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CATHOLICISM

PRESERVER OF CHRISTIANITY



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CATHOLICISM

Preserver of Christianity

Martin J. Scott, S.J.

In the consideration of this subject, it is most important to have a clear understanding of the terms employed. In stating that Catholicism is the preserver of Christianity, what do we mean by Christianity and by Catholicism? Christianity is the religion of Christ, Who claimed to be God in the true sense. Catholicism is the system of belief and practice which claims to be the religion of Christ. If Christ is not truly God, His religion is based on false assertions and consequently has no claim on our belief. If Catholicism is not the religion of Christ, it should be branded as imposture and repudiated. We are, accordingly, to consider whether Christ is truly divine; and if so, whether Catholicism is the sole true exponent of His religion.

Before going fully into the consideration of Christ's divinity and of the claims of Catholicism, it is advisable to make a few reflections concerning both these points. If Christ is not God as He claimed to be, it is evident that He was either a deceiver or deluded. But Christ is admittedly the most perfect being that this world has known. The Rationalist critic, David Strauss, says of Christ: "The first place remains reserved for Him in the temple of genius and humanity, as the unattainable ideal of moral greatness which can never be excelled." He has given to the world the highest standards of justice and fraternity, and the greatest incentive to live by these standards. The Sermon on the Mount presents to mankind the most sublime ideals of virtue possible to human endeavor.

The Lord's Prayer, commonly known as the "Our Father," if lived up to, would do away with injustice and contentions among individuals, and obviate wars among nations.

In view of Christ's lofty morality and His code of conduct, it is impossible to regard Him as either false or unbalanced. If Christ is not God, He was not only far from being the most perfect person that ever lived, but He was, moreover, not even a good man. If not unbalanced, He was an imposter. But an unbalanced mind could not conceive and proclaim the parables of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the Good Shepherd; and, moreover, meet and confound the crafty Scribes and Pharisees so that they had to confess that no man spoke as He did, and they were forced to desist from questioning Him thereafter. Only a good and wise man could attach to Himself a body of upright followers who, without worldly recompense, would serve His cause and suffer torture and death in order to convey His teachings to mankind.

No sane person, if not what Christ claimed to be, would presume to say what He affirmed of Himself: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth"; "I am the way, the truth and the life." "God so loveth the world as to give His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish but may have life everlasting." (John 3:16). Unless you are prepared to consider Christ as imposter or madman, you must believe Him when the High Priest said to Him, "I adjure Thee by the Living God that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ the Son of the Living God?", and Jesus said to Him, "I am." (Matt. 26:63). This statement, made under oath before the highest tribunal of His nation, was by One who is regarded as the most

perfect person that this world has known. The more we regard Christ from the commonsense standpoint, the more we are compelled to admit that no character in history is so deserving of credence. When, therefore, He solemnly and repeatedly declared that He was God, He is to be believed.

Moreover, He not only declared He was God, but acted in accordance with this declaration. "He who loses his life for my sake shall find it"; "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life"; "He that believeth in Me shall not die forever." These statements are the veriest absurdities and altogether incompatible in a person of Christ's wisdom unless He was truly the divine Being He declared Himself to be. The Jews all but worshipped Moses, yet when they quoted Moses as justifying themselves, Christ said, "But I say to you . . .," thus putting Himself above the Law and the Prophets. (Matt. 19:7, 8). Moreover, Christ did not explain His doctrine, but, as God, solemnly proclaimed it by divine right.

Only God in His own name, and by his own power, can forgive sins. Christ freely exercised this power. God alone, simply by a word, can directly give or restore life. Christ said to the dead and buried Lazarus: "I say to thee, arise," and the corpse became again a living being. What presumption for a creature to speak with the authority of the Creator unless He was truly what He claimed to be!

In exercising the prerogatives of God, Christ was thus acting in accordance with His divine claims. In the history of mankind, no created being has by his own power forgiven sin or given life. Not even Moses, who was the lawgiver of the Old Testament, presumed to forgive sins; instead he prayed to Jehovah for his people's pardon. But Christ directly and by

His own authority said to the paralytic, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." The Jews understood that Christ was exercising the prerogatives of God Almighty, for they accused Him of blasphemy because, being man, He was assuming the authority of God Himself.

Now, if Christ was not what He claimed to be He was assuredly not the most perfect being this world has known, but on the contrary a most blasphemous prevaricator and deliberate imposter. It has been said of Christ that He is either God or a bad man. Before any jury of unprejudiced minds it is hard to conceive how Christ would be adjudged either a fraud or a fool.

Christianity is the religion of Christ. Hence if He is what He claimed to be, His religion is divinely true. Accordingly, it must be borne in mind that Christianity is not a school of philosophy nor a subject of debate, but the pronouncement of God Himself on man's relationship to the Creator and Ruler of the world.

If anyone knew Christ's meaning of His claims, it was certainly the Apostles. They, each one of them, eventually endured torture and death in order to profess and propagate the truth that He was indeed the Son of God, in the sense that He was the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father.

Here it may be helpful to explain why, if Christ was God, He at times referred to Himself as the servant of God, doing the will of Him by whom He was sent. Christ was God from eternity, and God-man from His human birth. As man he was a creature like the rest of mankind, but free from every human defect. As man He was God's ambassador, carrying out the divine mission of salvation to mankind. As God he spoke the word that cleansed the leper, gave

sight to the blind, healed the cripple and raised the dead. As man He was at times fatigued, hungry, craved the sympathy of His companions, suffered calumny, crucifixion and death.

The briefest possible portrayal of Christ is that found in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel:

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; as many as received Him He gave them the power to be made the sons of God."

The Son of God assumed our humanity in order that we may become partakers of His divinity. Some may assert that it all depends on the interpretation of Christ's words. That is true. He foresaw and provided for that. As the founding fathers of our nation provided an official interpreter, the United States Supreme Court, for the Constitution, so did Christ establish a supreme institution for the interpretation of His communication to mankind. Having selected a body of followers called Apostles, He said to them:

"As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you, When He had said this He breathed on them and said, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost; Amen I say to you, he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me. It is not you that speak but the Holy Ghost. He that heareth you heareth Me'."

From these and other statements and deeds, it must be evident to those who are open to conviction that the Founder of Christianity is God in the true sense of the word, and that His religion is a divine revelation to mankind. The Gospels, which record

the deeds and words of Christ, are the most trustworthy historical documents in the world. Harnack, prince of Rationalists, has declared that no one with pretense to scholarship can now question the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels.

This brings us to the second point of our consideration, namely, the claims of the Catholic Church to be the true exponent of Christ's religion.

It is clear to begin with, that Christ did not leave to chance His mission to mankind. Every commission, verbal or written, requires that its message be rightly understood by those for whom it is intended. For this reason Christ established His Church, and, since His religion was intended for all mankind to the end of the world, He said He would be with it unto the end of the world. Generation after generation comes and goes, and new conditions confront the Church with each generation. In the first century of Christianity there were problems which find no place in the twentieth century, just as our problems did not concern the Christians of the Apostolic age.

Consequently Christ, as a wise Founder, saw to it that for the twentieth or fiftieth century His religion would have a spokesman who would be able to state exactly and authoritatively its meaning if a question about its interpretation should arise.

In the early ages of Christianity, the Church had to strive as hard to defend the doctrine that Christ was man as it now does to maintain that He is God. To the early Christians the life of Christ was so divine that some persons contended that He was not a man at all in reality, but only in appearance. Century after century, some point of controversy comes up which demands definite solution.

For many centuries any doctrine which conflicted

with the teaching of the Church established by Christ was pronounced heretical, that is, false. Those who denied her authority or jurisdiction were termed heretics or schismatics, that is cut off or separated from her government. Throughout Christendom, even those who differed from Catholic teaching claimed nevertheless to be Catholics, and eventually either submitted to the only Church in Christendom which existed from the apostolic age, or formed a church of their own, which, like a rudderless ship, drifted at the mercy of changeable elements. What we have stated implies that Christ actually founded a Church which He endowed with authority to teach the truths of His religion and to govern its pastors and people.

The means which Christ employed to perpetuate His mission to mankind was the establishment of a corporate society which He named His Church. After spending the previous night in prayer, He selected for His mission twelve close associates whom He called apostles. After intimate companionship with them during three years He made them His ambassadors to mankind, saying:

“All power is given Me in heaven and on earth . . . as the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. . . . Going, therefore, teach ye all nations to observe all that I have commanded you, and behold I am with you all days even to the end of the world.” (Matt. 28:18).

These twelve He constituted into a visible corporate society, an organization consisting of an authoritative commanding head and subject members. Having changed the name of one of them, Simon, into that of Peter, which means a rock, He said to him:

“Thou art a rock and on this rock I will build My Church, and I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven.” (Matt. 16:19).

Only God could presume to use such language as that. It is to be noted that Christ said, “On thee I will build *My* Church.” Christ founded one church only, and designated it His Church and declared that it rested on Peter as its foundation. To all the Apostles He said, “As the Father hath sent me, I also send you”; but to Peter alone He added: “I give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven” and added, “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven.” From that day forward Peter and his successors have exercised that authority which in history is known as the Papacy.

For centuries one Church only was recognized as the Church of Christ throughout Christendom. Today there is only one Church in the world which proclaims in its entirety the religion of Christ, the briefest statement of which is the Apostles’ Creed. Every Christian knows the Apostles’ Creed by heart, just as he knows the Our Father. But only one Church in the world now holds and proclaims every truth as stated in the Creed, the faith of the original church of Christ.

This Creed proclaims one God only, and that there are three Persons in this Deity, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, which we believe solely on the word of Christ, the second person of the Trinity. This Creed proclaims that the second person of the Trinity, the only begotten Son of God, became man for our salvation. It declares that the Mother of Christ was and is a virgin, who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, conceived and gave birth to Christ the Son of God

made man. It states that Christ, the Son of God, gave up His life in order that we might have life everlasting. It states, moreover, belief in the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. No Church except the Catholic now professes belief in every one of the articles of the Apostles' Creed. Several Churches believe in almost all but one article, namely, that which says, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." The Catholic Church specified in the Apostles' Creed was the original Church of Christ whose supreme head was Peter's successor. Only the Church whose head was the successor of Peter was for centuries the acknowledged Church of Christ. Only Catholics now believe in the Holy Catholic Church of the Apostles' Creed.

The Catholic Church of the Apostles' Creed is the only Church which dates from Christ. Every other Church owes its origin to some founder other than Christ and to some date later than Christ. Until the 16th Century, the churches of Christendom which separated from the Catholic Church held all the doctrine of the Apostles' Creed, but denied its supreme authority. Hence they were regarded as schismatics, that is, cut off from the jurisdiction of the Apostolic Catholic Church. Eventually they became heretical, that is, they denied a doctrine of the original Church of Christ, namely, they refused to believe that the Pope was the supreme ruler of the Church. Since, from the apostolic age onward, the Pope was the acknowledged Supreme Ruler of the Church, the denial of this tenet was a rejection of that article of the Creed which asserted belief in the Holy Catholic Church. It may be said in passing, that as a result of rejecting the headship of the Pope, these various sects

eventually fell under the authority of civil rulers, some of whom did not believe in Christianity at all.

It may not be out of place to say a word here on the Eastern Orthodox Churches. The origin of this term was owing to the fact that during a controversy among Catholics, those who remained faithful to the Church were called orthodox, which means right or true. Later, when these Christians, known as Orthodox, separated from the Catholic Church, they retained the name of Orthodox Churches, although they no longer recognized the Supreme Authority of the Catholic Church. They thus became schismatics. Eventually these churches denied articles of faith, thus becoming heretical as well as schismatical.

This reference to schism and heresy brings us to the consideration of one of the most important matters concerning Christianity. In order to appreciate its significance it is necessary to keep in mind that Christianity is a revealed religion, a divinely revealed religion. It is that, or the greatest deception and imposition that the world has known. If Christ is, as He claimed to be, divine, His religion is divine and consequently true. If He is not divine, then away with Christianity altogether.

Catholics believe that Christ is God in the full meaning of the term. When, therefore, He commissioned His apostles to teach mankind "all things whatever I have commanded you," and added, "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world," Christ was speaking with the same power and authority as when God fulminated the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

Christ before giving this commission to His Apostles, had constituted them a body which He termed His Church, and to which He had delegated

some of His divine prerogatives. "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you"; "He who hears you hears Me"; "It is not you that speak but the Holy Ghost." It was this divine delegation of authority that St. Paul had in mind when he said, "If we or an angel from heaven preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8); and, addressing the same people, he said, "You received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus" (Gal. 4:14). These are words of the foremost preacher of Christianity that this world has known, a man who was a most violent persecutor of Christianity but who, after conversion, spent his entire life proclaiming the truth of Christ's religion, and finally suffered imprisonment, torture and death for the faith which he professed and proclaimed.

Sometimes the Catholic Church has been accused of absolutism in refusing to confer with other Christian bodies on matters of creed. Scientists are not accused of absolutism because they refuse to discuss the truth of the multiplication table or any other certainties of mathematics. The Catholic Creed is as true as mathematics. The Catholic Church would cease to be the Church of Christ if it made any change or compromise on any article of the Apostles' Creed, or on any doctrine which the Catholic Church has defined to be true.

To question any article of the Creed or any doctrine defined as of Christian faith would be admission that Christ had not instituted an infallible means of perpetuating His teaching. But a fallible church could not be the voice of the infallible Christ. Moreover, the Founder of Christianity would not command His followers to believe a teacher that could mislead them.

A chain is no stronger than its weakest link. If but

one article of the Creed or only one defined doctrine of faith were false, it would be the end of the Catholic Church as a divinely authorized religion. The logical thing to do would be to reject Christianity if Christ's Church had failed in any point of doctrine. If the Catholic Church is not Christ's, no other is, since no other originated with Him. So, as regards religion, one is justified in rejecting Christianity altogether if it is not an infallible exponent of its Founder's doctrine. That would be the rejection of Christ also, for a divine Founder could not give a guarantee which failed.

When, therefore, the Catholic Church declines to unite with other Christian denominations to bring about unity by modifying or omitting any of its essential belief, it is not arrogance on her part, nor a lack of Christian cooperation, but loyalty to its divine Founder. He declared that "heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away (Mark 13:31). If the Catholic Church ever changed one article of its creed, it would only be a question of time when it would be in the same condition of disunion as now characterizes the churches which have separated from the original Christian Church, and are now making strenuous efforts to combine in some form of religious unity. The multiplicity of creeds is doing more to disrupt Christianity than all the efforts of its opponents.

It should be evident to the logical mind that a doctrine proclaimed by Christ is necessarily true, and consequently not subject to change. It is, moreover, evident that the original Christian Church received from Christ Himself the truths which constitute Christian Faith. St. Paul alludes to this when he says that his doctrine was not from man but from Christ Himself. "For I give you to understand, brethren,

that the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor did I learn it; but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Gal. 1:2). When, therefore, we behold as many different doctrines as there are sects, we are justified in saying that these contradictory creeds could not have had a divine origin. For, supposing that some one of these creeds were true, all the others which differed from that one would necessarily be false, and a false creed could not have God for its author.

Truth never changes. Error changes in its endeavor to rectify itself. There is only one church in the world which now holds the same doctrine as the original Church founded by Christ, and that is the Holy Apostolic Catholic Church. It is logical, therefore, to affirm that whichever church is Christ's, by the very fact of being His Church has His divine guarantee that He is with it and that in hearing it we are hearing Him.

Of course, those who differ from the original Church of Christ may allege that it has failed to represent Him and has fallen into error. Well, if the original Church has fallen into error, Christ's guarantee has failed and that ends Christianity as a divinely revealed religion. When Christ declared that He would be with His Church forever, He realized that it would need His presence to carry out His mission to mankind. That mission was to proclaim that God was our Father and that His Kingdom would be ours hereafter if we were His faithful subjects on earth.

In the Lord's Prayer, known also as the Our Father, Christ taught us to say, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In this

prayer Christ gives the answer to the three questions that have most concerned mankind from the beginning of the world, namely, the origin of man, the final end of man, and the purpose of life. The origin of man, our Father in heaven, God; the final end of man, the Kingdom of God; the purpose of life, doing God's will on earth. It may be said that the Our Father is the compendium of true religion; for the purpose of true religion is to worship God by doing His will, thus showing that we are His dutiful subjects.

There are two great obstacles to doing God's will, namely, man's tendency to do his own will; and to rely solely on his own judgment for belief. Worship of God means submission to His will and pronouncements. By observing God's commandments, man submits his will to God's will. By believing solely on God's word, man submits his intelligence to God's word. This twofold submission is acknowledgment of man's entire dependence on God and constitutes the highest homage that a rational creature can pay to the divine Majesty.

Both as regards conduct and belief, Christ makes demands on His followers which no mere mortal would presume to exact. As regards conduct, Christ's moral code requires of man control of the strongest human passions. With regard to belief, Christ requires man to believe truths which are beyond the capacity of human intelligence to ascertain or explain. That is why Catholics refer to their religion as the Holy Faith. They believe not on demonstration but solely on Christ's word.

This is not blind acquiescence, as some affirm, for it is based on the fact that a divine Being can neither deceive nor be deceived. Man should use all the reason the Creator has given him to learn if Christ is God as

He declared. That being admitted, it is the highest use of reason to acknowledge that He who gave it to us will not require us to believe what is against reason. To illustrate this procedure: one of the truths which Christ revealed to us is the Trinity. Man could never, by his own reason, learn of this truth, nor, after it is revealed, can he understand it. It is accepted, however, because Christ, eternal Truth, has revealed it. It is believed simply on His word. That constitutes an act of sublime worship, since by it man offers to God what he considers his most precious endowment—his judgment. It is this intellectual submission that makes Faith so important, and so acceptable to God.

The Christian religion is based on three mysterious truths altogether above man's comprehension: the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Eucharist.

Here it may not be out of place to advert to the fact that modern science has given man very special motives for belief in these incomprehensible truths. The scientific development of the past fifty years has demonstrated the possibility of the seemingly impossible. To illustrate: fifty years ago a man would have been regarded as insane if he ventured to say that a person in a room in New York could speak to a friend in London and be heard just as clearly as if they were conversing across the table in the same room. For how could the human voice travel thousands of miles in less than a second of time? A scientist would declare it to be absolutely impossible, for sound itself, which carries the voice, travels only 720 miles an hour, and would take several hours to cross the Atlantic. So science would declare that human conversation across the Atlantic would be an impossibility. We know now that conversation with another may be held ten thousand miles apart. What was impos-

sible a few years ago to the best minds is now a matter of daily occurrence. And this was accomplished by human power. If the seemingly impossible can thus be accomplished by man, surely the Trinity and other Christian mysteries are possible to divine intelligence and power.

This is only one of the seemingly impossible things which are now commonplace facts in daily life. Not so long ago it took weeks to cross the Atlantic; now it is done in a few hours. Aviation, radio and automotive vehicles are changing the entire world. The first half of the twentieth century has truly been styled the miracle age. All these marvelous accomplishments were undreamed of the previous century. And they are the work of man!

When Christ revealed the nature of the Deity, declaring that it was a divine Unity of Three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, He did not explain but solemnly proclaimed the fact. If God demonstrated the truths of revealed doctrine, there would be no merit in believing them, any more than believing a theorem of geometry or a conclusion of calculus.

Some times we wonder why there are mysteries in the Christian religion. One reason is that it gives man the opportunity of making a sublime act of Faith. Except those who continue in the religion in which they were born, and take for granted that it is beyond question, adherents of other Christian sects virtually make their own religion by selecting what they wish to believe and rejecting what they do not like. If the doctrine of the Church to which they belong does not meet with their approval, they join another church or give up religion altogether. If the doctrine from the pulpit does not accord with their religious sentiments, the members change the preacher for one who

gives them what they want. In this way they really make their own religion, and instead of the creed of the Apostolic Church, formulate their own man-made creed.

Some Christian denominations reject the Trinity, although it is expressly taught in the Apostles' Creed and in Christ's own command to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Other denominations reject the divinity of Christ although the Apostles' Creed distinctly states belief in "God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord." Nearly all the churches except the Eastern Orthodox reject veneration of the Virgin, although the Apostles' Creed declares that she was the Virgin Mother of Christ, the only Son of God. And so on, one article of the Apostles' Creed after another has been rejected by different Churches, which, nevertheless, pride themselves on being Christian.

Dr. Bernard Iddings Bell, a foremost spokesman for non-Catholic Christian churches, has recently declared that the influential Episcopal Church: "is a solution of one part Christianity to 99 parts respectability and good-fellowship." Good-fellowship and respectability are not poison, he said, but they can, and frequently do, so dilute the grace of God as to render it almost powerless." . . . It seems more like a social club. He sees a tendency in ecumenical circles "to assume that it does not matter overmuch what people think of Christ, whether He is God redeeming the world, or only a superfine moral leader." (The Witness, High Church Weekly, March 20, 1950).

How different is Catholicism! Every article of the Apostles' Creed is the living faith of Catholics. They accept it whole and entire, not because it agrees with

their sentiments or wishes but because it is God's revelation. Christ did not submit His doctrine for our approval; but delivered it as a divine declaration of belief and practice. Unless it is accepted as such, it is logical to renounce Christianity altogether if one is consistent.

A citizen of the United States cannot pick and choose what suits him out of the Constitution, but must accept it and abide by it in its entirety or renounce citizenship. Christ's doctrine as expressed in the Apostles' Creed is very much more a matter of acceptance than the most authoritative and binding constitution ever proclaimed by man.

Christianity is not a selective creed but a divine pronouncement by Him who has promised to give to them that receive Him the power to be made the sons of God. Christ is the only Begotten Son of God from all eternity; but He has deigned to become our brother in order that we may become partakers of the divine nature. Since Almighty God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, and since the only begotten Son so loved us as to give His life for our eternal salvation, and since His doctrine is the means by which man should be made a partaker of divinity, we may be sure that He did not leave that doctrine at the mercy of human caprice or option.

For man to say to God that he would believe of the divine declaration only what he was pleased to accept is really to insult the divine Lawgiver. Every Christian, by the very fact, believes that the Apostles' Creed is a brief summary of the Christian religion. It was the doctrine of the original Christian Church, given to the Apostles by Christ Himself. It is not for those who live centuries after the original Church was founded to alter in any way this original constitution.

Yet that is what they do who, professing to be Christians, nevertheless exercise their own judgment as to what they will accept or reject of this divine charter of salvation. We sadly behold now that the various sects are on the rocks because they have chosen to be their own pilots. The world is shocked, and they themselves are shocked by the distintegration which has resulted from the exercise of option in matters of revealed religion.

Christianity is either a divine revelation or not. If it is, any infringement of it is out of the question. If it is not, the sooner it is branded an imposter the better. We affirm, accordingly, that Catholicism is the preserver of Christianity. It has been the boast of various sects outside the original Christian Church, that their creed frees them from the shackles of intellectual slavery. They glory in the fact that they have freedom of judgment and expression regarding belief. But if it is admitted that God has spoken, there is no such thing as choice in the matter of belief. The very basis of the Christian religion is that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, has spoken and proclaimed a definite body of truths for belief. In confirmation of the distintegration of the various non-Catholic Christian Churches, let me quote a distinguished scholar:

“I am profoundly convinced that the time is not far distant when all men who think at all, and who possess the faculty of reasoning clearly and logically, will understand that the highest use to which the human mind can devote itself is the contemplation of God and His relations to man and the physical universe; and that when that time comes, I am certain that

a hymn of thanksgiving will well up from the heart of America to the Catholic Church, which, through misrepresentation and calumny and slander, and in spite of the most powerful opposition, has always held that great ideal before the minds of the people, has always made God and His Christ the basis and foundation of education."

(U. S. Senator George Wharton Pepper to the Yale Graduating Class of 1922.)

Recently (1938) the declaration which follows was made by Protestant clergymen at the General Assembly of the Church of England held at London.

"We are exactly 1,016 clergymen who have in these last eight years subscribed to the faith of the Council of Trent and pledged ourselves to preach it in our parishes. Moreover, some 2,000 others are in sympathy with our aims and join us every year with their parishioners in a novena for the return of the Anglican Church to the Papacy."

The Faith of the Council of Trent referred to above is the official statement of Catholic belief promulgated in the 16th century in confirmation of the Apostles' Creed and all its implications. Catholicism alone upholds in its entirety and in all its implications the Apostles' Creed, which is the charter of Christ's Church, established and guaranteed by its divine founder to be in the world to the end of time.

Christ said of Himself, "I am the light of the world"; and He said to His Church, "You are the light of the world." That light has shone steadily for twenty centuries despite opposition from without and

weaknesses within. The law of everything natural is to decay with years. But the Catholic Church, because it is supernatural, instead of decaying, grows stronger with the years. She is the only institution in existence which is a world-wide corporate Society, that is an organization with a head that exercises authority in every part of the world and among every nation on earth. It is the only Church whose Head speaks to its members throughout the entire world and whose words are accepted as those of Christ Himself, the invisible Head of the Church. The Catholic Church alone has never changed the doctrine committed to it by its Founder.

This does not mean that it is unprogressive or inactive. The multiplication table has never changed, nor will it change, yet it is the basis of the great constructions which are the wonder of the world today. The very fact that Christianity is a divinely revealed religion constitutes its doctrine unchangeably true.

It was to assure His teaching of permanence and absolutely true transmission to the end of time that Christ constituted His Church infallible. It were unworthy of a divine Founder to leave His deposit of faith to a fallible agency. Christ commanded us to obey the Church as Himself, but He would not command us to obey a voice that might mislead.

It may be objected, however, has not the Catholic Church been false to her mission? Has she not betrayed her Master? The Church, like her divine Founder, is both divine and human. She is divine in her constitution and sacraments, human in her members. Every member of the Church, from the Pope down to the lowliest of its adherents, may be guilty of any sin on the calendar. Faith does not make one immune to sin. The Light is one thing; following it,

quite another. In the first little group of Christ's followers, there was Judas, a thief and traitor, and Peter, who cruelly denied his Master. These defections, however, did not detract from the holiness of Christ nor from the truth of His doctrine.

Christ foresaw and foretold that there would be scandals even among the leaders of the faithful, but He also declared woe unto these false shepherds. If the Catholic Church were merely a natural institution, it would have perished long ago. When we reflect on the persecutions that have assailed it and the evil lives not only of some of its people but also of some of its prelates, it is clear as crystal that if it were not supernatural it never could have survived to this day. It has not only survived, but is moreover the most vigorous, most unified, most universal and most beneficent institution on earth.

Nearly all the valued features of our civilization originated from her teaching and ministry. It was owing to her practical carrying out of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man that we now enjoy so many philanthropic institutions. Previous to her active missionary and charitable labors, there were no hospitals, no homes for the aged, no asylums for orphans, no shelters for abandoned infants, no rehabilitation of the victims of social vice. These beneficent institutions did not exist before Christ, even when civilization was at its highest. It was Christian precept and example that gave them birth. And charitable organizations, made possible by the religious orders of men and women inspired by the incentive of Christ's injunction, "What you do to the least of My brethren, you do unto Me." The spirit of heroic sacrifice which the Catholic Church has inspired throughout the centuries is evidence that Christ is

with her, as He foretold. And because He is with her, she is incapable of religious error, or destruction.

That brings us back to the main point of this matter. If the Church which originated with Christ has ever erred in doctrine, she has falsified His prediction, and consequently He and His Church are discredited. Consistency demands that if, as charged by some, the Church originated by Him has erred, then away with Him of the broken promises and false claims, and away with all the Christian Churches. But He who proclaimed the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, who on the death-bed of the Cross prayed forgiveness for his executioners, who foretold not only His death but His resurrection, who is acclaimed the most perfect person this world has known, this person who alone of all mankind could say, "Which one of you can accuse Me of sin?", who alone of mankind presumed to set Himself up as a Model for imitation, this ideal of superlative manhood was neither fool nor fraud but what He claimed to be—the Only Begotten Son of God made man, the living invisible Head of the Church He built on Peter, who to all who believe in Him and live by Him He gives eternal life, participation in the divine nature, membership in the divine family.

The sole depository of Christ's religion is that institution of which He said, "Upon this rock I will build my Church." These words were spoken to Peter, and from that day to this, where Peter is, there is Christ's Church. All down the ages the Papacy has been the touchstone of the original Church of Christianity. Today it proclaims the same truths as the Apostles in their day. Despite human frailty among people and prelates, she has never compromised on the faith committed to her keeping. In fact, it would

seem that God permits her frailty and faults in order to manifest that her perpetual existence is not owing to natural, but to supernatural, vitality. "The foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the wise, and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong" (1 Cor. 1:27).

With all her weaknesses, past and present, the Catholic Church today is the strongest and most universal institution in the world. Like her divine Founder, who was misrepresented and falsely accused, she carries on her divine mission, and like Him, is the Light of the world. Regardless of human frailty, she holds aloft the highest standard of individual and social justice. Under her guidance, her adherents do not lose their intellectual or moral freedom, but rather utilize these precious endowments for the attainment of immortal companionship with God Himself. In this way the Son of God, who assumed humanity in order that we might partake of divinity, safely conducts those of good will to the final bliss of life everlasting. "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

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