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The Church Catholic:

BY

B. F. C. COSTELLOE, M.A.



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CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY, 18 WEST SQUARE, LONDON, S.E.



The Church Catholic:*

BY

B. F. C. COSTELLOE, M. A.



“Through all the centuries of civilization”—so I imagine Macaulay’s New Zealander will say to an impartial generation—“through all the change and chance of History there runs one permanent power. Alike in the decay of Greece and the pride of Rome, alike through the tempest of the barbarian times and the gradual uprising of the kingdoms, from the ages when men accepted meekly their appointed place, to the latter day when every man’s hand was against his brother in the bitter war of individual competition, one system of things has stood secure, as a castle founded upon a rock stands above the rising and the falling tide, through the calm weather and the storm.

“An organization at first but of the unlearned and the outcasts of society—as was its Founder—placed under the ban of the most imperial despotism the world has seen, it was but a little later the sister sovereign of that same Empire through the Roman world: and when the Empire fell beneath the greatness of its task, the throne of the Fisherman continued to stand in the very palace of the Cæsars, and the city where the Popes of four centuries had been driven like things of darkness underground became the world-capital of the Papacy.

“In one age the Apostle of an ideal morality in an evil time; in another the conserver of learning; in a third the

* An address delivered on Feb. 19th, 1888, at the South Place Institute, London, to a non-Catholic audience.

mother of the Arts; in all, the pattern and helper of political and social unity—this unchanging yet ever varying kingdom, this stern and yet most liberal philosophy, not only claimed to teach, but taught, as with authority, the children of men."

Surely I may claim, my friends, that it is a startling item in the secular march of things, a masterful fact not lightly to be put by—no more than that other cardinal fact to which it leads us back—the life and death of Jesus who was called the Christ. He founded this power, He said it should not fail; and it has not failed.

Not once but many times, indeed, there came great waves of what the world thought disaster. In the beginning it was persecution. Edict after edict went out against them, till in the darkest of the night before the dawn an illiterate barbarian bent the force of the twin Empires to exterminate the Christian name: and knowing how easy was the detection of those who never would deny their crime, the imperial statesmen said that the dangerous rival of the Cæsars would not be heard of any more—but it is the statesmen who are forgotten.

Then there was the wave of Schism. The Arian heresy prevailed so far that men said the Church's time was ended upon the earth. Princes and peoples, Bishops and provinces, fell away, till there was but a handful left to continue the great tradition. Yet in a little while the Arians passed like a mirage, and men asked each other the meaning of the name.

It was an even darker hour, when a rising tide of moral corruption and a swift outbreak of intellectual doubt coinciding in the period of the Renaissance seemed to have killed the energies of the Church, and swamped in wickedness and infidelity the very Court of Rome. Yet the curious reasonings of the Neo-Pagans have left but faint echoes in the history of thought—the worldly Popes and the corrupt Cardinals and all the unfaithful stewards who dared to lift their mitres up against their Master have gone to their account—and there does not remain upon the institutions or the morals or the doctrine of the Church a vestige of the evil time.

Wave upon wave, in the very worst of the danger, came the great upheaval called the Reformation, wherein

the spirit of Individualism, personified in the rough violence of Luther, rent the Church in twain: and in this rebellion and the disorders which accompanied and followed it, it seemed as if the bark of Peter must assuredly go down. Yet as even Macaulay—most typical of English Protestants—has borne witness, the work of the Council of Trent and the early labours of the Jesuit Order and all that inner Reformation which accompanied these, left the Papacy not weaker but stronger than before.

Finally, in our time, are come the days when countless new chapters of revelation are unrolled by science, and when a universal criticism, laying faith and reverence aside, has summoned every creed and every law to answer at the bar of reason for its right to be. All these great and good men who are to free us from the trammels of old time—whether they come as agnostics or in the name of evolution, whether they say they hold God needless, or have found our immortality to be a phantom, or cannot recognize that there is such a thing as Sin—with one accord in divers tongues cry out to us that the old creeds have passed for ever, and that the religion of the future, if religion there be at all, must be something less archaic than the Church of Christ. But in the midst of them—not denying whatever truth they have to show, adapting indeed the message of the ages to the later time, but upholding always her profession of Christ's teaching and the Christian Law—the ancient Church goes on.

It is in this permanence amid the changing centuries, it is in this enduring triumph in defeat, that even the most hostile critics have felt something of that great appeal which to her children the mere existence of the Church implies; and something of the force with which to their eyes is realized in her the prophecy of the Divine Founder. May we not well call it a fulfilment of that commission, with which, in different wordings, it pleased the Spirit that inspired the writers of the covenant to close three Gospels and to begin the Acts: "As my Father hath sent Me, so send I you. Go ye therefore into all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,

teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

It is in this light, then, that I desire first to present to you the mission and office of the Catholic Church. Its name insists upon its universal claim. It is not a congregation of persons agreeing together; it is not a School of Philosophy; it is not a Mutual Improvement Society. It is not even a Church among other Churches. It is *the* Church Universal—the Living Voice of God, in Christ's revelation, unto all people, through all time. It is for this reason, and this only, that it teaches as its Master taught,—not as the Scribes and Pharisees, but as one "having authority." It is for this reason that in God's name it makes that awful demand upon the faith of men which no human power, however arrogant, would dare suggest—that we who accept its teaching office shall accept those propositions which are "of faith," even where we do not wholly understand them, and even where they may seem to us to stand in conflict with other portions of our personal reasoning as to the things that lie within the human ken.

You will see at once that this demand cannot merely be waived aside as being incompatible with so-called rights of private judgment, unless you are prepared on the same principle to deny that there can be any authoritative revelation of God's truth at all.

Private judgment—meaning the paramount authority of that which at any moment may commend itself to me—must dissolve any divine authority of the Written Word, as surely as of the Living Voice. Luther, in his more consistent mood, was hardly less arrogant than Mr. Matthew Arnold in his assertion that the Canon of the New Testament was to be limited by his own theology. The Epistle of James, said Luther, cannot be the word of God, because it is tainted with "Justification by works." This and this cannot be a *λογιον* of Jesus, says the modern critic, because *I* would not have said it.

I do not forget that one great watchword of the sixteenth century revolt was the appeal from the Church to the Bible. But the impartial critics have long since begun to recognize that the Bible is no ally of the

Lutheran and Calvinist theology, much less of the eclectic system of the so-called National Church of England. And as the inevitable disintegration has gone on, the appeal to the Bible has come to be an appeal against the Bible.

I do not hesitate, indeed, to say that the teaching office of the Church and the existence of any real revelation must stand and fall together. If there be no Church, neither is there any Bible, unless you mean by a Bible an interesting but scrappy compendium of oriental literature. If the Church be not a teacher, then there is not any Christ at all, unless it be a self-deluded Hebrew Socrates.

It will enable me to make my position clearer, if I may for a moment assume that those whom I address accept the proposition that the mission of Christ was to reveal to the whole world some knowledge of divine things not attainable or not attained before. My position is that, if this be true, the claim of the Church to be a living voice, expounding with authority from age to age what was contained in that revelation and included in the deposit of faith, must of necessity be allowed. For if a revelation *was* required for the spiritual guidance of the race, it is self-evident that the truth intended to be revealed must be capable of being apprehended by all sorts and conditions of men, and in the coming ages of the world, with some reasonable security. A revelation which in its cardinal points was open to such absolute doubt, that the most honest, enlightened and spiritual men could arrive at conclusions diametrically opposed, and yet have no kind of arbiter to whom they could refer their difference, is no revelation at all. That any revelation should be useful for the world or conceivable as a providential design, three things surely are necessary: that it should be guaranteed in its inception: that it should carry a continuing certitude: and that it should be applicable to the intelligence and practical necessities of every struggling soul. It is written, indeed, that the things of God are hidden oftentimes from the wise and learned, and are revealed rather to the babes and sucklings of the world. But assuredly it *cannot* be true that the revelation of Christ is a thing discernible by sundry scholars and gentlemen, having

leisure and much knowledge, but wholly misapprehended or not visible at all among the "little ones" of whom He always spoke so carefully,—by the crossing-sweeper and the washer-woman, the labourer in the fields, the proletariat of the town. If from these, who need it most, the revelation of Christ is inevitably hidden, then God has mocked the universe. But if there be *not* a teaching authority and a living voice, how is the truth accessible to these?

Will you tell me they can read the Bible? I reply, that men better and more learned than they have found a thousand contradictory religions within the covers of the Sacred Books of Christianity. Even if it were not so, who shall guarantee to them either the degree of authority that attaches to these books or even the contents of the canon, if there be no continuing teacher in the world since the day when Christ last stood on Olivet, when not a line indeed of the New Testament was written?

The movers of the revolt against authority in the sixteenth century felt the difficulty dimly; but they evidently were not aware of the far-reaching scepticism which their protest logically involved. They adopted, as a working principle, the doctrine of the infallibility of Bible texts, supplemented by the conception of the "testimony of the Holy Spirit." On this view, earnest souls throughout Protestantism, prayerfully reading the Word of God with the intoxicating belief in a personal revelation of its import, were not long in setting up an infinite diversity of creed and practice, wherein for want of any pope, each teacher was his own. Even the monstrosities of the Anabaptists in the earlier time, or of the Mormons in our own, have come to them guaranteed by the same authority which guarantees the sturdy Calvinism of Scotland, the Puritanism of the Ironsides, the mystic spirituality of George Fox and William Penn. Of all this I merely say that, to my mind, such a revelation reveals nothing: and that if the office of the Messiah were but to live and speak for a little while, and charge a few uneducated persons to commit to writing a fragmentary account of what He did and said, and a still more imperfect set of epistolary remarks upon the theories of life and action which He taught, then He has left the

world without any secure guidance in the ways of God, or any safe criterion of truth and right.

Surely the cult of isolated texts which is nicknamed 'Bibliolatry' is no possible assurance of God's teaching. There are texts which, taken apart, prove almost everything. And conversely there are many vital matters which no set of texts, taken apart, will satisfactorily establish. If anything is clear about the New Testament, it is that nowhere does it profess to set out either a reasoned philosophy of life or a comprehensive scheme of doctrine. Apart from the patent circumstance, that the 'Discipline of the Secret' precluded the publication of what may be called the esoteric dogmas of the early Christians, it is obvious that in no one of the Gospels or Epistles has the writer any idea of writing a systematic exposition, or any notion that he is putting on record an exhaustive or complete account of the teaching either of Christ or of the early Church. To them, as to me, the deposit of faith was a body of tradition, providentially safeguarded by the earthly work of the Spirit of Truth, but not depending on nor bounded by the Sacred Books, for it was going on concurrently before and during their construction, by the same authority which adjudicated, first vaguely and afterwards with definite precision, upon the number and office of the Sacred Books themselves.

There is of course another sense in which all Christianity must depend on the Bible, for it is there chiefly that we find the historic warrant for the belief that such a life as Christ's was ever lived at all. But when we have used our Matthew, and John, and Paul, with Clement and Hermas, and the Pseudo-Areopagite and the rest, as we might use our Tacitus or our Josephus; and in the character of historic students have sifted out from these the fact that Christ's life and acts and work and personality are in the main as historic as Cæsar's; then, as a Catholic, I would say that we can collect from that account and the historic facts surrounding it the assurance not only that this momentous Person did found the Catholic Church—of which I am as certain as that Cæsar initiated the Empire—but also that in founding it He gave it a commission which, if He was truly God, was verily Divine. Thus it is that when, in course of centuries

we find it declared that Matthew, John and Paul are "of the canon of scripture" and are to be read as inspired writings, whereas Clement and Hermas, however venerable, are not; then we can go back to Matthew, and John and Paul and reread them not as mere historical critics but as humble students of the word of God—and so are prepared to accept, on their authority endorsed by the authority of the faith, much in their narrative which, as historical critics, we were content to earmark as possibly legendary or of doubtful accuracy, and much in their doctrine which, as mere literature, might not have commended itself to a fastidious taste.

I have desired to define at some length this Catholic view of Christ's revelation and the Catholic attitude towards the Bible, as opposed to the Protestant theories on these matters, partly because it is vital to the understanding of Catholicism and partly because it is seldom understood by those who stand outside the Church. I now pass to the consideration of some of the main lines of the Catholic teaching. It will be understood that I have indeed nothing to offer but a few suggestions, whose only value, if they have any, is that they have been borne in upon me by reason of much converse with those to whom Catholicism speaks the language of a strange country.

Upon the commonplaces of controversy I do not propose to waste time. The "errors of Rome" which exercise the mind of anti-Popery lecturers and other wise men, are for the most part beside the point. Too often, they are either flat misstatements of Catholic belief, imputing to us what no Catholic would dream of teaching—as that "the end justifies the means;" or they are a travesty of something which is the merest fringe of that great body of doctrine, such as the ancient usage of Indulgences or the celibacy of the clergy. Of such things, at a fit time, I should not despair of giving you a wholly reasonable account: but if a man desires to appreciate the Catholic Faith as it deserves, it is not with these high points of controversy that he will begin. It is the broad base-lines of that majestic plan that such a one will look for. It is the pregnant words which, by that living voice, the Master speaks to all the world and to each man's soul.

I cannot hope to make you know these mighty words—which Paul heard in the third Heaven—which all of us will hear when the last trumpet sounds—which, as we well know, descend at the altar rails into many a simple heart. To the ear of faith, they are not hard to hear: but to state them in the common language of the world, and above all in the customary speech of modern England, is a work that for its full accomplishment must wait, I think, till God shall send again that gift of ‘prophecy,’ wherewith He touched the lips of John of the Golden Mouth, and lit the fiery eyes of Savonarola, and winged the gracious words of Lacordaire. Yet, however little power there be to do it, we must do the little that we may. For when we look back upon that woeful time when the Body of Christ was torn asunder, and the mightiest semblance of God’s Kingdom which the world had seen was rent by civil war, I think we cannot choose but say that these men, however we are to judge their motives or their aim, threw back the world’s religious life by centuries.

We have had more than two hundred years of “Phoenix-cremation” since the Bull of Wittenberg was burnt; but I doubt if another two hundred will place us at the point the world might have reached, if the party of reform had been led by men of the type of Savonarola and of Thomas More, rather than by Luther and Henry VIII. That is our view: but of those who take any other, we may at least demand that they shall be willing to labour with us to restore the broken unity, to heal the secular war, to point the nations, amid a chaos that seemingly grows worse with every tide of books, to that City whereof the pattern is laid up in heaven, whose walls are justice and whose ways are peace, since it is builded upon the rock of an assured commission and lit for ever by the light of God.

I must pray you therefore to follow me a little, while I try to tell you what Catholicism means to me. It implies, first of all, a deep tremendous consciousness of the heaven-high difference between good and evil, truth and untruth, righteousness and sin. If it seems to be rigid in its teaching and in its insistence on obedience, it is because it feels that the tolerance which holds that one

thing may as well be true as any other, is but an opening of the floodgates of all misery. Tolerance we are perfectly ready to give where it is due. Where a man believes error honestly, only because he is somehow disabled from seeing the truth, we do not venture to condemn him: but we cannot talk of it as if he were as likely to be right as we are, or as if it did not matter which of us was right at all. For when we say that we *believe*, we mean it: and when we profess to hold the Truth revealed by God in Christ, we hold it as a precious gift, the wanton loss of which would be by far more terrible than any worldly calamity.

As with truth, so with the consciousness of sin. We are reproached, unjustly enough, with some unreasonable hostility to modern progress, and to that all-pervading spirit of emancipation which is the pride of the children of the Great Revolution. Neither with progress, nor with science, nor with freedom, has the Church any quarrel. She has herself in many ways been the promoter and guardian of them all: but she has always been and is and will be jealous of the *souls* that are in danger, for she counts the risk of moral evil as a thing far graver than material prosperity. As we would all say, surely, in our personal ethics, that no amount of money gain should weigh with an honest man against his moral degradation; so the Church says, upon her wider plane, that no amount of monetary or material progress will compensate a generation, if thereby it suffers moral wreck. "What doth it profit a man," she cries from age to age, "if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "Woe upon you," she cries to the heralds of comfortable Utopias of emancipation, "if by your recklessness the little ones of Christ are made to stumble and to fall." So much,—but no more. Churchmen have been mistaken, as we all admit, in their application of that principle. You are free to say bitter things about their politics, if you will. But if you would do justice to the spirit which animated even the narrowest among them, you must remember that the thought which underlay their warfare was the paramount importance of saving, if possible, these little ones among their flock, from what seemed a probable risk of being led to sin against God.

Throughout all the Catholic doctrine and the living practice of the Church runs the same dominant note of the consciousness of sin. That God is above all things infinitely Holy—that every single grave and deliberate sin is a disaster to the universe which we cannot measure—that, in the things of human life, sin is indeed the *only* real evil that exists, and that to advance towards perfection of personal character is our only real progress—these are the alphabet of the Catholic rule of life. If it be asceticism to hold that our pain and pleasure are of absolutely no account in comparison with any moral gain, then we are all ascetics in our belief, however little we may fulfil that rule in practice. And the reason why we hold each particular sin a woeful evil, is because it appears to us as a direct contempt of God, Who is our absolute Lord and infinite benefactor, and because we feel that to Him by His essential nature, evil must needs be horrible altogether. If we are to talk of justice, therefore, any one rebellion could be enough to forfeit all His grace, forego His promises, and alienate the sinner by the issue of his own choice from that Heavenly Presence wherein no discord dwells.

Not only does the Church so think of sin, but she goes on to say that even if by repentance and in God's grace the direct offence is put away, the rebel absolved, the alien soul brought back into the happy family who are at home with God, yet even so the mischief of that once-committed sin is not put by. For it is the nature of evil to work itself out still, in evil and disablement and loss: and these, which are technically called the "temporal consequence" of sin, must needs be suffered even while there is rejoicing in Heaven over the sheep which was lost and now is found again. It is in this connection that we think of Purgatory. It is the life beyond this life where souls, who are indeed not rebels now but God's beloved penitents, must wait and toil and grow till they have wholly purged away the consequences of forgotten sin, and wrought upon the frail and faulty characters they built themselves, that final beauty of holiness which is alone receptive of the Vision of God.

But if the Church is stern and terrible in her anathemas on even the beginnings of moral wrong, she is not slow

to preach the good tidings of the infinite mercy. I cannot profess to you that the God of Whom she speaks is the God of those who go their easy ways and say "He's a good fellow and 'twill all be well." She dare not bid us think it will be well, unless we will it. "He made us," says St. Austin, "without our consent, but He will not save us so." For with the consciousness of sin, the Church insists by logical necessity on the paramount fact of human freedom. When the human soul came from the creative fiat as a self capable of moral life, and therein stamped with the very image of the Divine, it bore both the mark of responsibility and the inalienable power, in God's despite yet none the less triumphantly, to cause evil things to be, in what was God's fair universe before. Why did He do it? we may all ask: but with our little knowledge of the secrets of the Eternal we cannot give much other answer than that, as far as we can see, it was not possible to separate the transcendent gift of a potential moral goodness, whereby we are indeed ennobled as no other gift could honour us, from its correlative possibility of creating crime.

On Free Will, then, the Church insists; but she insists no less on Grace. If God be stainless purity, He is no less essential Love. If he does not *compel* us to obey the Holy Law, at least He plies us with inducement, with suggestion, with facility of every kind which infinite wisdom joined to infinite love can offer for our aid. The world which we inhabit is the world our fathers made, and it is beset with the results of old ancestral sin: for it is the tragic property of wrong that its ill consequences affect not only him who does it, but also those to whom his life is bound in this great family of struggling souls. We live then not in a Paradise of God's arranging, but in a Babylon of crooked ways, whose streets are littered with the rotting evil and barred with the accumulated rubbish of that past which we inherit. I do not forget, still less deny, that this same Babylon is a mighty city, wherein are also goodly sights and gracious buildings not a few, with many that, though still imperfect, and it may be dangerous in their imperfection, are full of promise for the later time. I am no decrier of the noble inheritance our fathers left us: yet I say that when I think of it as

the abode wherein we must work out each of us his own salvation, it would to me seem little better than a fever swamp or stricken city of the plague, were it not for the grace of God.

For, as the Church conceives, the teeming millions who are born and die, at mere haphazard as it were, along the crooked ways where to the human eye there is no light nor joy, are not forgotten. Up and down, as Jacob saw them, go the messengers of God. To all they come: to those who are working out, with fear and trembling always, yet with steady resolution, what they take to be for them the will of God; and to those who are wavering on the brink of danger; and to those no less—nay rather, more eagerly, if possible,—who have already sinned and are persisting in their sin.

Up and down too go the messengers, in those hard places of the world where circumstance, to human eyes, is as a Devil-giant coercing hapless lives not only into pain but into moral wreck. We do not say that evil circumstance, that plague-inheritance of ancient sin, is a light thing. We think indeed that He Who judges all of us will make allowance amply. It seems evident that to some the avoidance of a special sin—say drunkenness—is easier than to others. To none, short of moral madness, is sin in truth a necessity: and the madman's acts are not sin. What we conclude is not so much that those who are thrown among evil surroundings are wholly to be excused, as that those of us who have had better advantage, have the deeper blame. But everywhere, and to each with the appropriate message, come the bearers of God's grace.

When the man who is clothed in purple and fine linen and fares sumptuously every day, is basking in a sensual ease, some warning, whether it take the form of Lazarus or no, awakes him to remember better things. When the stricken child, to whom life never brought a sweeter message than the harmony of the outward squalor and the inward pain, lies wistfully drifting towards the welcome end, there are hands unseen that clothe upon its soul the raiment of a lovely patience and light up within its eyes the radiance of an unearthly lesson. When the successful Philistine is blotting day by

day from the tablets of his brain the memory of any spiritual possibilities, there is a hand that constantly renews the unconsidered lines, so that he cannot choose but sometimes see them. For every battle there is an ally, for every frailty a support; with every temptation, however fierce it seems to our not quite impartial judgment, there goes forth for us the possibility of bearing it.

Conceiving thus of human life, as a warfare wherein we daily fight with sin with the perpetual assistance of the Grace of God, the Catholic Church presents to us, as the central fact of the world's history, the coming of the Christ.

It is not uncommon to reproach us with our acceptance of the supernatural: and our critics seem to be quite satisfied that the admission of any belief which involves things not explainable by so-called "natural law," is mere superstition—as absurd as witchcraft and less respectable than Spiritualism or the Mind Cure. I will not stay to discuss this general point of view: but I will content myself with the remark that there is no necessary antagonism at all between Naturalism and the Supernatural, rightly understood. If Free Will be a fact, that alone transcends at once all that in the narrow sense is spoken of as "natural law:" for every free act, if it be truly free, introduces a spiritual new creation into the sequence of material and organic forces. Why should not the same be true in a wider field? If there be a personal God, why may *His* will not also intervene and mould the stolid course of physical change and consequence? And if there be such influence at all, why should we assume that it is opposed to Law? Rather must it be itself the action and evidence of a higher and more spiritual reason in things, which we perhaps cannot as yet follow, but which we too may some day see.

To the Catholic, then, the cardinal fact of the whole world's history is the birth and life and death of Christ. The old world leads up to it: the new is its development and outcome. Unique in all the centuries—lowliest and yet most royal—that dying Preacher, Who was crucified by Jerusalem and Rome for saying that He was the very Son of God, is the corner-stone

of the world fabric,—the key of the human mystery—the Lord of Life. Reading the simple narrative, waiving all question of inspiration, if you will, we can come to no other conclusion but that He claimed to be the Incarnate God. Not at all a wise Socrates—not in the least, a later Isaiah—not a mystic nor a magician: but the very God—the Word made Flesh—the absolute “I am.”

Upon this absolute and central truth of Christ's Divinity, the Church insists as the focus and radiating point of all her teaching. I have spoken of her wide philosophy of sin and grace. For both, she takes us back at once to Christ. His life and death—the perfect sacrifice, the purifying and the reconciliation of sin-stained humanity—bore in it the needed infinite redemption, built in the counsels of the eternal mercy the golden bridge by which every sinner may return. In the mystery of that Life and Death, at once true human and inalienably divine, is the origin of all grace. He is the link between the Finite and the Infinite: therefore He is the Way whereby we come to God and whereby God communicates Himself to us. In that, by reason of His Humanity, we are the brethren of the Son of God, so are we heirs of the heavenly kingdom. In His Sonship is the eternal Fatherhood of God revealed. In that He died, He conquered death: in that He lived and liveth, He is the door of Life Eternal.

On all this, I say, the Catholic Church insists—and with far keener and more eager vigilance than any other of the confessions. For if Christ be not God, she feels, then is our hope vain. If He, Who on a score of critical occasions claimed to be Divine, was but a madman or a fraud, let us not play at Christianity—let us rather eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Because from the first she guarded this essential truth before all else, therefore she spent centuries in defining and maintaining the doctrine of the Trinity and the related doctrine of the Person of Christ, the Human and Divine. The elaborate formulæ of the Nicene theology and the rest are not scholastic subtleties or the quibbles of an oriental fancy: they are the necessary basis and security of the vital fact of Christianity. It is either these, or nothing.

And as she has insisted always on the doctrine of the Trinity, so, for exactly the same reason, she has been careful to uphold the honourable prerogative of her, whom from the earliest centuries she has styled the Mother of God. Wonderful indeed it is to any Catholic to hear the stale invectives which are still bestowed on "Mariolatry," as if somehow the worship of the Divine were squandered on a creature: for there lives no Catholic so ignorant as not to be able to tell you the true answer—that we honour her precisely because to do otherwise would be to ignore the real Godhead of her Son.

Believing then that Christ is the 'very God of very God,' who took upon Himself the human nature and dwelt with us on earth a while, the Church presents His earthly work under four different aspects—though these also are in truth the same. He is the Saviour of the world; He is the Revelation of the Truth of God; He is the Perfect Life; and He is the founder of the spiritual kingdom. You will see that each and all of these grow naturally and at once out of the main conception of His nature and His office. In the world-reconciliation, it was needful that men should learn to know God better, and that they should be taught to do His will, seeing that the human wisdom and human good intentions had not sufficed. Equally, as I have sought to show you, was it necessary that an abiding institute should be created—not indeed a kingdom of this world, but yet a palpable, continuing, organic fact—a sure custodian and an abiding witness.

On some of these points I have dwelt already—of all, there is abundant notice in the Gospel texts. To insist on them at length here would carry me beyond my scope. I pass therefore at once to say that beyond this fundamental insistence on the Divine character of Christ, there is another derivative sense in which the Catholic Church insists constantly upon the supernatural.

I said that, in her view, the life of man must needs be constantly assisted by the spiritual help of God; and that she presents the life and death of Christ, as being, in the design of Providence, the fountain of this unfailing Grace.

Now it is her special pride and office to be a means of salvation available to all—to be a Church truly Catholic,

to whom nothing of humanity is alien, from whom the beggar can draw spiritual wealth as surely as the prince or the professor, though they too find, if they will seek it, all the special help they need. To the end that there should be in the world such tangible and easy ways of entering into the Heavenly Communion, of appropriating, each poor nature for itself, the riches of the treasure of the Lord, the Church believes that Christ ordained that series of symbolic rites, adapted to the crises of our life, which we call Sacraments: and that it was His will to appoint concerning these that they should be to His disciples (apart from prayer) the ordinary channels of the communication of that grace and pardon and spiritual sustenance, which in and through the office of our Saviour we claim from the Almighty. True is it, that this infinite ocean of Love is waiting for us all the while. Yet in the spiritual order, Love too has its own laws, and this is one of them: that by Christ's appointment we draw its channels into our souls, as freely and as fully as we will or as our capacity for receiving it will allow, by obeying the sacramental ordinances of the Christian dispensation, in faith and love and humble trust in Him.

I need not tell you—for it is patent—that of this sacramental system the central fact is that, which more than any theoretic point marks off the life of the Church Catholic from everything beyond it—the acceptance of the Real Presence of the Lord upon our altars under the sacramental form.

To those who approach this as mere critics, bringing neither personal experience nor sympathy to aid them, no man can hope to say what it implies. To them I will only say "You read the *Imitation* and you hold it a great book—one of the treasures of the world—a mirror and revelation of the holiest in man. Read then the sacramental chapters of that soul-swaying meditation, and go back and scoff at us, if you can." Or let them go, if they prefer life to literature, into any Catholic church, not at a fashionable midday Mass but in the early morning, on some great day like Easter or the Birth of Christ: and watch the still rapt gladness that has fallen on the meanest faces, watch the fellowship and

democracy of the altar rails, catch the energy of better effort and of new beginning, and the enthusiasm of sincere repentance, and the nobility of high worship that makes the air electric—and tell us if they can, that it is all no more than mummery and priestcraft, folly counter-signed by fraud.

All this may be deception, you will say: and undoubtedly, although subjective testimony may be much to us who have believed, to others it is at the best a noticeable phenomenon. Something more is wanted. We must show a reason for our faith in this most startling or most mystic doctrine of a spiritual Presence that transcends not only sense but maddest imagination, of which yet there is no outward sign at all.

Our first reason, naturally, is in the Bible text itself. We say, and I confess I cannot conceive that an intelligent atheist would doubt it, that Christ said neither more nor less than what the Church teaches concerning the Eucharist, not only when He founded that rite on the most solemn occasion of His intercourse with His Apostles, but at many other times, and above all in that test discussion which is recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John. But strong as is the Scriptural argument, the Church has another that is perhaps still stronger.

The doctrine of the Real Presence, linked with that of the ordinance of the Last Supper as a mystic, yet most effectual commemoration and representation of the Passion of the Lord, is the essence and import of "the Mass." Now that great act of common worship and of mystic Sacrifice, of solemn commemoration and public prayer for all the living and the dead, is and has always been the central office of the Church—in every age and nation substantially, nay even minutely, the same. Being so notable a corporate act, it has been always safeguarded by jealous provision for a settled liturgical form. There is no time in the history of Christendom when that liturgy is not before us, as a palpable and most significant record: for in every age and under every variation it testifies beyond cavil to the belief in a Real Sacramental Presence of the Lord as the whole point and meaning of the great office. I suppose there are many able and learned persons who imagine, in a very careless ignorance,

that the Mass is a "fond thing vainly invented," somewhere in the Middle Ages. Yet nothing is more palpably untrue.

The case stands thus. There exist certain great types of the Liturgy of the Mass—all perfectly at one in their intent and doctrine and general plan, and even in their main forms of prayer and in unexpected coincidences of phrase and action, yet varying in practical arrangements and filled in with details evidently arising by local usage. Each of these is clearly *parallel to* and not *derived from* the others. Each is attributed by the local tradition to an apostle, who was the early founder of the local church. Each is carried up, by a separate chain of documentary and historical evidence, to a time not very many generations removed from the living witness of those who saw and heard the Lord. What is more clear as a mere matter of scientific historical criticism, than that these great trunk lines of liturgical tradition must have diverged from a common Apostolic Type or norm—and that this type must have been, as they are, a central and Sacramental and commemorative office, involving a Real Presence, and being to them in all essentials what the office of the Mass has been to us to-day?

Probably many of you will be incredulous, but the proofs are very simple. At Rome, we have the Liturgy which is now the common, though by no means the only form used in the Catholic Church, and we trace it back so far, that details of its use are attributed to Popes who ruled between 100 A.D. and 120 A.D. The names of the Saints commemorated in the text are known to have been added by gradual accretion, and yet all of them, with a solitary exception, were martyred before A.D. 310, (the excepted date being 362), while the earlier names go back to Linus, Cletus, and Clement, the immediate successors of Peter's Chair. Ambrose of Milan, himself the editor of a special rite still preserved there, cites some of the Roman prayers soon after 400 A.D., as being taken from what he then called "the ancient rites." Like all the others, it was preserved in oral tradition, by reason of the Discipline of the Secret, until the fifth century: but a copy of the Canon, exactly as it is now, was set forth in the Sacramentary of Pope Gelasius about 496 A.D.

There is, however, no question that the ancient form had been strictly preserved in all its essentials; and we have on record, in the Epistles of St. Innocent I. in the fourth century, that Pope's opinion that the Liturgy was in fact the true tradition given by St. Peter to the Church at Rome.

Turn now to the other great rite preserved at Alexandria, which in like manner was committed to writing by St. Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, after 400 A.D., and ascribed by him and by the whole Church to the direct oral tradition of St. Mark himself. The internal evidence of the prayers, as they were then set down and have been since preserved, points to the period of persecution, say 300 A.D., as the date of some of the added prayers, the body of the rite being therefore earlier. The condemnation of the Eutychian opinions in 451 led to the schism which detached all the Copts from Rome: yet the Copts have to this day a form of the same Sacramental Liturgy of St. Mark and St. Cyril, which was old among them then.

If you go to Syria, the great Liturgy of Jerusalem, ascribed to the tradition of St. James himself and to the direct development of the Church described in the Acts of the Apostles, is the Liturgy long used by and still preserved among the Eastern Eutychians, who therefore held it as the true tradition before 450. The Nestorians, who have been separated since 431, keep to this day a related rite, named from St. Thaddæus the Apostle. Indeed, we are told that Nestorius was the first of the schismatics of whom it was even *alleged* that he had altered the ancient Liturgy. It is curious to remember that the Portuguese, when they discovered Malabar in the 16th century, found a native church there using this very rite: and it is now clear that they had it from the Nestorian Church of Babylon, where it was in use before 400. But we carry this rite still further back with an absolute historic certainty. For it happens by good fortune that there are preserved to us the Sunday-school lessons of St. Cyril, who was Bishop of Jerusalem in 347. In these he actually instructs his catechumens in the ritual and meaning of the Mass, and for that purpose he explains point by point this venerable liturgy of St. James, much

as we have it still as the basis of a hundred local rites throughout the Catholic East.

Now each of these three great normal types of the Eucharistic tradition—that of Peter at Rome, that of James at Jerusalem, that of Mark at Alexandria—is perfectly independent. No scholar can dream that any is derived from, or even moulded by, any other. The hundreds of minor variations fall to the scholar's criticism easily under one or other of these or other equally ancient types. But the types themselves are sisters, not interdependent but collateral: and therefore they are sisters of a common stock. These three or four most venerable types—to leave aside the others—*involve an archetype*. Yet each of them by about the year 300, was not only established but old, and based by those who loved it upon an apostolic tradition. Who made the common archetype, I pray you, which Rome and Alexandria and Jerusalem and Babylon assume? In what common Eucharistic centre do these traditions meet? Who taught the half-dozen intervening generations to accept this appalling mystery with common certainty, as a thing not doubted even when dogmatic heresy was rife and all the world rang with polemical debate—as a thing which every schismatic took with him, whatever else he left? Who taught it, I ask, or could have taught it, but the Master Who, on the world-historic night, commanded them to do in memory of Him the solemn act which He did then.

If you still doubt what I say of the Apostolic origin of the Eucharistic Act, I would have you read what is not hard of access—the Apologia of Justin, who is called the “Philosopher,” addressed as early as 138 A.D. to Antoninus Pius, in defence of the Christian faith. Therein, speaking generally of the existing rites, for he had lived in Syria and at Alexandria and Rome, he describes the outline of the Mass. As the core and heart of it, he insists in plain terms on the doctrine of the Real Presence. With great simplicity and directness he bases both the doctrine and the office upon the institutional words of Christ. And as if to exclude any caviller who might suppose it a new idea of his own or his contemporaries, he goes on to remark as a striking

fact that "the evil spirits" (as he puts it) "have introduced this very solemnity into the mysteries of Mithra," the then fashionable ritualism of Rome: proving so that to his knowledge,—and he was a master of all the schools before his baptism,—the Mass was older than these fantastic Eastern rites, and was in fact, as it claimed to be, the commemorative office framed by those who first received the Eucharist at the very hands of Christ.

If then the Mass we have to-day, was known as the ancient and undoubted worship of the churches by this Syrian convert, born when John, if dead, was only just dead, and to whom John's personal disciples and the immediate followers of James and Paul must have been known, what will you say? If the "Supper of the Lord," which Paul was setting in order among the Corinthians about 50 A.D., was not the same thing as Justin. was admitted to about 120 A.D., who altered it? Not the beloved disciple, or his pupil if you will, who wrote the Fourth Gospel: for the Fourth Gospel insists most markedly on this very Eucharistic doctrine. Not the Church at Rome: for there, as I have said, the tradition preserved by well remembered records from the joint martyrdom of Peter and Paul down to the Sacramentary of Gelasius is unbroken by any hint of variance. The answer is that there is no change, no innovation; only an untiring effort to hold fast the ordinance of the Saviour, Who left it as His most precious legacy when He went out to die.

Terrible it is, if you will—surpassing human speech—this heart of heavenly fire that lives within our worship. You will tell me it is vain to trace it back to the Apostles, for the thing itself is past believing. I admit that if Christ be not God, our hope is vain—our holy office, as you say, a mummery—our Communion with the Lord of Heaven and Earth a bitter fraud. But I warn you that if you come with me so far as to agree that Christ was, and that He was Divine, you must come further. If you repudiate the whole record, I understand you. But every competent critic now admits that quite worthy witnesses are before us. If you take the witness as of any weight at all, you cannot put aside the clear consensus and wilful repetition of the three Synoptics who record the words of insti-

tution: nor the still fuller and more deliberate enforcement of the same by Paul: nor, above all, that vivid dramatic sermon in the sixth of John. There, after His teaching they asked as you do, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" and many of the disciples went away and walked no more with Him. He did not call them back to tell them that they misconceived, nor did He explain to the Apostles any hidden sense. He only turned sadly to the twelve, and asked "Will you too go away?" And Peter, spokesman of the faith as elsewhere, beaten down by the mystery, not understanding the hard saying any more than the seceders, answers, as we answer now, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life: and we believe and know that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

I have dwelt long upon the subject of the Mass and of the Eucharistic doctrine. It is, I think, an obvious dividing line between those conceptions of faith and worship which in our own day are tending towards Catholicism, and those which lead away from it. I have only time to pass now to one other aspect of the Catholic Church, in which it appeals with peculiar force to the present struggling generation, and to the coming time.

As the root idea of the Protestant Reformers was flat individualism, so the dominant note of the Catholic conception of the world is solidarity. In the beginning, the Church was all but a communism. In the days of the persecution, all who had, without other compulsion than the love that Christ revealed, gave up their wealth to feed the needy; and this fraternal distribution was directly organized by the Church. At all times, though she has allowed private property, she has suggested that to forego it is the better way. At all times, to those who keep their own, she has preached a far-reaching duty of charity to all the world, which if it were carried out, would leave little disparity to mourn.

As in property, so in all else. The universal brotherhood has been to her no empty name, but a world-reforming fact and law. Strongly, through bribe and menace, she has striven to uphold the equality of prince and peasant before the moral code: and it is her pride to remember that even when the hatred of the

English Crown was the penalty of refusal, a weak and hunted and tormented Pope refused to mete out to the Tudor any other marriage law than would be meted out to the meanest hind within his realm.

And no less is it our pride that we can say that while the Church stood upright, here and elsewhere—even to the latest hour of what they call her worst corruption—she provided for the people a career, far more sure and better worth their following than the most advanced democracy has given them since.

Take the great Churchmen, who, by their sheer ability and learning, did the chief part of the government of the world for many a century. They are a noble line, promoted often to an almost royal dignity, and in the vast majority of cases for no reason except their talents, or their virtues, or both: and of these men an enormous multitude are the children of the poor. There was not a country side that had not within reach its abbey or its cathedral: and where a peasant lad showed promise, and desired at once to serve God and to make his life useful upon a wider plane, it was very certain he would be put to school and made a 'clerk:' and once a clerk, the Church to him was but an organized democracy, wherein nothing, even to the Papal chair, was inaccessible to merit. You have sown the land with schools; you have improved the Poor Law and multiplied philanthropies; and you do well: but for all these things it was easier for the deserving helpless ones of the earth to find help in their need, and easier for those whom God endowed with power to find their rightful place, before Henry sacked the monasteries and made himself the English Pope.

If you pass to social or to political liberty it is still the same. In the Brotherhood of Christ the Church saw neither bond nor free. The patrician maiden and the slave girl, in the Acts of the Early Martyrs, meet as equals and as friends. As swiftly as human inertia allowed, the Church abolished slavery. In the home, she found woman degraded by the licentiousness of the age. She freed them at a stroke when she declared that marriage was a Sacrament of God: and when she placed above her altars, as the symbol next in holiness to the Incarnate God, her stainless ideal of womanhood

and maternity, she did more to hold in check men's proneness to brutality than all the laws that ever punished crime. In our own and every other struggling commonwealth, when the feudal power was at its worst, and threatened to engulf for ever the liberties of the tenants of the soil, it was the Church more than any other single force that bearded these lords of war, and made it possible for the common people to achieve their liberty. So it was the Church that gave articulate voice to justice and to civic reason, in adapting first and in administering afterwards the codes of written law: and here, as everywhere, she was but seeking, after the rough-hewn fashion of human institutions, to carry out Christ's paramount commandment—the Law of Love.

But not only within each single state was she a power for justice and emancipation—she was more and greater than them all. By the character of her Catholic title and her Catholic commission, she held up before the peoples the ideal of a world-community. Amid the lawless violence of the mail-clad centuries, she provided at least a possible arbiter. And however men may sneer at the ambition of the Popes, the European peace would be much nearer than it is to-day if the notable example of Prince Bismark could be adopted as a commonplace of diplomacy.

When the Empire fell, the Church upheld its claim. To this hour, she refuses in the name of her commission, and she will refuse, to bind herself by any frontiers, or to be otherwise than independent in her own field of every national government, whether it wears its crown in Rome or no. She knows that the world-progress is hampered while our narrow frontiers hedge us in with prejudice and tariffs, and our national self-seekings and distorted patriotisms keep all the nations lowering at each other like caged beasts, and stifle industry and freedom and every noble thing beneath the immeasurable load of military preparation: she looks for a better time when the human Brotherhood may be, even in statecraft, a practical reality.

Yet not even here can I pause. For if she prophesies of a World-State, and laughs at the little fences statesmen draw upon the map, no less does she bid us think of even

such a commonwealth as but one province of the Heavenly Kingdom. "The Church" to her cannot be bounded by the little scene whereon we play our parts a little while; for the Church is the Body of Christ. In our Father's house there are many mansions; and this is but the outer porch. Beyond the grave her children are not far away. She has taught and always teaches that they are linked to us, and we to them, in that Community of Saints which reaches upwards to the throne of God. It may be that they, our brethren, are of the company of the Church Suffering—purging away, by what endurance and patience and travail we know not, the mortal stains they carried from the warfare of the Church Militant, where we were comrades and brethren in arms. It may be that already, if with our measures we can rightly appraise what with the immortals takes the place of time, they have passed into that other company of the Church Triumphant, whose place is in the sight of God. Yet wheresoever they may be, our comrades, we can reach our hands to them and they to us, in prayer and spiritual fellowship, and unseen in God's ordering a common life goes on. Members we are then, of one another—here and in the unknown: members of one transcendent spiritual yet organic whole—and that whole is the Body of Christ.

Endless, of course, are the things that yet remain to say concerning the great tradition of the Catholic teaching. Endless also, I believe, are the ways in which it would be well for us and for our children, if the Catholic Truth were so stated in our modern speech, that those who now say that every Catholic must needs be either knave or fool, could understand the things that they despise. For the present purpose I am content if I have been able in any measure to set forth these three outstanding aspects of the Catholic belief—the claim of the Living Voice, the treasure of the Sacraments, the Brotherhood of the Body of Christ. Like all else in Truth, they are but different aspects of the same thing,—the application, namely, of the work of Christ to the needs of all humanity. They are the same in this also, that in each there comes the note of Catholicity. In Christ all men are one,—and that, not merely in any formal or theoretic

unity, but in a brotherhood which, if we could once translate it into the formulæ of government, would leave Democracies and Socialisms behind.

Those who take themselves to be the best exponents of Western civilization, have been accustomed of late to treat the Church with scant courtesy; and I agree that if, as some of them suppose, religion, and perhaps duty also, is altogether to vanish from the earth, then the study of Catholicism would be but a waste of energy. But if, as I believe, the moral and religious consciousness of man be no less a fact than knowledge or physical growth or life or death, then I claim that this transcendent expression of religion through the Christian centuries demands a hearing from them all. They call it dead, yet it is more alive, in the moulding of humanity, than all their schools. They say it belongs to a forgotten past, but there are not wanting signs that it shall inherit the future. In the field of ethics and religion, England, like the rest, is dividing rapidly into two camps—those who do and those who do not hold that religion is unnecessary and any reality of God superfluous. When that division is complete, it will be seen that the walls of the camp of the believers are but the fold of the Catholic Church.

In the field of social and political relations the old order changes day by day more swiftly. Much is gone and more will go. Surely one thing is clear: that neither just industry nor social health nor noble government is possible, unless we build on something better than selfseeking, and appeal to something holier than "the desire of a remembered pleasure?" Individualism, and the Manchester School, and freedom of contract, and all the theories that sought justice in the war of interests and progress in the clash of infinite selfishness, are being carried out before our eyes to burial. Protestantism is fighting for its life with organic disintegration and intellectual doubt, to which it can oppose neither a reasoned philosophy of life nor any authoritative gospel. It cannot rescue the body politic, for it cannot save itself. The masses leave it on the one side, and the leaders of opinion on the other. Is there no hope at all, of light and leadership in the coming time?

I submit to you that the promises of the Messiah have

not failed. His followers were the social saviours of the earlier Europe: it is not more difficult to help the centuries that lie before us. That which He promised to uphold, lives on: and, gathering up the ancient truth and the modern hope, it points the nations, now as always, to that true Republic, where freedom is the law of duty; where all are equal as the sons of God; and where fraternity is the willing service of the brotherhood of Christ, when the Kingdom of the Lord shall come.



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