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# The Catholic Notion of Faith



Thomas N. O'Kane



# THE CATHOLIC NOTION OF FAITH

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## THE NATURE OF FAITH

Address delivered on July 20, 1941

When Shakespeare placed upon the lips of Hamlet the words, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy," he challenged the modern narrow notion of knowledge and asserted the wide latitude of the Catholic position. Man's knowledge is not merely of this earth earthly. He is capable of knowing what is always and everywhere true. By his reason alone he can rise from the things that were made, to a certain knowledge of the existence and nature of God, of a future life, and his dependence upon and duties to his Creator. Furthermore, by an act at once divine and human, he can soar above this earth, beyond the limits of the greatest intelligence to a certain knowledge of truths, hidden in the very essence of God. Our purpose in these four addresses is to explain the nature of this act of faith by which man can know those things in heaven and earth which are not dreamt of in human philosophy.

To ask today what is faith is to invite a perfect babel of conflicting tongues. This confusion arises from the fact that the Apostolic notion that faith gives knowledge—a truth which passed as a coin of the realm of Western Civilization for fifteen hundred years—in the last four hundred years has been stamped with other dies and given other values.

The first blow was struck against the intellectual character of faith when belief was transferred from the realm of the intellect to the domain of the will, supported by a partially rational faith. Emmanuel Kant, distrusting the power of reason to reach

objective truth, went further. He denied all rational support to faith and established the truths of belief on the demands of the moral conscience. This opened the way to the modern non-intellectual approaches to God which gave us the four modern notions of faith.

According to the first of these, faith is a guess. It is an hypothesis which I make use of to explain what I otherwise cannot explain. I look on the world of creation. It puzzles me. I guess the existence of a creator. I look on the still form of a loved one. It startles me. I guess to a future life. I look on the figure of the historical Christ. He attracts me. I guess He must be divine. In all my relations to other-worldliness, nothing is certain, nothing is provable. In the words of Sir Henry Jones—"It is an experiment, the Grand Perhaps of the Universe." It is only a child playing childhood's game of pinning the tail on a donkey, with none of childhood's impatience to tear off the blind-fold and find out if we are right.

The second notion looks on faith as a postulate, as "the voluntary assumption of a risk for a higher end." Without any reasonable inquiry, it takes it for granted that God exists and looks ahead hopefully to an increase of confidence and buoyancy and fullness of living in the living out of the assumption. It is an overpowering confidence in the unknown, a hopeful leap into the dark—but a leap just as irrational as the overnight guest who steals out to the pool and dives in for buoyancy and refreshment. The water may not be there.

The third notion identifies faith with religious experience. "It is a certain experience in the heart of man, thanks to which God is attained without a

reasoning process." Mr. H. G. Wells has defined it as an encounter with God, Professor James as "any moment of life that brings the reality of spiritual things more home to me." It is modernism meeting a modern Christ on a modern Damascene road. No voice speaks from the sky; no Gamaliel even need teach. It has experienced; it knows.

The fourth notion identifies faith with the emotions and the imagination. It is not a process by which we arrive at knowledge but a means by which we attach ourselves to the person of an ideal Christ and live our lives in the light of what we believe of His precepts and counsels. In the thought of a modern American it is "the organized direction of man's life in devotion to ideal possibilities discerned by the imagination." It is the enchanting pursuit of a rainbow with its ever accompanying discouragement. We can never come just there.

Over against these notions which deny to faith its intellectual character, we place the ancient and changeless teaching of the Catholic Church. Faith is an assent which the mind of man gives to revealed truths, at the command of his will and under the influence of divine grace, simply and solely because of the infinite truthfulness of God who revealed them.

No one claims that any one man can know all that is presently known. No one claims that the human race now knows all it might know or all it will come to know by its own unaided powers in the years that lie ahead. The unrelenting advance of science and the persistence of thought and experiment daily are pushing forward the frontiers of natural knowledge. In their very advance, they reveal the existence of a vast and uncharted body of truth and law and principle which is outside the

furthermost boundaries of what is presently known. In particular, Philosophy argues to the existence of a Master-Mind, a Supreme Architect and Law-Giver of the Universe, the knowledge of whose intimate life and intimate dealings with His creatures is entirely beyond human powers. Reason tells me He has a direct hand in the government of the physical universe. He makes the sun to rise and set and governs the march of the seasons. Is it at all likely that after creating man, the crown of all His works, He withdrew, as it were, into a shell and had no further direct converse or communication with His creatures? There is nothing in the nature of God or man to prevent such communication. In fact, the very notion of the Fatherhood of God and of the yearning of all humanity to know its origin and destiny with certainty and without prolonged study would seem to indicate that such a direct communication between God and man would take place.

When we look to history we find that many men of sane mind and eminent character have claimed that it did take place. For two thousand years the Jewish prophets claimed to be mouth-pieces of God. In the midst of error and corruption, in the teeth of every manner of opposition, they taught one of the purest forms of monotheism and morality. Finally, in the days of Tiberius Caesar, there appeared in Judea a man who was manifestly the greatest of the Prophets. He came speaking strange things. In effect He said:

“I come from God.”

“I come teaching the same monotheism as Moses and the prophets but I come to bring fuller knowledge of the inner life of God.”

“I know that back in the depths of God’s Being



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mysterious vital processes are occurring by virtue of which He exists as three persons in one nature. Their names are—The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit.”

“I know this may seem strange to you. Take my word for it. It is a fact and some day you shall see these vital processes taking place.”

“I speak an equally strange thing. I, Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter, I am the second of these persons, the very Son of God made man. No splendor or glory surrounds me now but some day you shall see me coming in the clouds of heaven with power and majesty. If you question my claims, look to the miracles I have wrought. I have stilled the fury of the tempest. I have multiplied the fruits of the land and of the sea. By my power, the blind see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, lepers are cleansed, the dead rise again. All visible creation obeys the touch of my hand. They are my credentials that I am God, that I speak with authority, that what I say is true.”

These are bold words. What reaction does Christ desire? May we accept His person and spurn His doctrine? May we choose from His message some truths and reject others? No, we must accept His person and His doctrine. Unless we are prepared to accept all of His teaching, we, by that very fact, reserve to ourselves in effect the right to accept none of His teaching. We must confess with Nicodemus “. . . we know that thou hast come a teacher from God, for no one can work these signs that thou workest unless God be with him” (*John 3:2*). We must assert with Peter “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (*Matthew 16:17*).

The personal miracles of Christ prove Him true God of true God. As Truth itself, made man, He can neither deceive nor be deceived. Therefore when He tells us truths of eternity we need have no fear or hesitation in accepting what He says. He is Eternal Truth. He knows. On the absolute truthfulness of His word, we say "I believe." That is what the Catholic Church means by "faith."

You ask where is this voice today and how can I know in this modern world that this is the voice of Christ. He lived only thirty-three years. His message was immediately to those of His day but He willed it to reach all men even to the end of time. To continue this message, He established a visible Teacher, and to preserve it against loss or addition or corruption, He founded it on Peter whom He graced with His own infallibility. ". . . who hears you, hears me; . . . who rejects you, rejects me" (*Luke* 10:16). Today, Eugenio Pacelli sits in the chair of Peter, graced with Peter's prerogatives. He is appealing to the modern world as Christ appealed to the world of His day. He speaks in Christ's name and claims to have Christ's appointment coming across the centuries through the long line of Peter's successors to himself. With those of Christ's day some may object and say: "This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it." He feels for these in their difficulties. He realizes their stress, their desire for truth, their yearning for the light, their eager gropings for some secure ground of faith. With the abounding love of a Father's heart, he would take them into the bosom of the Church. But even for them he cannot change the deposit of faith given into his keeping. With tenderness, however, he asks them—to look to his credentials, to examine with

critical eye the claim of authentic succession from Peter, Prince of Apostles, to consider the miracles taking place every year in his Church—to think how in the midst of change he has remained stable, how before all opposition he is secure against the gates of hell; to look to his marvelous and inexhaustible fecundity for good, to his charitable works, his care of the enslaved, the sick, the indigent, the dying; to behold the holiness of his doctrine, the sanctity of his members, the unfailing constancy of the thousands of his children who today dye their robes in the blood of the Lamb. No other person, no merely human organization is signed with such seals. They support his claim to speak for God with divine authority.

So it is that the Church of Christ today makes the same demands on the intellect and the conscience of men that Christ Himself made two thousand years ago. Her dogmas are not the arbitrary teachings of a human organization but divine truths divinely given and divinely attested. Her morality is not the imposed will of a despot or the fiction of man-made convention but the manifest will of the God of Creation speaking through His accredited Christ and His accredited Church. Her faith is no mere guess or hypothesis, no sentiment or strange encounter with God. It is a process by which the mind of man, after realizing that God has spoken, gives assent to what God has said. The will of man and a special aid of God have their place. But when we say, "I believe," it is essentially an intellectual process leading to knowledge.

The tragedy of this world of ours, even more than its blood and toil and tears, is the fact that we have turned our back on Him who came from God

to tell us what kind of world it ought to be. Like Peter, we sail the vast sea of knowledge in an overshadowing night, laboriously casting our man-made nets to catch truths. We are proud of our skiff, proud of our nets and our strength. We debark at morning only to meet the White Figure and discontentedly murmur "Master, the whole night through we have toiled and have taken nothing" (*Luke 5:5*). He tells us draw out unto the deep and let down our nets—Not where we have been fishing, not where we think the fish may be—but just there, on a line with His pointed index finger. The Church has obeyed. At the word of the Christ she has let down her nets and her boat is full. May we show Peter's willingness—"At thy word I will lower the net" (*Luke 5:5*).

## FAITH AND REASON

Address delivered on July 27, 1941

From time immemorial man has been troubled by three questions: What am I; whence have I come; whither do I go? He wonders before the unseen.

Science has attempted to unlock the door but the key does not fit. Philosophy, like Moses, has seen the answer from afar only to languish on the summit of human effort, yearning for what is beyond. Humanism and the non-intellectual religion have striven devotedly to support man in his weary way. They fail because they are without benefit of the water from the smitten rock, the manna from heaven, the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

Yet, right in the midst of things, as obvious as a city on a mountain-top or a candle burning in a candle-stick—there is an Ancient and Living Thing which is saying day after day: “I have the answers. I will give you the certainty for which you crave. I will show you ‘the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that are not seen’ (*Hebrews* 11:1). Come for all things are prepared.”

Why is it that the modern world makes light of it, goes off one to his farm and another to his business and the rest lay hold upon it and treat it shamefully? (*Matthew* 22:5-6). Why is it that with all our progress in science and the arts the modern world refuses to meet this Church face to face on the honorable field of reason and has “fallen back upon the borderlands of myths and mysticism, like so many other barbarians with whom civilization is at war?” Why is it that the venerable Mother of the West sets

her table a-groaning with good things, invites all to come, only at eventide to see pressed against the panes of her windows the hungry faces of those who refuse to enter in?

It is true that no one but God, "who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (I *Timothy* 2:5) can answer why this individual soul in the particular case refuses to believe. The Spirit breathes where it wills and faith ever comes down to us as a gift of God. But looking at the modern world in the large we can reduce its mental objections to two mental attitudes.

*First:* The reluctance of human reason to accept religious teaching on the authority of another. "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary? . . . And they took offense at him" (*Mark* 6:3).

*Secondly:* The alleged absurdity of the doctrine which Christ's revelation contains. "This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it?" (*John* 6:61).

Since the Lutheran and Kantian revolts the modern mind has put on a modern naivete. It declares an intense hatred for the very word and notion of authority. It must see; it must touch; it must plumb the riven side and probe the blood-red wounds, before it will believe. It will not take the words of those who have seen. It remonstrates loudly against all authoritarianism in matters of the intellect the while it takes a party-line, or follows a fashion, or bows to every new seer in the agora. It fulminates against new and tyrannical forms of government, not because they are evil in themselves but because, as it claims, they are "authoritarian." It forgets that a democracy involves the obedience of the minority to the authority of the majority and clothes all the magistrates with some semblance to

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the authority of the divine. It is shadow-boxing with an opponent of its own imagination; it is trying to chop off the head of its grandmother only to find it has lost its own head. The inclination to believe, to accept truth on the authority of others, is just as natural to man as his thirst for knowledge or his craving for love. A child believes its parents. Students accept the words of their text-books and teachers. Doctors of Philosophy rely on the authority of their sources. You are taking the word of the announcer that I am a Catholic priest speaking to you from San Francisco.

Consider what a topsy-turvy world it would be were we always to doubt human testimony and always to insist on this seeing-is-believing attitude. The money in your pocket would be absolutely worthless. Education would have to banish from its halls all teachers and text-books and libraries. The certificates of doctors and lawyers and engineers would have no meaning. Newspapers could keep only their comic sections and radio would exist only for entertainment. You couldn't take a train or a boat with any certainty that they would arrive where you wanted to go. You couldn't use an elevator or order a dinner—unless you turned physicist to inspect the tension of the cables or chemist to certify for yourself the observance of the pure food laws. No man could look another in the face. No contractual dealings could be entered upon. The whole structure of modern living as we know it would wither under the blight of distrust. And were we to get the phobia that all or even the majority were untrustworthy, we would find ourselves either in an asylum cutting out paper dolls or sitting at home twiddling our thumbs. The inevitable end of the complete dis-

trust of humans is either inertia or intellectual bankruptcy.

If we put such trust in the value of human testimony, why should we be so reluctant to accept the testimony of God? Is the word of man greater than the word of God? Does the office-boy in the outer-room know as much about the workings of a corporation as the president who directs it? Are the charges of an avowed opponent and competitor so to prevail that the statement of the most Trustworthy of witnesses is to be rejected without inquiry? Sincere men do proffer sincere briefs against God and His Church. Their fault rests not so much with themselves as with their interpretation of the evidence. What they cannot see, God sees. Where they make mistakes, He makes no mistake. Where their authority is in doubt, His is never in doubt. Wherefore, it is neither politic nor safe nor wise to reject without inquiry him who is of Peter, who is of Christ, who is of God.

The second objection of the modern mind to the truths of faith concerns the alleged absurdity or impossibility of the doctrines proposed. You say there are three persons in one God; that doesn't make sense. You say this man Jesus is God; how can it be? You say the Catholic Church is divine; I can't see it. You say words breathed over bread and wine bring Christ under a roof; it is impossible. In the words of Nicodemus, "How can these things be"? (*John 3:9*).

The problem is not how such things can be but the realization of the fact that they are so. No one is more insistent than the Catholic Church that the act of faith is obscure. It is obscure not because of a lack of certainty but because of the nature of the



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action and the truths we are asked to believe. We make use of proofs to establish the divinity of Christ and the divinity of His Church. They serve only as the star that led the wise men to Bethlehem, only as the finger and the voice that pointed to the Lamb of God. They do not compel us to accept His message. They are not the reason why we believe what He says. They give us only the moral certitude that this person and this Church have the authority of God. It is on the absolute authority of God, itself and alone, that we establish our belief. The authority does not make clear all that it proposes for our assent. In the infinite reaches of its wisdom and from the profundity of its life, it draws secrets hidden from the foundation of the world.

These intimate secrets of the life of God and His dealings with His creatures, we call mysteries. They are truths which human reason could never reach to of itself, which, even when revealed, are entirely beyond our comprehension; yet for that, none the less truths vaguely seen now and hopefully to be envisioned in the splendour of their reality with God eternally. They are not rocks which God gives us for intellectual indigestion. Profound though the mystery be, there is always food for the mind and in no truths more evidently than in the two greatest mysteries of all—The Trinity, which helps us solve the problem of how a solitary God can be happy; and the Incarnation, which tells us how mercy and justice *can* kiss. Nor are they contradictions in fact. A contradiction is like a head-on crash between two trains running in opposite directions. Reason and faith do not run in opposite directions.

Directly before me are the truths of reason coupled one on another; behind them and graciously

and strangely attached to them are the truths of reason given me by faith; and far off below the horizon, where sky and heavens meet, mysteries I cannot see at all. God invites me to board that train. He has joined car to car. Am I reasonable in refusing His invitation because I cannot see the last car?

All about me there are mysteries of the natural order which are beyond my comprehension. The clock in the studio is ticking off minutes of time. Can anyone tell me what TIME is? This heart that is beating now, this life that I have—does anyone know its secret? I think and communicate my thoughts to you—can you give me an explanation of how I speak? You hear my voice in New York this moment sooner than those who sit seventy-five feet from me in San Francisco—have we a satisfying explanation for that? What is heat, what is light, what is energy? What is the inside of the inside of the atom? How do plants take carbon-dioxide from the air and unite with chemicals from the ground to form food? Why do animals mother their young? How does the carrier-pigeon return home? Why is it that the same bush that gives birth to the green leaf glories in the beauty of the blood-red rose? These are not mysteries in the true sense but even they are presently incomprehensible.

When we pass therefore from the natural to the supernatural, it is pure conceit and arrogance to think that a finite mind can comprehend the infinite. If we find mysteries in the natural order we should expect to find greater mysteries in the supernatural order. In fact we would be wary instantly of anyone who came proclaiming a God whose nature we could fully understand and a moral law which would

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be in perfect accord with our desires. We cannot mix childhood and adulthood. The young lady talking baby-talk is just as foolish as the child swearing like a trooper. So are we, if we desire to see in this our childhood, what God has reserved for the end of our days.

In Eden, the intellect of man craved undue knowledge and revolted. God sanctified it by faith. He does not sap it of vigor or make it other than it is. He sharpens it, strengthens it by giving it the microscope and telescope of faith. By it, we little folk now see in the small eventualities of life the teeming concerns of eternity and far beyond our normal vision we discern truths which are in the infiniteness of our God. Through no merit of ours, and in spite of our demerits, God has aided us to see that this Ancient Church of Rome is as inexplicable in human history as that star that startled Kings in the Oriental Sky. We have seen it and have come to adore. It had led us to a dwelling where Omnipotence hides under the swaddling clothes of the whiteness of bread and the ruby color of wine, where wisdom incontrovertible resides in the successor of him who denied his Lord before a waitress, where the power of a born and dead God are dispensed always under words said over bread and wine and water, salt and oil and balm. The Kings saw no evidence. We see no evidence. With them, we say, I believe. Why? Dear God, because you have told us—This and only this is so.

## FAITH AND WILL

Address delivered on August 3, 1941

There is nothing which man possesses as his very own but his free-will, his liberty to choose this and to reject that. His material goods, his life itself belong to God already. Even his mind is determined. He cannot deny that a whole is greater than a piece of the pie, that two dollars and two dollars make four dollars, that what is certainly supported by evidence—plainer than the jam on Eddy's face—is what it is. In these his mind is fixed and he has no more right to deny them than Eddy has to say "I was not at the strawberry jam."

In matters of faith it is otherwise. Whereas, the mind is determined to affirm only by the evidence of truth, we need a command of the will to accept truth on the testimony of another. I know nothing of Antarctica. Commander Byrd comes from there and tells me about it. I may either accept what he says or reject it. If I accept it, it is not because it is evident to me. I accept it because my will commands my intellect to accept the words of a knowing and an honorable man.

In the act of faith, which is founded on the incontestable authority of God, the will has a two-fold role. In the first place it spurs the intellect to seeking, it supports it during its search, and stands by it to dispel fantastic fears and vain imaginations. In the second place when the intellect has discovered the fact that God has spoken and intimated to the will the advantages of faith and the obligation to believe, the will may even then refuse to command the mind to believe, just as I may refuse to believe any

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message given me though there be a thousand reasons urging me to do so. I may be a Thomas Aquinas in philosophy and theology. I may be *at home* with the Fathers and the Early Church even as Cardinal Newman was—yet, unless God's Kindly Light leads me, unless he keep my feet and graciously direct my will to accept His truth in its entirety I shall remain in the encircling gloom, unable to take even the first step to the distant scene. Pride of intellect and stubbornness of will caused man to eat "the fruit of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste brought death into our world and all our woe." Only a humble intellect and a docile will, moved by the grace of God, will enable us to eat the fruit of that newer tree whose taste brings life and truth.

Were we to try to chart the course whereby men come to the Church we would be attempting the impossible. God alone knows. Few, if any, advance to it from proof to proof as one might advance from city to city on an air-line. The actual method is rather like going on an unbeaten path through a wood—a journey difficult to retrace because we took no mental note of the turns, the ascents and descents of the trail. Yet two elements are clear: 1) we must have hope of success; and 2) we must show good will.

The make-up of man is such that his will cannot plunge about blindly in the dark. The intellect must show it the substance of the things it may hope for and point out the means it can use to arrive at its goal. The will may or may not follow these counsels of the mind. If it does it will follow only so far as the intellect and faith may lead it, only as perseveringly as its own resoluteness and God's grace aid it to act. Were we to say that this will

and mind have been so corrupted by Original Sin that they are incapable of any good act we should not only insult the dignity of man but make the act of faith a more pitiable antic than the attempt of a cripple to scale the Alps. Were we to confound truth which resides in the intellect with hope which resides in the will we would not only show our ignorance of psychology but blast to bits all the rational foundations of religion and found our hopes on the shifting sands of everyone's wishful thinking. Were we to think with the presumptuous that we are so important that God will not condemn us, that we shall get heaven without good works and pardon without sorrow, we should not only offend the holiness of God but suffer a spiritual swell-head, an elation of spirit exceeding all reason. The Church keeps the middle path. She knows that the mind is prone to error and the will to sin—but always she will be found on the side of the defense of humanity, maintaining its innate goodness and perfectibility, opposing the dark gospel of despair as strenuously as she opposes the giddy gospel of optimism, yet ever bidding us raise our eyes to a way, a truth, and a life obtainable here below.

The second requisite to faith is *good will*. The angels announced its necessity at Bethlehem when they sang—" . . . peace on earth among men of good will" (*Luke 2:14*) and Christ taught it insistently: " . . . some seed fell by the wayside and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air ate it up. And other seed fell upon the rock, and as soon as it had sprung up it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. And other seed fell upon good ground, and sprang up and

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yielded fruit a hundred fold" (*Luke* 8:5-8). The receptivity of the ground is vital to the growth of the seed.

Now why is it that this sown truth does not bear more fruit today? For three principal reasons.

First—because of the pride of our human intellects.

Secondly—because we cherish possessions we will not renounce.

Thirdly—because we are caught in the meshes of circumstances we cannot avoid.

The intellect of man deems itself sovereign. It will bow to nothing but evidence and to that only under pressure of facts. When a problem arises, it looks to the material for an explanation. Failing that it will build for itself its own gods in the image it wants its gods to be. Today we want our own idea of a God and our own idea of a Church. We will not accept the full message of Christ. Why? Frankly, because we do not like it. We will not accept the teachings of the Church. Why? Because she is not the kind of a Church we wish her to be. She does not water the strong draughts of her truth to make them more palatable. She does not bend her moral code to accommodate the desires of men. She insists on preaching her old gospel—there is only one way to heaven, the sorrowful way of the Cross. Against this the natural independence of the mind of men rebels. It rejects the God-given and accepts the man-made—singing with the poet—"Safe upon the solid rock the ugly houses stand. Come and see my shining palace built upon the sand." <sup>1</sup> I ask

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<sup>1</sup>—Edna St. Vincent Millay—*Figs from Thistles* p. 1

you—if the pilot of a transcontinental plane were to leave the airport, declaring he was going to assert his independence and not follow the radio beam, would the passengers rejoice? Could you sit back in your seat with ease of mind if you knew that the engineer had a pet dislike for semaphores and red and green lights? God has given us faith for our direction. It is recklessness and folly to disregard it.

In the gospel we read of the son of the rich man who approached Christ, heard his doctrine, and witnessed His miracles, only to walk sadly away because he had great possessions. Each of us has possessions—desires, thoughts, actions, habits, a mode of life which we cherish and will not relinquish. Some are good, others indifferent, others still we know in our hearts to be evil and offensive to God. Our minds may have led us to the very door of the Church. There written large we read—“ . . . go, sell what thou hast, . . . and follow me.” We look to the Church, then to our possessions. We make our decision. Will we ever be able to forget the look in the eyes of our Mother Church—of Christ Himself—if we decide and walk sadly away?

The last and probably most persistent obstacle to the flight of our wills to God by an act of faith is the enveloping mesh of circumstances. We are born of a family line with honorable traditions, of a mother and a father who have lived splendid lives outside the Church. It is heart-rending to break with their traditions. We have been schooled, perhaps, in an educational tradition that has interpreted history and philosophy adversely to the Church. It is an act of heroic courage to admit the bias and begin as a child again. We live in an atmosphere of



public opinion that has long regarded the Church as an unscriptural, corrupt, intolerant, superstitious, and absurd system of religious imposture. It is humbling to admit that all the while we have been shadow-boxing with a phantom. The very hurry of our lives, this living with a watch in our hands, rushing here and there, nervously fidgeting always—all this does not make for the peace and the calm which the mind needs for the study of the truth and the will needs for its solemn acceptance.

More vividly and more profoundly than ever, we are realizing today the great fact of history that false doctrine coupled with a malicious will is the cause of all humanity's woe. On the international scene we see it as the first corollary of current history. On the academic scene, we are only beginning to see it. We know now by bitter experience that those who say that nothing exists but what is measurable, have seared the soul of America, that those who deride the sanctity of marriage and flaunt divorce are our most insidious fifth-columnists, that those who scorn religious truth and living will not desist from their nefariousness till they insult the flag. We have learned that it is vastly more important to watch the thought that goes into heads than to watch the spinach that goes into cans. We have found that truth is more important than the pure-food law.

May we take the further step with the most chivalrous knight of modern Christendom:

LEAD, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom  
Lead Thou me on!

The night is dark, and I am far from home—  
Lead Thou me on!

Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene—one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor pray'd that Thou  
Shouldst lead me on

I loved to choose and see my path, but now  
Lead Thou me on!

I loved the garish day, and spite of fears,  
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still  
Will lead me on,

O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till  
The night is gone;

And with the morn those angel faces smile  
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

## FAITH AND GRACE

Address delivered on August 10, 1941

Were we to seek for one word which would express exhaustively the burden of Christ's teaching to men, we would be constrained to choose the word "love." On love dependeth the whole Law and the Prophets. It is the new commandment Christ has given us, the sign whereby men are to know that we are His disciples. The early Church declared it "the bond of perfection," "the royal law." The Romans in the arena noted it as the distinctive mark of the disciples of Christ. St. Augustine does not hesitate to build his whole theological system upon it— "Act in charity and you can do what you will."

If love, therefore, is the whole Law and the Prophets, it should follow that Christianity must be "something incredibly simple and at the same time marvelously luminous, something which must win all hearts by nothing more than its sheer inner beauty. Why, then, the hard, strict duty of faith? Why all that immense apparatus of the Church: Pope, Bishops, Priests? . . . If it is true that love constitutes the essence of Christianity, is it not also true, that everything outside this sphere of love, all the external ecclesiastical trappings, all outward dogmatic faith, is something secondary, even something that leads away from the essence of Christianity, something that hinders, even kills love. Is it not just because of the dogmas that love has suffered the fiercest injuries, that it has been drowned in floods of blood and burnt at the stake?"<sup>1</sup> Is it not just because of the rigidity of the Catholic faith

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<sup>1</sup>—Karl Adam—Two Essays p. 55

that the generous love of all Christians today is dissipated? Is it not true that the Church today is playing the role of the medieval inquisitor, torturing inquiring minds on the rack of her demands and leading love unmercifully to the scaffold? What possible relationship is there between faith and love?

Unless we are ready to reject the historical value of the Gospels and to envision Christ as some strange teacher who does not care what men think of His teaching, we must admit of some intimate relation between faith and love. He identified His teaching with Himself. "I am the Truth." He made the acceptance of His teaching a necessary requisite of attachment to His person. "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; he who is unbelieving towards the Son shall not see life" (*John 3:36*). Those who believed in His doctrine He bound fastly to Himself as His friends and His familiars. Those who were only in admiration of His person but rejected His doctrine He permitted to go sadly away. The very hands that are to be nailed for them did not beckon them back. Why? Because the lips that announced the new commandment of His love, also uttered the threatening words: "He who does not believe shall be condemned" (*Mark 16:16*).

In the mind of Christ, therefore, faith and love are intimately related. But how? Here we plumb the very depths of His teaching on faith and love, their supernatural character.

In every order of creation, equipment for living must be fitted to conditions of living. The rose cannot bloom in a land of perpetual snow. Fish cannot live out of water. The test-pilot who soars into the rarified air of the stratosphere will suffocate

without additional oxygen. Now God has told us that beginning here on this earth and continuing on for all eternity in heaven, there is a life which we call the supernatural, a life as real as this our physical life, but a life so elevated, so transcendent that it partakes of the very life of God. Our human nature by itself, while adequate to the ordinary life of this world, is not adequate to this supernatural life in this world and in heaven. As the test-pilot needs extra powers of breathing, not contained in his nature, to live in the stratosphere, so we need extra powers in our soul, not contained in our nature, to live this supernatural life. These powers which are not ours by nature, which are not due to us in any manner, yet which are absolutely necessary in order that we may live supernaturally are the graces, the virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Of such are faith and love, the supernatural means which enable us to enter here upon that supernatural life we hope to live eternally.

When our Divine Lord, therefore, speaks of Love, He does not understand by it some sentimental mood which is today and is gone tomorrow, some vague movement of the soul towards an object of its desires that aims only at personal satisfaction. For Him, love is an act of the will, elevated and supernaturalized, by which we render a self-less service to God and to our fellow man. It is a love that passes beyond all personal, social, national, and religious divisions. It reaches out to all men everywhere—whether they be relative, friend, or foe, good or bad, interested or uninterested in our love. It is such a love that it leaves no room even for prudent reserve toward the public sinner; it responds with alacrity and whole-hearted venturesomeness by

going two miles with him who asks us to go one mile; it recoils not even from the sacrifice of our own lives.

This limitless love Christ urges upon us, not because we should do unto others what we wish them to do unto us, not solely because of the natural dignity of human personality, made in the image and likeness of God, but especially because we are under the obligation—"You therefore are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Matthew* 5:48), to know and to love man, not for what he is in himself or for himself but what he is for God; to know God not only for what our minds tell us He is but for what He Himself tells us He is; to love Him not with a mere human love but with a love that is divine. It is our duty to conceive of man as God knows him, his intrinsic worth, his multiple possibilities, his duty here and his duty hereafter. It is our further duty, after knowing him as God knows him, so to act towards him that our love be but the continuation of that love by which God so loved the world that He sent His Only Begotten Son and the Son so loved us that He died for our salvation. In brief, my appreciation and my love of my fellow-man must be based fundamentally on God's appreciation and God's love of all men, that is on a supernatural plane.

It is exactly here that love points toward faith, that the intimate relationship is established between the stern dogmas of the Church and the warm breath of her charity. I cannot discover by my own power what is God's appreciation of the worth of a single man nor can I arrive by my own power at any knowledge of the intimate life of God. My will cannot by its native power love men and God with the love wherewith God loves. For this supernatural know-

ing and loving, I need two gifts: First, a power that will enlighten my mind to see man and God as God sees man and knows Himself—supernatural faith; especially, a power that will elevate my will to enable me to love man as God loves him, to love God as God loves Himself.

How may I obtain these gifts? Our Lord has told us: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened" (*Matthew 7:7-8*). The Church awaits our inquiry. She will not hasten our conversion; she will not force our minds or our wills. She bids us only—study and pray.

Theoretically, all the preparatory steps—the reasons she offers us to prove that God has spoken, that Christ is divine, that the Church is His continuation in space and time, all that leads up to the mental conviction that this is Christ's Church and I ought to accept it, all this, theoretically, is within the natural powers of my mind. But, because I am moving towards a life entirely above my natural life, because I am on the way to arriving at a supernatural knowledge and a supernatural love, all these previous acts are caused and accompanied by a special help of God which supports and elevates and leads on my mind and my will. When I arrive at the point where I am convinced that God has spoken and that I ought to accept what He says, this special help of God moves my will to command my intellect to say—"I believe"; to form the act of faith accepting all the truths which God has revealed as they are contained in the living, teaching body of the Church. Then it is that God, in His mercy, by lead-

ing me to Baptism of water, of blood, or of desire, infuses in my soul the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and love and establishes me, even on this earth, in the beginning of that supernatural life I may enjoy with God eternally.

In the teaching of our Lord, therefore, the relationship between faith and love is so intimate that we may call it causal. We cannot have true and full love of our neighbor unless we have true and full faith. "Faith creates love, safeguards love, purifies love, strengthens love. It gives to love that which profane love lacks, the deep passionate breath of infinity, the characteristic tendency to superhuman greatness, passion for heroic, incredible, unheard of things, the very foolishness of the cross, before which all earthly pathos crumbles and breaks into dust."<sup>1</sup>

From this intimate relationship of faith and love, two important conclusions follow. In the first place, whatever protects faith, protects love; whatever strikes at faith, strikes at love. Everything necessarily belonging to faith—the dogmas, the sacraments, the mass and external cult, the whole constitution of the Church, her Pope, Bishops, Priests, Religious and Lay Apostles, her Councils, her Decrees, her Code of Canon Law—all stand as guardians and purveyors of the Faith and as such in essential relationship to love. The dogmas are nothing else than the grand unfolding of the glad news of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the joyous fact that the God of heaven has deigned to reveal His sacred reality to us in the person of His Son. The Divine Constitution of the Church, her hierarchy, her sacraments, her cult all bring within our reach

<sup>1</sup>—Karl Adam—Two Essays p. 70



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the supernatural blessings of the reality of God, manifested in Christ, all make the kingdom of God in us the Kingdom of God among us, a visible community of the faithful, carrying, carrying on God's work in time. To alter or to substitute for these safeguards others than those Christ has given and His Church established across the centuries is to put faith in jeopardy and weaken love, to sleep on the hills as the wolf prowls in the night.

The second conclusion is this: Where this faith in the supernatural knowledge of God and man and this supernatural power of love of God and man either does not exist or has been lost, love inevitably suffers. It matters not whether we adopt a natural ethic or attempt to worship a non-existent god called humanity, our most earnest and well-meaning efforts cannot maintain a heroic code of morality, will find difficulty in bringing to action the morality we do profess and never will be able to progress beyond the mere heroism of devotion.

If, however, we are yet in the stream of the Christian tradition, but accept only part of the full deposit of revealed truth, yet possess that part securely and profess that part sincerely, then before God, we belong to the soul of the Church and have by desire, if not by Baptism, the virtues of faith and love. Arduously we may live our life here without benefit of the mass and the sacraments and the external aids of the Church. Arduously we may get to heaven. The pity of it will be that only then shall we find that all the while we struggled here for goodness and for truth, Christ was present on the altar, teaching from the pulpit, and sanctifying with the seven sacraments that run down from the Cross.

Today, many of us like the Apostles, are strain-

ing at the oars, in a great storm, at the fourth watch of the night. In the darkness we, too, see a figure, walking on the waters of the world, a figure not at all in the form we imagined Christ and His Church to be. With the apostles, we too, think it a ghost and cry out in our fear. From the tabernacles of thousands of Catholic Churches come the old words: "It is I, do not be afraid" (*John 6:20*).

## CARDINAL HAYES STATES PURPOSE OF CATHOLIC HOUR

(Extract from his address at the inaugural program in the studio of the National Broadcasting Company, New York City, March 2, 1930.)

Our congratulations and our gratitude are extended to the National Council of Catholic Men and its officials, and to all who, by their financial support, have made it possible to use this offer of the National Broadcasting Company. The heavy expense of managing and financing a weekly program, its musical numbers, its speakers, the subsequent answering of inquiries, must be met. . . .

This radio hour is for all the people of the United States. To our fellow-citizens, in this word of dedication, we wish to express a cordial greeting and, indeed, congratulations. For this radio hour is one of service to America, which certainly will listen in interestedly, and even sympathetically, I am sure, to the voice of the ancient Church with its historic background of all the centuries of the Christian era, and with its own notable contribution to the discovery, exploration, foundation and growth of our glorious country. . . .

Thus to voice before a vast public the Catholic Church is no light task. Our prayers will be with those who have that task in hand. We feel certain that it will have both the good will and the good wishes of the great majority of our countrymen. Surely, there is no true lover of our Country who does not eagerly hope for a less worldly, a less material, and a more spiritual standard among our people.

With good will, with kindness and with Christ-like sympathy for all, this work is inaugurated. So may it continue. So may it be fulfilled. This word of dedication voices, therefore, the hope that this radio hour may serve to make known, to explain with the charity of Christ, our faith, which we love even as we love Christ Himself. May it serve to make better understood that faith as it really is—a light revealing the pathway to heaven: a strength, and a power divine through Christ; pardoning our sins, elevating, consecrating our common every-day duties and joys, bringing not only justice but gladness and peace to our searching and questioning hearts.

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