

A SHORT CUT
to the
TRUE CHURCH

By
REV. MICHAEL RANK, O. S. B.



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A Short Cut to the True Church

“Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. xvi, 18).

When Christ was upon this earth, He established His Church by which we must be saved. And He established only one Church. *“Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church”* (not Churches), *“and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matt. xvi, 18). Again He says: *“There shall be one fold and one shepherd”* (John x, 16). And St. Paul says: *“One Lord, one faith, one baptism”* (Eph. iv, 5). Reason itself tells me that Christ could establish only one Church, for truth is only one and can not contradict itself. He could not, for instance, tell me that He was true God and true man and at the same time say that He was merely man. One would have to be true, the other false.

He furthermore commanded us all to believe His Church. "*If he will not hear the Church*" (not Churches) "*let him be to thee as the heathen and publican*" (Matt. XVIII, 17). And "*He that believeth not shall be condemned*" (Mark XVI, 16).

Now in this year of Our Lord 1914, (for we date our years from the birth of Christ), we find some four or five hundred Christian Churches upon the face of the earth, one contradicting the other, one denying what the other affirms, one ridiculing what the other holds sacred. Certain it is that Christ did not establish all these contradicting Churches. Yet which one among these four or five hundred is that Church which Christ did establish, for He established only one.

The process of finding it is neither long nor difficult. Let us do it by the process of elimination. We will divide the Christian era into nineteen centuries, and to begin with, we will take the century between 1800 and 1900, or rather 1914, this present year. It is clear that any Church which was established during this period can not be the Church which Christ established, because it came 1800 years too late. Christ had died, risen again and ascended into

heaven 1800 years ago, while the Church which He established, had during all these years been saving souls by the millions.

Among other Churches founded during this century, I find the Christian Science Church founded by Mrs. Eddy. Now, Mrs. Eddy can not lay down a rule of faith for Almighty God by which He must judge me. What arrogance! Furthermore Mrs. Eddy can not promise me heaven if I obey her Church and live up to her rules because she does not own heaven and therefore can not give it. No one can give what he has not.

What I have said of Mrs. Eddy and the Christian Science Church, I say of every Church under the sun, excepting the one founded by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ alone could found a Church and promise me heaven if I live up to it, because Jesus Christ was true God and therefore owns heaven and consequently can give it under whatever conditions He pleases to lay down for me. This He has done. Hence I must search until I find His Church, for in it alone is salvation.

Let us then go back another century, from 1800 to 1700. We find a great many Churches founded during these one hundred

years, also. But we must reject them all for the same reason as given above; they all came 1700 years too late to have been founded by Christ. We shall now go back still another century, from 1700 to 1600. We find that a great many Churches came into existence during these one hundred years, too. We must likewise reject them all for the same reasons as given above; they came 1600 years too late. And now we will go back 50 years more, from 1600 to 1550, and here we will rest awhile and scan the Christian world as it exists at this date. You may be surprised to find that of all the Christian Churches in existence to-day, there were only five of them on the face of the earth in the year 1550, namely: the Lutheran, the Calvinist, the Anglican, the Greek and the Catholic. Not one of all the other Christian Churches in existence to-day, existed in the year 1550. True the Anabaptists also existed in 1550, but they have disappeared and the Baptists do not claim succession from them, having been founded by Roger Williams in 1639.

We may therefore confine ourselves to the five Churches which existed in 1550 and exist to-day. Which one of these was the

Church established by Christ through the Apostles? Let us see.

The Lutheran Church was founded by Martin Luther in the year 1524,—therefore nearly 1500 years too late. Hence Christ did not establish it. The Calvinist Church was established by John Calvin in the year 1541—also 1500 years too late; hence we must reject it, too. The Anglican Church was founded by Henry VIII, of England in the year 1534,—also too late. Christ was dead and gone over 1500 years, while His Church had been harvesting souls for heaven by the millions during all this time. So that if we go back another century, from 1550 to 1450 we find only the Greek Church and the Catholic Church. In fact the Catholic Church alone existed, for the present Greek Church came into existence in the year 1453, when the Turks took Constantinople and the Sultan, Mohamed II, appointed Gregory Scholarius, the heresiarch, patriarch of Constantinople. From the year 867 the Greeks had been, off and on, separating from and rejoining the Catholic Church. From 1054 they remained separated for 220 years, reuniting again at the council of Lyons in 1274, only to be sep-

arated again six years later. Thus the Greek Church came into existence in the 9th century. It ceased to exist several times during the successive 600 years, so that no one of the preceding establishments was an identical institution with its successor.

There remains then only one true claimant — the Catholic Church. It exists to-day; it existed in the time of Martin Luther and Henry VIII,—they went out from it. It existed during all the period of the Greek schisms, when the Greeks were going out from it and coming back to it. It existed before that time, through the first 9 centuries back down to the time of Christ, and of all the hundreds of sects which rose up against it during these 900 years, not one remains and only few of their names are known even to scholars at this day.

The succession then of the Catholic Church established by Christ through the Apostles is identical and complete without interruption. The line of its Chief Pastors, the Popes, has come down to us in regular succession from St. Peter, the first head of the Church appointed by Christ Himself,

to His lawful successor, Pius x, gloriously reigning at the present day.

Hence the Catholic Church is that Church which Christ established upon earth, and hence I must belong to it if I wish to save my soul. "*If he will not hear the Church*" says Christ, "*let him be to thee as the heathen and publican*" (Matt. xviii, 17). I have no other choice.

But I may be told that though the Catholic Church was the true Church founded by Christ, it went astray in the 16th century and hence the Reformation. If that is true then Christ was not God; nay, then He was not even a good prophet, for whatever, the prophets foretold came true to the very letter. Christ foretold that His Church would never go astray. "*Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" (Matt. xvi, 18). If the Catholic Church went astray, then the gates of hell (the Spirit of error) did prevail against it, then Christ foretold a falsehood, which is absurd, for Christ was true God and therefore foreknew all things even from eternity to eternity. "*The works of all flesh are before Him and there is nothing hid from His eyes.*"

He seeth from eternity to eternity and there is nothing wonderful before him" (Ecclus. XXXIX, 24, 25).

Furthermore, Christ said: "*I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of Truth*" (John XIV, 16). If the Catholic Church went astray then Christ did not give us the Spirit of Truth to abide with His Church forever. Then he deceived us. But Christ was true God and hence the eternal Truth and therefore He could neither deceive nor be deceived. Hence he did not lie, but the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth abides with His Church yesterday, to-day and forever, to the end of time, teaching it all truth, as Christ foretold.

Furthermore Christ Himself is with His Church. "*Behold I am with you*"—says He —"*all days even to the consummation of the world*" (Matt. XXVIII, 20). He is with His Church not at intervals, but He is with His Church "all days;" every day He is with His Church. How then can it go astray? Moreover, St. Paul says, "*the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church*" (Eph. v, 23). It is the head that guides the body. If then the Church

fell into error, then the head, Christ, guided it into error and fell with it, which is nonsense. No, His promises remain true. He Himself assures us of this when He says: "*heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away*" (Luke XXI, 33). What He said is Truth, for He is the eternal Truth. Hence he is still with His Church; hence the Holy Ghost still abides with His Church; hence the gates of hell, the spirit of error, shall not prevail against it; hence His Church will last till the end of the world, unchanged and unchangeable as He foretold.

I must therefore believe its doctrines and live up to them if I wish to save my soul. "*If he will not hear the Church,*" says Christ, "*let him be to thee as the heathen and publican*" (Matt. XVIII 17). And again: "*He that believeth not shall be condemned*" (Mark XVI, 16): Believeth what? "*All things whatsoever I have commanded you*" (Matt. XXVIII, 20). I may *not* believe what I please.

Therefore it is that I am a Catholic.

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