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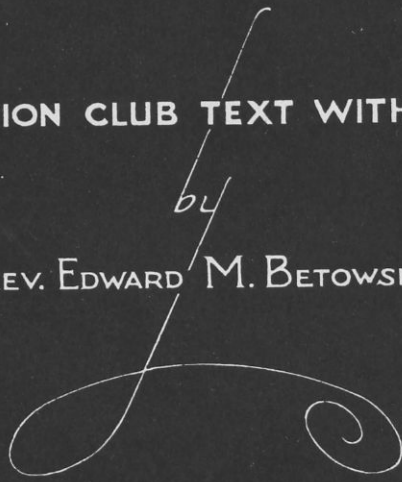
# The True Church

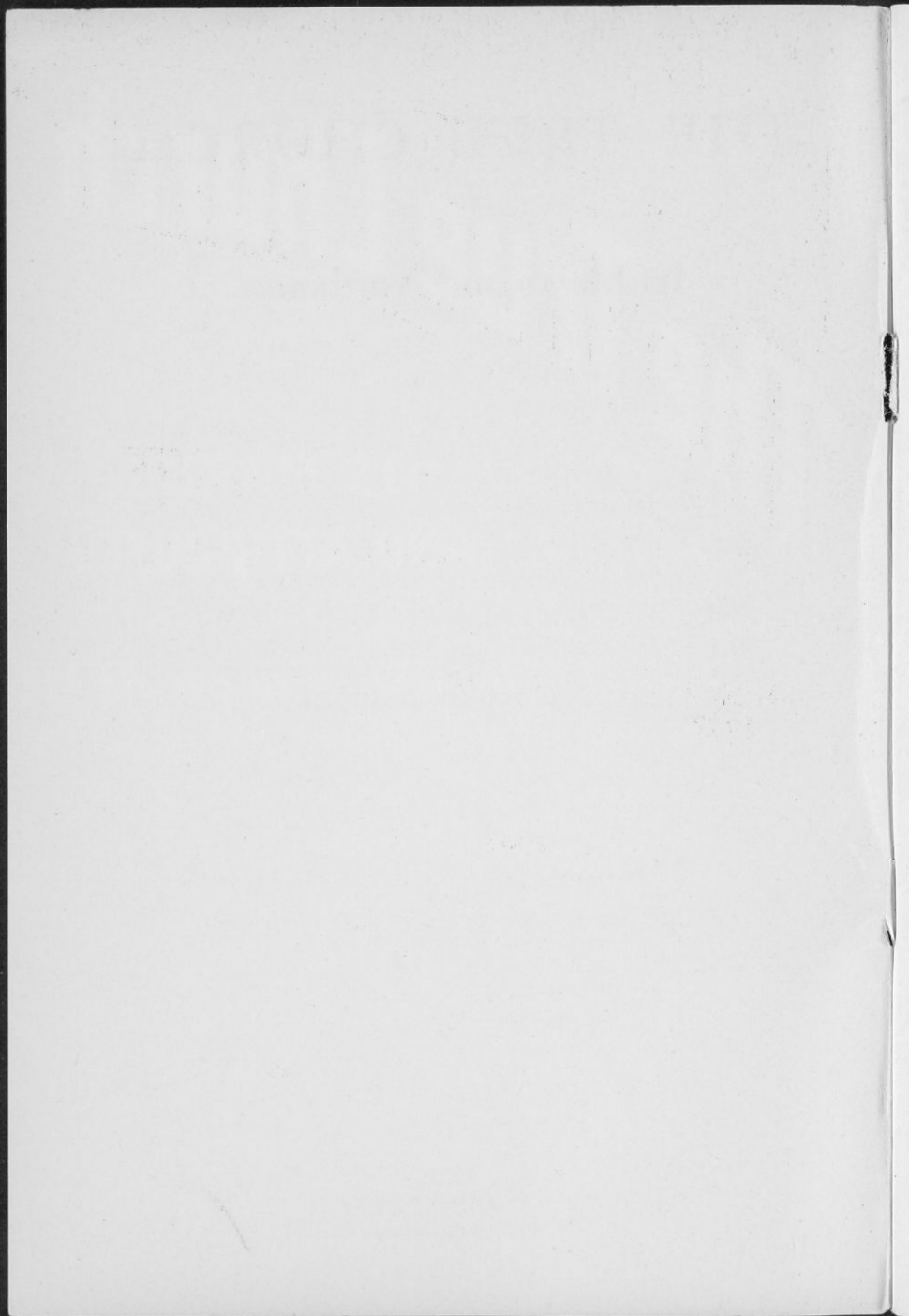
ITS MARKS  
AND ATTRIBUTES

A DISCUSSION CLUB TEXT WITH OUTLINE

by

REV. EDWARD M. BETOWSKI





# THE TRUE CHURCH

Its Marks and Attributes

BY

REV. EDWARD M. BETOWSKI

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## FOREWORD

THE priest or catechist engaged in the instruction of secondary school children as well as the leaders of religious discussion groups, will welcome the appearance of any new material for the presentation of the teaching of the Church. When that material comes from the pen of such a competent teacher as Father Betowski of St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, it is doubly welcome. In the present time, there is so much indifference about belief, so much small talk about "one religion as good as another," in short, so much illogical reasoning about the organization of the Church of Christ, that a treatise on the true Church, its marks and attributes is almost an inspiration. A discussion group working with this treatise should complete its sessions with a very clear conception of the nature and function of the Church of God.

✠ JAMES E. KEARNEY,  
*Bishop of Rochester.*

## FOREWORD

The priest or catechist engaged in the instruction of secondary school children as well as the leaders of religious discussion groups will welcome the appearance of any new material for the presentation of the teaching of the Church. When that material comes from the pen of such a competent teacher as Father Joseph St. Joseph's Seminary, Danvers, it is doubly welcome. In the present time there is so much indifference about belief, so much strife about "one religion as good as another," in short, so much theological confusion about the organization of the Church of Christ, that a teacher on the one hand, the pastor and administrator on the other, should complete his sessions with a very clear concept of the nature and function of the Church of

Christ.  
+ James E. Kearney,  
Bishop of Rochester.

## INTRODUCTION

THIS pamphlet, "The True Church—Its Marks and Attributes," is designed to show all who are interested, both Catholic and non-Catholic, the beauty, the goodness and greatness of the Catholic Church. There are some things so small they escape observation. If the Catholic Church escapes observation, it is because it is too large. There is nothing like it in all creation, or in all history. It surpasses all other institutions and organizations because the Son of God is its Founder. Therefore, it is divine. The Catholic Church is—to use the words of our Lord—"The Kingdom of God" on earth.

The Catholic Church may not be referred to as a sect, for a sect is something which is cut off. The Catholic Church has not been cut off; it is the main branch; it is the tree itself that was planted by Christ. To regard the Church as a society concerned solely about things of another world, is an inaccurate, distorted view. The Church is interested in religion, education, charity and every other vital question that concerns human beings in this world. Nothing that pertains to the welfare of human souls is foreign to its interests. There is nothing narrow or parochial about the Catholic Church, for it embraces all truth as well as all nations.

Why Christ instituted the Catholic Church, what marks He placed upon its brow so that it can be easily recognized as the Church of God, with what qualities He endowed it so that it might endure unspotted and unimpaired through all the centuries even to the end of the world—these are some of the questions which the author of *The True Church* has treated clearly and simply.



The following pages have been prepared primarily for discussion clubs—high school, college and adult. They will be welcomed also by those outside the Church who have the interest to find out what the Roman Catholic Church is. Unquestionably there are hundreds of thousands who would gladly embrace the Catholic Faith if they but knew the Church as it really is, in all its beauty and truth. Here is a blessed opportunity for Catholic discussion club members to do a bit of apostolic work by inviting their non-Catholic friends and neighbors to their discussion club meetings. An earnest study of this pamphlet will give any reader or student a better appreciation of the Church of Christ. But be eager to pass on this blessing to those who are in search of religious truth.

JOHN M. DUFFY,  
*Rochester Diocesan Director,  
Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.*



## THE CHURCH

### Around the World

ON a certain Sunday evening (July 10, 1938, to be precise) an airplane carrying five men left New York headed east. At the close of the following Thursday the same plane came roaring out of the west and landed gracefully upon the very field from which it had started. Howard Hughes and his companions had flown around the world in less than four days! Then there was a parade of welcome, and a paper-storm among the sky-scrapers, as ticker tape and bits of torn telephone directories drifted into the canyons of lower Manhattan. The demonstration closed with orations. The courageous pilot had found blind flying in the fog less terrifying than being called upon to speak. But he had been in a position to get a bird's-eye view of the landscape, and so after landing he took time to prepare a few remarks for the public. He began by trying to divert attention from himself. He praised his companions of the air; he extolled the ground crew; he explained the part played by the technicians who had consumed 200,000 hours in preparing the mechanical device that had encircled the globe in less time than it took the first passenger train to steam from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. In conclusion came the hope that his flight might contribute something towards the formation of a universal fellowship of aviators from every country, united by a common bond whereby the science and the art of flying would be used, not merely to guard against the destructive influences of ill will, but for the well-being of the entire human family regardless of race, color or geographical location.

### Man a Social Being

Without submitting to the peril of flying, the reader can sit in an easy chair and encircle the globe mentally by reading the press despatches of his daily paper, or by turning on the radio when news commentators are spanning land and sea to

reveal what is going on all over the world. Through reflection he can gather a summary of the diversified and, at times, conflicting forms of human activity. It may dawn upon him that the modern world is like a badly jumbled jig-saw puzzle. He may understand why the man who flew around the globe wants to bind the whole world together by a ring that will be more permanent than the quickly vanishing breeze produced by a propeller. Such a ring should serve, not merely to unite bird-men in a rightly ordered flock, but to bind together men of every profession and occupation in a manner so exalted that human hearts under every sky will be encircled by the charity which unites knowing creatures to the all-knowing Creator. Such a fellowship should be marked by:

oneness of mind,  
wholesomeness of spirit,  
openness of membership to the properly disposed,  
and security of foundation.

As a matter of fact such a fellowship *does* exist. It is called the true Church.

### **Definitions of Society**

Suppose we undertake a study of the A B C's of human companionship. The word, society, comes from the Latin, *socius*, meaning a companion. In its basic sense, society may be defined as a stable union of human beings working together for some common end. Do not confuse human society with the grouping of creatures that are not endowed with reason. If you have ever disturbed a hornet's nest you may have learned, to your sorrow, that the hornets are rapid fliers and highly organized. But you would not speak of the stings as having been inflicted by a society of hornets, at least not by a polite society. Properly speaking, hornets are not capable of being polite or impolite because they are not moved by intelligence, but by instinct. Flocks of birds move with marvelous precision, but conscious foresight and deliberation are not behind their movements. They, too, are directed by instinct.

But when birdmen, or aviators, fly in formation, reason is the directive influence. Hence it would be possible to have a true society of aviators.

A society is to be distinguished from a mob. Mobs are moved by emotion; societies presuppose permanence and organization of membership. Moreover, in a true society we have not only a number of persons, but authority binding them together. It is by submission to authority, residing in a king, or president, or leader of some sort, that the members make a unified effort to attain the common end of the society. In other words, while the members do not lose their individuality they are subordinate to the purpose of the society. This gives rise to the distinction between ruler and subject.

### Artificial and Natural Societies

Societies may be classified as artificial and natural. In an artificial society the members enter into the fellowship of their own free will. There is no real obligation to do so. For example, if you get interested in the technical study of the stars you will soon learn that there is an International Society of Astronomers, who of their own volition have made a common fund of the findings of telescopes throughout the world.

When the bond of union is imposed by the very nature of man, the society is called natural. The basic, natural society is the family. This is so, not only from the very elements which constitute man, but also by God's appointment.<sup>1</sup> In a well ordered family the husband and father is the head of the home, the wife and mother is the heart of the home, and children as subordinate members give prompt and cheerful obedience to head and heart working in harmony.<sup>2</sup> The family is a fundamental and natural society, and constitutes the unit of the State. But the family is an imperfect fellowship in the sense that it is dependent upon the State which is a perfect natural society directed towards the temporal welfare. The family, since it is an imperfect society, should be dependent

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Genesis 1 and 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Family, *Catholic Dictionary*, p. 359.

also upon the Church, the one perfect, supernatural society which has for its sublime purpose the fulfillment of the longing which is written on the heart of every normal human being who is able to enjoy consciousness, namely, a desire for complete happiness that will never for an instant be poisoned by the fear of losing it. This is the ultimate end for which man was created. It is called union with God forever in heaven.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Function of the State**

Historically and logically the family gave rise to the State, in which such temporal advantages are developed as unassociated individuals and families would be unable to attain. In Washington you will find majestic buildings given over to the legislative, judicial and executive departments of the nation. The legislature enacts laws, the judiciary interprets the constitution and the legal enactments, and the executive branch aims to carry out the mandates of the civil government. The State, in virtue of its aim which is temporal, is inferior to the Church whose aim is eternal. If the State attempts to exercise authority in the domain of faith and morals it becomes an usurper. It is unreasonable to argue for the complete separation of Church and State even though the vast majority of the citizens belong to the Church. Indirectly the Church should promote the temporal welfare of the State by insisting that each of her members fulfill the duties of his walk in life. Moreover, the State while having direct supervision over temporal concerns should by that very fact work indirectly for the sanctification of her citizens. From this it is clearly deduced that the ideal is *not* the complete separation of Church and State, although in certain grave circumstances such a separation may be tolerated or even preferred.<sup>4</sup>

### **Definitions of Church**

If you are driving through a small village and see two buildings with spires, you may say, "There are two churches in this

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Man, *Catholic Catechism*, Gasparri, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Church and State, *Catholic Catechism*, Gasparri, p. 111.

community." Obviously you are referring to houses of worship. The word church came into our language from the Greek, *Kyriakon*, which means "belonging to the Lord." During the third century it was used to signify a Christian place of worship. As you read the New Testament you will find that the word, church, is sometimes used to signify a family of Christians (Romans xvi. 5), or to refer to the pastors (Matt. xviii. 17). Furthermore, the term has been applied by Pope Pius IX in his brief "*Arcano divinae providentiae*" (1868) to "the Bishops of the Churches of the Eastern Rite who are not in communion with the Apostolic See." By courtesy (we say this in charity) the word church is extended to Protestant religious organizations.

### Communion of Saints

In its widest sense the Church means the society of all those, whether angels or men, from our First Parents to the last man, who are united into what is called the Communion of Saints. In the plan of revelation and redemption three stages are distinguished: first, the period of the natural law, when sacrifice was offered in the light of the promise of a future Redeemer; then the Mosaic period, when the outlines of the Church became clearer in the unity of the ministry, and in its teaching power, although it was only a foreshadowing of what the Saviour was to form in the fullness of time; and finally, the foundation of the Church by Christ. The form of the Church as it was in the Old Testament did not cease to exist in our Lord by way of destruction, but by way of translation and fulfillment. The Founder said, "I am come not to destroy but to fulfill" (Matt. v. 17). This fulfillment is clearly defined when Jesus says, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church" (Matt. xvi. 17).

In the Apostles' Creed we say, "I believe in the Communion of Saints." This means that between the members of the Church in Heaven, in Purgatory, and on earth—there exists, by reason of their close union with one another under Christ, their Head, a mutual communication of spiritual riches. The

Church in the fullness of its organism outstretches the territory of time and space and includes not only those who are still on earth and constitute what is called the Church Militant, but also embraces the Saints and Angels in heaven (the Church Triumphant), as well as the souls in Purgatory (the Church Suffering). Our study turns especially towards the Church Militant, or what is usually called the Catholic Church, which may be defined as a society composed of all the faithful who profess the same Faith, use the same Sacraments, and pursue salvation under one common head, the Holy Father, who is the visible representative of Jesus Christ, the God-man who died for the salvation of all.

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### Questions

1. From what Latin word is the term, society, derived? Explain.
2. Does a flock of wild geese deserve to be called a society?
3. Would you call a mob of angry men a society?
4. Distinguish between an artificial society and one that is natural.
5. Explain the part that authority plays in a well-ordered family.
6. What is the ultimate aim of the State?
7. Define Church in its widest sense.
8. What do you mean by the Church Militant?
9. Do you approve of the complete separation of Church and State?
10. Formulate two resolutions which each member of the Study Club can carry out between now and the next meeting which have a bearing on the extending of the Kingdom of God on earth.

## THE UNITY OF THE TRUE CHURCH

CHRIST is both man and God. He claimed to be God, and He proved His claim by the fulfillment of prophecies, and by miracles, especially by the astounding miracle of rising from the dead by His own power. After the resurrection, Didymus (later called Thomas) doubted the word of those who said that they had seen the Lord. Then the Saviour came to the Apostles when Didymus was present. The Master wanted to establish beyond all doubt that His risen Body was the same Body that had hung upon the Cross. How did He do it? By showing the *marks* made by the nails and by the spear. Didymus the doubter became Thomas the faithful Apostle, and exclaimed, "My Lord and my God" (John xx. 28).

The Catholic Church is the Mystical Body of Christ.<sup>1</sup> How does it prove itself to be the one true Church? By showing certain, unmistakable *marks*. The marks enumerated by the Council of Constantinople (381) are: *unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity.*

### A Study of Unities

It is easy to discover unities. Even the lifeless rock is marked by an elementary yet tenacious unity of small particles. They are held so tightly together that it requires the sudden blow of a hammer or the slow influence of frost and rain to break the rock into the dust of which it is composed. Living organisms are strongly marked by unity. A tree is a living organism: leaves, branches, trunk and roots are all unified by a vegetative<sup>2</sup> principle of life. Man, too, is a living organism. In him there is such a multiplicity of elements, all unified in one being, that the Greek philosophers called man a little world in himself a *microcosm*. This distinguished man from the big

<sup>1</sup> By Mystical Body of Christ is meant that the members of the Church are bound together and to Christ, their Head, into a real, spiritual Body by the supernatural life of grace received in Baptism.

<sup>2</sup> By vegetative principle of life is meant the power in nature by which plants, vegetables, and trees grow.

world, or the universe, which was known as the *macrocosm*. The unifying principle in man is his rational soul, a spiritual principle which enables him to think, and to act freely, thereby marking him off from all living organisms of an inferior order, such as birds and trees. There are, moreover, unities or fellowships among men. The State is such a unity; so also is the Church.

### **God the Basis of Unity**

On earth all things should be unified in God through the Church. This statement requires much explanation, especially if it is to be made clear to all the doubting Thomases of our day. Such a unity involves sublime mysteries. Still the Catholic child accepts these profound unities which are involved in the unity of the true Church. When the small boy signs himself with the Sign of the Cross in the name of the Triune<sup>4</sup> God, these supernatural unities are implied, whether he adverts to them or not. Consider for a moment the act of blessing oneself. It is a profession of belief in the Unity and Trinity of God. In this Trinity, there is only one Godhead, and yet no one of the three Divine Persons loses identity. The Sign of the Cross bespeaks the doctrine of the Redemption which involves a divine unity, the Hypostatic<sup>5</sup> Union of God and man in Christ. Reflect upon the unity of a human being who is pleasing to God. Such a person is by grace what Christ is by nature, a child of the Eternal Father, a temple of the Holy Spirit, and united to the Triune God by the bond of Charity.

### **University President Seeks Unity**

The modern world has been ignoring these divine unities. Of late, however, it has been groping for a unified outlook upon human activity. We call to witness one who lays no claim to being a Catholic, Robert Maynard Hutchins, head of

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<sup>4</sup> Triune is a title applied to God by reason of the fact that there is one God in three Divine Persons. The term emphasizes the unity of the Divine nature, as the plurality of Persons is stressed by the term Trinity.

<sup>5</sup> Hypostasis means person, and the Hypostatic Union means the union of two distinct natures, namely, the nature of God, and the nature of man, in the one Person of Jesus Christ.



the University of Chicago. His mind is expressed in "The Higher Learning in America," published by the Yale University Press. He seeks a bird's-eye view of the universe of studies. Many specializations within medicine, law, and engineering, confront him. When he looks for something which serves to unite these highly developed enterprises, he discovers, not unity, but chaos. To quote his words:

"This is what the young man would see as he stood gazing across the threshold of higher learning. It may be briefly described as chaos."<sup>6</sup>

He continues:

"How can these things be? Why is it that the chief characteristic of the higher learning is disorder? It is because there is no ordering principle in it. . . . Real unity can be achieved only by a hierarchy of truths which shows us which are fundamental and which subsidiary, which significant and which not."<sup>7</sup>

Failing to find unity in the non-Catholic or non-universal university, he raises the further question, "Did higher learning ever enjoy unity?" Study his answer:

"The medieval university had a principle of unity. It was theology. The medieval theologians had worked out an elaborate statement in due proportion and emphasis of the truths relating to man and God, and man and nature. . . . God is the first truth and the last end. The medieval university was rationally ordered, and for its time, it was practically ordered, too."<sup>8</sup>

He is speaking of the form of learning which was fostered by the Church that bears the mark of unity: unity of doctrine, and unity of government.

The next question is: "Do educators hope for the restoration of unity in the modern university?" Hopelessness is implied in this statement:

"Theology is banned by law from some universities. It might as well be from the rest. Theology is based on revealed truth and on articles of faith. We are a faithless generation and take no stock in revelation."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *The Higher Learning in America*, Hutchins, p. 94.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

He concludes:

"If we cannot appeal to theology, we must turn to metaphysics.<sup>10</sup> Without theology or metaphysics a unified university cannot exist. Both are almost totally missing today."<sup>11</sup>

This statement, dark as it may seem, is not altogether devoid of hope. If students in modern universities who are preoccupied with secondary causes will turn to metaphysics, they may come to the conclusion which eventually confronts the true metaphysician, namely, that behind all secondary causes<sup>12</sup> is a First Cause, God. They will rediscover that learning should be unified in what is Ultimate, Absolute, and Supreme. Those who are sincerely searching for a unified interpretation of reality will find it through the true Church. In this study we must not ignore the bond of unity, which unites man to man and man to God. This bond is charity. Humanitarianism is not enough. Thomas Aquinas, the great metaphysician and Saint, says:

"But man is not to be loved for his own sake, but whatever is in man is to be loved for God's sake."<sup>13</sup>

### Incarnate Love Speaks

God is charity, and the Founder of the Church is Incarnate Love.<sup>14</sup> His words are of the highest possible authority. After instituting the Eucharist, the Divine Son burns into the minds of His disciples the supreme necessity of unity by addressing the Eternal Father:

"As thou hast sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

"And for them do I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

<sup>10</sup> In its traditional sense the term, metaphysics, means the philosophical science which treats of the most fundamental principles underlying all reality, such as being, its essential attributes, substance, and cause.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>12</sup> Secondary causes are the causes in nature which fall under direct observation. For example cold is the cause (the secondary cause) of water turning to ice. In and through all nature is the omnipresent God who is the First Cause.

<sup>13</sup> *Summa Theologica*, Part 2, p. 22, Art. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Incarnate Love means Christ. God is infinite Love or Charity, and God became man through the Incarnation. The Apostle, St. John, says, "The Word was made flesh."

"And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me:

"That they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

"And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them: that they may be one, as we also are, one:

"I in them, and thou in me: that they may be made perfect in one: and the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast also loved me."<sup>15</sup>

Four times Christ prays: "*That they may be one.*" What divine intensity! An examination of the Catholic Church discovers this mark of unity:

It is one in its Divine Founder, Christ.<sup>16</sup>

It is one in its visible head, the Pope.<sup>17</sup>

It is one in its final aim, salvation.<sup>18</sup>

It is one in its doctrine, and in its means.<sup>19</sup>

It is one in its hierarchical<sup>20</sup> government.<sup>21</sup>

To quote from a catechism:

"The Church of Christ was, by the will of the Divine Founder, to be *one* in government, faith and unity of fellowship, whereby all its members make one social body, that is the mystical body of Christ, and this despite the diversity of rites."<sup>22</sup>

Catholics who belong to the Latin rite should always keep in mind that the true Church embraces several other rites whose discipline and language may be at variance with their own.

### Further Searchings for Unity

Even those who hate the Church maintain that human beings should be unified in something. The mistake is made in thinking that rational creatures can be unified in *something*

<sup>15</sup> John xvii. 18-23.

<sup>16</sup> *Handbook of Christian Religion*, Wilmers, S.J., p. 106.

<sup>17</sup> Matt. xvi. 18. <sup>18</sup> Mark xvi. 16. <sup>19</sup> Deharbe's *Catechism*, p. 140.

<sup>20</sup> Hierarchical government refers to the totality of sacred ministers in the Church, of various and distinct grades, in which the lower is subordinate and yields to the higher.

<sup>21</sup> *Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> *The Catholic Catechism*, Gasparri, p. 100.

*less than God.* Any false means to the fulfillment of the ideal of unity moves towards one extreme or its opposite. There is the extreme of what may be called compulsion from the outside. This is a form of tyranny. It may express itself through a heartless, godless communism which finds its highest point of unity in economics, with the State regarded as supreme. The idea of compulsion as a means of fusion, rather than union, is also found in what is popularly termed the Totalitarian<sup>23</sup> State, wherein the dictator proclaims the Civil Authority to be superior to the Church. This phenomenon usually exalts race or nationality beyond bounds.<sup>24</sup> The other extreme may be called a Bloodless Brotherhood, apparently a peaceful and smiling movement, but based upon religious indifference. All over the world little groups of social-minded people are forming.<sup>25</sup> They take themselves seriously and aim at unifying the human race in good fellowship, but without including God. In fact the members are forbidden to introduce anything religious at the meetings.<sup>26</sup> All these ventures, both large and small, are bound to fail, because they seek the center of unification, not in God, but in man.

### Personal Efforts Towards Unity

Jacques Maritain, philosopher and convert, thinks that the greatest obstacle to the spread of the kingdom of God on earth is to put the blood of fallen human nature<sup>27</sup> in place of the adorable Blood of Jesus Christ. Godless fusion or unification calls down the Blood of the Saviour upon its head. The Catholic who puts nationality, or color, or social or financial position ahead of the idea that the Church is for all to the ex-

<sup>23</sup> A Totalitarian State is one in which the civil government is held to be so utterly supreme, that it should dominate every form of human activity.

<sup>24</sup> Pius XI warns the world against racism or exaggerated nationalism.

<sup>25</sup> "The One and Only Church," Pamphlet No. 61, Sunday Visitor Press.

<sup>26</sup> *The Framework of a Christian State*, Cahill, S.J., p. 238.

In this volume, *Rotary International*, the Esperanto Association and the Friends of Israel are referred to as forms of "White Masonry" whose immediate objects may be good, but whose ultimate ideals foster secularism, indifference to religion and false internationalism.

<sup>27</sup> In one Totalitarian State the name of the Divine Child was removed from the Christmas hymn, Holy Night, and in its place was inserted the name of the nation. This is a clear example of an attempt to introduce the adoration of fallen human nature as expressed in the State.

clusion of none, works against the notion of one fold and one Shepherd. The faithful should always seek a share in the apostolic work of unifying the world in God. In what way? First of all by developing a closer personal union with God through grace. Members of a Club studying the marks of the Church are apostles of unity when they strive for further sanctification through prayer, self-denial and the fruitful use of the Sacraments.

"I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called. . . .

"Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

"One body and one Spirit; as you are called in one hope of your calling.

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all."<sup>28</sup>

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### Questions

1. Tell the story of Didymus the doubter.
2. What are the marks of the Church? By what Council proclaimed?
3. What is requisite for unity in a tree? In a man?
4. Enumerate three divine unities.
5. In what should a university curriculum be unified?
6. Can you give the main ideas of Christ's prayer for unity?
7. Explain the unity of the true Church.
8. Is there a search for unity going on in the chaotic, modern world?
9. What is your personal duty in the present struggle for unity?
10. Give two lessons to be drawn from the appeal for unity written by St. Paul to the Ephesians (iv. 1-6).

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<sup>28</sup> St. Paul to Ephesians, iv. 1, 3-6.

## THE HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH

### The Person of Greatest Worth

SUPPOSE you were to say to a modern high school student, "Who, in your estimation, is the person of greatest worth in any community?" The answer of one may be, "I would say the statesman whose political prowess can lead us out of our social confusion." Another may answer, "I choose the great artist whose creative genius can produce a masterpiece in marble, or color, or words, that will tend to ennoble the race." A third may calmly say, "I consider the physical scientist to be the person of greatest worth, especially the one whose untiring research gives rise to an antitoxin that can stamp out epidemics which have cost the lives of millions."

Are any of these answers satisfactory to you? Perhaps you would like to formulate an answer of your own. Suppose you pause for a moment and do so, before reading further. Now that you have made up your mind, we shall consult one who is not to be charged with special pleading in our field of discussion. Dr. Alexis Carrel is an investigator of the Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research, and a winner of the Nobel Prize. He has written a book entitled, *Man the Unknown*. The drift of the volume is in line with the educational observations of the President of Chicago University as set forth in *The Higher Learning in America*. He writes that for years man has been the special object of scientific study. Many specializations have developed. But when the simple question is asked, "What is man?" the answer given is often either incorrect or incomplete. Then he implies that when the true nature of man has been learned, and the query arises, "Who is the man of greatest worth?" the right answer will be that the person of greatest worth is not the statesman, as such, nor the artist, nor the scientist, but the one who has developed the highest degree of moral beauty, the Saint. He does not

hesitate to say that the Catholic Church recognizes this important fact.<sup>1</sup> We are not endorsing all the contents of the book nor is this testimony introduced because an empirical scientist is conceived as being habitually adept in passing judgment on ethical matters. It is done rather to reveal that the skepticism and unbelief which some students think must necessarily accompany the scientific attitude, is giving way to the recognition of an order that is higher than the order of nature, namely, the supernatural.<sup>2</sup>

### Holiness the Aim of the Church

If it is conceded that the Saint is the person of greatest worth, the loftiest desire of all human beings should be to develop holiness. True holiness is not incompatible with lowly occupations. Christ Himself was a carpenter. As a matter of fact, sanctity is the one vocation to which all are called. "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess. iv. 3). The aim of the true Church is man's sanctification here, in order that he may attain eternal joy hereafter. Without demanding that everybody should retire into a monastery, the Church provides the means of becoming holy. There should be no hesitancy in entrusting oneself to the Church whose work is of divine appointment. It is an exceeding privilege to become a member of the mystical body of Christ, the Church.

### The Nature of Personal Holiness

Since holiness is the one common proficiency to which all are called, another question arises, "What is holiness?" Sanctity is a synonym for holiness. It is interesting to note that the word, holy, is given the same sound as the word, *wholly*. To be holy is to be *wholesome*, and to be wholesome in a religious sense man should be united to something else. To what? To the very source and center of sanctity—God. The

<sup>1</sup> *Man the Unknown*, Carrel, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Compton, another Noble Prize winner, in his book, *The Freedom of Man*, argues for the existence of moral responsibility to a Supreme Power.

Triune God, being infinitely perfect, is infinitely holy. When a person in this world is united to God by sanctifying grace, that person shares in the very life of God, and deserves to be called holy. When serious sin cuts this bond between the creature and the Creator, the unity or wholesomeness is destroyed, and the soul is said to be spiritually dead. By being holy the natural life of man is not destroyed but elevated and ennobled. The power of personal choice enters into this discussion. Think of how you can use your free will: you can give it *wholly* to God, and that leads to the heights of holiness (the proficiency of the Saints); or you can yield it to God, but *not* wholly (which is the road to spiritual mediocrity); or you can reject God altogether by serious sin, which produces unholiness. If you die without sanctifying grace you are lost forever.<sup>3</sup>

### The Church Is Holy

We should spend our greatest energies to acquire not fame or riches, but holiness. It does not matter who says this. It is true. Scientists, artists, statesmen, as well as obscure toilers, all should understand that they are called to holiness. Holiness is a matter of universal importance and the all-holy God, before whom the Angels sing, "Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus," provides a normal means to develop holiness. This means is the true Church. The true Church can be known because it bears the mark of holiness. The Catechism says that the Church is holy in its Founder, Christ; in its unblemished teaching; in its life-giving Sacraments; in its worship (especially in the most holy Sacrifice of the Mass); and in many of its members.<sup>4</sup>

It has already been pointed out that man to be holy must be joined in some way to God, the source of holiness. The aim of the Church is to bring about this union of creature with the Creator. "Christ loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it that He might sanctify it" (Eph. v. 25, 26).

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<sup>3</sup> *A Map of Life*, F. J. Ward, p. 67, Sheed & Ward.

<sup>4</sup> *The Catechism Explained*, Spirago-Clarke, p. 243.



### Twofold Function of Redemption

An elementary study of Christian doctrine and practice will make clear that the redemptive function of the Church is twofold:

1. The Church brings God to man by the Sacraments.
2. The Church brings man to God by teaching and preaching.

Consider the first function, the Church bringing God to man by the sacramental system. Interesting studies can be developed in this area alone. What a mysterious union is affected when the Triune God comes to dwell in a human being through Baptism, the gateway to the Church! Chesterton, who was constantly crusading in the cause of the holy Church which he had entered by conversion, thoughtfully told Bernard Shaw who was hoping for a life span of 250 years on earth, that when the water of Baptism is poured on the head of an infant, the little child becomes 2,000 years old! How inspiring to contemplate a child in our own day being adopted into the Holy Family, and becoming by grace entitled to call Mary, Mother! Or, to introduce another implication, we may say that when an old man is baptized he becomes a child of God. Our Saviour tells us that we cannot get into heaven unless we become like unspoiled children. Unspoiled children are wholesome. Moreover, contemplate God being brought to man in the sacrament of Love, the Eucharist! The mark of holiness shines also in the sacrament of Penance, whereby the life of God is restored to a person dead in sin, or made more abundant if the penitent is already enjoying the friendship of the Almighty. Consider also the process of redemption as it sanctifies society through the sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders.

Not only does the Church bring God to man through the Sacraments, but it brings man to God by teaching and preaching.<sup>5</sup> The appealing eloquence of St. Francis de Sales is said to have been the occasion of such torrents of grace that 70,000

<sup>5</sup> *The Spirit of Catholicism*, Karl Adam, p. 193.

Calvinists entered the Church that is marked by holiness. Good books, and intelligent conversation, and good example, all these prompt human beings to think, to pray, and eventually to go to God. One old newspaper, containing a sermon on the true Church, worked its way to Newton Grove, North Carolina, and is calculated to have led to the conversion of 1,000 people in a village where there had not been one Catholic. Even this small pamphlet may be put into the hands of an earnest inquirer and serve to lead the reader to God. Surely you will not confine your study of the true Church to the mere examination of Christian Doctrine. A zealous student will study ways and means for making the Apostolic spirit bear upon those who are searching for the right road to salvation. (It might be entertaining for a mathematician to work out an answer to this question: If 100,000 Catholics in the United States were to make one convert each during the year, and then they and each of their converts were to repeat the process, how many years would have to roll over our heads before all the people in the country belong to the Church that enjoys the mark of holiness?)

### **Unholiness Among Catholics**

We must be frank in granting that there would be more conversions if there were less unholiness among Catholics. Bad Catholics in high positions are a special source of disedification. The person who refuses to enter the Church because he can point to unworthy members of the Church refuses to make a distinction between the holiness of the doctrine and unholiness of the one who professes but violates the doctrine. An unbeliever may be a sober man, and a Catholic may be a drunkard. What are we to say? Simply this: the unbeliever is better than his principles, and the Catholic is worse than his. Our Lord said, "It must be that scandals come, but woe to him by whom scandal cometh" (Matt. xviii. 7). Scandals in the Church are part of the general problem of evil. Human nature is not to be trusted because it is in a fallen condition. Our enemies are: the flesh, the devil, and the world (so-

ciety organized apart from God). We must be always on guard. "He that trusteth himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). In trying to develop holiness the ideal is not a mere abstraction, but Christ, true God and true man, who gives us the example that we may follow in His steps.

### The Patron Saint of Men Doomed to Die

It is a mistake to think that the sole labor of the holy Catholic Church is to hold the faith in the faithful, and to guard the virtue of the virtuous. That protective influence is commendable, but Christ came to call, not the just, but sinners to repentance, and the Church must carry on His work. Murder is a shocking crime; still it is consoling to hear that among those condemned to die in Sing Sing, nearly 25 per cent of the non-Catholics enter the Church before they enter the death chamber.<sup>6</sup> The only Saint who was canonized before he died was a thief who hung upon a cross. He looked to the all-holy Saviour and prayed, "Master, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." The Sacred Heart of Christ was moved. How distinctly we remember the words of pardon: "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43). May there be no irreverence in our saying that the repentant thief seemed to steal his way into heaven by one little act of perfect contrition.<sup>7</sup> Dismas (the good thief) is the patron Saint of those condemned to die. Are we not *all* doomed to die by virtue of being children of Adam? St. Dismas, pray for us, that we may be holy, that we may do something to extend the holy kingdom of God, and at length that through your prayers and the intercession of St. Joseph, we may enjoy the grace of a happy death.

<sup>6</sup> *Spurs to Conversion*, Betowski, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Members of a Discussion Club who wish to be doers of the word and not hearers only can foster holiness by prompting those who are ill to make acts of perfect contrition. Study the effect of one such act even upon a person who has never been baptized with water. Become interested in a means of assisting well-meaning non-Catholics to die a happy death. Particulars may be obtained by writing to the "Apostolate to Assist the Dying," Compton Road, Hartwell, Cincinnati, Ohio.

**Questions**

1. Defend your choice of the person of greatest worth.
2. What are the proximate and ultimate aims of the Church?
3. Is there a common vocation for people in all walks in life? Quote Sacred Scripture.
4. Explain the use which man may make of his will.
5. In what does personal holiness consist?
6. Why is the true Church called holy?
7. State, with examples, the twofold redemptive function of the Church in developing holiness.
8. Why does a person who is in the state of grace deserve to be regarded as a member of the Holy Family?
9. Discuss the sanctifying influence of Baptism, and the Eucharist.
10. Can a person be saved without Baptism of water?
11. What specific recommendation do you think Christ would make for fostering personal holiness?
12. What suggestion can be carried out by all Catholics for fostering the entrance of others into the Church?

## THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH

### A Curious Compliment

A CERTAIN priest conducted a public Novena at the Convent of Mary Reparatrix in Detroit. His sermons were developed under the general heading, "Philosophy of Suffering." At the close of the devotions a person came forward and said, "O Father, I am so sorry that it is all over. Your sermons should go on and on." The priest smiled, thinking that his preaching had influenced at least one soul in the congregation. Precisely so, but not in the manner surmised, as disclosed in this explanation, "You know, Father, I have been suffering from insomnia, and for weeks could get no rest. It was such a relief to sleep during your sermons!" Seldom are compliments so free from human respect.

Unfortunately there are millions in the modern world who look upon preaching as a sleep-inducer in no benign sense. Since they hate religion, they would do away with preaching once and for all. Lenin of Russia, following Marx, said, "Religion is opium for the people. Our propaganda necessarily includes the propaganda of atheism." (By saying that religion is "opium for the people" the accusation implies that any doctrine of charity or resignation makes the worker numb, or at least reconciled, to the social injustices which are crushing him. The Encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI on social questions clearly reveal that charity and the spirit of penance are not discordant with an insistence upon the promotion of justice in political and industrial life.)

A swift survey of Communism shows that in rejecting all religion that points to heaven, it aims to substitute what may be called a religion that points to earth. In this new world view wherein economics is taken to determine all things, Marx is honored as the inspired writer, Lenin, as the prophet and savior, and the Soviet State as the supreme and holy society. If you visit the tomb of Lenin in Moscow, you will observe on the part of his followers a reverence that is akin to religious awe.

Do not be shocked if someone who knows all this should ask, "Has the Catholic Church anything in common with Com-

munism?" Certainly nothing in common with the contention that all reality begins and ends with time. Nothing in common with the gospel of hate which leads to the burning of churches, the murdering of priests and Sisters, and the starvation of millions of peasants! Perhaps the question may be more clearly presented by asking, "Is there anything for which the Communists are searching that can be found in the true Church?" Long ago Tertullian said that the human heart is naturally Christian. It will not do to maintain that the hearts of Communists are naturally inhuman. It is heresy to contend that human nature is corrupt to the core. Since the time of Martin Luther an ever-increasing number of people have tried to think as they please, and to do as they please, living on the assumption that religion rests only on private opinion. They are now the victims of innumerable conflicts, and are crushed beneath the weight of dissatisfactions which involve industry, political endeavor, and education. Is it not natural that they should search for something that will bind together a world that is falling apart, something that will transcend the narrow boundaries of states and principalities? Groping for what is beyond and above national barriers, they may be easily captivated by the title: "The Third Internationale of Moscow." (They may even center their hopes in "Rotary International" as a means of inaugurating a worldwide fellowship.) We now come to a pertinent question, "When the human heart throbs with a desire for something that is international or supranational, is not that an implied searching for what is to be found in the true Church, namely *Catholicity*, or *universality*?" And if there is in the heart of man an impulse to obtain what is enduringly good, a longing for complete happiness, is it not the duty of those who belong to the Church which is the normal means to so happy an end, to respond to the command of Christ saying, "Going therefore, teach ye all nations"? Of course the mandate concerned the Apostles directly, but the Holy Father has frequently insisted that the laity should seek an active and obedient share in the work of the apostolate. In brief, it is our duty, not to denounce Communists, but to convert them. The

first law of the Church founded by Christ is the law of love. Hate error, but love the erring. Denounce sin, but direct charity towards the sinner. Charity aims to reach around the world. The Church on earth is the mystical body of Incarnate Charity.

### The Nature of Catholicity

Unfortunately, many look upon the Catholic Church as a sect, as merely one of the several denominations. Catholic schools in this country have come to be known as parochial schools, and public schools are called non-sectarian. If the word "Catholic" (derived from a Greek term) means "universal," and if what is universal cannot be sectarian, then in a wholesome sense it is the Catholic school that is truly *non-sectarian*. The Catholic Church is for all, to the exclusion of none, not on the compromising terms of fallible men, but according to the principles of the infallible Divine Teacher who is the author and finisher of our faith. "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15).

Consider the varying aspects of Catholicity. The true Church is catholic in point of time: it was catholic or universal from the beginning. On Pentecost, the birthday of the Church, St. Peter preached and "they therefore that received His word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand" (Acts ii. 41). Among those to receive the waters of regeneration were "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia" (Acts ii. 9) and other countries from afar. Is not universality visible at once?

The Church is also catholic in regard to *doctrine*. The Apostles were fully aware that when the Saviour sent them forth to baptize all nations, He added "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 20).

In the light of what has already been shown, it should be clear that the Church is catholic in regard to *all mankind*. After the Apostles heard the words, "Going therefore, teach ye

all nations," they actually went into lands afar. Otherwise St. Paul would not have written, "Yes, verily, their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world" (Romans x. 18). This implies a universality of *place*. If you have traveled around the world you no doubt are happy to tell that you heard Mass in every strange land which you visited. You saw with your own eyes the fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachias writing, "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered in my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles, said the Lord of hosts" (Mal. i. 10, 11). Mary Magdalen was told of the universality of the Church when the Master said that wherever the Gospel is preached in the whole world, her name would be spoken (Matt. xxvi. 13). All through this valley of tears where sin is so frequently found, the Church is also to be found, thereby giving witness to the mercy of Jesus. "You shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8).

### Explanation of Rites

Catholicity presupposes unity. It may be said to include it. But unity is not disturbed by accidental differences. Catholics who are accustomed to attend the Latin Mass are occasionally confused when they hear of other languages being used, and other ceremonies employed at the Holy Sacrifice. This prompts us to pause for a brief survey of rites. The word "rite" may have several meanings:

1. Any religious function, as the rite of Baptism.
2. A group of several functions (*e. g.*, the "last rites" reference being to the Sacraments of Penance, Viaticum, and Extreme Unction).
3. A collection of services used in public worship, or a group of Churches, *e. g.*, the Roman Rite.

The different prayers, actions, languages and customs used in the amplification of fundamentals distinguish the rites, in



this last sense. Nine rites are recognized by the Catholic Church:

1. The Latin (including variants),
2. The Chaldean,
3. The Byzantine,
4. The Abyssinian,
5. The Armenian,
6. The Coptic,
7. The Malabar,
8. The Maronite,
9. The Syrian.

It is to be noted that all these with the exception of the Latin and the Maronite are used also by Christians who are no longer Catholics. In addition to what has been outlined, some religious communities have what are called their own rites, *e. g.*, the Benedictines, Carmelites, Cistercians, Dominicans, and others. (You may have observed the divergence of rubrics when Mass is said by a Dominican Father. The point to keep clearly in mind is this: provided there is unity of faith, diversity of rite does not disturb Catholicity.)

### **The Roman Catholic Church**

A difficulty is sometimes made to circle around the expression, "Roman Catholic." It is feared that the word "Roman" restricts in some way the idea of universality. The term "Roman" simply refers to the center of authority. It is like the difference between the center of a circle and the circumference. The city of Rome, where the Holy Father lives, is the center of the Church, and the universality, the Catholicity, is the circumference of the Church.

### **The Branch Theory**

Some High Church Anglicans, who wish to be called Catholics, have advanced the Branch Theory. It maintains that the full scope of the word "Catholic" includes three great

groups: Anglicans, Greeks and Romans. These combined are said to constitute the Catholic Church in its full sense. As already intimated, this would be an incorrect conception of Catholicity because the Church, to be truly Catholic, must be marked by unity. There is no room for real unity in the Branch Theory inasmuch as heresy is harbored in the Anglican denomination, and at least schism is to be found among the so-called Orthodox Greeks who refuse to look to the Pope as the head of the Church. Moreover, if the argument were valid, then a controversialist could propose a Church that would include even more members than the Branch Theory. He could say: "One religion is as good as another, and hence the Church which is truly Catholic includes Christian Scientist, Quaker, Jew, Gentile, Moslem and all. This provides for a wider range of Catholicity than is introduced by the Branch Theory." Such hypotheses, because of ignoring a truly unifying principle, tend to rob truth of its dignity.

### **The Search for Catholicity**

It is well to admit that the modern world is groping for something that will be satisfactory to all, and it may be maintained that the mere tendency in itself is wholesome and encouraging. But the ideals presented fill us with fear, lest we fail to vindicate the true Church as the only supranational society which can serve the purpose. Radio, the motion pictures, and the modern press—all tend to secularize society, and to crush out religion from modern life, not necessarily, but because of the weight of public expression which has been largely circumscribed by time and space. Modern man really needs something Catholic, but his philosophy of life, his world view, has been vitiated. In this country we observe the bourgeois idealism of the Rotarians and similar groups who are convinced that they have a formula for catholicizing and unifying the divergent elements of mankind; in Germany there flourishes the racial idealism of the Nazis; and in Russia the proletarian idealism of the Communists animates an experiment on a large and violent scale. Each form aims to control

the whole of life. The race to universalize and to unify is on.<sup>1</sup> The world (society organized apart from God) would turn the term "Catholic" towards the universal worship of humanity; but the Church (society organized in God) is already truly Catholic, even though millions plan its utter destruction. The intense light of a strong Catholicity glowing in the creed and conduct of the courageous Catholic serves to illuminate the city that is seated on a mountain. As for fear—"the gates of hell shall not prevail" (Matt. xvi. 18).

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### Questions

1. Discuss Lenin's charge that religion is "opium for the people."
2. Has the Catholic Church made certain observations which are in common with observations of Communism?
3. When a social movement takes itself so seriously that it aims to be a world-movement, what mark of the Church does it try to appropriate to itself?
4. If our Lord were in direct charge of a Catholic school, do you think that He would allow only Catholic students to register?
5. When a Catholic college excludes colored students solely because of color, does that college clearly exemplify the Catholicity of the Church?
6. Explain the meaning of the word "rite."
7. Why do not divergencies of rite mar the unity, and hence the Catholicity of the Church?
8. Would not the Church be more universal if it were just "catholic" instead of "Roman Catholic"?
9. Name one book which serves to show the position of religion in the modern world?
10. In what way does a crowded Communion rail reveal the Catholicity of the true Church?

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Religion and the Modern State*, Dawson, Sheed & Ward.

## THE TRUE CHURCH IS APOSTOLIC

### The News of a Newsstand

THE modern newsstand refutes the old saying that one side of the world doesn't know what is happening on the other side. Through the mysterious use of wires, and through the more mysterious use of wireless, the joys and anxieties of the human race are almost instantaneously reported in the newspaper. Some are tempted to surmise that the newspapers are so wonderful that they present the news before it happens. (If you are near the source of distribution you can buy the Sunday newspaper on Saturday night!) The scorn which moderns have for a newspaper that is one day old indicates how little they wish to recall the scandals, the political changes, the catastrophes, and obituaries hastily scanned a few hours ago. There are so many facts constantly bombarding their minds that they scarcely have time to think by way of reflection. They let other people do their thinking for them. The worried business man confesses that he reads the newspaper to keep himself from thinking.

This is not altogether an attack upon the newsstand, but rather a stand taken in defense of news in the sense that it *may* start reflection in a thoughtful person. Reflection is often consequent upon discovery. All discoveries constitute news, sometimes very good news. Bear with the supposition about to be developed. We suppose that a professor, marked for a Soviet purge, has escaped from Russia, and is walking through Times Square. Coming to a newsstand he buys a copy, not of a newspaper, but of an Almanac.<sup>1</sup> By chance he turns to a page whereon is reprinted the Declaration of Independence. He learns that in 1776 the United States of America came into being dedicated to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," and that George Washington was the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Turning to God*, Betowski, p. 178.

first President. In his reflection he asks, "Does the nation founded then exist now?" Turning to another page he comes upon a list entitled, "Presidents of the United States." The name, Roosevelt, at the end of the list, goes in unbroken line to Washington at the beginning. Accepting the data as authentic, his question is answered, and he concludes that the United States of America today *is* the United States of 1776. To exemplify fruitful reflection, we think of the thoughtful professor deciding to take out citizenship papers in order that America may become his land by adoption.

This is not fanciful in the sense of being fantastic. No step is outside the circle of possibility. To continue, we now imagine the professor reflecting upon this question, "If the well-ordered State promotes temporal well-being, is there not a society which promotes what is enduringly good?" He grants that at the time of Christ there was such a society, called the Church. Moreover, he knows that the Catholic Church of today claims to be identical with the Church founded by Christ, asserting that Pius XI is the successor of St. Peter. Preoccupied with test-tubes and microscopes, he never took time to investigate the claim. Now life has become his laboratory, and the evidence under consideration is biological by way of being historical. He knows that his study can be objective. The Almanac is merely a compilation of cold facts and statistics, and was not printed to plead the cause of any religion. But he knows that valid conclusions can be drawn from reliable information. He consults the alphabetical index for the word, "Popes," and turns to the appointed page. There he finds a list of over 260 names, ending with Pius XI and going back and back until it comes to the first name, Peter, to whom, he recalled, Christ said, "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18). His conclusion is simple, and necessary: the Catholic Church of today *is* Apostolic, since it is identical with the Church founded by Christ upon the Apostles with Peter as the head. Conversion and further reading reveal that this Apostolic Church is dedicated to the spiritual life, and to the liberty

which arises from the spirit of the Lord, and to the pursuit of eternal happiness. To such a charter, he is convinced, every reasonable man *should* subscribe. We conceive of the professor praying. Grace comes, and we picture him entering the Apostolic Church through Baptism, thereby becoming a fellow citizen with the Saints.

### Points for the Study of Newman

Perhaps you are annoyed by the introduction of a fictitious character. Would it not be better to choose a great historical figure, such as Newman? Well, if you are not acquainted with him already, you can sharpen the spirit of study by consulting the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. You can vitalize the newsstand story by studying the article printed under his name. As you read, allow your reflections to be guided by these observations:

1. Newman became dissatisfied with his religious position as an Anglican minister.
2. He read Sacred Scripture devoutly, and studied the history of the Christian religion, especially as expressed in the writings of the Fathers.
3. He became convinced of the necessity of dogma, and an Apostolic Church which can make dogma trustworthy.
4. He prayed. (Read the inspiring hymn which he composed, beginning with the words, "Lead, kindly light, amid encircling gloom.")
5. He lived in seclusion at Littlemore, and Father Dominic, a Passionist, received him into the Catholic Church in 1845.
6. Then there were forty fruitful years in the priesthood to which he was ordained in 1846, culminating in his elevation to the Cardinalate by Leo XIII.
7. Through his writings, and under the influence of the Oxford Movement, many have entered the Apostolic Church. His ideas may be found in a splendid array of books which have earned for him a position among the great masters of style. (Read at least passages from his "Idea of a University," or from the "Apologia." His heart throbbing with such impulses as Dante enjoyed, may be found in his poetic masterpiece, "The Dream of Gerontius.")

### The Nature of Apostolicity

The mark of Apostolicity is not only a sure mark of the true Church, but a mark that is most easily examined. It simply refers to that Apostolic succession by which the Catholic Church of today is one with the Church of the Apostles. With the consistency of the imaginary professor, and with the prayerful patience of the historical example of Newman, all who seek rest in a restless world are invited to examine the Catholic Church.

1. *In origin* the true Church is Apostolic, because it goes back to Christ, who chose the Apostles, and clearly stated that He was founding a Church with Peter as its first head. His words, as already quoted, are unmistakable, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Not only was it made Apostolic, but it will continue Apostolic to the end of time. It *must* be in existence today. Apostolicity of origin is one of the ways of recognizing it.

2. *In doctrine* the true Church is Apostolic. All over the world Catholics express their Apostolic belief by reciting the Apostles' Creed. History reveals that all attempts to break this Apostolic continuity by heresy, or by schism, or by violent persecution, have been unsuccessful.<sup>2</sup> The unflinching teaching authority of Peter and his successors have kept the links in the doctrinal chain intact.

3. *In its mission* the true Church is Apostolic. Christ said, "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you" (John xx. 21). In other words, the Church goes back to the Apostles in doctrine and in foundation, and its *going back* (as well as its going forward) is *authorized, divinely sanctioned, and valid*. This Apostolic chain simply *cannot* be broken. We must not question the prophetic voice of the Saviour saying, "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" (Matt. xxviii. 20).

<sup>2</sup> *Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae Fundamentalis*, Tanqueray, Vol. I, p. 506.

### Old Yet Ever Youthful

Returning to the newsstand, it is good to note that the very word "Gospel" means "good news." What news could be better than to let the descendants of Adam know that God became man, and founded a Church which is the normal means to salvation? The advance news of the birth of the Saviour was published by Angels singing over the hills of Judea. Even when a thing is very old its discovery deserves to be called news. Radium was one of the elements of nature all along. Its discovery was scientific news. The Church was already old when Newman came upon the good news that it is the true Church. Truth may be old, but it is marked by undying youth. The rules of grammar have respect for the youthful vitality of truth. One rule, regulating the tense of a verb, reads: "Statements *permanently true* should be put in the *present tense*." The Apostolicity of the Church is permanently true. The Catholic Church *is* Apostolic. It is permanently true that, under one aspect, good Catholics may be said to be 2,000 years old because by grace and adoption, they *are* members of the Holy Family. And, in another sense, they retain their youth, because they *are* children of God.

### The Voice of Sacred Scripture

Sacred Scripture abounds in words of encouragement. We are urged to cling to the chain which binds us to Apostolic faith and practice even though it may cost our lives. "Hold the form of such words which thou hast heard from me in faith and in love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. i. 13). We must not waver. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. i. 8). Furthermore, St. Paul wants the undistorted good news to ring around the world. "And the things which thou hast heard from me by many witnesses, the same commend to the faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also" (2 Tim. ii. 2).



### The Fathers on Apostolicity

The good news of the Apostolic character of the Church was republished by the Fathers. Listen to St. Irenaeus: "Wherefore we must obey the priests of the Church, who have succession from the Apostles." Study the words of St. Clement: "Christ was sent by God, and the Apostles by Christ." Accept the warning against breaking the Apostolic chain uttered by St. Cyprian: "Novatianus is not in the Church, nor can he be considered a bishop, because in contempt of Apostolic tradition he was ordained by himself without succeeding anyone." All sects that reject the Episcopate, by that very fact, cut themselves off from Apostolic succession. Anglican Orders are invalid, but even if they were valid the Anglican Church would not be Apostolic in a full sense because *jurisdiction* is essential to Apostolicity of mission and ministry.

### Getting the Good News Into the Newspapers

While the mark of Apostolicity is an external sign, we feel impelled to introduce some reference to the invisible Apostolic spirit which ought to enliven the life of a true Catholic. Return to the newsstand. A secular newspaper aims to gather all the news, even religious news, and for that reason prints a religious column on Monday to set forth the substance of the sermons delivered on Sunday. If you read these accounts you will see that the reporter reports mainly what he calls matters of news value. The sermon has special news value if the speaker has denounced somebody in person. But, strange to say (or perhaps not strange) the good news of Sacred Scripture is almost invariably ignored. For example, if the preacher says that Christ appeared in a dream to a psychiatrist in Washington, that would be called news, but if he were to set forth Christian doctrine to the effect that Christ *is really present* in every city where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, that would be omitted on the score that it is not news. And yet millions of people who read the daily papers have yet to know the good news of the Real Presence.

The question arises, "How are we going to get the good

news into the newspapers?" It has been maintained that when Catholic life becomes sufficiently full and Apostolic it will flow over into the regular news items of the newspaper. An example: There lived in the Grand Hotel in New York a Catholic servant. She was there for nearly half a century. Her memory went back to the time when Henry Ford occupied an inexpensive room, because he did not have many dollars to his name. What was her proficiency? Simply to do her work well and graciously, and (this we must not omit) to go every day to Mass and to receive Holy Communion at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi. One morning she did not appear. She had died during the night. So struck were the reporters by her life of faith and faithfulness that a large account of her seemingly unaccountable career appeared on the front page of the metropolitan newspapers. The reporters were not trying to be pious in their expressions. Their stories were excellent examples of effortless and therefore, artistic writing. They had caught a glimpse of real news value as it glowed in the remarkable regularity of a life that responded humbly to a doctrine and an inspiration that reached back to Christ and the Apostles. The conclusion: we Catholics must strive to be Apostolic in *conduct* as well as in creed.

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### Questions

1. Make clear the meaning of "Gospel."
2. Evaluate the modern secular newspaper.
3. What is meant by the Apostolicity of the Church?
4. Using an almanac, show how you would prove to a non-Catholic that the Church is Apostolic.
5. Trace some of the transitions to be observed in the conversion of Newman.

6. How would you answer an adversary who maintains that only that is true which is new, and who thinks that the Church is useless because it is old? <sup>3</sup>
7. State the position of St. Paul in relation to the permanence of Apostolic doctrine.
8. What do the writings of the Fathers reveal in relation to Apostolicity? Quote St. Clement.
9. Explain one way in which you think that the Apostolic spirit can be revived.
10. Relate a personal experience which shows the importance of being Apostolic in conduct as well as in creed.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Catholic Church and Conversion*, Chesterton, p. 15.

## THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

### Reading the Bible

WE shall begin with personal experience. A Methodist woman is interviewing a priest. She is curious about the claims of the Catholic religion. In a frank tone of voice she says, "Speaking of Sacred Scripture, I have come to the conclusion that the Catholics in the office where I work know far less about the Bible than I do." The priest deliberates for a moment, and then gives answer, "If you mean that you are able to quote many texts, and to recite certain Psalms by heart, and to describe characters found in the Old Testament, I am ready to admit that you know much more about the Bible than most Catholics do. But in another, and more important sense, I must defend the statement that an old Catholic woman who has never learned how to read, but who practices her faith, knows more about the Bible, far more, than you do." A veiled expression of resentment crosses her countenance. The priest continues, "An old Catholic woman, who may be illiterate in a formal sense, but who shuffles around the Stations of the Cross, is reading with compassionate heart that portion of the New Testament which speaks of the passion and death of our Lord. When she goes to confession she is entering most intimately into the holy narrative wherein we find the Master's words, 'Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them.' At Mass she is present at the Sacrifice of Calvary, now renewed in an unbloody manner. And in receiving Holy Communion she becomes a companion of the disciples to whom Christ said, 'Take ye, and eat. This is my body.' Do you not grant that in a deep and vital sense, this old woman who can neither read nor write knows more about the Bible than you do?" He waits for an answer. There is a pause. A struggle is going on within a mind long hampered by prejudice. Then comes the conviction, liberated by lowliness, "*I do.*"

This little story is not told for the purpose of defending

any carelessness on the part of Catholics who seldom turn the pages of the Bible. It is to be granted that while there never has been a general prohibition against the reading of the Bible by the laity, there were, during the thirteenth century, a number of local restrictions which the Church introduced against the use of vernacular versions, because of the danger of misinterpreting certain texts which were being popularized by a dangerous heresy known as Catharism, a general name for dualistic sects who said that there are two supreme principles: a principle of good, and a supreme principle of evil who created the material world and is coexistent with the supreme principle of good. Against the reading of approved translations in any language, there are no restrictions at the present time. On the contrary, the faithful are encouraged to read the word of God in their own language, by the granting of indulgences, notably those published by Pope Pius X in 1914 for members of associations for the promotion of the reading of the Gospels.

### **The Church and the Bible**

In a matter so tremendously important as salvation, the Church constantly maintains a balance, a sense of proportion, a respect for logic. First of all, the Church antedates the completion of the Bible. The doctrines of the Church do not need any Scriptural text for their warrant; dogmas are believed not because they are contained in the Bible, but on the authority of God who teaches mankind through the Church which He founded. The inspiration of the Bible is itself a dogma resting on the teaching authority of the Church divinely sanctioned and protected against error. The general historical trustworthiness of Sacred Scripture is ascertained by purely historical methods. In brief, it may be said that Holy Scripture is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, and to instruct in justice, but the direct reading of it is not necessary to salvation, nor is the Bible the only or the direct rule of a Christian's faith. The unailing teaching authority of the Church is the direct rule. Sacred Scripture and tradition are the joint source of revelation.

### Cardinal Franzelin on Authority

There is a treatise on Divine Tradition and Scripture that is considered a classic. It was written by Cardinal Franzelin (1816-86), a devout and scholarly dogmatic theologian who explained the doctrines of the Church for 22 years in the Roman College. Study his words:

"The book which Christ wrote was the Apostles, a book written not in ink, but with the Holy Ghost, who gave to the Apostles all authority, all power, and jurisdiction in the Church. He appointed them to rule, to teach, and to sanctify the faithful."—Scrip. et Trad. Th. iv.

### Chaos and Calm

Many in the modern world are caught in that current which accepts nothing for certain except what comes through the authority of the senses. In the more advanced forms of skepticism the senses themselves are not considered trustworthy witnesses. This soon leads to the conclusion that the intellect can never know things as they really are. Hence, the drift towards mental confusion in man's subjective states, and constant chaos in his external dealings as expressed in political and economic life. At the bottom of the complexities which surround such elementary matters as food, clothing and shelter, which had led to the bewildering condition of poverty in the midst of abundance, Pope Pius XI finds one thing—greed. The fundamental problem, then, is *spiritual bankruptcy*. The question arises, "How is greed to be rooted out of the hearts of men?" His answer is, "We must begin by touching the consciences of men." This necessitates the recognition of moral law, and submission to an external authority, vested with power to teach, to sanctify, and to govern. While many drift towards the utter rejection of all such authority, it is consoling to observe that there is another current of human beings moving towards peace and spiritual security offered by the Church of Him who said "Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28).

If doubt and denial frequently develop into a psychological whirlwind, certainty, such as follows the acceptance of a dependable teaching authority, can effect a great calm. At this point those who glory in what they choose to call "free thought" may say that the person who accepts the Church as an authority in matters of faith and morals, will have to stop thinking altogether. On the contrary, mystery should feed the mind, and the convert who responds to the sublime verities which are found in the Apostles' Creed should find himself thinking more than ever but *in the right direction*. Last year as reported in the *Catholic Directory*, more than 60,000 people who were searching for a trustworthy interpreter of ultimate realities entered the Church in the United States.

### The Authority of Christ

The authority of the true Church is derived from the authority of Christ, true God and true man, who imparted His power to the Apostles and their successors. If a non-Catholic student accepts Scripture and Tradition as historical evidence, he should be convinced that Christ is divine as well as human. His divinity flashes forth with astounding brilliance in the resurrection. Once he admits that Christ is God, he should accept what Christ teaches, because no certitude can be more secure than that which rests upon the authority of Him who by His very nature can neither deceive nor be deceived. Without impairing His humility, Christ taught with unmistakable authority:

"And it came to pass when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at His doctrine.

"For He was teaching them as one having power, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees" (Matt. vii. 28, 29).

"And they were astonished at His doctrine: for His speech was with power" (Luke iv. 32).

"All power is given to me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18).

"Then Jesus said to those Jews, who believed Him: If you continue in my word, you shall be my disciples indeed.

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John viii. 31, 32).

### **The Church Teaches With Authority**

The authority of the Eternal Father is in the teachings of Christ: "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me" (John vii. 16). He transmits this authority to His Church: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you" (John xx. 21). The Triune God teaches mankind through the Church: "But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (John xiv. 26). Moreover, there is divine sanction to the teaching authority of the true Church: "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" (Mark xiv. 15, 16).

### **The Sanctifying Authority of the Church**

Recall that Cardinal Franzelin said that Christ appointed the Apostles, not only to teach, but also to sanctify. Much as we treasure the truth, we must have even greater reverence for charity and the spiritual life. The Church is the mystical body of Him who called Himself "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John xvi. 6). With authority the Church enacts the part of Christ as priest. The Church offers in an unbloody manner the same Sacrifice of Him who shed His Precious Blood that the children of Adam might obtain life through His suffering and death. Baptism is the gateway to a participation in the life of God. Confirmation strengthens that life. Penance, through the mercy of the Master, can restore the life of grace if it has been lost through serious sin, or intensify the life if the penitent already enjoys the friendship of Him who said, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." The Eucharist is not only a sacrifice, but also a sacrament of Divine Life and Love, a food so sublime that those who receive it fruitfully are gradually assimilated into Incarnate Love, and are able to exclaim, "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me." With power the Church presides over the Sacrament of Orders which per-



petuates the priesthood, and over the Sacrament of Matrimony<sup>1</sup> through which God's grace makes it possible for the spirit of the Holy Home in Nazareth to invigorate the hearts of fathers, mothers and children in the homes of those who respond to the sanctifying authority of the Church.

### **The Pastoral Authority of the Church**

The Church continues the work of the Good Shepherd. It seeks to unify the human race in God. This unification is spoken of tenderly as "one fold and one shepherd" (John x. 16). The Church performs this pastoral work with the authority of Him who said, "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep" (John xxi. 17). A bishop carries a staff to remind the faithful of a shepherd. Priests are given faculties by their bishops to teach and to preach, because in teaching and preaching are to be found the occasions of grace which serve to gather the sheep around the Good Shepherd. Furthermore, in offering Mass, and by administering the Sacraments the Good Shepherd, personally or by His grace, associates most intimately with the sheep.

To review hastily what has been said: Christ entrusts to His Church the threefold office and authority of teacher, priest and pastor. As teacher the truths of revelation are imparted; as priest the means of grace are administered; as pastor the faithful are directed to the pastures of eternal joy.

### **Church and State**

In our day the authority of the Church is frequently ignored, and even made the object of scorn, so advanced is the secularization of modern life. The State tends to go beyond its own purpose, and to violate the rights of the spiritual society whose province is man's eternal welfare. Pope Pius XI has taken a stand against what is called racism or excessive nationalism, as contrary to the designs of the Author of nature. The Church was instituted by Christ, and in its purpose is distinct from the State; but the State should not be separated from the Church, although under certain serious

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "The Family," *Catholic Mind*, August 22, 1938.

circumstances such separation may be tolerated and even preferred.<sup>2</sup>

Pray that enmity and suspicions may be replaced by charity and that the threefold authority of the Church may constantly inspire her children to work faithfully, both individually as in association with others, toward the happy end of bringing light and guidance, and sanctification to distracted humanity, that all may be one in Christ.

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### Questions

1. By whose authority is the Bible called the word of God?
2. What encouragement is given to Catholics to read the Bible.
3. Reveal the mind of Cardinal Franzelin concerning the threefold authority of the Church.
4. Express the ideas of Pius XI on the cause and the cure of modern economic chaos.
5. Does submission to the teaching authority of the Church tend to stop people from thinking?
6. What is the precise value of the authority of Christ?
7. Explain the sanctifying authority imparted by Christ to the Apostles.
8. Interpret the statement, "I am the Good Shepherd" in terms of the Church.
9. Is the complete separation of Church and State to be desired under all circumstances?
10. Through personal reflection evaluate the influence of a Catholic school as distinguished from a purely secular school.
11. In what way does the saying of the Rosary foster the spirit which enlivens the triple authority of the Church?

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<sup>2</sup> "In your part of the world the Church enjoys, without any interference by the civil authorities, perfect and unhampered liberty of life and action: it is hindered by no laws, it is defended against violence by common law and justice. But while this is true it would be wrong for anyone to conclude that we have to look to America for an example of the Church in its ideal state, or that it is lawful and expedient, that religious and civil affairs should be everywhere totally dissociated after the American fashion" (Leo XIII, *Ep. Longinqua Oceani*, January 6, 1895).

## THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

### Searching for Truth

A MAN who lived on a little farm along the Chemung River had what appeared to be a noble ambition. He cultivated the land, not for the purpose of getting rich, but merely to have enough to live on in order that, by reading and studying, he might gather in *a harvest of truth*. For over fifty years he pursued this course. In what did the harvest consist at the end? Note the cockle in the enumeration which follows:

1. He believed in the transmigration of souls.
2. He denied the right of private property.
3. He held that the will of man is not free, but determined completely by heredity and environment.
4. He subscribed to theosophy.

When asked, "What was your guide?" he replied, "Merely my own judgment." During the conversation he was annoyed by the assertion that the Catholic Church is the one un failing teacher in the really big things of life. To him it appeared an absurd presumption to say that the Pope is endowed with infallibility when speaking to the whole world on matters of faith and morals. And yet (please observe the inconsistency), the very precaution against making a mistake which he denied to the Holy Father, that very prerogative, with fewer limits, he attributed to himself, and to millions of others who, as he said, "have the power to judge with un failing correctness for themselves."

### The Church Claims Infallibility

Man can find out certain things for himself. But many things he must accept on the authority of others. The authority should be trustworthy. In matters of faith and morals

the authority ought to be *infallible*. When this is denied there is bound to be confusion in society, and things will drift towards anarchy or tyranny, as they have done already. The man on the farm, relying solely on a subjective standard, might be called a victim of the error of "private interpretation" diffused by Martin Luther. As soon as a person reflects he should try to discover by reason and revelation, the purpose of human existence, and the means whereby that purpose is to be attained. A successful pursuit of truth, using valid external authority as well as personal observation, will lead to several tremendous facts which may be briefly stated:

1. Man's purpose is to gain salvation.
2. A society has been founded by God to tell man what he is to believe and what he is to do to save his soul.
3. To help man to save his soul this society, the Church, acts as teacher, priest, and shepherd.
4. In exercising this threefold office the Church is safeguarded against error.

This leads to the discussion of the fact that there is in the world a teaching authority, endowed with infallibility under certain conditions.

### **Infallibility: Its Source**

The question is raised: "Why does the Church make the remarkable claim of freedom from the possibility of making a mistake when teaching all the faithful on matters of faith and morals?" If we admit that Christ is truly God as well as man, His words and promises have unshakable authority, and lead to certitude so secure that nothing can be more secure. The Son of God has all knowledge, and all power. He founded a Church upon Peter. He sent the Apostles forth to teach all nations, and He guaranteed that the Church would continue until the end of time. "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). Security against error, the seed of disintegration, is strongly expressed in this divine prophecy.

Moreover, another heavenly guarantee against error was advanced when the Saviour said, "I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of Truth" (John xiv. 12-17). The Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, as promised, and still abides with the Church to protect it against the loss or distortion of the truths which Christ commanded the disciples to teach.

Unfailing teaching security is clearly proclaimed when our Lord says, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xv. 16). Persecutions may assail the Church from the outside, heresies may try to destroy its life from within, the human elements (even the Pope) may transgress the laws of God, but the mystical body of Christ is ever protected against teaching false doctrine. Otherwise the gates of hell *would* prevail.

### **Tradition Implies Infallibility**

Although the doctrine of infallibility was not explicitly defined until during the Vatican Council (1870), it is strongly implied all through Christian tradition. With reverence we listen to:

1. St. Augustine who voices the mind of the Church in his day. He brings the controversy against the heretic, Pelagius, to a close by saying, "Rome has spoken, the case is closed."
2. The Fathers of Ephesus (431) declare that they are "compelled to condemn the heresy of Nestorius by the sacred canons and by the letter of Our Holy Father and co-minister, Celestine, the Bishop of Rome."
3. The Fathers of Chalcedon (451) after hearing Leo's message read, recognized the safeguard against error by saying, "So do we all believe. . . . Peter has spoken through Leo."
4. Mark the reference to infallibility in these words of the

Council of Constantinople (869-870), "The Catholic religion is preserved inviolable in the Apostolic See."

Until the Photian Schism in the East, and the Gallican movement in the West, there was no formal denial of infallibility.

### **Instruments of Infallibility**

Coming closer to the exercise of this unfailing teaching power of the Church the question may be asked, "By whom are the decisions of the Church given?" The answer: "Either by the Supreme Head of the Church, the Pope, or by a Council confirmed by the Pope." To express the matter in other words, the Church teaches infallibly when it speaks through the Pope and the bishops united in a General Council, or through the Pope alone when he proclaims to all the faithful a doctrine of faith and morals.

A General Council is also called a Ecumenical Council. It is distinguished from a Particular or Provincial Council, and consists of an assembly of bishops of the entire Catholic Church summoned by the Roman Pontiff. It represents the Universal Church as constituted by Christ. Since the primacy of Peter, and of his successor, the Pope, is an essential feature in the constitution of the Church, it follows that there is no such thing as a General Council independent of, or in opposition to, the Holy Father. No corporate body can perform a valid corporate act without the consent and co-operation of its head. Only the Pope can authoritatively confirm the decrees of a General Council. It is not necessary that the Pope should preside in person; he may act through legates.

### **Noteworthy Councils**

In the year 51 the Apostles held the first Council of Jerusalem. Since that time twenty General Councils have been assembled. Fruitful fields of study can be opened by following the proceedings of such Councils as:

1. The Council of Nicaea (325) which repelled the Arian heresy.

2. The Third Council of Ephesus (425) which declared Mary to be the Mother of God.
3. The Nineteenth General Council of Trent (1545-1563) occasioned by the heresies of Luther.
4. The Vatican Council (1870—) which defined the infallibility of the Pope as an article of faith.

### The Limits of Papal Infallibility

We now come to the infallibility of the Supreme Pontiff. Many Protestants (searching like the farmer for a harvest of truth) virtually maintain that they enjoy infallibility when they devoutly read the Bible and use the standard of private interpretation. Hundreds of divergent sects, teaching at times contradictory doctrines, have followed in the path of this method, and have tempted not a few to classify eternal verities among vague opinions and soft sentiments. The Church does not claim that the Pope is infallible except under certain definite limits. Should you ask: "When does the Roman Pontiff exercise his prerogative of personal infallibility?", the answer is: "The Roman Pontiff exercises his prerogative of personal infallibility when he speaks '*ex cathedra*'—that is, when, in the exercise of his office as Shepherd and Teacher of all Christians he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church."<sup>1</sup>

Study well, then, the limits of Papal infallibility:

1. The Holy Father must speak "*ex cathedra*"—that is, from the "chair" or position once occupied by Peter, the first visible head of the Church. He acts in virtue of his office of chief pastor and teacher of the Church, and as successor of the one upon whom Christ built the Church.

2. The Pope must speak "*ex cathedra*" on *matters of faith and morals*. Hence it is not asserted that he is protected against the possibility of making a mistake when he speaks on any other subject, such as mathematics, or botany.

<sup>1</sup> *The Catholic Catechism*, Gasparri, p. 103.

3. The Pope must address *the faithful of the whole world*. It would not suffice if he directed his decree to one or more of the bishops, nor even to a considerable number; His pronouncement must be *for the universal Church*.

The Vatican Council (1870) made explicit what was at least implicit in the Church from the time of our Lord, when He promised to protect Peter and his successors against teaching what is contrary to revelation. Read carefully the words of the Council which defined: "as a divinely revealed dogma" that "the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*—that is, when in the exercise of his office as pastor and teacher of all Christians he defines, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the whole Church—is, by reason of the Divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer wished His Church to be endowed in defining doctrines of faith and morals, and consequently that such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of their own nature and not by reason of the Church's consent."

### Misconceptions of the Term

At times opposition to this doctrine is to be traced to a misunderstanding of the term. Some seem to think that infallibility has the same meaning as impeccability, and are under the impression that Papal infallibility means that the Pope is exempt from liability to sin. As a matter of fact, the Popes have been, with few exceptions, conspicuous for their virtues. Seventy-nine have been canonized. However, freedom from the possibility of making a mistake in doctrine under certain conditions is quite apart from inability to sin.

Others make the mistake of thinking that infallibility is the same as divine inspiration. The gift of inspiration was conferred upon the Apostles, and their writings are accepted as the revealed word of God. It is not correct to say that Papal infallibility means that the Pope is inspired or endowed with divine revelation properly so called. To quote the Vatican Council:



"For the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter in order that they might spread abroad new doctrine which He reveals, but that, under His assistance, they might guard inviolably, and with fidelity explain, the revelation or deposit of faith handed down by the apostles."<sup>2</sup>

This statement should serve to make clear that infallibility is not a modern invention, nor does it serve as a means of introducing new doctrine.

### **Gratitude for Mental Security**

Security of mind comes through cheerful submission to the Church, our unfailing teacher in matters of eternal consequence. The modern world is suffering from conflicting interpretations of reality. One-tenth the surface of the earth is now tyrannized by a spurious internationalism, whose philosophy of life not only rejects the supernatural, but maintains that the utter destruction of religion is necessary for the economic well-being of the human race. Christian soldiers, armed with truth, must move forward charitably on their knees, openly professing the truth taught by the divinely appointed Church acting as their infallible guide to eternal joy. We must not waver. St. Paul warns us against being "Carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men." He calls us to draw mankind into the one, unfailing Church "until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13).

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### **Questions**

1. What consequences follow from relying upon private judgment in all matters?
2. Does Sacred Scripture imply that the true Church will be protected always against error?

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<sup>2</sup> Conc. Vat. Const. Pastor Aeternus, C. 4.

3. Explain the attitude of Christian tradition towards the Church as a trustworthy teacher.
4. Who renders the doctrinal decision of the Church?
5. Point out the difference between a Particular Council and a General Council. Name two General Councils.
6. What precisely is meant by Papal infallibility?
7. Can the pronouncements of a Council be infallible?
8. Refute one misconception that frequently attends opposition to the doctrine of Papal infallibility.
9. Does the exercise of infallibility introduce new doctrines?
10. What connection can be established between a devout life, and the fruitful work of a Study Club that wishes to oppose the development of atheistic internationalism, or to refute the misconception that the Church is merely a department of the State?

## THE INDEFECTIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

### Gamaliel States the Test

SHORTLY after Christ founded the Church, Peter and his companions were brought before the Sanhedrin, or Jewish Court. They were accused of having filled Jerusalem with the teachings of the Crucified. The Prince of the Apostles uttered a simple defense, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 29). These words so angered the Jews that they were "cut to the heart" and "thought to put them to death" (Acts v. 33). There was a tense moment of indecision. Then Gamaliel, a fair-minded lawyer, calmly rose in the council chamber and delivered a short speech that will be long remembered:

"Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do, as touching these men" (Acts v. 35).

He next appealed to history which shows the fleeting character of human institutions, and then rested his case upon the unconquerable stability of the Almighty by concluding:

"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 naught:

"But if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it, lest perhaps you be found even to fight against God" (Acts v. 38, 39).

Nearly two thousand years have swept on since the day when the test of the stability of the work founded upon the rock called Peter was clearly stated. Gamaliel reviewed the past, and drew a valid deduction; if he had been able to cast a prophetic eye over the twenty centuries of violent persecution assailing the Church from without, and heresy and schism which have tried to destroy its vitality from within, he would have made the unqualified statement, "This *is* the work of God."

### **What Indefectibility Does Not Mean**

It is important to tell, first of all, what indefectibility does *not* mean. Much opposition to Catholic doctrine arises from misunderstanding. Sometimes there is a disinclination to remove the misunderstanding. The opponents of the Apostles did not want to listen to the unbiased judgment of Gamaliel. Prayer and the spirit of fair play are needed to remove this obstacle. We must make clear that just as infallibility does not mean sinlessness, so indefectibility does not mean that Catholics individually can do no wrong. Even some of those who were directly under the instruction of our Lord did not remain faithful. Denial and betrayal are serious defections from moral stability.

Moreover, indefectibility does not mean that each separate part of the Church is guaranteed against heresy and schism. At the time of the Mohammedan conquests whole populations renounced their faith. During the sixteenth century the Church suffered serious losses, and whole countries, such as Norway and Sweden, became Protestant. In an attempt to justify the rejection of authority, heretical bodies deny the attribute of indefectibility. They contend that their plea for separation rests on the supposition that the main body of Christians has fallen so far from primitive Christianity, or from the original standard of Christian morals, that the formation of a new and separate body is necessary. With emphasis upon subjective states they argue that indefectibility pertains, not to a visible Church, but to an invisible Christian community. This is a form of individualism which is not consonant with the corporate and enduring union of a universal organism which retains its identity through oneness of doctrine and stability of government.

### **What Indefectibility Does Mean**

Briefly, indefectibility means that quality or attribute of the Church whereby it is *proof against failure*. Such words as stability, or perpetuity, may be used in place of indefectibility. This permanence, or unconquerable endurance, is

promised by Christ saying, "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20).

Gamaliel implied that if the religion of the Apostles endured, this endurance would be externally visible in its triumphs over trials and dangers and all the forces turned towards its destruction. The dispassionate study of history presents the test of 1,900 years. Not a few non-Catholic historians, impressed by the visible stability of the Church, have reasoned that the source of this indefectibility is something internal, and, in response to grace, have entered the true fold.<sup>1</sup> This internal indefectibility has preserved the Church's supernatural life, and has safeguarded her channels of grace against all the destructive possibilities arising from carelessness, indifference, and ill-will. The precise manner in which it works is a matter of speculation.

To summarize: Christ endowed His Church with indefectibility, and by this we mean, not merely that the Church will last until the end of time, but that it will preserve unimpaired its essential characteristics. The Church as a social organism, as the mystical body of Christ, cannot retain its identity, nor fulfill the prophecy of the Saviour, if it were to change its creed, or to undergo any constitutional alteration which would make it different from what it was in the beginning. To enumerate, the Church can never:

1. lose its unity,
2. or become corrupt in its faith and morals,
3. or break down into something sectional,
4. or sever continuity with its Apostolic foundation.

Therefore, indefectibility is precisely what the Divine Teacher plainly promised when He declared that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Should any destruction of unity of doctrine or of government eventuate, the powers of hell *would* prevail. Furthermore, the Saviour told Peter and his companions to preach the Gospel to all men. He estab-

<sup>1</sup> Among contemporary converts are listed these historians: Carlton Hayes (Columbia), Ross Hoffman (Fordham), Father Robert H. Lord (formerly of the Faculty of History, Harvard).

lished a Church to proclaim His revelation to the world, and commissioned it to warn all listeners that if they culpably rejected that message they would encounter eternal ruin. It should be evident from this that if the Church could become defectible by teaching false doctrine, then the mandate of Christ would be patently unfair. Could our Lord reasonably enforce under so severe a penalty what is erroneous? Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. He is Incarnate Truth. Hence it is not too strong to say that indefectibility safeguards the Church against even the *possibility* of failure.

When the attribute of indefectibility is made to turn towards morals, it means that not only does the Church always proclaim the perfect moral standard bequeathed by her Founder, but also that in every period the lives of many of her children are based upon a flawless Model. The supernatural principle of spiritual life within the Church accounts for this. The Holy Spirit animates the organism. Since the Fall, man's natural inclination is towards sin. If the Church were merely a human society, with purely human supports, relying solely upon natural ingenuity, it would become defective in its moral code, and would not enjoy the quality of indefectibility. Gamaliel saw this point in the clear light of reason, and so he warned the Jewish Court of the futility of fighting against what is of divine origin. While we have not reached the end of time, twenty centuries of opposition have been sufficient to prove the presence in the Church of something that can and does resist conquest.

### **Jewish Opposition**

The external forces directed against the Church have been so violent and of such frequency that no mere human institution could survive. "Let them alone," said Gamaliel, but the Jews in their perversity directed the full force of their ill-will against what Christ had founded. St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was stoned to death. St. James was hurled from the roof of the Temple, and St. Bartholomew suffered the excruciating torture of having his skin torn from his body. And

yet Christianity not only survived, but showed renewed vitality. And the Jews who had clamored for the blood of Christ were in a few years crushed and scattered by disease, famine, and the military onslaughts of the Roman Empire—crushed and scattered with the warning of the far-sighted lawyer still echoing in their memories, "If this work be of God, you cannot overthrow it."

### Pagan Persecutions

The pagans prolonged and intensified the opposition of the Jews. The disciples, enlivened by the fire of Pentecost, moved forward. Martyrs were soon numbered by the hundreds.<sup>2</sup> St. Paul was silenced by the axe of the executioner; St. Peter was crucified head downward in the city which deserves to be called Eternal because of the enduring qualities of the Universal Church. Half-famished beasts, and hooks, and heartless flames added inexpressible agony to the customary tortures inflicted by the Jews, and in place of the forty years of Jewish persecution, pagan opposition burst forth with appalling frequency for a period of three hundred years. Behind this external resistance there burned such subtle designs as were aroused by the intellectual power of the Gentile philosophers, or by the sly skill of the envious pagan priests, or by the political planning of the Roman Empire which regarded the Church as its rival for supremacy. And yet the Church remained unconquered. The sublime example of the Christians who suffered patiently after the manner of their crucified Master seemed to dramatize the words of Gamaliel, "If it be of God, you cannot overthrow it."

### Barbarian Persecutions

To the organized efforts of the Romans must be added the ruthless onslaught of the barbarians who inundated southern Europe during the fifth century. The apparently impregnable Empire fell beneath the impact, but the kingdom of God *stood*

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<sup>2</sup> The prayer following the Memento for the Dead in the Canon of the Mass contains a list of early Christian martyrs. It would be interesting to prepare a short biography of each. Cf. *Holy Sacrifice of Mass*, Gihl, Herder, p. 677.

*firm* and, vindicating its divine mission, repaid hatred with charity by enkindling the holy light of faith among the unholy hordes of darkness.

### Schism and Heresy

The Church has resisted, not only violence from without, but also the gnawing influence of heresy and schism from within. Heresy is the denial of doctrine. Schism usually arises from a quarrel about submission to ecclesiastical authority, and cuts the bonds which bind the faithful to Rome. During the eleventh century it is estimated that 100,000 Christians repudiated their allegiance to the Holy Father. Later the Great Western Schism seriously disturbed Christendom, and served as the forerunner of the widespread apostasy of the so-called Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther raised the standard of Private Interpretation of the Bible, thereby opening wide the gates of disunion. Scores of sects were the inevitable consequence. Private judgment invited indifference, and indifference soon welcomed the rejection of the Bible and religion altogether. In the United States alone more than 60,000,000 people are said to have no religious affiliation.<sup>3</sup> Luther was not the first heretic, nor the last. Long before his day:

Arius (c. 250-336) denied the divinity of Christ.

Pelagius (c. 405) spread false doctrines concerning the nature and necessity of grace.

Nestorius refused to admit that Mary is the Mother of God. He was condemned by the Council of Ephesus (430), and Chalcedon (451). (Were the list complete it would be a long inventory of unfaithfulness.)

These are only a few of many disloyal sons who have plunged the dagger of denial deep into the bosom of the Church, but the Church has proved invulnerable. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that resisteth thee in judgment thou shalt condemn" (Isaias liv. 17). St. Augustine wrote, "As fire is necessary to purify

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<sup>3</sup> "The One and Only Church," Pamphlet No. 61, p. 8, Sunday Visitor Press



silver and separate it from the dross, so heresies are necessary to prove the good Christians among the bad, and separate the true from false doctrine."

### Modern Opposition

Modern opposition simply streamlines the destructive devices of the past. In Russia, Mexico and Spain attempts have been made to extinguish the light of faith with the blood of Christians. In our own land the secularization of educational, industrial, and domestic life develops a growing pressure against religion:

- (a) To exclude religion from the curriculum of school or university systems is not unrelated in purpose to the onrush of barbarians.
- (b) In popular, and at times in supposedly scientific, literature, the pen of the atheist is given to the same task as the weapon of the pagan persecutor.
- (c) Bigotry and secret societies spread in a more subtle manner than the flames with which Nero tried to burn belief out of the hearts of those who gloried in the cross of Christ.

Tossed about in a sea of trouble the bark of Peter is proof against shipwreck, much to the amazement of even her enemies. "This is the Lord's doing; and it is wonderful in our eyes" (Psalm cxvii. 23).

### Personal Stability

Confident as we are that the Church of Christ will be divinely protected against storms until the end of time, we must have diffidence in ourselves because individual Catholics can easily suffer from such instability as leads to loss of faith, and moral depravity. In concluding this review of the marks and attributes of the Church, one resolution should animate us all, namely, to extend the kingdom of God on earth by stimulating conversions.<sup>4</sup> But do not forget that ordinary people are unwilling to read big books of apologetics, or even little pam-

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Spurs to Conversion*, Betowski, Benziger Brothers.

phlets that aim to show that the Catholic Church is the work of God. We may not be able to draw them into discussion about religion. Nor can we get them to listen to long and at times wearisome, sermons on the indefectibility of the Church. On the other hand, thoughtful persons cannot be kept from making a study of our very lives. Edifying conduct is a book that can be quickly read. It is an open forum that is easily understood. It is a form of silent eloquence that speaks of the one, true, and unconquerable Church, echoing the ancient and significant statement of Gamaliel, "If it be of God, you cannot overthrow it."<sup>5</sup>

### Questions

1. Repeat the argument of Gamaliel in his defense of the Apostles.
2. What are two misconceptions of indefectibility?
3. Define indefectibility: (a) in relation to doctrine; (b) in relation to the government of the Church.
4. In what way can the occasion of the grace of conversion be obtained by reading history?
5. Name two converts among contemporary historians.
6. What forms of opposition are hurled against the Church?
7. Describe: (a) the persecution by the Jews; (b) the opposition of the pagans; (c) the barbarian invasion.
8. Distinguish between heresy and schism. Give historical references.
9. Point out several forms of modern opposition to the Church.
10. Discuss the possibility of doing something definite to increase the number of converts to the true Church.

<sup>5</sup> Study Clubs should aim to be doers of the word and not hearers and talkers only. An admirable and inexpensive means of using the printed word as a means of bringing the true Church to the attention of non-Catholics was inaugurated in 1929 by a small group of men in St. Margaret's parish at Narbeth, Pa. The idea is now operating in nearly 60 centers. Details may be had by writing to: The Catholic Information Society, Box 35, Narbeth, Pa.



