courage, I have overcome the world.[8] That is: I have overcome Lucifer, the prince of this world; I have overcome the fierceness of trials and persecutions; and I have overcome sin and death. By virtue of my victory you may trust surely that you will conquer, for I conquered for you, and I am in you, fighting so as to conquer. I give you thanks, eternal Father, for the victory you give us through your Son Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:57); for the victory and its glory are to be yours. I will not doubt or distrust that I shall be able to attain it.

Glory to the Father, glory to the Son, glory to the Holy Spirit. Glory to Most Holy Mary, conceived without sin and crowned with glory in the happiness of heaven. Amen, Amen, Amen.

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[1] Jn 15:20.

[2] Jn 15:18.

[3] Jn 16:21.

[4] Jn 14:1.

[5] Jn 14:18.

[6] Jn 16:16, 19, 22.

[7] Jn 16:26.

[8] Jn 16:33.