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WHY NOT BE A CATHOLIC?

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Why Not Be a Catholic ?

I.—THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ALONE FOUNDED BY CHRIST



HE inspired warning of the Prince of the Apostles, that we should be ready to give an account of the faith that is in us, should be taken to heart by every Catholic in the present age. There never was, perhaps, a time when unbelief held such sway or when doubt and agnosticism prevailed so widely. The Catholic, then, should furnish himself with every possible proof of the divinity of the Church, in order that he may strengthen his own faith and show clearly to those outside the Church the reasonableness and the truth of that faith.

This does not mean, of course, that we can demonstrate the mysteries of religion. But, if we can clearly show that those mysteries should be believed because they have been revealed by the all-knowing and all-truthful God, we have achieved the purpose I have mentioned. If, *e. g.*, we could bring an agnostic to admit that God exists, that God is infinite truth, and that God has revealed a certain religion to mankind, he would, if he were reasonable, at once embrace that religion and cling to every doctrine it taught, even though some of those doctrines were far beyond the reach of reason. We suppose, of course, that in making such an act of faith he is aided by God's enlightening and inspiring grace.

THE VATICAN COUNCIL AND THE REASONABLENESS OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH

The Vatican Council insists upon the reasonableness of the Catholic Faith when it speaks thus: "In order

that the homage of our faith might be in keeping with reason, God willed to unite to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit external proofs of His revelation, that is, divine facts, and particularly miracles and prophecies, which, since they clearly show forth the almighty power and infinite knowledge of God, are most certain signs of Divine Revelation and are suited to the understanding of all persons."

We may suppose three classes of persons to whom it is necessary to prove the divinity of the Catholic Church: (1) Atheists and Agnostics, who do not admit the existence of God; (2) Rationalists, who are willing to admit the existence of a Supreme Being, but who reject all supernatural revelation; and (3) Protestants, who believe in God and accept His revelation given to the world by Christ, but who will not admit that the Catholic Church is the one true Church, the only true exponent of God's revelation to mankind.

Obviously, if one undertook to deal with each of these three classes, he would find it necessary to write a book in order to set forth the requisite arguments. Even to deal exhaustively with the third class, one would require to write a treatise. At present I simply purpose to write a brief outline of the chief arguments which should convince every unbiased and thinking Protestant of the truth of the Catholic religion.

ONE OR TWO MISGIVINGS

Now, in the first place it may be well to remove one or two misgivings entertained by non-Catholics. Why, we are often asked, are we so intolerant of other creeds, even to such an extent as to teach that the members of all non-Catholic denominations are lost eternally? And why are we so desirous of extending the Catholic Church, thus practicing and encouraging proselytism?

In answer to the first objection, I would say that the Catholic attitude is absolutely misrepresented. The well-known adage, "*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*" ("Outside the Church there is no salvation"), is twisted into the statement that we condemn all Protestants to Hell. As a matter of fact, the Church teaches nothing of the kind. We distinguish, as all reasonable people distinguish, when there is question of duty or obligation, between vincible and invincible—*i. e.*, culpable and inculpable—ignorance. If a non-Catholic is culpably ignorant of the truth of the Catholic religion, that is, if he has serious doubts as to whether it is not, after all, the true Church, and then refuses to inquire; or if he really recognizes it as the one true Church, and then refuses to enter it, such a person cannot be saved, for the simple reason that he is stifling the voice of his conscience in a grave manner, or, in other words, is disobeying the Divine command to embrace the truth. But if a Protestant is in good faith—that is, if he has no misgivings about his own creed, and therefore does not recognize the Catholic Church as the Church of God (as she truly is)—if, moreover, he has faith in God and in redemption by Jesus Christ, and follows the dictates of conscience, making an act of perfect contrition should he fall into mortal sin; if he is so disposed that he would embrace the Catholic Faith were it recognized by him as the truth of God, certainly he will be saved. Thus it is quite likely that a great number of non-Catholics, being in good faith, will attain the eternal vision of God. Regarding this matter, Pius IX. spoke very clearly in the following words: "We must hold it as certain that those who are in ignorance of the true religion, if such ignorance is invincible, are not held guilty of this fault in the sight of God. . . . Those who are invincibly ignorant of our most holy religion, and who, faithfully observing the natural law and its precepts engraven by God on the hearts

of all, and, ready to obey God, lead an honest and upright life, can, by the power of divine light and grace, attain eternal life." Needless to say, however, it is far easier for a Catholic than for a non-Catholic, in good faith, to work out his salvation, seeing that the former is enriched by so many wondrous supernatural helps.

PROSELYTISM

In reply to the objection regarding proselytism, we need simply give an illustration. Let us suppose that James and his friends are toiling hard day after day in a mine in which there is little or no gold, while John, a friend of James, has, through a stroke of good luck, discovered a mine that is abounding in gold. Suppose that John visits James, tells him of his rich discovery, and invites James and his friends to work the mine with him so that they may become wealthy men. Could any reasonable man blame John's friendly act? Yet this is precisely what we Catholics do. We are sure that our non-Catholic friends are working in a mine where there is little or no supernatural gold; we are absolutely certain that we, through God's mercy, have discovered the true gold mine, abounding in the wealth of God; and because we love our Protestant friends and wish them to be as rich in the gifts of God as we are in this life, and as blessed as we hope to be throughout eternity, therefore we never tire of setting before them the truth, the beauty, and the wealth of the Catholic religion, and of cordially inviting them to take shares in that glorious supernatural gold mine.

THE REAL QUESTIONS

Let us now come to the real questions at issue: (1) Is there only one true Church? (2) If so, which Church has that grand prerogative?

We answer unhesitatingly: (1) There can be only one true Church. (2) That Church is the Catholic Church.

(1) There can be but one true Church. It seems strange that anyone could contradict this self-evident truth. Yet we hear persons state that it matters not what religion one professes; that one religion is as good as another; that all forms of belief are equally pleasing in the sight of God. These statements must logically mean that all religions are equally true. Such a statement is evidently absurd.

If a teacher proposed a mathematical problem to six children and received six different answers, could he admit that one answer was as good as another—that all, in fact, were correct? Certainly not. Yet the same principle holds good when the question is proposed as to how many true churches there can be. We need but the most elementary knowledge of the tenets of each denomination to be convinced of the contradictions existing between the respective churches. Obviously, contradictory and contrary statements cannot all be true.

Besides, there is only one God, and consequently there can be only one religion revealed by Him. In fact, Christ always speaks of His Church in the singular number, which is a clear proof that He founded but one Church. Nor are His followers allowed to pick and choose their own favorite doctrines and reject the rest. His Divine words are irrevocable: "Teach all things whatsoever I have commanded you. . . He that believeth not shall be condemned."

THE ONE TRUE CHURCH

(2) The Catholic Church is the one true Church. Let us calmly reflect on the chief arguments which so convincingly prove this statement.

First, all other churches were founded by men, whereas the Catholic Church alone was instituted by Jesus Christ. The study of the facts of history places this truth beyond the shadow of a doubt. Well did Cardinal Newman write: "To be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant." It is easy to point to the commencement of each Protestant denomination as the work of some man or body of men.

Take, for example, the Anglican Church. Undoubtedly it was founded by Henry VIII. in the sixteenth century. When Henry came to the throne the whole of England was Catholic—or, if you wish, Roman Catholic. The English nation believed and professed the same doctrines as we Catholics to-day; throughout England, laity, priests, bishops and king,—all acknowledged the spiritual jurisdiction of the Pope. How did the Church of England, then, originate? Simply in the following manner. Henry, who was lawfully married to Catherine of Aragon, fell in love with Anne Boleyn, a young lady of his court, and resolved to marry her. He appealed to the Pope for a divorce from Catherine, which was, of course, refused. John Richard Green, the Protestant historian, tells the sequel: "Despair of other means drove Henry at last to adopt the bold plan from which he had shrunk at Wolsey's fall. The plan was simply that the king should disavow the Papal jurisdiction, declare himself head of the church within his realm, and obtain a divorce from his own ecclesiastical courts." The infamous "Act of Supremacy," passed in 1534, formally established the king "as the only supreme head of the Church in England." This Act is called by Green "the great statute by which the new character of the Church was defined." So much for the origin of the church established by the saint of six wives.

The Methodist Church is of still more recent origin. It arose in the eighteenth century as a religious movement

guided especially by John Wesley, and finally became a separate denomination.

The Presbyterian religion owes its existence to Calvin, John Knox, etc., who lived in the sixteenth century.

Space does not permit me to enter into the details of each Protestant denomination. I have singled out the chief sects and pointed to the circumstances of their origin. We can, with history as our guide, single out, in turn, each Protestant denomination, and point to the man who founded it, the country in which it was established, the year in which it sprang up, etc. It is an historical fact that all non-Catholic denominations were instituted by men who had not the shadow of a Divine credential. How could any individual who came into existence centuries after Christ had established His Church and ascended into Heaven claim the divine prerogative of having authority to establish a Church? As well might some fanatic pitch his tent in Central Park, gather together a few followers, and call his church the Society of Paradiseopolitans! Then his name, too, would go down to successive generations with the names of the men we have mentioned, and would be held in benediction for all time by his pious disciples.

When, however, we turn to our opponents and say to them, "We have given you the circumstances of the foundation of your respective churches, showing them to be purely human institutions; now, please, tell us in what country the Catholic Church was founded, by what man, under what circumstances," they are compelled either to observe an inglorious silence or to admit that the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ. Yes, truly, "to be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant."

II.—HOW THE CATHOLIC CHURCH WAS FOUNDED

IN order to show how the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ, we must go back to the Gospels. All Christians admit that these are inspired records of the life of our Divine Redeemer; but, even if we abstracted from their inspired character, they would still answer our purpose in the present matter, for it is absolutely beyond doubt historically that they are genuine documents written by reliable witnesses, and handed down in their purity and entirety to subsequent generations. In dealing with Rationalists it is sufficient, when we wish to prove the divinity of the Christian religion, to take the Gospels as mere historical narratives, waiving the question of their inspiration; but as Protestants admit the inspired character of the Scriptures, we shall, in showing them the truth of the Catholic Faith, treat the Gospels also as inspired documents.

When we read the New Testament attentively, we see that Christ not only revealed a religion to mankind, but also established a living infallible teaching-body to perpetuate that revelation in all its fulness and purity. Early in His public life Our Lord chose twelve companions who were to be constantly associated with Him during the years of His earthly ministry. Teaching on the mountain, preaching at the lakeside, expounding His doctrine in the temple, instructing the crowds that flocked around Him in the desert, Jesus was ever encircled by the faithful twelve, who eagerly caught every word that fell from His sacred lips. To them He explained in private what He had taught in public; to them He revealed the secrets of His Heart; to them He even manifested His glory. The years of Our Saviour's public life were at the same time the period of training for the Apostles for the great work with which their Divine Master was to intrust them.

THE OFFICE OF THE APOSTLES

The office of the Apostles was, as the Gospels manifestly show, and as all Christians admit, to go forth after Christ's Ascension and teach all men the truths revealed to them. Now, in this sublime work were they to be left to the mercy of erring human nature, so that they or their successors could fall into error in their official teaching, and thus lead mankind away from God? Surely it is unthinkable that God's own Son, after redeeming mankind by His precious blood, and establishing His Church to regenerate and teach men the truths of Redemption until the end of the world, should, after His Ascension, leave that Church a prey to the errors of the world, and thus undo the very work of Redemption. On the very face of it such a supposition is absurd, and the study of the Scriptures absolutely shatters it, for they explicitly tell us that Christ endowed His Church with the gift of infallibility or perpetual freedom from the power of teaching error.

(1) "He that heareth you," said Our Lord to His Apostles, "heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me" (St. Luke x. 16). Could this be said if it were possible for them to teach error? No, for in that case those who heard the Apostles would be listening not to Christ and His doctrines of truth, but to erring men who were spreading false doctrines. These words, then, show that the teaching body instituted by Christ was gifted with infallibility.

(2) In addressing Peter, Christ also made a solemn promise regarding the Church: "I say to thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (St. Matt. xvi. 18). These emphatic words express a solemn guarantee that the Church will never be permitted by its Divine Founder to teach error; they express a promise that He will ever watch over and guide it, so that the powers of darkness and error may never prevail against or vanquish

it. Clearly, then, another promise of infallibility was given by Jesus on this occasion.

(3) The fourteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel also contains a clear guarantee on the part of Our Lord that His Church would not, after His Ascension into Heaven, fall into error, for it would be blessed with the abiding presence of the Spirit of Truth. And Our Redeemer clearly states that the Spirit of Truth was to remain with the teaching body not merely for one or two or three centuries, so that the Church would afterwards fall a prey to false doctrines and remain in that state until the glorious Martin Luther should appear in the sixteenth century to enlighten it by his infamous teaching, and his still more infamous example, but right on until the end of time—"for ever." Here are Our Lord's own words: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, that He may abide with you for ever. . . . The Comforter, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (vv. 16-26).

(4) From the fact that those who refuse to believe the teaching of Christ's Apostles and their successors are threatened with everlasting perdition, we must necessarily infer that such teaching would never be allowed to assimilate any error, but would always remain absolutely undefiled. How could God justly condemn those who refused to accept false doctrine? The same duty is imposed of assenting to the teaching of the Church as of wholeheartedly believing the words of the Redeemer Himself: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (which words refer also to the successors of the Apostles). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (St. Mark xvi. 16).

(5) Lastly, before ascending to Heaven, Jesus gave His final commission to the Apostles. He bade them go forth and teach all nations all the doctrines, without exception, that He had taught them, and at the same time He gave them an emphatic guarantee that, in their office of teaching, He would be in their midst, guarding His teachers from error, not merely for a few centuries, after which He would abandon His Church and allow it to fall into errors of every kind, but "even unto the end of the world." Could any clearer promise be given of the perpetual infallibility of the Church established by Jesus Christ? Read His words as recorded by St. Matthew: "And Jesus coming spoke to them, saying: All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo! I am with you all days, even until the end of the world" (xxviii. 20).

THE SOLEMN ASSURANCE

From all these passages of Scripture it is undeniably plain that Christ not only revealed His doctrine to the Apostles and commissioned them to go forth and preach that heavenly doctrine to the human race, but also gave them the solemn assurance that the apostolate instituted by Him as His living and perpetual teaching-body would never throughout the ages turn aside from that doctrine, but would ever proclaim it in all its fulness, without addition, diminution, change or corruption.

This gift of infallibility the Apostles most emphatically claimed. Thus they call the Holy Ghost a fellow witness of the matters they proclaim. "We are witnesses of those things, and the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to all that obey Him" (Acts v. 32). And in addressing their

disciples on the question of circumcision, they say: "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." Evidently they relied upon the unfailing promise of their Divine Master that the Holy Spirit would ever be with them to guard and guide them. St. Paul also insists upon the same claim when he writes thus: "Our exhortation was not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in deceit; but as we were approved by God that the Gospel should be committed to us, even so we speak not as pleasing men, but God, Who proveth our hearts" (Thess. ii. 3, 4). Again, he writes: "When you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it, not as the word of men, but (as it truly is) the word of God, Who worketh in you that you hath believed" (*Ibid.*, 13). So confident is he of the infallibility of the Church, that he regards it as a divine pillar and foundation of truth—"the Church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of truth" (Tim. iii. 15). Imagine an inspired writer applying such expressions to an erring society!

THE CHURCH WOULD NEVER FALL INTO ERROR

The Church, then, established by Jesus Christ, was gifted with perpetual infallibility; that is, it received the divine guarantee that it would never fall into error. The logical conclusion is that the Church of the third century taught the very same doctrines as the Church of the Apostles; the Church of the eighth century, the self-same doctrines as that of the third; the Church of the sixteenth century, absolutely the same doctrines as the Church of the eighth, the third, and the Church of the Apostles. Yet, in the sixteenth century, when the whole of Christendom was Catholic (with the exception of the Greeks, who had finally broken away in the fifteenth century, but who still believed practically every Catholic doctrine), Martin Luther, a profligate monk, stood up before the world,

and, by his own almighty authority, rejected doctrine after doctrine of the Universal Church, and secured a following in his work of destruction and dissolution. Luther's attitude was tantamount to this: "Listen to me; I am Martin Luther. The whole Church is wrong, and has been immersed in false doctrines for centuries. All are wrong—laity, priests, bishops, and Pope. I alone am right. Follow my guidance, for I alone, a monk who have found my vows too burdensome, and have rejected without compunction the solemn and irrevocable promises I made in the presence of God on the day of my religious profession, can show to mankind the way of salvation. Pull down the altar and abolish the sacrifice of the Mass; destroy all images and abrogate devotion to Mary and the saints; reject the priesthood and the Papacy; away with indulgences and the doctrine of Purgatory; discontinue confession, to which you have been so accustomed; deny the reliability of all ecclesiastical tradition. Listen to me: Take your Bible in your hands, and put your own interpretation on it (though mine, of course, is the correct one, and, under pain of being insulted by me, you must accept it)."

THE BLASPHEMY THAT MARTIN LUTHER WAS RIGHT

Now, who will dare utter the blasphemy that Martin Luther was right, and consequently that the Universal Church, which had come down through the centuries, teaching, in obedience to the unfailing promises of her Divine Founder, the very doctrines revealed to the Apostles, was wrong? To say that the doctrines of the Mass, the Priesthood, the Papacy, Purgatory, Indulgences, Confession, Devotion to Mary, etc., are false doctrines, which had crept into the Church and remained in it for centuries until Luther appeared to extirpate them, is certainly nothing short of emphatically stating that Christ repudiated

His most solemn and repeated promises made to the Apostles, and that the Church instituted by Him, and paid for by the price of His Precious Blood, failed most miserably. It is, therefore, equivalent to saying that "the gates of Hell have prevailed against the Church"; that "he who heard the Apostles and their successors did not hear Christ"; that "the Spirit of Truth has not remained with the teachers of the Church for ever"; that "Christ has not been with the teaching-body of His Church all days"; that "the Church is not the pillar and the ground of truth," etc.

No, we cannot assent to such blasphemy if we are Christians; if we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, or even a divine ambassador; if we believe in the inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures, or even admit—what no reasonable person can deny—that the Gospels are genuine historical documents. The doctrine of the Catholic Church, then, in the sixteenth century was as pure as when that Church came forth fresh and unsullied from the Heart of God Incarnate; and the teaching of the Catholic Church of to-day is absolutely identical with her teaching in the sixteenth century and in the age of the Apostles. She will live on until the end of time, ever guarded by her Divine Founder; ever blessed with the guiding presence of the Spirit of Truth; ever triumphing over error; ever shining before the world as a divine institution, as the one true Church, the Church of Jesus Christ, unchanged and unchangeable, unconquered and unconquerable. Substituting the indicative mood for Lord Macaulay's subjunctive, we may say, "She will still exist in undiminished vigor when some traveler from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's."

III.—THE NOTES OR TRAITS WHICH CLEARLY CHARACTERIZE THE CHURCH AS A DIVINE INSTITUTION

OUR second argument to prove that the Catholic Church is divine may be thus stated: When Christ instituted the Church He adorned it with certain notes or traits which clearly characterize it as a divine institution. Amongst these characteristics the chief are unity, holiness, Catholicity and apostolicity, to which the Fathers who assembled at Nice in the year 381 so distinctly refer in the profession of faith which they drew up: "We believe. . . . one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church." When we attentively read the prophecies regarding the Church of God, when we carefully read the Gospels, when we exercise our reason as to the nature of a Church divinely instituted to apply to a fallen race the saving truths and graces of Redemption, we easily see that the true Church must be endowed with these four properties.

Now, only the Church of Rome blends in her constitution those divine characteristics, and therefore she is the one, true Church. Other churches may enjoy to some extent one or other of those qualities, but not one of them combines the four together, nor possesses even one in its fulness.

(1) The Church of Rome (I use this title at present because I have presently to demonstrate its claim to Catholicity) alone enjoys true unity. It is a sheer impossibility to have unity in a church which is not only not infallible, but does not even lay claim to infallibility. Hence, on their own supposition that they are quite liable to err, the various non-Catholic denominations must say good-bye to unity. Just put into practice the glorious privilege of private judgment. Thomas takes one meaning out of an important text of Scripture, William another, and

Richard quite another, and each clings tenaciously to his respective doctrine. How can they decide which of the three is right? It is impossible, so each goes on in his own sweet way. "*Tot sententiæ quot capita*" ("As many opinions as persons"), should be the logical motto of Protestantism. Even in the Anglican Church, with its recognized Book of Common Prayer, there is hopeless division. There is the High Church, the Broad Church, the Low Church, etc. They even boast of their "comprehensiveness." Their own ministers cannot agree on vital doctrines and practices, and have no effectual means of settling their differences. Witness the controversy between the Fundamentalists and the Modernists.

A MARVELOUS UNITY

But in the Church of Rome a marvelous unity of doctrine, government and worship flourishes with perennial vigor. Wherever the Church defines, discussion ceases. The words of the great intellect of Hippo, "Rome has spoken, the cause is ended," have become an axiom. In whatever matter the Church has lifted her infallible voice, from the days when the Bishops assembled at Nicæa in the twilight of the ages long gone by, until recent years when their successors assembled in the Vatican Council, all the members of the Church, irrespective of nationality, of interests, of ability, have bowed in whole-hearted submission to her teaching. In hundreds and hundreds of matters she has laid down irrevocable decisions, and each definition is accepted by her children as the very voice of God. Even in less important matters, when she leaves her children free to discuss, their eyes are ever turned towards their unerring mother to follow her guidance loyally should she see fit to intervene. On any matter of dogma there is no room in the Church of Rome for two opinions. Go to a Catholic school child in Japan, to a

feeble old woman in Ireland, to a Catholic Bishop in America, to a Catholic philosopher in France, to a Cardinal in Rome, to a priest in Australia, to a Catholic young man in India, and then to the Pope himself, and ask: "Should we pray for the dead?" "Is the Eucharist a sacrifice?" "Ought we to honor Mary and pray to her?" "How are we to get our sins forgiven?" "Is Baptism necessary for salvation?" "What is the Blessed Sacrament?" "Who is the visible head of the Church?" etc., and you will invariably receive the same answer. Oh, there is true unity—hundreds of millions of men, women and children, differing in language, in nationality, in political interests, all uniting in believing and professing the same doctrines, in offering to God the same spotless sacrifice, and in giving whole-hearted allegiance to the same divinely appointed ruler, the Bishop of Rome. Even if we had no knowledge of the Scriptures or history, this striking unity alone would convince us of the divinity of our Church, for such unity is, as the learned Balme says, a supernatural phenomenon.

(2) The Church of Rome is endowed with holiness in a far more eminent degree than any other denomination. We do not claim that all the members of our Church are saints or that all live up to the ordinary standard set before them, nor do we deny that, outside the Church, a certain number of holy persons are found, for fortunately the various Protestant churches have retained some Catholic doctrine and some Catholic practices, by means of which those who are in good faith are sanctified. What we mean when we say that the Church of Rome is endowed with far greater holiness than any other church, is that it furnishes its members with far more effective means of acquiring holiness, and actually produces far greater fruits of holiness. Its doctrines and moral code are the purest and sublimest the world has ever known;

in fact, it is sometimes urged against us that our rule of faith is too high and too exacting; that the divine law as propounded by us, especially in regard to marriage, divorce, purity, justice, charity, self-sacrifice, etc., is too rigid, and is almost impossible of observance; that our ecclesiastical precepts, particularly those regarding fast and abstinence, attendance at Mass, reception of the Sacraments, the celibacy of the clergy, etc., are so severe as to be almost unbearable. Such teaching regarding faith and morals, we reply, is the glory of our Church, for it manifestly characterizes her as the very Spouse of Incarnate Purity and Holiness.

As to the fruits of holiness produced by the Church of Rome, we might distribute half of them amongst the other Churches, and even then, with that increase given to their own fruits, not one of them could show an amount equal to what we would still retain. Space does not permit us to outline the wondrous manifestations of sanctity that have shone forth in the lives of the countless children of the true Church; the inquiring reader may enter any Catholic bookshop and glance through the different "Lives of the Saints." Then consider the resplendent works and institutions that have blossomed, and still blossom, as unfading flowers of holiness in the garden of the Church, under the fostering care of the Spirit of God— orphanages, hospitals, homes, schools, etc., which are maintained, not with Government aid, but by the supernatural spirit of self-sacrifice on the part of the faithful, and are attended to by men and women, who, without any earthly remuneration or inducement, have immolated themselves as victims of love on the altar of the Heart of Jesus.

THE HOLINESS OF ROME AND OTHER DENOMINATIONS

I would point to one fact, especially, which strongly

contrasts the holiness of the Church of Rome with that of other denominations—*viz.*, the work of evangelizing the pagan nations. What did Protestantism do during the three centuries which followed the so-called Reformation to further this work? In recent times they have, indeed, taken up this work; but their labors and fruits compare most unfavorably with those of Catholic missionaries. Down through the centuries the Church of Rome has uninterruptedly carried on the Christlike work of evangelizing the heathens. Macaulay, who was certainly not biased in favor of the Church, has, like many another Protestant writer, given testimony to this fact. "The Papacy," he writes, "remains, not in decay, not a mere antique, but full of life and youthful vigor. The Catholic Church is still sending forth to the furthest ends of the world missionaries as zealous as those who landed in Kent with Augustine, and still confronting hostile kings with the same spirit with which she confronted Attila. The number of her children is greater than in any former age. Her acquisitions in the New World have more than compensated for what she lost in the Old. Her spiritual ascendancy extends over the vast countries which lie between the plains of the Missouri and Cape Horn, countries which, a century hence, may not improbably contain a population as large as that which now inhabits Europe." But Protestantism, after three centuries of lethargy, began the work of Christianizing the infidels; yet, although it is greatly assisted by natural resources (it is estimated that the Protestant missions receive over eight times as much money as the Catholics), they convert fewer pagans, and, as Canon Taylor admits, also fail to raise them to so high a level of Christian life. Another Protestant writer, Cust, holds up the Catholic missionary spirit as the exemplar: "A life service, a whole-hearted service, a self-sacrificing service is required. The Church of Rome has

for three centuries exhibited this amount of self-sacrifice.”

(3) We come now to the question of Catholicity. The other denominations profess, in reciting the Apostles' Creed, that they believe the “Holy Catholic Church,” and so convinced are certain denominations that the true Church must be Catholic, that they object to the word “Protestant” and desire to be called “Catholic.” But names do not change realities. If a Church is to be called Catholic, it must naturally be Catholic. Let the various sects call themselves as they will; let them apply to our Holy Church what name they will, the stern fact remains that the Church of Rome alone can rightly claim the title, “Catholic.” In fact, many Protestants seem content to designate our Church by that name.

WHAT DOES CATHOLIC MEAN?

What does “catholic” mean? It simply means “universal,” “belonging to every nation,” “international” or “supernational,” etc. A church, then, which is a purely national organization governed by a temporal sovereign of some particular nation, or a church whose membership is practically restricted to one nation or people or language, cannot claim to be catholic without becoming guilty of a most glaring contradiction. Thus, on the most elementary principles of logic, we must disqualify the Anglican Church, the head of which is the Sovereign of England, a church which is confined chiefly to the English-speaking peoples; the Methodist Church, which is in great part also restricted to English-speaking countries; the Presbyterian Church, which exists chiefly in Scotland and amongst people of Scottish descent; the Lutheran Church, which finds scarcely any adherents outside Germany and people of German extraction; and so on until we have exhausted the whole catalogue of Protestant denominations, as well as excluded the Greek Church.

But when we turn to the Church in communion with the See of Rome, we behold true Catholicity. The members of that Church, as Protestants are forced to admit, outnumber not only those of any particular denomination, but even the members of all the Protestant denominations combined, and probably those of the Protestant and Greek churches combined. In the Church of Rome we see a glorious catholicity; there we see over three hundred million Christians of every nationality—English and Germans, French and Austrians, Italians, Spaniards, Americans, Hindoos, Japanese, Arabs, Portuguese, Australians, Danes, Syrians, Scottish, Irish, Swiss, Papuans, etc.—all uniting in believing and professing the same religion and in manifesting unswerving loyalty to the Bishop of Rome. Truly, there, and there alone, we discern the divine mark of the true Church, catholicity.

(4) The fourth mark of the true Church is apostolicity. From what I have already said when treating of the foundation of Christ's Church, it is evident that the Catholic Church alone is apostolic. How can any denomination founded by mere men lay claim to that gift? The Catholic Church alone, dating back, not to Martin Luther, or Henry VIII., or Calvin, or John Knox, or John Wesley, who lived in comparatively recent times, but to our Divine Lord Himself, Who founded it on the Apostles, as I have already shown, can make the proud boast that she is the Apostolic Church. And we can point to the long, unbroken line of Roman Pontiffs, from Peter to our present Pontiff, gloriously reigning, Pius XI., thus showing the truly apostolic succession of the Catholic Church, which is also apostolic, as I have already shown in the second chapter, in the doctrines she teaches.

Thus it is as clear as the light of day that the Church of Rome alone is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Therefore, she is the one, true Church.

IV.—THE MARVELOUS STABILITY OF THE CHURCH

ONE of the most striking characteristics of the Catholic Church is her marvelous stability. This trait might be included in the notes of the Church, of which I treated in the last chapter, but I have preferred to consider it as a distinct proof of the divine institution of the Church. The argument comes to this: No merely human institution can, in spite of the severest persecutions of every kind, continued with unabated fury for ages, remain intact, unchanged and perennially vigorous, when it is absolutely void of earthly power and means of resistance, unless such an institution comes from God. When the Jewish Council were holding the trial of the Apostles, Gamaliel expressed this self-evident truth. "And now, therefore, I say to you, refrain from these men and let them alone; for if this council or this work be of men it will come to nought; but if it be of God you cannot overthrow it" (Acts v. 34). Now the Catholic Church has, during nineteen centuries, been attacked and persecuted in every possible manner, yet she still stands before the world with a smile upon her heavenly face—the smile of triumphant defiance.

Was ever any institution attacked as the Catholic Church has been throughout the ages, and is still in an age that boasts of enlightenment? Physical force in the cruelest and most powerful degree has been used by earthly tyrants to extinguish the light and life of the Church, but the blood of martyrs has but served to fertilize the Kingdom of Christ. "*Semen Christianorum sanguis martyrum*" ("The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians") has become a proverb in the Church. Intellectual arguments, or rather sophistries, of every description have been employed against her by proud philosophers and conceited writers, but her children have ever dispelled

such reasoning as the sun dispels a mist. Slanderers have raised their voices against the Bride of Christ; they have sadly distorted her most cherished doctrines and most sacred practices; they have reviled the Mass and the confessional; they have striven to drag the virginal veil of the cloister and the resplendent robe of the priesthood into the mire in which they themselves grovel; unprincipled writers have spread abroad the basest calumnies against her; but still the Spouse of Christ stands forth in all her pristine purity and splendor. Governments have refused to recognize her God-given rights, have trampled upon her dearest privileges, have enacted the most iniquitous laws against her; and yet the Church continues to flourish with amazing vigor.

THE CHURCH THE DESPAIR OF HER ENEMIES

Protestants themselves seem to despair of the possible overthrow of the Church. Allow me to quote Macaulay again. "We often hear it said," he writes, "that the world is constantly becoming more and more enlightened, and that this enlightening must be favorable to Protestantism and unfavorable to Catholicism. We wish that we could think so. But we see great reason to doubt whether this be a well-founded expectation." "She saw," he again says, "the commencement of all the governments and of all the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all." "Four times," he continues, "since the authority of the Church of Rome was established in Western Christendom has the human intellect risen up against her yoke. Twice that Church remained completely victorious. Twice she came forth from the conflict bearing the marks of cruel wounds, but with the principle of life still strong within her. When we reflect on the tremendous assaults which she has survived,

we find it difficult to conceive in what way she is to perish." Speaking of false prophets who are constantly foretelling the death of the Church or declaring that she is already actually dead, Monsignor Benson, himself a convert from Protestantism, says: "Yet it is remarkable that these philosophers do not seem to reflect that the dirge has been sung over the Church of Rome not less than ten or twelve times already, in almost universal chorus, in the history of the past, and that every single time it has somehow died away—that the same things have been said again and again and again, and that each time all predictions have been completely falsified. Nero said it; Arius said it; Henry VIII. said it; Voltaire said it; and now Viviani, Mr. McCabe and Mr. Fawkes take up the chant with undiminished confidence. And yet, somehow or another, the body lives. Oh! I acknowledged that it ought to have died; that it is clean against all precedent and all experience."

On this matter Cardinal Newman wrote thus on the eve of his reception into the true Church: "It is true, there have been seasons when, from the operation of external or internal causes, the Church has been thrown into what was almost a state of deliquium; but her wonderful revivals, while the world was triumphing over her, is a further evidence of the absence of corruption in the system of doctrine and worship into which she has developed. If corruption be an incipient disorganization, surely an abrupt and absolute recurrence to the former state of vigor, after an interval, is even less conceivable than a corruption that is permanent. Now this is the case with the revivals I speak of. After violent exertion men are exhausted and fall asleep; they awake the same as before, refreshed by the temporary cessation of their activity; and such has been the slumber and such the restoration of the Church. She pauses in her course, and almost suspends her func-

tions; she rises again, and she is herself once more; all things are in their place and ready for action. Doctrine is where it was, and usage, and procedure, and principle, and policy; there may be changes, but they are consolidations or adaptations; all is unequivocal and determinate, with an identity there is no disputing. Indeed, it is one of the most popular charges against the Catholic Church at this very time, that she is 'incurable'—change she cannot, if we listen to St. Athanasius or St. Leo; change she never will, if we believe the controversialist or alarmist of the present day."

The Catholic Church has, despite the unceasing persecutions of nineteen centuries, lived on unchanged and unchangeable; she will likewise live on until the end of the world, no matter through what persecutions she may yet have to pass.

A FAMOUS CARTOON.

I have heard of a famous cartoon that appeared in a certain leading paper during the time Bismarck was persecuting the Church. A puny man was represented in the cartoon, standing beside a rock-built tower, round which he had fastened a piece of rope. The tower represented the Catholic Church, and the puny man Bismarck. Bismarck's friend, the devil, had just come on the scene, and is shown in the cartoon. The following conversation then takes place: "What are you doing, Bismarck?" asks the devil. "I'm trying to pull down the Catholic Church," replies the ally of Satan. "Give it up, my friend!" answers the Prince of Darkness; "I've been trying in vain for over eighteen hundred years."

In speaking of the persecutions of the Church, I might have mentioned that the very fact that the Church is so persecuted is a mark of her divine character. "If the world hate you," said our Divine Lord to His Apostles

after the Last Supper, "know ye that it hated Me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember My word that I said to you: The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me they will persecute you."

As long as the world lasts, the Church will be persecuted in every manner. She will be slandered, reviled, misrepresented, assaulted, ostracized and hated; but such persecutions, far from lessening her vitality, will only cause her divine origin to shine forth with greater clearness and more radiant glory. There is a beautiful passage, in Newman's *Development of Christian Doctrine*, regarding this matter. As it is a classical passage, and would be weakened or spoiled if curtailed, the reader will pardon me for quoting it at length. "On the whole, then," writes Newman, "I conclude as follows. If there is a form of Christianity now in the world which is accused of gross superstition, of borrowing its rites and customs from the heathen, and of ascribing to forms and ceremonies an occult virtue; a religion which is considered to burden and enslave the mind by its requisitions, to address itself to the weak-minded and ignorant, to be supported by sophistry and imposture, and to contradict reason and exalt mere irrational faith; a religion which impresses on the serious mind very distressing views of the guilt and consequences of sin, sets upon the minute acts of the day, one by one, their definite value for praise or blame, and thus casts a grave shadow over the future; a religion which holds up to admiration the surrender of wealth, and disables serious persons from enjoying it if they would; a religion the doctrines of which, be they good or bad, are to the generality of men unknown; which is considered to bear on its very surface signs of folly

and falsehood so distinct that a glance suffices to judge of it, and that careful examination is preposterous; which is felt to be so simply bad that it may be calumniated at hazard and at pleasure, it being nothing but absurdity to stand upon the accurate distribution of its guilt among its particular acts, or painfully to determine how far this or that story concerning it is literally true, or what has to be allowed in candor, or what is improbable, or what cuts two ways, or what is not proved, or what may be plausibly defended; a religion such that men look at a convert to it with a feeling which no other denomination raises except Judaism, Socialism or Mormonism, *viz.*, with curiosity, suspicion, fear, disgust, as the case may be, as if something strange had befallen him, as if he had had an initiation into a mystery, and had come into communion with dreadful influences, as if he were now one of a confederacy which claimed him, absorbed him, stripped him of his personality, reduced him to a mere organ or instrument of a whole; a religion which men hate as proselytizing, anti-social, revolutionary, as dividing families, separating chief friends, corrupting the maxims of government, making a mock at law, dissolving the empire, the enemy of human nature, and a 'conspirator against its rights and privileges'; a religion which they consider the champion and instrument of darkness, and a pollution calling down upon the land the anger of Heaven; a religion which they associate with intrigue and conspiracy, which they speak about in whispers, which they detect by anticipation in whatever goes wrong; a religion the very name of which they cast out as evil, and use simply as a bad epithet, and which from the impulse of self-preservation they would persecute if they could—if there were such a religion now in the world, it is not unlike Christianity as that same world viewed it, when it first came forth from its Divine Author."

So far I have given three chief arguments to show that the Catholic Church is the only true Church; (1) All the other churches were founded by men, whereas the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ and has come down through the ages unchanged and unchangeable; (2) the Church of Rome alone bears upon her brow those four glorious traits of divine institution—unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity; and (3) the Catholic Church has, throughout the bitterest persecutions which have been unceasingly directed against her, manifested an unconquerable stability which most clearly points to divine guidance, divine protection and divine intervention.

THE TRUTH OF THE PAPACY

A fourth argument is derived from the truth of the Papacy. The Scriptures show that Christ appointed Peter head of the Church, with full jurisdiction over all its members, and willed that headship to continue for ever in the Church. History clearly tells us that the successor of Peter in the office of Supreme Ruler of the Church of God is the Bishop of Rome. Therefore the Church which is in communion with the Roman Pontiff is the true Church. I shall not, however, develop this argument at present, as the Papacy is really the subject of a special treatise.

Lastly, I wish to give a very strong argument of fact. Have you ever known a Catholic to drift away from the Church and attend some other place of worship? Probably you have. Have you ever known a member of another denomination to enter the Catholic Church? Such cases must have come under your notice, as conversions to the Church are quite frequent. Now, just contrast those who drift away from the Church with those who enter it, and you will see that the former are invariably led by earthly,

sometimes base, motives to barter away the supernatural birthright they acquired by Baptism, whereas the latter are practically always actuated by genuine supernatural motives. In fact, very many converts have made heroic sacrifices in embracing the true faith. T. W. Allies, though an illustrious Anglican minister, left his calling, quitted his dearest friends, broke off his sweetest associations, and entered the Catholic Church to labor as a layman (for he was married and therefore could not become a priest) in the lowly trade of a carpenter. John Henry Newman, the greatest intellect the Anglican Church has ever had, snapped asunder the tenderest friendships and left the Church which smiled upon him with the greatest affection and admiration, to enter into a region whither the "Kindly Light" had led him, though the inhabitants of that new region were absolute strangers to him. Robert Hugh Benson, the son of the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, after a distinguished career in the Church of his father, while the members of his Church idolized him, left all to follow the "Call of the Eternal King." It was not sentiment; it was not desire of honor; it was not love of wealth; no, it was no earthly motive, but sheer conviction that led him into the Church of Rome. He tells us in his beautiful work, *The Confessions of a Convert*, how little a part emotion played in his reception into the Church. There was no pleasure, no sentiment, no emotion, but simply downright conviction and whole-hearted following of conscience. "I do not suppose," he writes, "that anyone ever entered the City of God with less emotion than mine. It seemed to me that I was utterly without feeling; I had neither joy nor sorrow, nor dread nor excitement. There was Truth, as aloof as an ice-peak, and I had to embrace it. Never, for one single instant, did I doubt that, nor, perhaps it is unnecessary to say, have I ever doubted it since. I tried to reproach myself

with my coldness, but all fell quite flat. I was as one coming out of the glare of artificial light, out of warmth and brightness and friendliness, into a pale daylight of cold and dreary certainty."

We may contrast not only the motives of those who leave the Church and those who enter it, but also their subsequent lives. Our converts are amongst the glories of the Church; they glisten in her crown as precious jewels; they are as choice trophies which she prizes as some of the richest fruits her ministry has gathered in. Often, indeed, our converts surpass in piety and holiness those who have been Catholics all their lives. Those converts, especially, which Rome has gained from the Anglican Church since the beginning of the Oxford movement, have added wondrously to the Church's glory. They were the pride of their own Church, on which they shed a supernal lustre by their upright conduct, their holiness of life, their spirit of religion, and their ardent zeal. In their lives no one could point to the slightest blemish of character. And these men of keen intellect and saintly piety came with the simplicity and humility of children to the grand old Mother-Church, looked up with faith and trust and love into her tender eyes, and asked her to take them as her own. Then she stooped to them, kissed them, and took them into her arms, while they, in turn, laid their laurels of learning upon her queenly brow. The very names of those distinguished converts send a thrill of delight and admiration through our hearts—Cardinal Newman, Cardinal Manning, Father Faber, Father Dalgairns, William George Ward, T. W. Allies, Monsignor R. H. Benson, etc.

THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO DRIFT

But when we consider the lives of those who drift away from the true Church, we can only pity the denominations that have been so unfortunate as to have welcomed them. No wonder Dean Swift exclaimed in despair: "I wish that, when the Pope weeded his garden, he would not throw his weeds into the Church of England."

To make this argument of fact more forcible, let me ask two simple questions: (1) Have you ever known a Catholic, on his or her deathbed, to send for a Protestant minister in order to be received into a Protestant denomination? (2) Have you ever known a Protestant, on his or her deathbed, to send for a priest in order to be received into the Catholic Church? A decided negative will be given to the former query, while an emphatic affirmative will be given to the latter. This fact alone shows where the truth lies, for, when men are face to face with eternal judgment, then, surely, they act from pure, supernatural motives.

My task is now completed. I have undertaken to prove that there can be but one true Church, and that this Church is the Catholic Church. I have striven to set forth the chief arguments which occurred to me, with the greatest possible fairness, avoiding any subtlety or sophism. Should this booklet fall under the notice of a Protestant reader, I ask him to read it carefully, without bitterness or prejudice, and to consider it well in the presence of God, praying that the "Kindly Light may lead him on, o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone." And, if he becomes convinced that the Catholic Church is the one, true Church (as she really is), then let him shrink from no sacrifice in order to embrace the faith of Christ. Let him remember especially the words of our Divine Lord: "The kingdom of heaven is like a

merchant seeking good pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it."

To one who is resisting God's call, no more appropriate words could be addressed than that sublime appeal which burst forth from the heart of John Henry Newman when his long reasoning had at last brought him to the threshold of the Catholic Church, and he was about to take the irrevocable step: "Such were the thoughts concerning the 'Blessed Vision of Peace,' of one whose long-continued petition had been that the Most Merciful would not despise the work of His own Hands, nor leave him to himself; while yet his eyes were dim, and his breast laden, and he could but employ Reason in the things of Faith. And now, dear reader, time is short, eternity is long. Put not from you what you have here found; regard it not as mere matter of present controversy; set not out to refute it, and looking about for the best way of doing so; seduce not yourself with the imagination that it comes of disappointment, or disgust, or restlessness, or wounded feeling, or undue sensibility, or other weakness. Wrap not yourself round in the associations of years past; nor determine that to be truth which you wish to be so, nor make an idol of cherished anticipations. Time is short, eternity is long."

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