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of  
FAITH

by

Francis P. Le Buffe, S.J.

*THE QUEEN'S WORK*

3742 West Pine Boulevard  
ST. LOUIS, MO.



# THE COMMON SENSE OF FAITH

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# The Common Sense of Faith\*

## Is There a God?

“SIR, I do not see why there must be a God,” said a young Jew to me as we sat in the law-school office years ago. “You said in class that back of all law there must ultimately be the Natural Law, and back of that, God. That I don’t see.”

“Well, sit down, Jack, and let’s talk it out. Why don’t you see it? What’s your reason?”

“Here it is, sir. I belong to a club of young Jewish boys. There are eleven of us. We are seeking the truth and will follow it wherever it leads us. Now, recently Professor N—— lectured to us and he explained the whole thing without God.”

“He did? Let’s hear it.”

“Well, he said that the whole universe started with matter and motion, and, as a result of the motion, matter has taken on all the forms that we see. That’s all there is to it.”

“Well, Jack, did that satisfy you boys?”

“Why, yes.”

“All of you?”

“Sure. What’s wrong?”

“And none of you thought to ask a question?”

“Why should we?”

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“Well, Jack, where did the matter and the motion come from?”

If Jack had been struck with a brick, he could not have shown greater astonishment. He was literally “hit between the eyes.”

“Jack, should that question be answered?”

“Certainly. And I know the answer you want.”

“No, Jack. I don’t want an answer. I’ve had it for years. *You* want it; and just let me tell you and your friends that you all let Professor N—— put blinders on the eyes of your minds, and you saw no farther than he let you. All I ask you boys to do is *think*.”

Blinders on the mind! That is the root of much of the practical atheism of today. In our schools, in our newspapers, in our magazines, near-thinkers of the type of Harry Elmer Barnes and H. G. Wells express pontifically whatever solution appeals to them at the moment. They throw out, with proper professional dignity, now this half-baked solution, now that; and unskilled minds stop thinking when Barnes and Wells say their little say. If they cannot find a thing in a test tube, or weigh and measure it, Barnes, Wells & Co. say it does not exist, and then the thousand hangers-on catch up the cry.

But I cannot *think* and stop short of God. I simply cannot get a reason, an ultimately satisfying reason, for even a speck of sand unless I get back to God. We all chuckle at Topsy (in “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”) when she says that she “just happened.” Small

as she was and black as she was, Topsy could not have "just happened."

Go back over a thousand years; go back over a million years; go back over a billion years (if time has lasted that long); you are no nearer a solution than you were when you started back from the present, unless God stands at the beginning of those billion years. Rather, the farther back you put the beginning of the universe, the more you have on your hands to explain. A ninety-year-old great-grandfather with thirty descendants needed parents ninety years ago certainly just as much as a tiny youngster needed parents a year ago.

We and everything around us in the universe are *dependent* beings. Each of us was brought into existence by another. Moreover each living thing depends here and now on many a thing outside of itself for existence: air, light, food, etc. No one thing in all the universe brought itself unaidedly into existence, and no one thing in all the universe can unaidedly continue its own existence. In the root sense of the word we all *de-pend*, i. e., *hang from* others. Number 1 came from 2, and 2 from 3, and 3 from 4, and so on back, and back, and back. Will anyone tell me that if I just keep on going back and back and back that is a sufficient explanation of how we all came into being? In answer to one's question how to get to a place, people in certain parts of the country will answer, "Go down the road a spell and then a piece." Now, if after we had gone "a spell and then a piece" every man we met were to give us the same advice—well, I suppose we

would turn around and go back home, wouldn't we? Yet men who deny the existence of God tell us just to keep on going over the road "a spell and then a piece" and to keep on going. Sensible, isn't it?

Suppose I pointed out to you a hanging chain and you asked me from what it was hanging. "Why, link 1 hangs from link 2, and 2 from 3, and 3 from 4, you see." "Yes, but from what does the whole chain hang?" If I replied, "Why, the chain is infinitely long, that's all," would not your answer come quickly, "If it is infinitely long, there must be a mighty big peg for it to hang from. Else you'd better get out from under."

Yes, lengthen the chain of beings back through time and out through space all you want to; the more you lengthen it and the more you broaden it, the more need you have of God from whom it is all derived. A man cannot pull himself up by his own bootstraps; much less can anything pull itself into existence by bootstraps that do not exist.

This is an old, old proof for God's existence. But just because it is old, the modern near-thinkers say it is no longer any good. They tell us that it was first formulated when men thought the universe a much, much simpler thing than it is, but that now, since we know the universe to be immensely more complicated, the proof no longer holds. With his usual uninformed flippancy Barnes wrote (Forum, April, 1929):

"In our age, in which the cosmos is conceived by scientists in terms of billions of light years, there is no place other than

historical, for a deity who was invented at a time when this earth was looked upon as a small bit of flat turf around the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea and the heavens were regarded as an inverted bowl, studded with luminaries, a few miles from the earth."

Splendidly logical, is it not? I hand you a watch. You think it is an Ingersoll and ask, "Who made it?" But you look again and find that it is one of the finest time-pieces you have ever seen. Are you going to withdraw your question as a foolish one? Will you judge that *just because* the watch is so intricate it needed no maker? Yet that is precisely what the modern near-thinker does when he discards the old, old proofs for God's existence, *just because* he finds the universe so marvelously intricate and so tremendously big in time and space.

Men thought the world was flat and the heavens near, and they concluded that there must be God. But even the near-thinkers ought to see that they did not conclude to the need of God because the earth was *flat* and the heavens *near*, but because, flat or round, near or far, neither the earth nor the heavens could account for themselves.

Big or little, young or old, simple or intricate—it makes very little difference—the universe and all within are *dependent* (i. e., hanging) beings. And sound common sense says a hanging thing must hang from something.

Even though his mind had been warped by the false reasoning of his teachers,

Jack saw this at once when the right question jolted him into thinking. Back of all these changing things there must be a Changeless One; back of all these limited things there must be an Unlimited One; back of all the "hanging," dependent things there must be One who exists by the very necessity of His nature — uncaused, self-sufficient. If the chain is hanging, it must hang from a peg. And for all "hanging" creation that peg is God.

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## What Is God?

"**Y**ES, you know, I do so love to go out into the great wide spaces and there find God." Thus averred the would-be intellectualist as she flicked the ashes from her cigarette. "Cramped within the four walls of a church, hemmed in by the ignorant on all sides, how can one contact the Infinite that way?"

Somehow, as we sat there in the great salon, which was blatant with all the garnishments of wealth, this "contacting the Infinite" struck me a bit awry and snapped me into active but, I hope, concealed hostility.

"Yes, you know, to be high up on the mountains at break of day and see the sun push its myriad fingers through the banks of clouds grips one's being into the sense of God's manifold laying-on-of-hands upon all about it. Or to be up betimes on shipboard and to see, as Kipling says, the sun 'come up like thunder,' makes me feel (shall I say?) the 'thrust' of the Infinite upon me."

Then I really became suspicious. "My dear lady, may I ask? What is your idea of God?"

"God? Why, God is a sense of the beautiful, the incarnation of all loveliness, the all-pervading joyfulness of life and rhythm. You and I and everything, if we are true and beautiful in our way of living, are at one with God—we are part of Him."

"And you worship this God? And you pray to Him? And you try to serve Him?"

Another flick of the cigarette and a deprecating wave of the bejeweled hand. "Oh, no! Nothing as old-fashioned as that. I just contact God. I put my being in harmonious vibration with beauty and stand overwhelmed with universal loveliness."

"But, my dear madam, God is not, then, a real being for you. He is not a person. He is just some vague thing: now the sunset; now the bewildering reaches of interstellar space; now the music of the spheres; now the—"

Luckily for her, and far luckier for me, the master of ceremonies beckoned us and the other guests into the great hall and we "contacted" no more.

A strange interview and stranger views? No, not very. Such large, loose views are quite prevalent today. Einstein gets screaming headlines in the magazine section of a sedate paper such as the New York Times with his "cosmic religious sense" and delivers himself of this vagueness (reprinted in "Cosmic Religion."):

"The individual feels the vanity of human desires and aims and the nobility and marvelous order which are revealed in nature

and in the world of thought. He feels the individual destiny as an imprisonment and seeks to experience the totality of existence as a unity full of significance." (P. 48.)

"The basis of all scientific work is the conviction that the world is an ordered and comprehensive entity, which is a religious sentiment. My religious feeling is a humble amazement at the order revealed in the small patch of reality to which our feeble intelligence is equal." (P. 98.)

There you have it. Standing on this small planet the earth, and at this moment of time called "now," I look out into space, "where the wheeling systems darken and our benumbed conceiving soars," and I gaze back through time and forward through unending years—and I feel very small and very much "benumbed"; and that Space-Time Bigness which makes me feel small and numb is God!

Again, Professor E. G. Conklin of Princeton University writes ("The Direction of Human Evolution," p. 180):

"Hence God, the spirit of truth and beauty and goodness, becomes the 'Good Man,' the general spirit of evil becomes the 'Bad Man,' heaven becomes the Celestial City with streets of gold and gates of pearl, etc. To insist that these and many other religious symbols, metaphors and allegories shall be accepted by mature minds as real, material entities rather than as symbols is like requiring grown-up people to 'believe in Santa Claus' as a real, physical personality rather than a symbol of the spirit of Christians, the spirit of good-will and service and love."



And so on through the writings of many present-day scientists we find "God." Yes, but he is a vague, impersonal being more or less identified with the world. The lady with whom I began the discussion was not unique in her views after all!

But is that God? Certainly not. God is someone real, a personal God, a being endowed with intellect and will. By that we mean one who understands and who has power to act or not to act. That is of the essence of personality.

And how do we prove that God is a person? There are many ways of proving this, but the easiest proof is found just by looking about us in the world. What do we see? If we see any one thing, it is order, which is the correct arrangement of many things towards a definite end or purpose.

Now, common sense tells us that a proper arrangement of things and a set sequence of events imply intelligence. If I walk into a room and find all the coats and hats and garments hanging up properly, and all the books standing in a row or in neat piles, and all the furniture correctly in place, I conclude at once that an orderly person lives there. There must be intelligence back of it all. Not so if everything is heaped in a corner.

Or I go out into a garden and there I find the plants laid out in intricate designs of form and color. No one will ever persuade me that each seed just happened to fall in this particular spot.

And shall I lose my common sense only when I look out upon the great, wide uni-

verse? Einstein writes ("Cosmic Religion," p. 102):

"I see a pattern. But my imagination cannot picture the maker of that pattern. I see the clock. But I cannot envisage the clockmaker."

What reasoning! Certainly my *imagination* may not be able *correctly* to conjure up the patternmaker or the clockmaker, six feet tall, with bald head, blue eyes, aquiline nose bestrided by pince-nez. But *reason* tells me that the pattern and the clock were made by intelligent beings, i. e., by persons; reason tells me there *was* a patternmaker and a clockmaker, and that the more intricate the pattern and the clock, the more intelligent the makers.

Again, if things could be otherwise every time they happen, and yet they do happen in a regular sequence, reason teaches me to look for a cause behind this constancy. If I am playing bunco and my companion throws triple sixes every time, I know the dice are loaded. "There's a reason."

Now, to repeat; in the great universe the most striking thing is its *order*. So much so that the old Greeks called the universe *cosmos*—the *orderly* thing. Order, as we said before, is the correct arrangement of many things towards a definite end or purpose, and there is in all about us an arrangement that fits in with the needs of things, and there is a set sequence of events in the universe.

The trees need sunlight, and there is the sun. They need soil bearing definite chemicals, and there is the soil. The animals need food, and there is food. They need water,

and there is the rain, and beyond and above, there is the sun to draw the water up from the ocean, thereafter to fall as rain. The eye needs light to see, and there is light.

Or are we to say that the eye "just happens" to be as it is, and that it "just happens" to need light, and that the light "just happens" to be where it is needed? Yet men do say that the eye was not made for seeing; it just happens to see. Does a watch "just happen" to keep time? Does a Rolls-Royce "just happen" to be able to move around? Does an aeroplane "just happen" to stay aloft?

The universe is a *cosmos*—an orderly and ordered thing. Einstein sees this and it makes him have "a religious sentiment." No, the great mathematician is wrong, for it is not a *religious* sentiment that arises within him, but as he rightly defines it, "a humble amazement." That is not religious sentiment. If I have any sense, I feel a humble amazement when the Twentieth Century Limited flashes by, or the DO-X zooms aloft, or Niagara Falls roar before me. But to go beyond "the ordered and comprehensive entity" to the One who ordered it and made it so comprehensive in its inclusion of so much that is beautiful, to stand in His presence and to know that He planned and willed it all—that is religious sentiment. That is to know the "Designer Infinite." That is to realize in the innermost recesses of our souls the answer that God would have had Job make (xxxviii):

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?

Tell me, if thou hast understanding.

And who laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest?

Or who hath stretched the line upon it?  
Upon what are its bases grounded?

Or who laid the corner stone thereof,  
When the morning stars praised me together

And all the sons of God made a joyful melody?

Who shut up the sea with doors

When it broke forth as issuing out of the womb;

When I made a cloud the garment thereof,  
And wrapped it in a mist as in swaddling bands?"

Our answer to that question, the only answer with which human reason can rest satisfied, is that which the writer in Wisdom gave (xiii): "All men are vain in whom is not the knowledge of God. . . . For, if they are able to know so much as to make a judgment of the world, how did they not more easily find out the Lord thereof?"

Back of this planned universe there must be the Planner; back of this ordered universe there must be the Orderer; back of all the design there must be the "Designer Infinite." And to that Designer we pray for light and grace to follow out the designs He has for our own lives and the lives of others; and we worship Him because of His infinite majesty and power, so wonderfully revealed in the ordered universe about us.

## Has God Told Us Anything?

IT WAS a nasty night—fog and rain and a chilling wind—and the old Norwegian lookout and I had had the hurricane deck to ourselves. But soon, out of the darkness, came a strong, lithe figure. One glance showed that he wanted to talk.

“Shall we walk up and down?” I asked. “Be glad to,” came the quick reply. And so we strode up and down the vacant deck.

As usually happens to a priest who meets a non-Catholic while traveling, the conversation turned quickly to religion. The young chap was thinking hard and was trying to find God. And so his questions came with the rapid fire of pent-up earnestness. Of all that rain-drenched talk one question has stood out most vividly in my memory down through the years that have passed since then.

“What I can’t make out, sir, is how you Catholics are so certain that you are right. There is a sureness about all of you that almost irritates, but just as certainly challenges, one not of your faith. How can you be so sure?”

“Well, my dear young man, let’s go back a bit and chat it out from its true beginning. First—Do you and I and every other man really feel a craving to know just what we ought to believe about God and just what He would have us do?”

“Yes, sir. I surely would like to know with certainty; and I suppose every other man and woman would too.”

“Good enough. So you admit the craving; you admit that we all really want to know. So now let me ask: If He wanted,

*could* God let us know with certainty what we ought to believe about Him and what He wants us to do? *Could* God tell us?"

"Of course He could," snapped back the response as though implying the absurdity of any other answer.

"That's fine. You admit that we *want* to be certain; you admit that God *could* make us certain. Then you stop. We Catholics go further. We are convinced God *has* told us. You see, we have a better opinion of God's goodness than you have. You say God *could*, and stop there. We say God *could* and in His kindness *has*. That is all we mean by Revelation: God has, in fact, been good enough to tell us what is true about Himself and what we ought to do to please Him."

Then, as we paced the deck and the rain beat down upon us, the old, old story was re-told once more, of the house of God's Church built upon the rock, against which winds and storms cannot prevail, wherein are found the living teachers of His living Word.

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How simple the meaning of God's revelation is! Stripped of all technical terms, it is just this: God saw that we, His children, distracted by all the good things He put round about us in the universe, would find it very hard to learn about Him as we should. He saw how the things that we see would draw our gaze away from Him; and how the things that we hear would make it hard for us to catch the voice of all nature telling us of Him; and how the very things we touch would hold back our hands from reaching out for Him. His own

good gifts would make us linger on them—and forget Him.

And further, too, He saw that even when we should have tried to do our best to seek Him unremittingly the darkness of our intellect and the weakness of our will, brought on by Adam's sin, would cheat us of knowing and loving Him aright; yes, that, try as we might, we should be sincerely puzzled at times to know just how we should act and just what His law might be that we should follow.

And so, with His wonted goodly care of us, He spoke to Adam first, and then to Noe, and then to Moses, and to the Patriarchs and Prophets, making each of them learn a part of the great lesson He had to teach us children. He spoke to them from time to time, each time teaching His backward, wayward children more of His truth and laying upon them more of His commands. Not once, but many, many times He spoke to them, lest the fulness of His message be too much for their tardy intellects. He taught them much and guided them well. Even when they rebelled, He disciplined them back into submission, lest their foolish wilfulness might encompass their ruin.

Then, when long years had run and "the fulness of time" had come, to use the glorious words that open the Epistle to the Hebrews:

"God, having spoken of old to the fathers through the prophets by many partial revelations and in various ways, in these last days hath spoken to us by one who is His Son, whom He hath set up as heir of all things."

Jesus Christ, Our Lord, came to teach us

the truth, and for three years He taught His apostles and disciples. He was their "private tutor" for three long years, accommodating Himself to the narrow limits of their minds, with patience working out old errors and feeding in unchanging truths. Yet, for all He did, the measure of His success with them was small. For, when the first great test came, one betrayed Him, another denied Him, and all ran away. And so, when He had ascended into heaven, He sent the Holy Ghost, who finished the lesson once and for all. To them, as the first members of the apostolic college, the Holy Ghost taught "all manner of truth," leaving to them and to their successors in the Church, as to a living teacher, to teach each new generation the lesson that is ever old and ever new.

All this we prove in many ways, but quite easily and definitely from Our Lord's words:

"And Jesus coming, spoke to them, saying: All power is given to me in heaven and in 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 behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (St. Matt., Chap. 28, Ver. 18-20.)

"And he said to them: Go ye into the the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall



be condemned." (St. Mark, Cnap. 16, Ver. 15-16.)

Thus they are to go,

1. making disciples (pupils)
2. of all nations,
3. teaching them to observe all things
4. whatsoever He had commanded *them* (the Apostles);
5. and He was to be with them to the end of time;
6. and whosoever would not believe would be damned.

Certainly Peter and James and John and Matthew were not to last to the end of the world. And so, when He charged them to teach and promised to be with them to the end of time, He was clearly talking to them as the first "staff," the first "faculty," of His apostolic college, the first "board of regents" (we might put it) of His Church.

And in committing His doctrines to a living teacher Our Lord was again meeting squarely the fact condition of our nature. We naturally learn from others, not from books. Indeed, until printing was invented, *in the fifteenth century after His time*, a book (handwritten, of course, from start to finish) was a most costly thing and a rare possession. To hold that God willed to save mankind through a book (the Bible)—as the Protestants contend—is to hold that God willed quite the most impossible way of saving mankind. The majority of men had no books and could afford no books; and many, many millions of them could not have read a book even if they had one.

Thus we Catholics, we repeat, have a better opinion of God than other men have. Others admit God could have told us. We hold God could and did tell us; and further, that He has transmitted His message to us in the way that best fits in with our wonted manner of learning—by a living teacher.

It is this strong conviction (based on absolute proof that God did speak to us through the Patriarchs and Prophets and then in the person of Christ Our Lord, whose teaching is carried down the ages by His unending Church) which is the reason why we have that splendid sense of sureness, that all-pervading conviction of right which is the greatest treasure of life. Other men are groping blindly for the truth; we have it. Other men are wandering hither and thither after the right; we know it and we hold it unafraid. Other men, at best, consult a dead Book; we consult a living Teacher.

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## Is Whatever the Pope Says True?

“**S**AY, old man, do I look like one of those chaps you are reading about in that paper?”

Startled by my question, the young man looked up at me. Passengers on the Third Avenue “L” do not usually talk to each other, and certainly not that way.

“I mean it. Do I look like a fellow who would trample on the American flag, or kill my Protestant neighbor, or rob a Jewish synagogue, and all just because an *Italian* Pope told me to do so?”

Taken aback, he looked me over carefully. "No," came the answer. "I don't just think you would."

"But it says so there, in that article you are reading—and you'll pardon me if I admit that I read it over your arm."

"Yes, it says so here, and I did believe it. Don't you Catholics take all your thinking from the Pope? Don't you believe everything he tells you?"

"Well, no. Not quite. See here. If the Pope told me that a Ford was a finer car than a Rolls Royce, I'd just chuckle and tell him to give me a Rolls Royce. And if he told me that a glass of hot lemonade was more refreshing than a chocolate sundae, why, I'd ask him to let me have the sundae."

Then we both chuckled, and as the "L" slowed up around curves and hurtled along the straightaways, we had our little talk about infallibility, and all it means, and all it does not mean.

\* \* \*

And what is it after all—plainly and simply?

First, it does not mean *impeccability*; i. e., that the Pope can do no wrong. Old English law, by a legal fiction, held that "the king can do no wrong," but that is not and has never been the position of the Catholic Church with regard to the Pope. The Pope can do wrong, and the Pope can commit sin, and some few of the Popes have not been very exemplary men. (Though by and large, as has been remarked, the long line of Popes far, far surpasses in personal

worth any other line of sovereigns.) And each Pope goes to confession, just like every other Catholic, priest or lay person, and he has his "father confessor," just as every priest and bishop and cardinal has. And when he is on his knees in the confessional, his confessor is then and there his "Father-in-God."

Nor does infallibility mean that the Pope knows everything and is right in everything every time he speaks. If the Pope talks on wireless with Marconi, Marconi is by far the more learned there. If he were to talk with Millikan on cosmic rays, he might have to ask the learned physicist many a question. If he tried to pit his knowledge of stocks and bonds against that of J. Pierpont Morgan, he might soon find that Mr. Morgan owned the Vatican.

Even as an individual theologian, in his capacity as a private scholar, the Pope need not rank among the foremost theologians or moralists or canonists. On the whole the Popes have been richly gifted men, but not many of them could have matched their wits and come out victors in an argument with St. Albertus Magnus, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bellarmine or Suarez in theology, or with St. Alphonsus de' Liguori in moral, or with Cardinal Gasparri and Father Wernz in canon law.

What in the world, then, does infallibility mean? Just this and nothing more: that when, (1) as Supreme Head of the Church, (2) he teaches the entire Church on a matter of faith or morals, (3) intending his decision to be irrevocable, (4) he cannot make a mistake.

There are various parts here. First, he

must speak in virtue of his apostolic office, as successor of St. Peter, precisely as the *Supreme Head* of the Church. The present Holy Father may speak as: Achille Ratti, the noted mountain climber, or the competent Coptic scholar, or the former librarian of the Vatican; or he may speak as Bishop of Rome, making laws for his own diocese; or finally, he may speak precisely as Head of the Church.

But even so, as Head of the Church, he may write a birthday letter to the King of England, or send a note of congratulation to our new President, or speed a blessing to a newly wedded couple. And so we have the second condition: "He teaches the entire Church on a matter of faith or morals." Our Lord left a "deposit of faith," a sum total of revealed truths, to His Church. Therein is contained His revelation to mankind. The Pope is infallible only when he speaks on a doctrine contained in that "deposit of faith" or a matter of serious import to the moral life of the Faithful. He is not infallible either on automobiles, or electrons, or Coptic manuscripts, etc., etc., or when he fulfils the social duties of an earthly sovereign.

Well, then, is the Pope, when he broadcasts over the radio in Vatican City, talking infallibly all the time?

No, by no means. The Pope may address the whole Church on a matter of faith and morals and yet not intend to make his decision irrevocable. All of the encyclicals—and they deal largely with matters of faith and morals—are addressed to the entire Church, but only a few, a very few, contain infallible pronouncements. He speaks *in-*

*fallibly* only when he intends to have his decision on a matter of faith and morals accepted as *final* and *decisive*. Then, and then only, is it true that he cannot make a mistake. (Of course, all his other pronouncements as our Supreme Pastor are to be accepted with internal reverence, ready submission and filial obedience. We are here defining and determining only when he is *infallible*.)

But why do we insist on “cannot make a mistake”? Would it not be sufficient to say “will not make a mistake”? No. In that word *cannot* is hidden the real reason and source of infallibility. The Pope *cannot* make a mistake, because the Holy Ghost will not let him. That is the long and short of it. As theologians put it learnedly: The “assistance” of the Holy Ghost is promised to the Pope. And this means merely this: the Holy Ghost “stands by” (*ad-sisto* in the root Latin sense) the Pope when he makes a final and irrevocable decree on faith or morals, to see to it that he does not make a mistake. And inevitably and necessarily, if the Holy Ghost sees to it, the Pope simply *cannot* make a mistake.

And how do we know that the Pope is infallible? Because, when Our Lord founded His *teaching* Church, He promised that He would be with it to the end of time and that the gates of hell would not prevail against it. He is to be with His Church *precisely in its teaching*; and *precisely in its teaching* the gates of hell are not to prevail against it. Certainly the *minimum* requisite in a successful teacher is to teach the *truth*. He may not be brilliant, he may not be wonderfully learned, but at least

whatever little he does teach must be true.

And—to indicate another proof—Our Lord told His disciples (St. Mark xvi, 15, 16):  
“Go ye into the whole world,

And preach the Gospel to every creature.  
He that believeth and is baptized  
Shall be saved;  
But he that believeth not  
Shall be condemned.”

I must believe what I am taught by the Church, or else I shall be damned. Now suppose the Church could go astray in teaching and actually did teach that Our Lord was not true God and true man. Suppose I accepted that teaching. Then I die, and at the judgment seat Our Lord confronts me with my false belief. “*I am both God and man.*” My reply, which He would be obliged to accept, would be: “Yes, Lord, I know that now, but *your* Church taught me the opposite.” I should get to heaven for believing an untruth; and I should have gone to hell if I had believed the truth!

\* \* \*

There we have it plainly and clearly, and my Third-Avenue-“L” friend was a deal more gracious as he left; for, tearing the paper into bits, he threw it out of the window: “Sir, *that* lie will go no further. I’m mighty glad I met you.”

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## Prove It From the Bible?

IT WAS the observation platform of the Crescent Limited, which I had boarded after having said Mass between trains at

Greensboro, N. C. The train had hardly got under way, when next to me sat down a splendidly built fellow who started in at once to chat.

"No, I'm no Catholic. I say this because I believe you are a priest; are you not?"

"Yes—"

"Well, I've been around Catholics a great deal. In fact, as a contractor, I've done many a job in convents, and have the highest admiration for the Catholic Church."

"I'm glad to hear that, indeed."

"Yes, but if you'll pardon me, I am badly puzzled. How do you Catholics prove all you believe, and all you do, from the Bible? I've read the Bible from cover to cover many a time, and, for the life of me, I don't see where you could possibly get your proofs."

I chuckled. "Neither do I," I answered quietly.

Jolted by my remark, he turned sharply and looked at me in blank amazement.

And I chuckled again.

"Say, aren't you a real Catholic priest?"

"Sure, old fellow; very real, very Catholic, and, I hope, very much a priest. But you've 'got us all wrong'."

Surely he had; but his mistake was a most usual one among non-Catholics. And so, as the wheels of the "flier" clicked off the miles, we talked—all through the morning, and across the lunch table, and on into the afternoon, until he left the train at Montgomery.

\* \* \*

Prove it from the Bible.

That is the Protestant position.



It is not the Catholic position.

The Protestant must prove each article of his belief from the Bible, since for him it is the sole source of revelation. Within its covers, from Genesis to Revelation, he must find out what he is to believe on God's word. What is not there, God does not vouch for. "The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible."

But the Catholic position is essentially different. It is at the very foundation of our whole faith that we need not seek Scripture proof for all we believe, but that the Church is the immediate source of our knowledge of God's revelation and that from her, and her alone, can we learn *everything* that He has revealed. It is to the Church alone that God has given His *total* revelation, which we call "the deposit of faith," and it is through her living teachers that the Church transmits this deposit of faith to her children.

God has left us a *living* teacher to whom we are to go to learn His revelation, and this *living* teacher is for us the Church of *today*.

Not that the Church of today is different from the Church of yesterday or yesterday-century. It is always the same, teaching always the same, whether it be at lascivious Antioch or haughty Rome, in the gilded halls of Constantinople or when the twilight of the Dark Ages come on, in the height of Reformation pride or in the mechanized twentieth century.

But God, in His goodness, has not told us to consult a Book, even though it be His own, or to pore over dusty tomes to

find out what the teacher He had left taught centuries ago. He has met our need most generously and most fittingly by giving us a living teacher—living today and right down among us—from whom we learn our creed (in brief or in expanded form), to whom we may go with our difficulties and doubts.

But where is this living teacher? This teacher is the authoritative group of men, duly consecrated as bishops, who, with the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, at their head, form the official teaching body. Associated with them in their teaching duty are the priests throughout the world, who are the wonted channels through whom the truths of faith are spread.

From them we learn our faith; from them we learn what God has revealed, and what He would have us do to gain eternal life. As individual men they may make mistakes; even as individual teachers they may fumble the truths of Revelation. But as a group united with the Pope and teaching in accord with him, they cannot teach awry.

That is what we mean when we say that our immediate "norm of faith" as Catholics is the Church teaching today. For it is the teaching of the Church today which is "our standard of judgment by which all revealed truths are clearly and certainly known" (and this, by the way, is the definition of the "norm of faith" whether our faith be Catholic, Protestant, Jew, or Mohammedan).

Our everyday, working norm is: What does the Church teach? It is just like going to a teacher and asking the answer to our problem. And God was very good to deal with us in matters of faith the very way

our daily lives are cast. We all go to teachers to learn the answer: to the doctor, the lawyer, the architect, the shoemaker. Our whole lives are led relying on the knowledge of others.

Of course, if I have time, and talent, and the inclination, I may go back and blow the dust off old tomes and find out what the Church taught when other men walked the earth: what she taught at the Councils at Nicaea and Ephesus, at Constantinople and Florence, at Trent and the Vatican. I may read the Syriac and the Greek and the Latin Fathers, and hear them transmit the teaching of the Church in their day. I may do that—and I shall find that what they taught is exactly what is taught today. But that way of finding our faith, of testing it, is quite out of the question for most of us. And so theologians call it the “remote” norm or “remote” test of faith.

\* \* \*

“Well, then, Father, where does the Bible come in for you Catholics? You don’t throw it out altogether, do you?”

“Assuredly we do not. We reverence it just as truly as you Protestants do; only we view it differently.”

\* \* \*

And how—differently?

For us Catholics the Bible is indeed God’s own book, containing His revelation, but only part of it.

Whatever of revelation is in the Bible is part and parcel of the total “deposit of faith,” but the Bible itself contains only *part* of God’s total revelation.

That God intended this recourse to the *living teacher* is clear from the words of Our Lord when He sent forth His Apostles to "teach all nations" and foretold eternal loss as the penalty for not listening to this *living* group of men, who were, as a teaching body, to last to the end of time.

And this is what theologians mean by "tradition"—"the teaching of the Church *handed down* (*trado*) through the ages." In that tradition we have all God's revelation; and so the theologians sum up the Catholic position briefly:

Revelation is contained wholly in tradition, and partially in the Bible.

Monsignor Benson has somewhere beautifully described tradition as "the imperishable mind and memory of the Church from which she brings forth continually things old and new." Yes, as the ways of men change and their needs vary, the Church stresses now one aspect of God's revelation, now another; yet always is the sum total of her teaching the same. No addition thereto, no subtraction therefrom, but just a difference of accent through the centuries—even as the musician varies the same identical piece of music, now *lento*, now *allegro*, now *fortissimo*, now *pianissimo*; yet the notes are ever the same. If the men who heard St. Paul were to hear the word of God preached today at St. Peter's, they would hear no strange doctrines. Augustine could grace the pulpit of Berlin today, or Anselm thunder forth in Paris, or Aquinas teach in New York, and all would recognize their doctrines.

But God has not sent us back to Augustine or Anselm or Aquinas for our faith. They

had it—just the same Catholic faith as we of today. From them we *may* learn it; but we need not so learn it.

Nor has God made it of rule that everyone should seek salvation from Genesis or the Psalms; or catch the words of revelation from an Isaias, a Paul, a Peter, or the Evangelists. These we may read, and indeed should read, to our profit, for what they wrote God wrote. But to the Bible it is not *necessary* to go; and as Catholics we neither try to prove nor can we prove everything we believe from God's written word.

\* \* \*

“And so you see that we Catholics have a better idea of God than you Protestants have,” was my last remark as the train slowed up for Montgomery.

“How's that, Father?”

“Well, let's see. Suppose a dying father called his children and said: 'Children, all my wishes are expressed in this my will. Follow it.' And then another dying father called his children and said: 'Children, I have written my wishes down, it is true; but there are many things I have not written down. But your mother knows my mind. Ask her. She will tell you all.'

“You Protestants hold that God has left His *written* will in the form of the Bible. We Catholics hold that God has, indeed, left His written will, which we revere and treasure, but that He has also left us a good Mother, the Church, who knows His wishes and has 'an imperishable mind and memory, from which she brings forth continually things old and new'.”

## How God Wrote a Book

“THE Bible a best seller! Say, Father, when was that? After a mission? When fellows got religion?”

“Well, boys, no. It happened all through Europe when printing was first invented. And what’s strange about that? Isn’t the Bible God’s inspired word? Is it strange that God would be the author of a best seller when many a hack today dashes off a worthless bit of trash which sells into the hundreds of thousands?”

“No, I guess not,” said one of the boys. “But Father, the point you just touched on I have never clearly understood. What do you mean when you say that the Bible is “inspired?” Isn’t Homer inspired? And Vergil? And Shakespeare? And Francis Thompson? And again, how did God write a book? Did He use pen and paper as we do?”

“Well, now, let’s see, boys. I am glad you asked that question, as few people who have not studied theology can answer it clearly.”

And so, as we sat out under the trees, pulling away at cigarettes and pipes, we dived headlong into theology.

That the Bible is God’s written word is the accepted judgment of Jew and Christian alike. It has been so revered for centuries.

Now to be the author of a book implies three things:

1. That I have something to write about.
2. That I determine to write it.
3. That I actually do write it.

Of course, if I have nothing in my head, I cannot become an author. Even if I have something in my head, I am not thereby an author. I must determine to write it down. That is the next step, and a very essential one. (I know a very brilliant teacher who has much in his head but is determined never to write a line.)

But even when the determination is there, I am still only a *possible* writer. I must actually set down or cause to be set down in writing what I have determined to write.

So, to put it in another way: For a man to be an author, he must

1. Have an idea.
2. Want to write it down.
3. Write or have it written down.

Actual physical use of a pen or a typewriter is not necessary. I "write" many a letter by dictating to a stenographer or by talking into a dictaphone. That's clear, isn't it?

"Yes. But Father, how is God the author of the Bible when you also tell us that Moses wrote the first five books, and David many of the Psalms, and Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John the Gospels. If they are the authors, how is God the author?"

"That's fine, Jack. You've hit another rock-bottom difficulty squarely on the head. Each book of the Bible has two authors—**God and the human writer: God and Moses; God and David; God and Isaias; God and St. Paul; and so on.**"

Yes, for every book of the Bible there is a twofold authorship. And therein lies the need of exact thinking on this question.

Since God is the author we must find the three requisites of authorship in Him; and since Moses, David, Jeremias, St. Peter, St. Jude, etc., are authors, we must find the same three requisites in them. We may show this by a diagram:

**God as author—**

1. Has something to write.
2. Determines to write it.
3. Actually brings it about that the sacred writer does write just what He wants, nothing more, nothing less.

**Sacred writer as author—**

1. Has this same something to write.
2. Determines to write it.
3. Actually writes, under God's influence, just what God wants.

The action of God on the sacred writers is evidently a mysterious one, quite above our understanding. Why? Because God does not use them as I am now using my pen, as a thing without any free will. He uses each of them as a man with a mind and a free will, allowing play and scope to their individualities and peculiarities of temperament and character. To every reader it is evident that St. John has a style of his own, and St. Paul another; and the writers of the books of Esdras, of Judith and of Tobias each another way of writing.

And therein lies the mystery. God brings it about that each sacred writer actually puts forth a written work that is His, just as He wants it to be, yet stamped all over with the style marks of the human author. Ultimately this is an insoluble question:



*How* does God do it? This problem is insoluble because of our limited knowledge: (1) of our own intricate minds; and (2) of the workings of God's grace.

The *how* of the dual authorship is difficult, the *fact* of the dual authorship is clear. The Council of Trent and again the Council of the Vatican expressly declare the *fact* that "God is the author" of both Old and New Testament. That is a defined dogma of Catholic faith.

Further, in fulfilling their duty as supreme teachers of the faithful, the Popes, in encyclicals, endeavoring to indicate the *how*, have developed this idea of authorship and given, in other language, the requirements which I have listed above.

Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical "Providentissimus Deus," writes:

"Hence, because the Holy Ghost employed men as His instruments, we cannot therefore say that it was these inspired instruments who, perchance, have fallen into error, and not the primary author. For, by supernatural power, He so moved and impelled them to write, He was so present to them that the things which He ordered, and only those, they first rightly understood and then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth. Otherwise it could not be said that He was the author of the entire Scripture."

Pope Benedict XV, in his encyclical "Spiritus Paraclitus" (wherein he extols St. Jerome for his work on the Bible), says:

"If we ask how we are to explain this power and action of God, the principal

cause, on the sacred writers, we shall find that St. Jerome in no way differs from the common teaching of the Catholic Church. For he holds that God, through His grace, illumines the writer's mind regarding the particular truth which, 'in the person of God,' He is to set before men; he holds, moreover, that God moves the writer's will—nay, even impels it—to write; finally that God abides with him unceasingly, in unique fashion, until his task is accomplished."

In view of all this, theologians have formulated a clear statement of this dual authorship. It reads as follows:

"The sacred writer, under the impulse and direction of God, mentally conceives, determines to write, and actually commits to writing wholly and solely what God wishes to be written."

\* \* \*

"There you are, boys. God and a man, under God's direction, have composed each and every book of the Bible from Genesis to Machabees, and from St. Matthew to the Apocalypse. Clear?"

"Yes, Father." This time from Chris. "But what about inspiration? Don't forget that."

"Say, Chris, have you been asleep, or just entirely wrapped up in the tennis game over there?"

"Neither, Father. I've listened to every word."

"Well, then, Chris, inspiration as used of the Bible means exactly what I have been explaining: that God and man are the authors of each book of the Bible. The word 'inspiration' brings out clearly the notion of

God's part in the transaction, for in His own mysterious way He *inspires* or *breathes into* (boys, get your Latin going!) the human author whatever is required to have the book written.

"And so the inspiration of the Bible is poles apart from the inspiration of Homer, Vergil, Dante, etc. In these and other poets inspiration means merely a superexaltation of mind, a "fine frenzy," an ability to put forth ideas in an imaginative and emotional way. It has nothing to do with inspiration in the Bible, which implies the authorship of God Himself. . . . Right, boys?"

"Okay, Father. And let's call this class in theology off, eh? But thanks, all the same. It's great to get things clear."

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## Who Wrote the Bible?

"JUST a minute, old man! Before you start passing that hat around, I want to ask you one question."

The "preacher" standing at the back of the Gospel wagon looked disconcertedly at the Irish chap who challenged him, and tried to smile though he sensed a fight:

"All right, my good man, what is it?"

"Well, you said you had been a Catholic, but that you had left the Church. Right?"

"Yes."

"You also said you still believe all you believed before except what you called this 'Pope-can't-make-a-mistake stuff.' Right?"

"I did say that—yes."

"So you believe *everything* else, even though you are now a Protestant?"

"Most emphatically."

"Then, old man, you're neither a Catholic nor a Protestant. You're a plain faker. You don't even know that the Catholic and Protestant Bibles are different. You're a fraud. So don't pass around the hat. Just close up shop and move on!"

And move on he did.

That little scene occurred in downtown Washington one Saturday afternoon in the late nineties; yet it has never faded from the memory of one who as a small boy felt proud of the Irish laborer who that day sent the preacher on his way.

\* \* \*

Yes, the Catholic and Protestant English Bibles do differ, and differ notably. They differ:

1. As to the number of books that make up the Bible.
2. As to the English translation.
3. As to the titles of some of the books.

And of course Catholics and Protestants are frequently poles apart in the interpretation of what is in the Bible.

It will not be our purpose here to discuss the differences in translation or in the titles of some of these books. The latter difference is mostly due to the fact that the translators of the King James (the "Authorized Version") adopted the Hebrew form of proper names, e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, etc., where our Catholic version has adopted the Greek form—Isaias, Jeremias, Zacharias. This whole question is largely unimportant.

But the question of translation is vital; though we have not here the opportunity to treat it at length. In many places, in order to substantiate their own false position and to refute their Catholic opponents the King James translators either definitely mistranslated or used words which robbed the statement of an important doctrinal implication (e.g. "cup" for "chalice"). Much of their translation could merit approval, but as a whole the translation is not acceptable.

The precise question, however, dealt with here is the number of books that make up the Bible. We all know that the Bible was written by different men, at different times, and in different places. From the days of Moses, who was the author of the first five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), down to the days of St. John's Gospel many a writer was moved by God to put down His revelation to mankind.

These books, written at various times by different men, were slowly gathered together. The authoritative list of books belonging to the Bible is called the Canon of the Bible. For canon in the Greek means a rule or standard, and so the Canon of the Bible is that standard list which tells us whether a book belongs to the Bible or not.

Now in olden times there were two lists or canons: the Palestinian and the Alexandrian. The Palestinian canon (or the "canon of Esdras") was adopted by the Jews of Palestine. The Alexandrian canon was adopted by the Jews of the Dispersion, i.e., those Jews who had voluntarily or under duress of captivity migrated from Palestine to various parts of the world. These two canons or standard lists differed. The Alex-

andrian was longer. It contained books not admitted as authentic by the Jews of Palestine.

These "disputed" books of the Old Testament were: Judith, Baruch, 1 and 2 Machabees, Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom and Tobias, together with such parts as Esther X, 4—XVI, 24; Daniel III, 24-90; XIII, XIV.

The nondisputed books have been termed learnedly "protocanonical," i.e., belonging to the first (*protos*) or undisputed list: the disputed books are called "deuterocanonical," i.e., belonging to the second (*deuteros*) or disputed list.

Now we Catholics, in the Old Testament, have the same Bible as the Alexandrian Jews; the Protestants the same as the Palestinian Jews. But we Catholics certainly do not hold the longer list to be the true one because the Alexandrian Jews hold it. No indeed. We hold it because God, speaking through the infallible voice of the Church has told us that both the nondisputed and the disputed books have Him equally as their author. Baruch is as much the word of God as the Psalms; Machabees as much as Genesis.

In the New Testament some books were disputed in the past, but today they are admitted practically by Catholic and Protestant alike: Epistles of St. James and of St. Jude; Epistle to the Hebrews; Second Epistle of St. Peter; Second and Third Epistles of St. John; the Apocalypse; and a few other sections.

So, on the very Bible itself and the books it should contain, Catholics and Protestants are divided. And how can the question be settled? In no way except by the Church.

There is no single passage in the Bible that enumerates just what books belong thereto, and yet a Protestant should find that list, in some shape or form, within the Bible. For the orthodox Protestant position is, "The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible" is the word of God. So if the canon or standard list is not in the Bible, the Protestant cannot be certain whether he has, or has not, the right list of books; whether he has too many or too few.

We Catholics are infallibly certain that our collection of books is the correct one, for the Church has told us so, notably and most distinctly at the Council of Trent and at the Council of the Vatican. This is the collection of the Old and New Testaments which the Church herself made under God's guidance.

For, again, we must remember that the books of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, were not written by one man, but by many men, in many places, at many times. Moses wrote maybe as he trekked across the desert; David as he prayed in the Temple; Amos as he tended his flock at Thecua; St. John when he was at Patmos and Ephesus; St. Paul at Rome; St. James at Jerusalem. And centuries separated many of these men.

Slowly did the copying of the sacred books go on, for in those days there was no printing. Slowly at Jersusalem and at Babylon and at Alexandria did the Old Testament books gather into one collection for the Jewish people there. Slowly, later on, did the Church at Rome and at Corinth exchange copies of the letters St. Paul had written to each. Slowly did each church

that could afford it gather into its collection of sacred writings the Gospels and the Acts and the Epistles and the Apocalypse. And all the while the Holy Ghost was watching over these seemingly vagrant writings, preserving them by and for the Church, and in the fulness of time the Church declared authoritatively just what the standard list or canon was.

So we Catholics have no least doubt just what is the written word of God. We know that we have it—neither more nor less. Nothing may be subtracted therefrom; nothing may be added thereto. And we accept each and every book of the Bible as equally the word of God, and we read them all with equal reverence.

And the Catholic Church uses the Bible, and counsels her children to use it. Protestants claim it is forbidden for Catholics to read the Bible and that the Church did its best to keep the Bible away from her children.

Such an assertion would never be made by anyone who really knew the history of the Church. Down through the centuries there was not, indeed, a "Bible in every home," for prior to the invention of printing it was a most costly process to write out the Bible entirely by hand. It took many a long day, and yet it was one of the chief works of the monks who are supposed to have been so benighted and stupid.

Again we must remember that in olden days the majority of people could not read. Yet, from the pens of the great preachers, such as Augustine, Anselm, Hilary and others, we have sermon after sermon which



is just a "running commentary," a continued explanation of the Bible story.

For those who could read, Bibles were provided in the churches and the libraries. But they were chained! Yes, they were chained, precisely because the church authorities wanted all to read, and likewise wanted no one to steal the costly volume. As was said recently in the English periodical *John O'London's Weekly*:

"A book, it was said, was worth as much as a farm. Unlike a farm, it was portable property that could easily be purloined. Valuables in all ages require protection. Books, therefore, were kept under lock and key. This was done in two ways: they were either shut up in a cupboard (almery or "armarium") or a chest, or they were chained, sometimes four or five together, to a desk, often in the choir."

Briefly, the Bibles were chained for the same reason for which the dippers were always chained to the old town pump, or for which telephone books are fastened to the wall of the public booths.

And the Church herself makes continual use of the Bible. The missal, the book used by the priest at mass, is taken, at least about seventy-five per cent of it, from the Bible. Moreover the priest's breviary (which he must read daily under pain of mortal sin) is composed almost entirely from the Bible. Non-Catholics seldom realize that, in this way, every single priest, praying as an official minister of the Church, reads the Bible for almost an hour daily.

Moreover Pope Leo XIII, to encourage the faithful to know the Bible, granted a special

indulgence to those who read it for fifteen minutes daily.

The only prohibitions which the Church has issued against reading the Bible have to do with unauthorized translations and books explaining the Bible but written by non-Catholic authors. The Church wants us all to know the Bible, to love and relish it; but she wants to make sure that the Bible we use does not misrepresent the original books as they came from the pens of the sacred writers.

Briefly, she wants us to read God's written word as He Himself composed it. For that she has, and she would have us have, the greatest reverence.

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## **All Right? Or Who's Right?**

“**W**HO'S right? Why, sir, that's not a correct question. We are all right. We are all trying to love God and are all going back to Him, only by different ways.”

I looked at the man—a fine, square fellow and, according to his lights, seeking God. Long had we chatted across the table, so long that we were quite the last ones in the great dining hall. Serious had been the conversation, touching the very foundations of life, for he was in truth hungry for God.

“Yes, we are all going back to God, I hope, and truly by different ways. But only one way can be the right way. I may go from Philadelphia to New York the straight, direct way. Or I may go around by way of Atlantic City, or by way of Bethlehem, or I may even take a boat and cross the ocean and go clear around the world to get to

New York, only ninety miles away from where I started. A foolish suggestion? Oh, no. In fact far less foolish than your own position."

"I don't see that, sir. Travel through space is one thing. Travel of the soul is another."

"Admittedly so. And precisely for that reason wrong soul-travel is very foolish. Wrong soul-travel means believing wrong things about God; it means holding wrong views about what He has told us; it means acting in ways God never imposed on us. It is simply impossible for us all to be right, because we are all contradicting each other on essentials. Let's see."

\* \* \*

And so the conversation went on. "All right?" or "Who's right?" Let us take the major religious beliefs found in the Western world: Judaism, Protestantism, Catholicism. If God is the God of truth, it is simply impossible that they all be right.

Between Judaism and Christianity there is a complete cleavage on the basic truth: the Messiah has come. Orthodox Judaism flatly denies that He has come, and so it still awaits Him. The "Expected of the nations" is still expected, and the "Desire of the everlasting hills" is still longed for. The Christian's whole belief is founded on the coming of the Messiah; his whole faith is based on the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, Son of Mary, known in history as "the Christ" (the name comes from the Greek word *chrío*, to anoint, and so is the equivalent of "Messiah," which comes from the Hebrew *Maschah*, to anoint).

Now Jesus either existed or He did not exist. And if He existed, He was either the "Christ," the "Messiah," or He was not. Between "was" and "was not" there is the choice. Choose one or the other. The two cannot be right. It is easy enough to say Jew and Christian are both seeking God, but if we translate the cloudy phrase "Judaism and Christianity are both correct" into a clearcut presentation of their fundamental belief, we find the absurd statement: "Jesus is the Messiah, and He is not the Messiah." Broadmindedness may be all right, but it cannot digest flat contradictories. If Jesus was not the Messiah, Judaism is correct. If He was the Messiah, Christianity is correct. One or the other, but not both.

Now within Christianity the major division is into Protestantism and Catholicism. Are they both right? Can they both be right? The answer is no; just as emphatic a no as separates Judaism and Christianity. Why?

The fundamental, originating proposition of Protestantism is the right of private judgment. It was with that slogan that Luther and Melancthon and Calvin and Zwingli broke with the Catholic Church. Traditional Protestants hold *as their fundamental tenet* that Christ, the Messiah, did not leave an authoritative teaching church, but left a Book; and their early battle cry was: "The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible." Protestantism declares that we are to win our way to God by reading the Bible under the guidance of God and, using our own judgment, learning therefrom, everyone for himself, what God wants of him and how God wants him to save his soul.

The Catholic position is diametrically the opposite. The Catholic holds that Jesus Christ left as His official representative on earth a teaching body which teaches in His name and with His authority and is infallible when pronouncing final judgments on matters of faith and morals. The Catholic claims that the founding of this "apostolic college" is an historical fact, and that the unbroken continuity of that "apostolic college" through its legitimate successors, down through the centuries, is another historical fact. And he holds as a third historical fact that Jesus Christ guaranteed this enduring continuity to the end of time.

So there we have it—between Catholicism and Protestantism a flat contradiction: Jesus Christ left an authoritative, official church, and He did not leave such a church. He did—He did not. Again a choice, but certainly not both statements, if we are at all sane. If Christ left only a Book—the Bible—and no church, then Protestantism's fundamental doctrine is correct. If Christ left, not only a Book, but also, and especially, a church teaching with His authority, then Catholicism is correct.

Let us put it another way. If Protestantism and Catholicism are both correct, then as a Christian I find myself in this impossible position: "I *must* listen to Christ's church and submit my judgment thereto; yet I am absolutely free to use my own judgment in *all* matters of religion." That is clearly an impossibility. "I *must* listen" is clearly offset by "I am *free* to listen." In fact I really should not listen, since the Catholic Church's assumption of a *right* to teach is a denial of the freedom of indi-

vidual judgment which Christ, in the Protestant's position, granted all Christians.

"All right?" or "Who's right?" Clearly the question must be "Who's right?" If in physics we may not hold that light is a wave and not a wave; if in chemistry we may not hold that hydrogen and oxygen are changed in forming water and are not changed in forming water; if in astronomy we may not hold that the universe is expanding and is not expanding, neither can we hold contradictions in the realm of religious thought. Yet that is precisely what advocates of "One religion is as good as another" try to do—only they do not think far enough or clearly enough to see the absurdity of their position. They are caught, as so many moderns are, by a slogan.

No. Either Judaism is correct or Christianity; and within Christianity either Protestantism or Catholicism. All three cannot be correct; nor can any two of them be correct. If "one religion is as good as another," then Jesus, who was not the Messiah, was the Messiah who left an authoritative church which He never founded, to which He obliged all men to listen and which He has told them to repudiate because He left them absolute freedom of individual judgment.

This is a staggering sentence! It sounds like Jabberwocky talk. Yet thousands hold that position today. Are they insincere? No. They just do not think. They are caught by a phrase which seems comfortably true and provocative of peace and harmony—and with that they are content.

But if a man thinks, the only question which can be asked and which demands an answer is, Who's right?



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THE QUEEN'S WORK  
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