

Catholic \triangle Truth \triangle Society.

WHY I AM A CATHOLIC.

BY REV. CHAS. A. RAMM.

[The following lecture was delivered by Rev. Charles A. Ramm of St. Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco, and gives an account of the reasons which led him to enter the Catholic Church. Through his courtesy, the Catholic Truth Society publishes the lecture in pamphlet form.]

The question which I am to treat as the subject of this evening's lecture, namely, "Why I Am a Catholic," may be interpreted in either of two senses. It may be taken to mean simply, What reasons have I to give for the faith that is in me? Or, inasmuch as I was not born or reared a Catholic, it may be understood to mean, How did I come to be one? What line of reasoning was it which led me to my present position? Of course, the second interpretation, in a measure, embraces the first; but it includes besides, and is mainly concerned with, the account of my change from a former religious faith to the one which I now hold.

Since both interpretations are clearly within the scope of the question, I prefer to choose the second. Were I to take the other, I should be obliged to start

where I am, *in* the Church, and give a more or less abstract argument for her truth. In the other alternative, I shall retrace the concrete path which I myself actually followed; I shall begin, as I did, from a non-Catholic's starting point, and approach the Church from the outside. I may thus hope to lend to what I may say the personal interest which always attaches to the story of a mental change, especially a religious change.

I cannot expect in the compass of an evening's lecture to draw more than the outlines of the broad argument which led me through the gates of the fold. There are a thousand and one converging lines of reasoning which a Catholic may give for his faith. Some of these will appeal to one soul, some to another. One man may be mainly impressed by the perpetuity of the Church; another by her marvelous unity; a third by the unexampled works of Christian charity which she is always and everywhere accomplishing; a fourth by her architecture or by her liturgy. These arguments are all *moral*, and consequently their force will severally vary with the temperament, needs, education, moral life, or antecedent experiences of different men.

I shall confine myself, as I have said, to the one which chiefly appealed to me. Even this I shall not endeavor to develop fully; neither shall I have much to say about the tributary arguments which swelled the main stream.

It is never pleasant to speak in public of one's self, especially of one's religious experiences. I am, however, encouraged to do so in the present case by the thought that someone may benefit by it. While it is true that we are living in the midst of an appalling amount of religious indifference, yet it is equally true that there are many people among us who, because they are unsettled in their faith, have a deep interest in questions of religion. They listen hopefully to every new exponent of a creed, be he an Oriental, clad in foreign robes, or a Westerner in the garb of a democratic American. They try one philosophical substitute for religion after another; they are Spiritualists for a while, and for a while they are Theosophists, or they are Christian Scientists. They wander into

church after church with the vague hope of finding what they want. Many of them are sincere and earnest, feeling, perhaps, the crushing weight of sins upon them. They realize they have souls to save, and want to save them. But they are not satisfied. They go about seeking rest and finding none. They are harried by doubts and plagued with uncertainty. They feel that they are in a desert with the darkness of night upon them. They are hungering for the truth and straining their vision for the light. Some there are disposed to give up the quest as hopeless.

As my own wanderings in this dismal region were real, it is possible that my experiences in getting out of it may be of service to another. I give them, therefore, with the hope that they may help someone else out of the labyrinth and haze of doubt into the straight and clear path of truth.

Inasmuch as it is the evident intention of the question, "Why I am a Catholic," to grant me as proven the truth of the Christian religion, I need not waste any time this evening in establishing the doctrines of the Trinity, the Redemption, the Divinity of Christ, and the existence and truth of His supernatural Revelation. These doctrines all Christians accept, and as I am addressing Christians, I shall therefore start on this common ground and pass to the parting of the ways—Why am I a Catholic rather than a member of one of the sects?

There is one further introductory remark which I wish to make. What I shall say in the course of my lecture is in no sense intended to be controversial. I am reminded that truth is stronger than any of its advocates. Presented, therefore, in its native force, it may hope to win victories where, if clothed in controversial armor, it would only succeed in repelling, irritating or wounding its often sincere antagonists. I propose simply to give some account of my religious history. The statements which I shall make concerning certain religious bodies, as well as the illustrations which I shall adduce in support of them, no one, I think, will be disposed to question. The reasoning which I shall found upon them is, of course, my own

and must stand upon its own merits. I ask for it only an impartial consideration.

My very early religious training amounted practically to nothing. My parents were Lutherans, and although I presume they were fairly well instructed in their faith, they made no efforts to teach it to me. I do remember that my mother once taught me some prayers, but that was all. What contributed, besides the all too natural tendency to give it up, to the absence of all practical religion in the family, was the fact that there was no church of any kind within ten miles of us. There was for some time, however, a Sunday school in the town in which we lived, which I attended, rather, I think, for the novelty of the thing than for any better reason. I know that I learned some Bible texts and answered some Biblical conundrums at this Sunday school. I discovered which was the shortest verse in the Sacred Volume and which was the longest, and some other facts of about the same practical importance; but I cannot remember that I learned any religion there beyond a few prayers. My teachers never taught me the fundamental doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation or the Redemption. In fact, I have no recollection of ever having heard of them in those days. I soon forgot to say the prayers I had learned and lapsed into that total neglect of all religion which, I suppose, is the normal condition of the vast majority of the population of this country.

When I was thirteen years of age I took my first step as a Christian—or, rather, it was taken for me. I well remember the day and the circumstances. For some years a German Lutheran minister had been in the habit of traveling in his circuit through the region of country in which we lived. On the particular occasion to which I refer it was determined, I forget by whom, that he was to baptize all the children of the family. There were five of us besides the baby. He stood us all up in a row, and passing along in front of us with a basin of water, he baptized us where we stood, beginning with the eldest.

The whole proceeding, I have thought since, was rather remarkable. I had at the time not the faint-

est idea of what the Sacrament of Baptism was. The minister gave me no instructions upon it either before or after administering the sacred rite. He went on his way rejoicing, I suppose, and I was reminded of my baptism only by the fact that it was regarded by the boys of the town as so unusual an occurrence that they made it the subject of merriment. To me it was an enigma.

Two years later I was sent to a boarding school in Berkeley. Here the boys were expected to attend church services every Sunday, unless excused by their parents. While I was granted my freedom in the matter, I nevertheless generally attended some church. I went to them all, one after another, but I do not remember that anything religious ever impressed me very deeply. It was in Berkeley that I first entered a Catholic church, and first witnessed the celebration of Holy Mass. Of course, I knew nothing of its meaning. I remember that some of the boys who had to go to church somewhere used to go to the Catholic church because its services were earliest over.

These few facts constitute all my religious history up to the time when I left this school and entered College. If I knew little about religion, I had at least one great blessing; I had no prejudice, either in favor of, or against any creed or sect.

My first religious affiliations began two or three years later, with the Episcopal Church. I did not so much enter it as drift into it. My becoming a member of it was mainly a matter of personal inclination and of attachment for the pastor of the church in which I worshipped. Besides this, most of my friends worshipped there. This manner of becoming identified with a Church is, I think, quite common among non-Catholic people. Interest in a minister, apart entirely from his teaching, or in some one who attends his church, or in the music; the culture or social standing of the congregation, convenience of geographical location or accessibility by a neighboring car line; these are not unfrequently the determining motives for their belonging to one Church or sect rather than to another. I am very far, of course, from implying that these more or less trivial circum-

stances may be the *occasion* of one's coming to belong to a certain Church, but they are hardly rational motives for adhering to it.

So far as I was concerned, I never made, nor was I ever asked to make any profession of faith in anything when I entered the Episcopal Church. I underwent no course of instruction and was never formally received into it, although I was recognized as a member of it and received communion in it. I joined in the worship, following the ritual of the Book of Common Prayer. I was satisfied to accept the fundamentals of Christianity with but a very imperfect grasp of their meaning or of the reasons for them. I verified them thoroughly only at a later date. I recited the Creed with only a vague understanding of what it meant.

This rather nebulous state of mind continued for some years, until a circumstance began the evolution of order out of it. A number of my friends, as well as my pastor, began to entertain it as a pious belief that it was my vocation to be a clergyman, a state of life for which I felt absolutely no attraction. On the contrary, I had a repugnance for it to the very end, which nothing but a sense of duty enabled me finally to overcome.

The pious belief waxed into a settled conviction in their minds, and my position became in consequence extremely uncomfortable. On the one hand, I owed a deference to the judgment of those who took so kind an interest in me; while on the other, I could find in myself no affirmative response to the vocation which they were persuaded was mine. I was of necessity driven to examine closely into my own feelings and convictions, especially into the grounds upon which my position in the Episcopal Church rested. Before I could even think of being a teacher in it I must find out just what I would be expected to profess and teach; and then, what were the reasons for this profession? In other words, I was forced to determine two vital questions before I could act rationally and considerately in the position in which I found myself; viz., What did the Episcopal Church teach? and, On what basis did she rest her teachings?

To the first question I could find no satisfactory answer. I found that the Church taught everything and and that she taught nothing. There were the Broad Churchmen, and the Low Churchmen, and the High Churchmen, and the Ritualists; and among them they taught about the whole cycle of Christian Doctrine, and among them too they denied almost as much. There were those who believed in seven Sacraments and there were those who believed in but two, or in none; those who believed in the Real Presence and those who believed in the "Real Absence;" those who believed in Confession and those who abominated it; those who considered the Mass as the central act of Christian worship and those who, in the words of the Thirty-first Article, regarded it as a "blasphemous fable and a dangerous deceit;" there were those who believed in Sacred Orders and there were those who denied them. And these were all alike good Episcopalians, one as good as another.

It was obviously impossible in the face of facts like these to expect any teaching of the Episcopal Church as a whole. To be sure, there were still the formularies like the Thirty-nine Articles, but these were held only in a "non-natural" sense—that is, in any sense you please, or in no sense. And there was the Creed; but even that, while it was professed as a whole, could be freely denied in more than one of its articles.

Lest these statements should appear too strong, I may be permitted to illustrate them by a few facts. In this question of teaching I may identify the Episcopal Church in this country with the Established Church in England.

In the London *Tablet* an Anglican clergyman, who signs himself "Priest of the Church of England," writes indignantly as follows: "I want to ask a question—viz., What part of the Christian faith (if any) is a Church of England clergyman not permitted to deny? Of course, all the world knows that the Real Presence, the Eucharistic Sacrifice, Prayer for the Dead, Purgatory, Necessity for Episcopal Ordination, Absolution, etc., [all of which the writer believes in] are open questions—

the divinity of our Lord, the worth of the Old Testament, everlasting punishment and the truth of miracles are all denied with impunity. The present Dean of Ripon denies the whole Christian faith, if we are to believe correspondents of the *Church Review*.”—(*Tablet*, 2d May, 1896.)

Certainly here is small reverence for even the Creed. This writer, it is to be inferred, believes in the Christian Priesthood and in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. But the Archdeacon of Liverpool, in the same Church, Dr. A. P. Taylor, writes in the same paper that “the Reformers, the men who drew up the Prayer Book and the Ordinal in the sixteenth century—utterly rejected the sacrificial idea, and expunged it from the liturgy of the Church.” And he adds that he is of the “opinion that some thousands of the clergy even still are in substantial agreement with them.” (*Ibid.*)

There is nothing High Churchmen contend for more strenuously than the Sacrament of Holy Orders, and the consequent power of offering the Sacrifice of the Mass by those who have received it. Yet the Archdeacon just quoted says: “For those who, like myself, do not hold that the Christian ministry is a sacrificing priesthood, but is simply ambassadorial, ministerial, pastoral and didactic, and its absolution only declaratory, Anglican Orders are perfectly satisfactory.” (*Tablet*, 18th April, 1896.)

Another Churchman writes thus, complacently—if not very reverently—of his Church: “We all agree to follow Christ; the manner of following is left to the individual. Although we use the term, ‘Loyalty to the Prayer Book,’ we do not care two straws for articles, rubrics or formularies, unless they are susceptible of an interpretation which harmonizes with our private views, but being consistently inconsistent, we are anxious to concede to others the toleration we claim for ourselves. In a word, we are members of the Church of England, not because we accept or advocate its particular doctrines, whatever they may be, but because we are Englishmen [geographical reasons, observe]; and even if we possessed any tribunal with authority to decide questions of faith and discipline,

as self-respecting Protestants we should never think of submitting to it." (Ibid.)

Mr. Augustine Birrell, the author of "Obiter Dicta," who is a Churchman, I think—certainly he is not a Catholic—in the *Nineteenth Century* of April, 1896, proposes to make the Sacrifice of the Mass the test of continuity in the Established Church, between the pre- and post-Reformation times. "It is impossible," he says, "to believe that a mystery so tremendous, so profoundly attractive, so intimately associated with the keystone of the Christian faith, so vouched for by the testimony of saints, can be allowed to remain for another hundred years an open question in the Church which still asserts herself to be the guardian of faith." (Ibid.) Upon which the writer just quoted remarks serenely: "Surely this kind of an alarm is sounded twenty or thirty years too late for an excursion. The Gorham judgment (1850) has allowed Baptism to remain an open question in the Established Church, and why should there be any difficulty about the Real Presence or the Real Absence in the Eucharist when, at the present day, the Amateur Catholic [Ritualist, he means], who believes in Transubstantiation, the Socinian [denier of the divinity of Christ], who regards the Lord's Supper as a simple meal in memory of Christ, kneel peaceably side by side?" (Ibid.)

The London *Spectator* declares that if Mr. Birrell's advice that the Established Church should say clearly what it believes about the Real Presence were followed, "the English Church would be rent into fragments, never more to be joined." (*Tablet*, 11th April, '96.)

Quite recently a writer in the same London weekly from which I have been quoting, in order to "test the Anglican position" on a most vital doctrine, proposed this question—"May Divine honors be paid to the Blessed Sacrament of the altar in the Church of England? Can it be regarded and addressed as Very and Eternal God, according to the doctrines of the Church of England?" (*Tablet*, 3d April, 1897.) In the next issue of the paper an Anglican clergyman replies: "I answer, without any hesitation, yes." (Ibid., 10th

April.) Two weeks later a fellow clergyman writes as follows: "I perceive that one clergyman of the Church of England expresses in your columns his opinion that 'Divine honor may certainly be paid to the Sacrament of the Altar' in our communion. I hope you will kindly allow another clergyman to express *his* view that such honors may certainly *not* be paid; and further, that we have no sacrificing priesthood and no altars in the Church of England at all. Of course, this is only my own opinion; the Church herself leaves us in the dark." (Ibid, 31 April, 1897.) Both these clergymen are in good standing in the Church; yet they hold diametrically opposed views upon doctrines which are as vital as they can well be.

The same condition of things exists in the Episcopate. Not long ago the present Pope, after a most careful examination, declared Episcopal Orders to be "utterly null and void," a judgment, I may say, in which he is at one with the Old Catholics, Orientals and Greeks, none of whom is in communion with him.

A reply has been issued by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, which has been extravagantly praised by some Churchmen and as vehemently denounced by others. One English Bishop (Sodor and Man) writes: "So far as I am aware, the English Bishops, as a body, were not consulted about this document (for the obvious reason, it is said, that they could not possibly have agreed about it), and, therefore, as such, cannot in any wise be held responsible for it. Failing utterly to see how many of the principal arguments which it contained can be taken to represent the authoritative view of the Church of England as regards the Character of the Christian ministry, I can only regard their Graces' reply as an expression of their private opinion." (The *English Churchman*, quoted in the *Tablet*, 1st May, 1897.)

These are illustrations enough from over the water. Similar doctrinal discord exists in the Episcopal Church in our own land. It is not many weeks ago since there appeared in our local daily papers a rather acrimonious controversy between two antagonists who have the bay lying between them, concerning matters so sacred that one is pained to see them dragged into

the public prints. I have myself seen a Congregationalist, known to be such to the officiating Episcopal clergyman, receive communion from his hands with the regular communicants of his flock.

A friend of mine told me that the present Bishop of New York, Bishop Potter, shortly after his consecration, went to administer Confirmation in the Ritualist Church of St. Ignatius in that city. The Rector, before the Bishop came, had carried the consecrated particles, my friend told me, into the sacristy because his lordship did not believe in the Real Presence.

I remember reading, under Episcopal Church Notices, in a Church Directory in a hotel in Chicago during the Fair year, something about week-day Masses, a nine o'clock children's Mass with choral service, and High Mass at 11 o'clock on Sunday. And there were notices too for Confessions. Just below was the more familiar notice about "morning prayer" and "Communion services once a month."

We all know what a bitter war has been waged for some years past in this country in connection with the the revision of the Prayer Book concerning the title of the Church. The "advanced" members have endeavored to drop the word "Protestant" and have themselves called "The Catholic Church of America," but just as good Episcopalians as themselves, and just as vigorous, insist upon being called Protestants.

These instances may suffice for my purposes. I repeat I do not bring them forth for controversial uses. I simply give them as recent illustrations of facts of my own experience which I met with on every side when I set about trying to find an answer to my first question: What does the Episcopal Church teach? The facts themselves, I think, nobody will venture to quarrel with; they may be abundantly verified any day by anyone who cares to do so.

They bear out fully I think the conclusion I came to that the Episcopal Church taught practically nothing; that there was no such thing as a teaching of the Church as a body. Consequently I was legitimately dispensed from investigating the second question, namely, By what authority does the Episcopal Church teach? As her teaching (if one may so name it) is

contrary on almost all points, it was perfectly obvious that she possessed no authority to teach which was worth discovering. It was even hard to see in what sense she could be called the Church of Christ, so I waived the second question. The Bishop from whom I just quoted speaks indeed of the "Authoritative view of the Church of England," yet he ends the sentence in which these words occur by declaring that the solemn letter put forth by the two Archbishops of his Church, a letter dealing expressly with a doctrinal matter, and addressed in consequence "To the whole body of Bishops of the Catholic Church," can only be regarded "as an expression of their own private opinion."

Indeed my own conclusions are admitted by a clergyman from whom I have already quoted in language which is stronger than my own. "All kinds of different doctrines," he says, writing of his own Church, "have been tolerated in the Church of England. We have no living voice; we are not members of an *Ecclesia Docens* like the Church of Rome; we are left to believe what we like. And this in an uncertain age, and in view of the progress of modern thought, I look on as the great glory of the Church of England." (*Tablet*, 24 April 1897.)

In another letter he says, "I am able to give my allegiance to my Church just because in her communion everyone believes and disbelieves just what he likes. We live in an age of transition, when the old moorings are dragged, and when we don't know what the future will bring forth. They therefore who have felt the influence in the *Zeitgeist* are at home in a communion which has no definite voice, which leaves us largely to think what we will; we feel it well to be members of an uncertain Church." (*Ibid.* 5 June '97.)

There is then in this Church admittedly no teaching and no authority.

Here it may be asked, why I did not rejoice over this fact with the writer just quoted, rather than made it a cause for complaint. Since the Episcopal Church was broad enough in her toleration to embrace the widest extremes of contradictory doctrine,

why did I not choose what suited me and stay where I was, as so many others have done.

My shortest answer to this is that my common sense prevented any such course. I wanted to save my soul. That was not to be accomplished by "believing and disbelieving just what I liked." The means and conditions of salvation are of God's naming, not of mine. These means and conditions it was the purpose of Christ's Revelation to make known to me. Therefore I was looking for Christ's Revelation. That was one and could be only one body of consistent truth revealed for all men; and therefore it was in no way dependent for its existence upon my choosing. It must have an objective existence entirely apart from my individual ideas about it. My choosing a lot of doctrines does not make them true. To have been eclectic in my Creed, to have picked out what I would accept, and rejected the rest would have been to make Christ's revealed truth simply a subjective matter—the veriest creature of my own mind. What I believe to be true is true for me; and what you believe to be true is true for you; and these two may be contradictory.

If Christ's revelation is to be subjected to that sort of treatment it was surely a work of supererogation to give it to us. He might as well not have made it, and have allowed us from the first perfect freedom to guess at the whole matter. Since He was sane, to claim no higher prerogative for Him, His revelation must be obviously one consistent whole. It was meant for the redemption and salvation of all men to the end of time. Therefore it was certainly a most serious thing. Therefore He could by no means be indifferent to what became of it; or whether it were accepted or rejected. "It was impossible that it should be a matter of no consequence to Him, that men should find and believe one-tenth of it simply because they liked it, while they rejected the other nine-tenths; or accept six-tenths and reject the other four-tenths. Revelation is of itself so remarkable a fact—God breaking through the laws of Nature, and in this case speaking not by His prophets, but by His own lips—

that our Blessed Lord never could have revealed a truth which was of no use or not worth preserving.

It is but common sense therefore to conclude that the fact alone of Revelation is sufficient proof, even were there no other, that the matter of it was intended by our Lord to be preserved intact. Only on this condition could it possibly accomplish the work for which it was given. Revealed truth which is lost—dead and gone—is not likely to be a very potent factor in the salvation of men. Therefore it must still be in existence somewhere, not in a maimed, fragmentary condition, but whole and entire; it must still be together in one depository. It was moreover meant for the instruction and salvation of the world; therefore it must be discoverable by some simple means easily within the power of ordinary men.

The question then arose: Where was the full revealed truth of Christ to be found? And here I might have been answered, Why, in the Bible of course. "The Bible and the Bible alone" would have satisfied all your requirements and would have made a good Protestant of you.

Well, I thought of that and others helped me to think of it; but I must confess I wasted very little time chasing that delusive phantom. To begin with, how did I know the Bible contained the whole of Christ's teaching? Or how was I to prove it? St. John says explicitly, "There are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written every one, the world itself I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written." (St. John xxi. 25.) And we assume that one small volume contains all, or at least His essential teaching.

Then, how did I know that the Book was inspired, that it was the Word of God? I could not and cannot yet prove its inspiration on any Protestant principle of which I am aware. If you think the proof is easy, take as much paper as you please, sit down and write out for instance the proof of the inspiration of the New Testament. The truth of the matter is that the vast majority of Protestants take this fact for granted, or rather, they take it from the constant tradition of the Catholic Church, which has always

taught it; and then for the most part they declaim against "tradition" not realizing apparently that in doing so they are cutting the ground from under their own feet.

But even supposing this initial difficulty of inspiration surmounted, I should still have been no nearer to a solution of my question. The New Testament as we have it to-day, in which some at least of Christ's revelation is contained, was not gathered together into one volume until about two centuries after the writers of its several books had died. Evidently the great multitude of martyrs and doctors and confessors and virgins of the first centuries, who were undoubtedly good Christians, did not get their faith from "the Bible and the Bible alone." Therefore that was not *the* source from which Christ meant His revelation to be learned. When, then, did it become so?

Moreover I soon discovered that however much men might laud "the Bible and the Bible alone" as the "Rule of faith," as a matter of fact, nobody followed that rule. There is not one man in ten thousand, I venture to say, who gets his religion from the Bible alone. They all get it from their grandmother or from their parents or their Sunday School teacher or their minister, or their religious weekly, or from some creed or "Confession" written by a few solemn, uninspired and very fallible divines a few centuries ago. From one or more of these sources they take their belief, already formed and expressed for them; then they recruit from the Bible a battalion of texts to defend it.

I believe that if he knew nothing about Christianity, not one man in one hundred thousand would get anything like the Christian religion as we have it to-day out of the Bible alone. He would for instance, hardly deduce Infant Baptism from it; or the idea of a Sacrament; neither would he make much out of the central doctrine of the Incarnation—two natures and two wills divine and human in one Person. He would find the four little words; "This is my body," and he would probably only succeed in adding one more to the two hundred interpretations of them, which had already been invented within fifty years after the

rise of Protestantism. So great a mind as Cardinal Newman confesses, "I would not have found out the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in the sacred text [of Scripture] without previous traditional teaching." (Diff. of Ang, II. p. 57.)

Indeed it seems to me evident on the most casual inspection of the Book that Holy Scripture was never intended to *teach* doctrine, but to *prove* it after it had already been taught in some other way. The Epistles of St. Paul, for example, all suppose that the Christian faith was already known to those to whom these letters were written.

Besides all this, before I could have even pretended to interpret the Scriptures intelligently, I should either have had to make a supreme act of faith in translators and interpreters or spend half a lifetime studying Greek and Latin and Archæology. I do not believe our Blessed Lord ever meant to rule out nine-tenths of the human race from the possession of His truth in this way, or make the discovery of His revelation a conundrum.

Here I must pause for a little digression. It may be objected that I was giving altogether too much prominence to the search for Christian doctrine; that I could have lived a good Christian life without bothering my head about the number of the Sacraments, the Real Presence or the Articles of the Creed.

This is the familiar contention of those who claim to be liberal in the matter of religion; although I have generally found that their liberalism is only another name for indifference to the whole subject. They will tell you that it doesn't matter what you believe provided you lead a decent life.

Now, it seems to me that it ought not to be necessary to waste much time in showing the dangerous fallacy of this principle. People who take this view of Christianity totally misconceive its character. If it is anything it is dogmatic in its teaching. Its Founder built it upon definite doctrines whose acceptance He made compulsory, and for whose truth He laid down His life. He had many enemies in His day, and was often assailed by them. I think, however, that there is no serious instance in which they at-

tacked Him for His purely *moral* teaching. We do not read, for example, that they objected to the Beatitudes. But again and again they did attack Him for His *doctrinal* teaching. The necessity of Baptism, the promise and possibility of the Blessed Eucharist, exorcisms, the forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body and life everlasting—these were the subjects of controversy, and they are all of them first matters of *belief* and only secondly matters of *conduct*. And when our Blessed Lord reached the end of His life, He died, not for preaching the Sermon on the Mount, but for asserting His Divinity, which is an Article of the Creed.

Christ then made Christianity definitely dogmatic from the beginning, and He commanded this characteristic to be perpetuated. "Go," He said to His Apostles, "and teach all nations all things whatsoever I have commanded you. He that *believeth*—Believeth what? Why, all things that you are commanded to teach—he shall be saved; but he that *believeth not*—these same things—shall be condemned." So that salvation depends not only upon conduct, but also upon belief in definite doctrines.

Of course, allowance must be made for those who are in good faith; who before God are sincere in believing in a creedless Christianity; but their good faith, while it may excuse them from sin, does not alter the fact that their principle is false.

The Apostles did as they were told. They at once began preaching the doctrine of the Resurrection; that is to say, they began with an Article of the Creed. St. Paul does not hesitate to say: "If Christ be not risen again from the dead, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain."

Christian life and Christian virtue are only the practical consequences of belief in Christian doctrines. Destroy this belief, take away these doctrines, and Christian life and Christian virtue will inevitably cease to exist. This is just what is happening in our midst at the present time, although we do not perhaps realize the fact. Multitudes of people still live an outward Christian life simply in virtue of the inertia of Christian principles which they themselves have ceased to

hold. The atmosphere about us is still Christian. But a change is in progress. There is a tendency to revert to pre-Christian principles of thought and life, and because this tendency is particularly marked in this country, a distinguished French publicist has recently done us the honor to characterize it as the "Americanizing of morals." "Aryans and Semites, de-Christianized Christians and de-Judaized Jews," he says, "are practically reverting to a sort of unconscious Paganism." (*Israel Among the Nations*, p. 69.)

"What the Christian spirit has to battle against is not so much the new science or the modern spirit, with its confused aspirations, as the old Pagan instincts, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life once more unchained by the centuries." (*Ibid.*, p. 70.)

Christian principles, clearly enunciated and vigorously insisted upon, overthrew the old Paganism, and they alone at the present day can prevent the tide of civilization from ebbing back into the ancient sea of iniquity. Make Christianity creedless, eliminate from it all dogmatic teaching, and it will cease to be a rational religion and become but an empty emotion or a vanishing sentiment.

I was right, therefore, and perfectly logical in giving so much prominence to the search for the revealed doctrines which lie at the basis of Christianity. These are the foundation upon which Christian morality rests. If I could once find them, if I could once certainly know what to *believe*, it would be very easy for me to know what to *do*.

I return now from my digression to the point where I left off.

Not only was I trying to find out what truths Christ had revealed for the salvation of men, but it will be observed that I was all along in my investigation trying to find some competent *authority* to *teach* them to me. Christ's revelation, as I have said, was not and could not be a mere matter of every man's opinion. It was an objective truth which must be in existence somewhere, else the purpose of the revelation has failed. Even supposing that truth was in the Bible, I was convinced, for the reasons which I have given, that I could by no means be sure of finding it there. Hardly

two persons who search the Scriptures find the same thing.

Now, in seeking for and confidently expecting to find an authority, I was doing nothing unreasonable. We learn almost everything from authority. Why should the vital matter of religion be an exception? In fact, it is not. For those who pretend to get their religion from the Bible, the Bible is an authority, although speechless and abused. Even these, as I have shown, in reality are taught by living authorities of one kind or another.

Besides, if one fact is clear from the New Testament, regarded simply as the authentic history of our Lord's life and words, it is that He Himself *taught* as one having authority, and in time formed a body of men to whom He committed His entire doctrine with the command to *teach* it to all men. "Go and *teach* all things whatsoever I have commanded you." He wrote nothing except a word in the forgetting sands at His feet, as the adulterous woman stood before Him. Neither did He command His Apostles to write anything; but He taught, and He commanded them to *teach* after Him. What they were to teach was His revelation: "All things whatsoever I have heard of My Father I have made known to you." The things which the counsels of My Father decreed to make known to men, these I have declared to you. They are the words of life, go and teach them, not to your own generation alone, but to all future generations as well. "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." It is not unreasonable, therefore, to expect to find that authoritative teacher somewhere in the world to-day.

I say I was seeking a competent authority. To none other would I submit myself. Now the first and obvious requisite of a competent authority is that it shall be consistent in its teachings. Unless it is consistent it is merely guessing. That necessary characteristic at once ruled out the Episcopal Church, the teachers of which as I have shown are as the builders of Babel, no man speaking the same language as his neighbor. And it ruled out the sects as well, which have been continuously engaged since they began in

splitting up into smaller bodies over rocks of disagreements, or in revising their Creeds or Confessions to keep them up to date, declaring thereby that they were wrong in the past, and admitting by implication that they are probably wrong in the present.

This weakness of inconsistency is inherent in the very nature of human institutions. History proves nothing more certainly. No *merely human* authority, therefore, is competent to teach revealed Christian truth. Therefore the competent authority I was searching for, if it exists, must be *Divine*; if Divine, then unerring in its teaching.

This requirement of inerrancy arises not only from the necessity of consistency in the teaching, but it springs out of the very nature of the truth to be taught. As I have already said, we get almost all our knowledge, especially the beginning of it from authority. Later on, as our minds grow, we can verify much of this knowledge for ourselves, and *seeing* its truth, we can then throw off the authority upon which we first accepted it.

Not so is it with Christ's teachings. His revelation was supernatural, therefore, not truth of which the human reason can ever fully see the intrinsic verity. No amount of thinking or reasoning, for instance, will enable us to see that there are three Persons in God, or that there are two natures in Christ; that there are Sacraments or that there is a life of grace. We do not know these things and we never can know them. We *believe* them; that is to say, ultimately, our motive for accepting them is *authority*. Our reason has to deal not with their truth, of which it is no capable judge, but with the veracity and competency of an authority who proposes them to us.

As we accept Christ's revealed teaching on authority, and as that teaching is by its very nature beyond the sphere of reason, it follows that we can never reach a time, as we may in the case of natural knowledge, when we shall *see* it to be true, and be able to dispense with the authority upon which we first accepted it. Think a moment and you will see this to be true. Reject your authority for accepting the re-

vealed truths and at once you are unable to defend your further belief in them. Authority must abide.

Now, evidently the only authority which is competent to teach revealed truth to us is *God*, because He alone knows it. Whether He speaks to us directly, as in Christ, or indirectly, through His ministers; He speaks unerringly. So Christ spoke unerringly, and when He commanded His Apostles to teach all He had taught them, to teach His truth, He gave them by implication that *infallibility in their office* without which they would have been *merely human teachers*, and therefore utterly incompetent to carry out the command which He had laid upon them.

From both directions, therefore, the conclusion was the same. The only competent authority to which I could or would submit myself must be infallible.

When I reached this stage I was not far from home. I looked about me and found only one body in the world which even claimed to teach Christ's revelation infallibly. That was the Catholic Church. It only remained for me to test her claim.

It has always seemed to me that infallibility is, in the way in which I have pointed out, necessarily bound up with the idea of revelation. Nothing but an infallible custodian can possibly preserve revealed truth. Human reason alone being incompetent to deal adequately with it, will inevitably end by rejecting it on the ground of its incomprehensibility. Look around you and observe how those who deny infallibility are also gradually denying revelation. They are only logical; without an infallible authority there is no good reason for believing in revealed doctrine at all. On the one hand, then, an infallible authority is necessary: on the other the Catholic Church alone claims to be that authority. The claim answers to the necessity; therefore the Church is infallible.

To this all but conclusive antecedent presumption in her favor, add the fact that she has always claimed infallibility; then test this claim by history. Although she has been defining doctrines for nineteen hundred years, no man has yet been able to point out one instance in which she has contradicted herself in her

dogmatic teaching. Do you think this doctrinal consistency is humanly possible when three hundred years have been abundantly sufficient for all sorts of contradictions everywhere else?

Look in the Scriptures and you see my line of reasoning verified. In the Old Dispensation, God the Father spoke by the Prophets, who, speaking in His name were therefore infallible. Then God the Son spoke in His Own Person to the Apostles again infallibly. Are we who are in a fuller, more perfect dispensation than were the Jews of old, bereft of God's living voice and unerring teaching? No; when Our Blessed Lord ascended on high to His Father He sent down to His Church the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, to preserve the Revelation which He had made to men, and to perpetuate the mission which He had inaugurated. "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever, the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not or knoweth Him; but you shall know Him because He shall *abide with you* and *shall be in you.*" (S. John. xiv. 16, 17). "The Paraclete the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you *all things* and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you." (v. 26). When "all things" shall have been called to their minds by God the Holy Ghost, the Apostles and their successors can teach them as they were commanded to do; not till then.

Accepting then this promise of the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost within her, by God's grace I believed in the Holy Roman Catholic Church. With the certainty of faith, I could say my Creed as alone a Catholic can say it, "I believe in God; I believe in Jesus Christ His Son; I believe in the Holy Ghost, and I believe in the Holy Catholic Church."

That one fact of the infallibility determined, I had only to go to the Church and ask to be taught, certain that she would teach me Christ's full revelation and not the doctrines of men; for He had said to His

Church : " He that heareth you heareth Me." (S. Luke x. 16)

Here was a simple, rational way of learning the Christian religion. Its very simplicity and applicability to all persons and times and places were a strong confirmation of its correctness.

I have detained you too long already, and yet I have given you only the general trend of the reasons why I am a Catholic; the details which fortify the argument, I have largely left out. Some such broad argument as I have given must, it seems to me, have been intended by our Divine Lord to bring man to His fold. As St. Ambrose says, God never intended to save his people by dialectics. Neither did He mean to save them by an accumulation of texts. Our Lord *taught* the people His truth. He commanded His Apostles to *teach* it; they and their successors taught it and are teaching it to this day as they were told to do. The only question to be determined by an inquirer after truth is their *right* to teach. In proof of that there is besides the general argument I have given, the wonderful fact of the Church's existence. She looks the world in the face and speaks out, and her features and her voice are not of those of one born of earth.

The Catholic Church is her own greatest witness. She is too obvious in the world not to be seen. She is a city on the hill, that has strengthened the bolts of her gates and is a unit in herself and at peace. She is everywhere over the face of the earth. Men cannot close their eyes to her; her voice is always in their ears. She lifts the symbol of the Son of Man on high, and she never ceases to proclaim aloud her teaching in unhesitating accents. She is too great to be explained away by sophistries. Men can find no adequate cause for her being, her might, her greatness, but that which she herself gives, that she is the work of Jesus Christ, Who poured His blood into her veins, and gave His power into her hands, and bade her go forth in His name and be His witness, and teach and do good. Her enduring life is the breath of the Holy Spirit within her. She has scattered too

many blessings over this sorrowing earth and given it too many holy men and women in every age to be other than the Spouse of the King and the mother of the children of God.

CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY, ROOM 37, FLOOD BUILDING.
Price : Single copies, 5 cent. Per 100 copies, \$2.00