

# **The Continuity of the Catholic Church**

The Most Reverend Duane G. Hunt D.D.

*A Bishop shows that Jesus Christ founded the Catholic Church  
and refutes theories of Apostasy in early Christianity*

Bishop Hunt wrote this brilliant book, whilst he was Catholic Bishop of Salt Lake City. It was written to counter Mormon claims that there was an apostasy in the early centuries of the Church and a loss of Divine authority.

In a charitable and objective manner, Bishop Hunt shows that this theory has no foundation in the scriptural and historical record. In fact all the facts and evidence point to the Catholic Church of today being one and the same with the institution that Jesus Christ founded, nearly two thousand years ago.

A convert to the Catholic Church, Bishop Hunt comes to this subject with the advantage of having shared some of the prejudices and misconceptions that many non-Catholics have about the Church.

This book is a classic in miniature, and the reader will find that the arguments the Bishop uses, can be used with great effect to share and defend the claims of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Although primarily written to defend the Church from contemporary Mormon writers, it is a solid defense against any anti-Catholic group that challenges the Catholic Church and her claims to Divine authority.

***Ecclesia Press***  
**Know, defend and share your  
Catholic Faith**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Duane Garrison Hunt was born in 1884. Raised in a devout Methodist home in the State of Nebraska, Duane Hunt began to examine the claims of Christianity whilst a College student. This led to his reception into the Catholic Church in 1913. Abandoning a promising career, he trained for the Priesthood and was ordained in 1920.

He served in the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City, and was consecrated Bishop in 1937. Throughout his life, he wrote and spoke in defense of the Catholic Church. Bishop Hunt was a brilliant apologist, and developed an acclaimed radio ministry.

This particular book was written in 1959, primarily to answer Mormon Apostle, Bruce R. McConkie, who had accused the Catholic Church of being the devil in the first edition of his book, Mormon Doctrine. Since 1966, that explicit reference has been deleted, but the Mormon claim of apostasy remains. That claim is the main premise of the Mormon religion. Refute it and the Mormon claims collapse. In his refutation Bishop Hunt always remained objective and not sensational, maintaining a sound witness to Catholic truth, but never at the expense of putting down the Mormon people.

Bishop Hunt died in 1960, but his writings continue his Apostolate of Catholic truth, blessing souls and leading them to the Church, Jesus Christ founded.

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The Most Reverend Duane G. Hunt D.D.

Bishop of Salt Lake City (1937-1960)

*Ecclesia Press (Bangor is y Coed)*  
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This is a revised and expanded version of the book  
published in 1959 as *The Unbroken Chain* and includes  
a sermon from *The Christian Way of Salvation*  
c Ecclesia Press 1996

Published by Ecclesia Press (Bangor is y Coed)  
Whitchurch Road, Bangor is y Coed, Wrexham  
LL 13 OBB, United Kingdom

designed by Michael Real  
22 Surbiton Hill Park, Surbiton, Surrey KT5 8ET  
Tel: +44 (0) 181 399 1459, email 100660,3574@compuserve.com  
ISBN 1 901089 25 8

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<http://www.transporter.com>

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*And I say to thee, that thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

Matthew 16:18-19

*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you let them be accursed.*

Galatians 1:8

Both these Texts are on the walls of the Catholic Cathedral of the Madeleine, Salt Lake City, Utah.

## *PREFACE*

The subject of the continuity of Christianity is now, and for years has been, one of great interest to me. From the earliest days of perplexed thinking about my religious status, while yet a student in college, I began to inquire among the churches of my acquaintance about their continuity with the origin and source of Christianity. That my inquiries finally led me to the Catholic faith is another but a parallel story.

I have been prompted to put into writing some of my observations by two wholly contradictory facts. The one is that so many modern Christians of non-Catholic denominations attach little or no importance to the subject; seemingly, they are not interested in it. I should like to point out to them that the subject is of **vital** importance, in that continuity is the measure of validity. In other words, any church of today which claims to be of Christ must be able to trace its origin back to Him. It must have had continuous and physical contact with Him; it must be the unbroken link between that contact and the world at each new moment of time.

The other fact is the explicit denial of unbroken Christianity. This is the point of view of the Mormon denominations (Latter-day Saints), of origin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They recognise that continuity was to have been a characteristic of the Church, but insist that it was fatally lost when, sometime in the early centuries, the original church came to an inglorious end. They declare that there was no church from that time until the restoration in the last century. I should like to point out to them that any break in the succession of the church organisation or in the teaching of the Gospel would have been and has proved to be impossible.

If in the following pages it appears that I give disproportionate attention to the second of these two groups, there is a natural reason for my doing so. My life as a priest, of nearly forty years now, has been spent in Utah, in the center and stronghold of Mormonism, where I have been reminded continually about Mormon doctrines and Mormon practices. It is inevitable, therefore that in writing about the continuity of the Catholic Church I should reply to the Mormon arguments which are directed against that same continuity. Not that these come to me in the daily and friendly contacts with the Mormon people, many of whom are excellent neighbors, but rather that they come from the official or perhaps the self-appointed spokesmen of the Mormon Church. It seems that these speakers and writers cannot resist the temptation to censure the Catholic Church. Evidently they believe it their duty to do so, a duty to their own Church. Here let me make my own position very clear. I am not in the least interested in any Mormon doctrine, except in so far as it is unfavorable to the Catholic Church. Then, to the best of my ability, I shall reply.

Any inquiry about Christianity should begin, like all similar inquiries, with the plan and purpose of its Founder. What did He intend? What did He provide for? It seems only reasonable, in as much as He established a religion for all men of all time, that He must have made adequate provision that when He started would persevere. This is human

reasoning, I recognise; it is not historical proof. But surely it is good reasoning. And as for proof, there will be sufficient in the pages that follow.

The continuity of the Church means, for one thing, institutional continuity, a continuous organisation, linking in physical contact the officials of each generation with those of the preceding one and back finally to the Apostles themselves. It means, furthermore, the unchanged Gospel as taught in the beginning by the Apostles. Because the traditional claims of the Catholic Church are challenged in both respects, it is necessary for me to consider both.

With the subject, "The Continuity of the Catholic Church", I defend a thesis which is purely constructive, not destructive; positive, not negative. Neither now nor at any other time do I propose to criticise the doctrines or practices or officials of any other church or religion. I try to always obey the rule honoured by my Church everywhere throughout the world, the rule followed for over nineteen centuries, that of preaching the Catholic religion only.

In stating this intention, however, I am fully aware that every affirmation I make touches some point of controversy. It cannot be otherwise. Every doctrine of the Catholic Church has been denied by some group of persons at some stage in the Church's long history. If I should say, by way of illustration, that the Catholic Church had good reason to change the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday, immediately I am contradicted by at least one Christian denomination which teaches otherwise.

So it is that no matter how closely I limit my attention to the Catholic religion, my every statement will show disapproval of something else. Somewhere in the Christian world someone can interpret each of my affirmations as a rejection of one of his beliefs.

**Implicit in every Catholic doctrine is a denial of its opposite.**

As a matter of course my right to defend the Catholic Church should not be questioned. If, in these pages, I undertake the Church's claim of continuity, I do so precisely because it has been so frequently challenged and denied. That the subject is important cannot be doubted. If the Catholic Church has been continuous from the time of our Lord to the present, she has an irrefutable claim to being the one Church which He established. If, to the contrary, she has not been continuous, two very embarrassing questions command attention. First, when did the original Church come to an end? Second, when did the present Catholic Church come into being?

The sources from which I draw material are the Sacred Scriptures and history. In these it is clearly demonstrated that the person known as our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ, established the Christian religion; for this fact, no proof need be offered here. What is necessary to note is that Christianity is both visible and invisible, both physical and spiritual, both body and soul. Man himself, for whom Christianity was ordained, is a composite of body and soul; most reasonably, therefore, the religion which he needs must be a composite of body and soul.

Here is another illustration of what I mentioned a moment ago, and I digress to call attention to it. There are Christians, how many I do not know, who deny that our Lord established a visible church. They believe that what He gave the world was a spiritual Gospel only, along with His exemplary way of life. According to them, the organisation is merely a human creation and is subject, therefore to human changes from time to time. In my judgement this opinion does not deserve an explicit refutation; it will be sufficiently dealt with in the data which I present relative to other subjects.

**My thesis is stated very simply: The Church which our Lord established is continuous from Him to the present day and will be continuous until the end of the world. This means, first of all, that the body of the Church, the organisation, has lived every day during the past nineteen centuries and will continue to live every day until the end of the world. It means, furthermore, that the soul of the Church, her doctrines, her ideals, her means of grace, and her supernatural protection, have remained constant, that they have not changed and never will change.**

Except where otherwise mentioned, quotations from the Scriptures are taken from the King James version.

## *CONTINUITY OF ORGANISATION*

The officials of the Church organisation are, and at all times have been, priests and bishops, among the latter there being one chief or primate, the Bishop of Rome. I am not unaware that in the narratives of the early Church other titles are mentioned, such as prophet, evangelist, teacher and pastor, but it is evident that these do not refer to officials who were distinct from priests and bishops. Let me explain further that, if in these pages I give exclusive attention to bishops, it is not to imply a lesser importance of priests. It is rather that bishops have as their function to ordain priests and consecrate successors. In performing this function they play the essential role in perpetuating the organisation of the Church, thus assuring the all-important continuity.

Incidentally, because of an impression that the titles “Apostles” and “Bishops” are not identical in office, I call attention to a few pertinent facts. The first officials of the Church were known as Apostles, from the Greek word which means “one who is sent”. The successors of the Apostles were and are known as bishops, from the word which means “an overseer”. Both titles refer to the same office, the ruling office which our Lord created as an essential part of His Church. Once it is recognised that He established a visible organisation and put it under the charge of especially authorised officials, it makes little difference what the officials are called, whether managers or governors or directors or overseers or something else. The important thing is the office, only that.

This importance is clearly indicated in the instructions given by our Lord to the Apostles. To them, and to no others, He said: “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21). “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19). “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (The Acts 1:8)...”All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and teach to all nations...Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” (Matt. 28:18-20). This last statement is of special importance because it indicates that our Lord had given commands for His Church and people, commands which the Apostles were to explain and enforce.

As already noted, the first officials were the Apostles, consisting of the original twelve and St. Paul. No less than the others, St. Paul was a witness of the resurrected savior and was appointed by Him. St. Barnabas, also, was called an Apostle, but in a restricted sense. Thereafter the successors were known as bishops, the title “Apostle” being reserved as a token of reverence for the first fourteen. If the reader is not convinced of these facts, let him consider that if the original Apostles were not the same as bishops there were no bishops during our Lord’s ministry and that if bishops were not the successors of the Apostles there have been no successors. Each of these hypotheses is wholly untenable.

The responsibility of the Apostles to perpetuate their office is illustrated by what they did at the first meeting after our Lord left them. Presided over by St. Peter, they were instructed to choose a successor to Judas. Quoting from the Psalms, with an interesting application to Judas, St. Peter said: "Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take" (Acts 1:20). The chapter closes with the statement that St. Matthias was chosen and was "numbered with the eleven apostles". This was the first step in Apostolic succession.

That bishops were to enjoy the same authority as that entrusted to the Apostles is attested by our Lord's several statements about the future of His Gospel and Church, statements which will be quoted later. Moreover, it is confirmed in the understanding and functioning of the early Church. One reference will suffice. In his address to the clergy of Ephesus, St Paul gave this advice: "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God..." (Acts 20:28). It is worthy of note that the Greek word which is translated as "overseers" is "bishops."

In brief, our divine Lord created a visible society, His kingdom on earth. Over it, He appointed certain officials, giving them full authority to "teach, govern and sanctify." This authority, handed down generation by generation without a break, comes to us today with the same force and meaning that it had in the beginning.

## *OPPOSITION TO THE CHURCH*

It must be recognised, and the fact is not overlooked by critics, that the Church has had to endure punishing persecutions from time to time and that, as the result, she has been seriously weakened in whole countries. True enough. Such misfortunes, however, no matter how tragic they may be, do not and cannot break the Apostolic continuity. If and when the Church is suppressed in one part of the world she enjoys freedom in another. When bishops in one country are prevented from administering the Sacrament of Holy Orders, their colleagues in other countries are undisturbed. In the sixteenth century, for instance, nearly all the Catholic bishops of England were eliminated. But all the while there were numerous bishops on the Continent, through whom the priesthood and episcopacy were kept alive. Finally, after three centuries of exile, the hierarchy returned to England.

To go back further in history, the Mohammedan invasion in the eighth century practically destroyed Christianity in northern Africa, where for centuries it had prospered. No Catholic bishops and priests were left. But all the time there were bishops across the Mediterranean in Europe in whom the Apostolic succession was preserved. During recent generations bishops have been returning to North Africa, to preach once more the Gospel of Christ, to ordain new priests, and to consecrate new bishops. Without doubt the Islamic interruption in Christian progress is a most tragic chapter. It will leave its dismal trail in civilisation for perhaps another thousand years, but the point to be noted is that it has not destroyed the Catholic Church.

It is possible that another persecution will come, even more crippling than that by Mohammedanism. Perhaps it is already underway in the curse of Communism. Conceivably it could destroy all civilisation in Europe and in the Americas. Conceivably it could destroy the Catholic Church everywhere except on one little spot, such as a remote island in the Pacific, leaving only one bishop alive. Let it be noted that even then, even in such an extreme catastrophe, the Church would live. That one bishop would exercise the authority left by our Lord. He would ordain new priests; he would consecrate a few of them as bishops. Immeasurable harm would have been done to the Church, to civilisation, and to everything good in the world, but the succession of authority from the Apostles would not have been broken. It could be broken only if all Catholic bishops were simultaneously destroyed; but against that fatality stand the clear promises given by our Lord Himself.

Here I touch the premise upon which rests Catholic confidence for the future. Every Catholic is sure that no matter what occurs, no matter how much the Church is maligned and persecuted, no matter how many mistakes are made by her own representatives, even by her clergy and higher officials, the Church will continue to live. With this, no assurance known to man can be compared. It is unique in all human history; it is solid beyond all dispute.

### *PROOF OF PERPETUITY*

The perpetuity of the Church was foretold by Old Testament prophets, Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Hundreds of years before Christ they wrote about Him and the kingdom which He was to establish, stating that it would endure until the end of time.

Of equal if not greater importance is the announcement of the Angel to Mary. After informing her that she would give birth to a Son, Jesus, and that He would be the divine Son of God, the Angel added: "And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33).

Come now to the promises made by our Lord. On one occasion, meeting with the Apostles, He singled out St. Peter for this statement: "...and upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). This is nothing less than a divine guaranty that the Church could never be destroyed. On another occasion He promised to be with the officials of His Church even to the end of the world.

It is difficult to understand how such promises can be misinterpreted or ignored by opponents of the Catholic Church. Surely their meaning is clear beyond a reasonable doubt. And as for the importance; can it be questioned? If Christ is divine, as Christians believe, His promises are certain of fulfillment. If He is not divine, both He and his religion can be ignored. Furthermore, if opponents of the Church insist upon reasoning backward, if they declare that, in fact, the Church came to an end, if they

dismiss our Lord's guaranty of perpetuity as meaningless, they would reduce Him to the level of a deluded man or, worse, to that of an imposter.

### *HISTORICAL CONFIRMATION*

To offer historical confirmation for the fulfillment of our Lord's promises may seem to smack of sacrilege, implying as it does some reason of necessity. In the very nature of things there can be no necessity. Nothing in the human juggling of history can logically be weighed against the clear statements of Christ which, in and by themselves, are sufficient. Such is the persistence of the opposition to the Church, however, that the facts of history must be explored from time to time in order to demonstrate that they fit perfectly with our Lord's promises.

Let me explain. If the continuity of the Catholic Church be not a fact of history, it follows that the original Church came to an end and that some time afterwards the present Catholic Church was organized. If these were real events, and not mere figments of the imagination, the date for each, could be fixed with approximate accuracy and certainty. Each would have a clearly marked place in history. But the fact is that there is not the slightest mark or record or indication of either, a phenomenon to be pondered carefully by the critics of the Church. Once more the questions: When did the original Church come to an end? By what process? By what word or gesture from God? Would God have removed the Church from among men without telling them what he was doing? Finally, when did the present Catholic Church come into being?

Let us suppose, for example, that the year 500 is named as the end of the original Church and that the year 1000 is named as the beginning of the present Catholic Church. (Those dates are as good as any other.) The supposition vanishes at once in the face of the indisputable fact that the Church lived in every generation from the year 500 to the year 1000. The Church at each moment of time has been the continuation of the Church from the previous moment.

If any other pair of dates is named, precisely the same weakness is disclosed. There is no point when one ended and no point when the other began.

Let the same conclusion be tested by another approach. In 1937 I was consecrated Bishop of Salt Lake City by the Archbishop of San Francisco. Eleven years earlier he had been consecrated by the Cardinal Archbishop of New York, who had been similarly consecrated by a former Archbishop. For him the line of succession traces back through centuries of consecrations back finally to the Apostles and our Lord Himself. Thus there is an unbroken chain of succession from the beginning of Christianity to the present moment and to me, as to every bishop in the world. Through this chain come the functions of my office. Now if this chain upon which I depend does not go back to the first century, when I ask again, did it start? When was the present Catholic Church founded? How was it founded? By whom was it founded?

Was the Church established in this, the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Obviously not, because we know full well that it existed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Well, then, was it created in the 19<sup>th</sup>? Again, no, because the 18<sup>th</sup> century is full of it. For a similar reason it could not have been created in the 17<sup>th</sup> or the 16<sup>th</sup> or the 10<sup>th</sup> or the 5<sup>th</sup> or any other century other than the first. No matter what century is named as the starting point of the present Catholic Church, it is ruled out by the undeniable fact that the Church lived and functioned in the century previous, going back ultimately to the Apostles and to Christ.

### *THE GREAT APOSTASY?*

Despite the force of such reasoning, certain critics insist that there was an historical collapse of the Church, which they call the great apostasy. By this is meant not merely a break in institutional continuity, but also the corruption of the Gospel by the Church and the loss of her God-given authority. It means, and this is emphasised especially, the loss of the Christian priesthood, the conclusion being that since the apostasy there have been and now are no validly ordained priests in the Catholic Church. When we inquire, quite reasonably, about when these misfortunes occurred and when we point out, as I have done, that at no period of time has the church disappeared, we are informed that the apostasy was one of gradual decline. This theory, if it can be called a theory, is taken so seriously that I digress for a few comments about it.

The reluctance of the critics to name a date for the collapse of the Church is readily understood. Obviously if the Church was taken from the world in one terrible and swift stroke from God, the fact and the date would be known to all mankind. The collapse of the divinely established religion would have been a most severe shock to all civilisation; it would have left historical records, precise and rich in details, as much so as those which are left by the ministry of Christ and the establishment of Christianity.

Thus to avoid assigning an impossible date and yet to persist in the allegation that the church apostatised, the critics refer to a gradual decline. But this, as I now point out, is as difficult to defend as is the other theory. The claim of a gradual decline pictures the Church as taking one downward step after another, moving by a staggered process further and further away from the original Gospel. This means, obviously, that none of the preliminary mistakes was fatal and that none could have destroyed the Church or her authority from God. Otherwise, there would be no excuse for the claim of a gradual decline. The worst of which the Church can be accused is that with each step the area of her faithfulness was narrowed.

If this theory has any merit whatever, it means that the alleged apostasy by the Church could not occur until the Gospel was completely corrupted; it could not occur so long as the Church continued to teach correctly even one doctrine of faith. Hence this question for the critics: Would they say that by now the Catholic Church has repudiated every part of the Gospel of Christ? If they reply in the negative, they admit that the wished-for apostasy has not yet taken place. If they reply in the affirmative, I ask when the fatal last step was taken. If it has occurred, why cannot the date be found?

Let me pursue this subject a bit further. The Church teaches the existence of God. Is that a false doctrine? The Church teaches the divine origin of the Ten Commandments. Is that false? The Church teaches the divinity of Christ, the divine origin of Christianity, the appointment of the Apostles, and the command that they evangelise the world. Are all these false? I have chosen doctrines which the critics cannot reject. They must acknowledge, therefore, that the Catholic Church has faithfully preserved a part of the Gospel. With that acknowledgement, the “gradual decline” theory loses all its force. With it goes, also, all substance of the alleged apostasy, about which the critics think and write so freely. It has not yet occurred.

### *SCRIPTURAL PREDICTIONS*

Let me now consider the basic argument by which the supposed apostasy is defended. The critics of the Church point out, quite correctly, that some of the writers of the New Testament and even our Lord Himself foresaw apostasies and warned the Christian people about them. From these predictions the inference is drawn that a great apostasy was foreseen in which the Church herself was doomed to fall away from her God-given moorings. Let it be said quite frankly that this argument, in and by itself, does not deserve the slightest attention. The wished for conclusion does not follow from the premises. Unfortunately, however, the argument is offered to the world very seriously and is accepted as truth by thousands of loyal believers. For such reasons it calls for analysis and comment.

What was foreseen in the New Testament was that false teachers and prophets would come into the Christian flock and would lure many persons away from the faith. Special references are made to the last days of the world when these apostasies would reach their ultimate and most tragic proportions. It follows that “the great apostasy” which the critics of the Church like to envisage has not yet come, because obviously the signs of the end of the world, as described in the narratives, have not appeared. In other words, whatever “the great apostasy” is to be, it is still in the future.

But what kind of apostasies did the Holy Scriptures foretell? What were they to be? Apostasies by the Church or from the Church? There is only one possible answer. Nowhere is the slightest hint of a defection by the church; **the only defections were to be from the Church.**

As we are aware, some Christians in each generation lose their faith. Such misfortunes occurred even in our Lord’s day. It is written that, immediately after He revealed the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, “many of his disciples went back; and walked no more with him.” Then, too, there was Judas. Did these defections spell the failure of Christ? The same question can be asked about apostasies from the Church and with precisely the same manner. It is to be remembered, let me repeat, that all the forecasts about the Church guaranty its permanency until the end of the world.

## *THE PRIMACY OF THE POPE*

So much for the organisation of the Church and its perpetuity. It remains to call attention to the central office, the Papacy, and to the official who fills the office, the Bishop of Rome or the Pope. The facts begin with our Lord and St. Peter; they come up-to-date with the present occupant of St. Peter's Chair.

Concerning this subject the Church teaches that St. Peter was made chief among the Apostles and given superior authority; that he became Bishop of Rome; that the succeeding bishops of Rome, one by one, have had the same authority which was given to him; and that, in brief, the office of the Pope is the continuance of the office created by our Lord.

In as much as each of these facts has been denied by critics of the Church, it is necessary to examine the record. Let it be said at once that either St. Peter was the head of the Church or there was no head. No one has suggested that St. Paul was given primacy, or St. John, or St. James, or any of the others. As it is unreasonable to judge that there was no chief among the Apostles, in as much as every organisation must have a visible head, we come logically to St. Peter and through him to the Pope in Rome.

This conclusion is confirmed by abundant testimony from the Scriptures. I cite a few of the facts. St. Peter is designated as "first," although he was not the first chosen. He alone was given a new name; to his name, Simon, was added that of Peter, or "rock." It was from his boat that Christ preached. It was to him, before the other Apostles, that Christ appeared after His resurrection. It was to him that Christ gave the threefold commission, "feed my lambs," "feed my lambs," "feed my sheep," meaning the primacy over the whole flock of Christians. It was to him that our Lord said: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou are converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32).

Especially to be noted was the occasion when our Lord asked the Apostles: "But whom do ye say that I am?" As was to be expected, it was St. Peter who replied; he acknowledged Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God. Then came our Lord's momentous reply: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:17, 18).

In as much as Peter has been given the name rock, it is only reasonable to conclude that he was the rock upon which our Lord promised to build His Church. This conclusion, however, because it is Catholic, is rejected by the opponents of the Church. Some of them insist that the word rock refers to St. Peter's confession of faith; others, that it refers to the revelation by which he learned the truth.

Such arguments can be disregarded at once because they make not the slightest difference in the present inquiry. In the very next sentence our Lord said to St. Peter: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven..." Can it be asserted that these words refer to anything or anyone other than St. Peter? How could the "keys of the kingdom" be given to a confession or a revelation? They were given to a person; the words are, "unto thee."

The expression, "giving the keys," is found in Semitic literature, both biblical and non-biblical. It means to deliver the management of affairs, one person to another. In St. Peter's case, the gift of "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" means that he was appointed our Lord's plenipotentiary, possessed with full powers to govern divine authority to manage the affairs of Christ's kingdom. As evidence of his (St. Peter's) primacy, it should be accepted as final and conclusive.

This guaranty, the one which I have just quoted, is followed by another equally significant statement, one which throws further light on the subject. "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth," our Lord added, "shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). As already noted, on a different occasion our Lord addressed the same words to all the Apostles as a group. It appears then, that St. Peter, individually, had the same authority "to bind...to loose" that the other Apostles had collectively.

The history of the early Church, as narrated in "The Acts of the Apostles," contributes still further evidence. As I previously pointed out, it was St. Peter who presided over the meeting of the Apostles and disciples when a successor to Judas was chosen. It was he who preached on Pentecost day and who performed the first miracle. It was he who received a miraculous demonstration that Gentiles were to be accepted in the Church. It was he, rather than the Bishop of Jerusalem, to whom St. Paul presented a problem from the missions among the Gentiles. And it was he who presided over what is called the Council of Jerusalem. Following the debate about the application of the Mosaic law to Gentiles, it was St. Peter who gave the decision, after which "all the multitude kept silence."

So much for the primacy of St. Peter. It is a matter of history that he went to Rome, where he was established as the first Bishop, and where he gave his life for the faith. Contrary to anti-Catholic opinion there is overwhelming historical evidence for Peter's Roman Episcopate. For instance, all the early Church Fathers affirm it, and in 393 A.D. St. Jerome wrote: "...Simon Peter...the Prince of the Apostles, after his Episcopacy over the Church of Antioch, and after preaching to those dispersed of the circumcision...goes to Rome in the second year of Claudius, to defeat Simon Magus and there he held the Episcopal chair twenty-five years, down to the last year of Nero, that is the fourteenth. Under who he also suffered glorious martyrdom, being crucified with his head downwards...He was buried on the Vatican Hill, near the Triumphal Way, and is honoured with the veneration of the whole city".

His immediate successor was St. Linus; the third successor was St. Clement. The latter deserves special attention because of a very significant episode which occurred during his pontificate.

It seems that a dissension had arisen among the Christians of Corinth, becoming so serious as to call for instruction and correction from higher Church authorities – the highest, in fact. Who was the highest? Was it St. John, the beloved Apostle? He was still living in Ephesus, a Greek city; and Corinth, too, was a Greek city. The ties between the two were closer than those between Corinth and Rome. Moreover, St. John was the last of the original Apostles. Would he not be expected to send a message to the Christians of Corinth? The fact is that he did not do so, but the third successor of St. Peter did. St. Clement, the Bishop of Rome, wrote to Corinth, gave the necessary instruction, whereupon the dissension came to an end. His letter was so highly regarded that it was read publicly in Corinth for nearly a century, and was included in early manuscripts of the Scriptures.

This letter contains the following very significant words:

“If any should disobey the things spoken by Him through us, let them know that they will involve themselves in no light transgression and danger.” One Protestant scholar, Lightfoot, has described this as “the first step towards Papal aggression.”

From that time on, the evidence for the primacy of the Bishop of Rome is multiplied. In the second century, for instance, a disagreement arose about the correct date for Easter. Similarly, there was a dispute about a doctrine of faith. Both questions were referred to the Bishop of Rome, whose decisions were immediately accepted. To the same end was the testimony of early Christian writers, such as St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, and St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. Let it be noted, furthermore, that there was no suggestion that anyone other than the Bishop of Rome was the visible head of the Church.

### *INFLUENCE OF THE EMPIRE*

Perhaps it is well to note, briefly at least, one of the principal arguments against the primacy of the Pope. It proceeds on the theory that the authority of the office was built up during the expansion of the Church after the Roman persecutions and because Christianity had become the religion of the Roman Empire. It is contended that such influences contributed to the prominence of the Church in Rome, with the bishops of that City taking full advantage of the opportunity to elevate themselves. May I tell you that the truth is exactly the opposite?

With the growth of the Church came, not a greater respect for the position of the Pope, but the impulse to disregard it. During the early centuries the Church was united because of the universally recognised primacy of the Bishop of Rome. This, the original and divinely ordained concept of central authority, was not seriously challenged so long

as the Church suffered persecution and was kept under ground. As time went on, however, and as the position of the Church became more secure, a centrifugal force began to assert itself. A provincialism was fostered, out of which arose protests against the old order of things in which Rome was always first. Out of such rivalries was born the theological notion that the Pope did not enjoy universal jurisdiction – a notion which gained additional weight with each further separation. Each move away from Rome built up its own local sentiment and claim of autonomy. Each created excuses and arguments to justify its detachment. Thus it is that the very factors which are mistakenly assigned to explain the authority of the Pope are in reality responsible for the protests against that authority.

One further argument must be considered. It is based on the assumption that some defect can be found in the succession of Popes. Critics point out, for instance, that on an occasion a long interval elapsed between a particular Pope and his successor, as much as three years. It is claimed that such an interval broke the continuity of the Church.

The argument is wholly without merit. If an interval of three years could break the continuity, so also would an interval of three days or three minutes. The criticism assumes that each Pope must personally appoint his successor and hand over to him the authority of his office. Such a premise has not the slightest sanction either in the constitution of Christianity or in common sense.

### *THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS*

The organisation of the Church, as already noted, resembles a board of directors, one of whom is chairman or president. When the chairman dies, the office does not die with him. It remains to be filled by the other directors, most of whom continue to live. They may act quickly or they may procrastinate. They may agree among themselves or disagree. They may split into factions; they may indulge in quarrels. They may lose prestige and influence. But the one and all-important fact is that the organisation continues to exist. In time a new chairman is chosen, at which moment he acquires all the authority belonging to the office.

This tells the story of the succession of Popes. The death of a Pope does not mean the death of all other bishops throughout the world. They remain, and in them the Church organisation continues to live. Suppose that three years time is wasted before a new Pope is elected, as occurred once. What about it? True enough, the Church does not function as well as it should. But the further truth is that the Church still lives; the office of the Papacy still remains. In time it is filled, whereupon the new Pope enjoys all the authority belonging to the office.

A similar difficulty is imagined in the unfortunate rivalry which existed on one occasion, the rivalry for the Papacy among three claimants. The critics wish to know which one of the claimants was the rightful Pope. And if the answer is not convincing, they declare

that the succession of Popes was broken. Perhaps, they point out, the transfer to the eventual successor was made by an official who was not truly the Pope. If so, they continue, everything that followed in the later succession was nullified by the mistake.

The criticism is based on the same premise as noted above, namely, that each Pope must choose his successor and must personally turn over to him the authority of the office, a premise which is false. In the case of the three rival claimants, other bishops remained at their posts throughout the world, continuing to perform the duties of their office. Not for a moment did the Church cease to exist. Not for a moment did the office of the Pope disappear. It remained, although contested. Eventually it was filled, the contest being ended, whereupon the new Pope acquired all the duties and prerogatives pertaining to it.

The inescapable fact is that the Catholic Church has lived in every generation since the day of her origin. In spite of persecutions and local defeats, in spite of human frailty, in spite of difficulties which would have wrecked anything but a divinely founded institution, the Church has continued to live. Opponents may protest, they may disregard history and logic, but the stubborn fact remains clear as the noonday sun. The Catholic Church has not ceased to exist even for one moment of time from the beginning of Christianity to the present day. It will not cease until God in His wisdom calls an end to human existence; not until the end of the world.

This degree of survival and continuity has been recognised by many persons throughout history. One Protestant historian, Lord Thomas Macaulay commenting on the Catholic Church, noted the following:

“She saw the commencement of all the governments and of all the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all. She was great before the Saxon had set foot in Britain, before the Frank had crossed the Rhine, when Grecian eloquence still flourished in Antioch, when idols were still worshipped in the temple in Mecca. And she may still exist in undiminished vigor when some traveller from New Zealand shall in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul’s.”

### *CONTINUITY OF DOCTRINES*

Come now to an entirely different kind of criticism, one that directs attention not to the organisation but to the spirit of the Church. Institutional continuity is not sufficient, it is pointed out; the accurate teaching of the Gospel is of equal if not greater importance. The complaint is that the Catholic Church, despite her self-perpetuating organisation, has corrupted the Gospel by making unwarranted innovations and by adopting heretical doctrines. If this were true, it would follow that the soul of the Church is not the same as that breathed into it by our Lord; therefore not continuous from Him.

In reply, I point out that the body and soul of the Church cannot be separated, that the one depends upon the other. I point out, further, that the soul of the Church can be preserved inviolate only if the body likewise remains intact and continuous.

Here it is necessary to appraise correctly the promises which were made by our Lord. He did not promise that the officials of His Church would always be conscientious and devoted; He did not promise that they would be efficient in management; He did not promise that they would be good and worthy representatives or even that they would be free from sin. Despite such weaknesses, the characteristics of human frailty, He made two promises, the two upon which rest the perpetuity and sacred character of Christianity. One was that the Church would live until the end of time; the other was that the Church, under the protection of the Holy Spirit, would always teach truth. I have already referred to the former; I now call attention to the latter.

The promise is approached by noting first that it was the Apostles and their successors who were set apart and commissioned to speak for our Lord and to represent Him. "Go ye into all the world," He commanded, "and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). "...ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (The Acts 1:8). In confirmation of these instructions was the practice of the early Church. It is recorded, for instance, that the Christians in Jerusalem "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine" (The Acts 2:42).

Testifying to the constancy and unchanging character of the Gospel is this further statement by our Lord: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, ...and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19, 20). Evidently our Lord was thinking about the Gospel not merely for one generation or for a few centuries; He was looking down through the ages, unto the end of the world. He promised to be with the appointed teachers of His Gospel all days, every day, until the end. Not for one moment, therefore, could these teachers depart from the original Gospel.

Of equal significance are the promises about the Holy Spirit, whom our Lord identified as the Spirit of truth. I quote three statements. First: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive; ..." (John 14:16, 17). Second: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). Third: "Howbeit then He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth..." (John 16:13).

These promises hold the key to infallibility in teaching, the assurance of which must be given by any church if it would direct mankind along the way to eternal salvation. This assurance the Catholic Church can and does give. She does so because her organisation is the physical continuance of that which our Lord established; because her officials, being the legitimate successors and heirs of the original Apostles, can confidently claim for themselves the guidance of the Holy Spirit as promised by the

Master. For the Catholic, the Church is the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).

## *SUPREME COURT PROCEDURE*

The method used by the Church in defining her doctrines is somewhat similar to that used by the Supreme Court of the United States. When confronted with a problem about the constitutionality of a law, the Justices examine not merely the Constitution itself and the various influences which contributed to its formation, but also the decisions of former courts, those by which the Constitution has been previously interpreted. They make every effort to reach a decision which is in line with what has gone before. They do not make new laws; rather, they try to preserve the laws as they were intended to be understood. They add clarifying statements as needed, making the laws more understandable and making them applicable to the problems of the moment, but that is all.

As I said, the method used by the Church is somewhat similar. It is not exactly and completely so, however, in as much as the Court can reverse itself; in as much, furthermore, as the Court cannot call in for guidance the infallible wisdom of the Holy Spirit. The similarity to be noted is that the Church, whenever called upon to make a declaration about the Gospel of Christ, looks into her own past record to learn what has been handed down from the Apostles and Christ. From this record she learns the precedents which she is bound to respect and follow.

Let it be noted that the Church, when considering a clarified definition of a doctrine, does not ask: Would the proposed definition be favorably received by our people? Would it silence criticism? Would it add to the prestige and influence of the Church? Would it attract favour from non-Catholics? Would it assure support from civil rulers? Would it serve to relax persecutions of the Church and her faithful? None of these. With complete confidence in the deposit of truth left in the beginning, the officials of the Church ask but one question: What is in that deposit? They trace back through the Tradition which has come to them; what they find there determines their decision. Now I ask: Does it not seem that this method, in and by itself, is a recommendation of constancy? Is there any other method which could so perfectly preserve the Gospel and the soul of Christianity?

A good illustration of the method used by the Church is given in the Council of Nicea, 325 A.D. The occasion was that under the leadership of Arius a heresy had developed in which the divinity of our Lord was qualified and limited. Arius asserted that our Lord was not co-equal with the Father. The heresy, being attractive, lured many Christians away from the true fold, finally becoming so widespread and destructive as to compel attention by the Church. At the council of Nicea, the bishops asked and answered one question: What have we received from the Apostles? They examined both the Scriptures and the testimony of the Fathers in the preceding three centuries. Then,

under the protection of the Holy Spirit which had been promised them, they declared officially that our Lord was truly God as well as truly man.

Note well that the bishops at Nicea had added nothing to the doctrines of the Church, nothing beyond explicit statements. There was nothing new in their definition of doctrines beyond assurance that the doctrines were not new. It has been the same with every definition of doctrine from that time to the present. In 381 A.D. the bishops, meeting in Constantinople, asked and answered the question: What do we believe and teach about the Holy Spirit? What doctrine has been handed down to us from the Apostles? They answered by declaring that the Holy Spirit, equally with the Father and the Son, is truly God.

### *PUBLICITY OF CREEDS*

Further assurance of continuity is seen in the full and universal publicity which is given to all definitions of faith. Consider the Apostles' Creed, for instance, which in content dates back to the first century. It testifies to a practice of the Church, from the time of the Apostles onward, a practice by which a profession of faith was required from adults before they were baptized. A formal creed was thus adopted for universal use. Here again there was nothing new. All the doctrinal elements found in the Apostles' Creed had already appeared by the end of the first century in the numerous formulas of faith which are contained in early Christian literature. One more pertinent fact: For centuries the Apostles' Creed has been recited daily by Christian people and clergy throughout the world. With such open and continuous expressions of the Creed, how could it be changed? Who would have dared change any part of it?

Incidentally, I cannot turn away from the Apostles' Creed without calling attention to its opening statement: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." This is the Christian reaffirmation of the revelation announced in the first chapter of Genesis. It is clear and irrefutable proof that the earliest Christians believed in the fact of creation, as the Hebrew faithful had done before them. Of equal importance is that all later Christians, Protestants and Catholics alike, have professed faith in the same fact, all until the Mormon denominations appeared in the nineteenth century. These latter are committed to a belief in the eternity of matter and the denial of creation. For creation by Almighty God, they substitute the mere organisation of pre-existing matter. And yet, the spokesmen for these same denominations do not hesitate to accuse the Catholic Church of misrepresenting the Gospel of early Christianity.

It is complained, however, that the Church has made innovations by adopting two other creeds, the Nicene and the Athanasian. Each of these, it is alleged, goes beyond what the Apostles taught. The refutation is only a matter of history.

These later Creeds, the one from the fourth and the other from the fifth century, merely add explanatory and clarifying phrases to the Apostles' Creed. Please note that the Nicene Creed is recited every Sunday in every Catholic Church and mission in

Christendom; it has been recited publicly ever since it was first declared. The Athanasian Creed is part of the priest's "office" and is contained in the "Manual of Prayers" used by the laity. The preservation of the creeds in the liturgy of the Church and in the devotions of the Catholic people is evidence that the doctrines they express have not been and cannot be changed.

It would be wholly impossible in these few pages, or indeed in many volumes, to discuss and defend all the Catholic doctrines which have been the object of attack. The list is interminable. I call attention to a few only, with the reminder that they are typical of the others, typical in that the critical arguments follow more or less closely the same general pattern. Concerning a particular subject, critics declare that the Catholic Church fell into error by substituting a new and false doctrine for the one taught by our Lord. They declare that as the result of this error God withdrew His blessing and approval from the Church, creating the need for a new organisation. To fill this need, they continue, God chose the leaders of their organisation and instructed them how to restore the Gospel of Christ to its original purity.

Such critics find texts of the Scriptures which, in their opinion, are misunderstood by the Catholic Church and for which they offer the correct explanations. They forget that the books of the Bible were put together by the Catholic Church. Is it likely, I ask, that she would select the Scriptures, guaranteeing them to be inspired, and at the same time teach doctrines contrary to their contents?

Who is in the better position to interpret the Scriptures – the Catholic Church, which has had unbroken contact with the generation which identified the books of the Bible and put them together, or someone who came on the scene a thousand or more years later? From a merely human point of view, the advantage is all with the Catholic Church.

### *SEMINARY INSTRUCTION*

Let me put the facts in very realistic terms. The Catholic bishops of today were taught in seminaries a few years ago, taught by teachers who had been students in seminaries a generation earlier, where they had been taught by teachers who were students in still earlier years. The direct and personal contact of teacher and pupil, the one instructing the other, has been continuous from the beginning of Christianity, when our Lord taught His chosen Apostles and when they taught their disciples.

It is pertinent here to quote from St. Paul, writing to St. Timothy: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:2). In these inspired words is shown the patterns by which the Gospel is to be preserved. It is used today in the seminaries of the Church, where the bishops, through chosen and approved professors, teach the Gospel to young men who will be the clergymen of the next generation. From teacher to pupil, day after day, year after year, generation after generation, there has not been one break. The seminarians of today are taught what their professors were taught;

they, in turn, were taught what their professors had been taught. Back goes the continuity, back to the beginning.

Two methods of learning and defining Christian doctrines are thus in contrast, methods which have been and are now being used. The one is that of religious leaders who have appeared on the world's scene in some later century, the 10<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup>. Assuming the role of reformers or something similar, they undertake to interpret the Gospel of Christ and to correct the alleged mistakes of the Catholic Church. Without contact with the past, and with little regard for Tradition, they are dependent upon their own reading of the Holy Scriptures. To their credit let it be said that they regard the Scriptures as the inspired word of God. It is to their credit, furthermore, that they wish to preserve and teach the Gospel as it was originally taught by the Apostles. **Even so, their method, I do not hesitate to say, is wholly incorrect.**

### *SUNDAY OBSERVANCE*

Illustrations of the two methods readily suggest themselves, among them none being more informative than that of setting aside Sunday in place of Saturday as the day for rest and worship. One group of Christians, organised in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, decided after consulting the Scriptures that the designation of Sunday was unscriptural and therefore, unwarranted. They still hold to Saturday. Without doubt the testimony of the Scriptures suggests Saturday, the Sabbath, but there is another bit of evidence which should not have been ignored. It is that the change from Saturday to Sunday was made during the Apostolic generation. It is inconceivable that the Apostles would have acted without knowing the mind of the Master. Their decision was one of the first contributions made to the Tradition of the Church.

### *SOCIALISM*

Another example comes under the heading of Socialism. There are Christian Socialists who insist that all Christians should follow the example of the early Church in Jerusalem. The Acts of the Apostles records that "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (The Acts 2:44-45). This text and another similar one are accepted as proof that our Lord intended His followers to live in socialistic communities. Against this conclusion is that of the Catholic Church. From the first she understood that the socialism of the early Church was purely voluntary, that it established no precedent, and that it implies no obligation upon Christian people. As the record shows, the early Christians believed in the right of private property. They could scarcely do otherwise, in light of the divine command, "Thou shall not steal."

## *THE CEREMONY OF FOOT WASHING*

The ceremony of foot washing gives another illustration. There are a few groups of Christians who look upon foot washing as a required act of religious worship. They draw their opinion from an incident in the Last Supper when our Lord, as an act of great humility, stooped down and washed the Apostles' feet and when, in response to St. Peter's protest, He said: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (John 13:8). Does it follow from these facts that foot washing is a sacred ceremony commanded by our Lord for His followers? The question is answered by the Church in the negative. Again, I ask who is in the better position to understand the intentions of the Founder of Christianity, those who have had no contact with the Apostolic generation or the Catholic Church which never lost contact?

Disregarding the method used by the Church and consulting the Scriptures alone can lead to the most unfortunate conclusions. It has led some to expect a millenium and to speculate about when it will come. It has led to predictions about the end of the world and to the fixing of certain days for that awesome event. It has led to the refusal to procreate children, who would be doomed to die quickly. It has led others, a few at least, to pluck out their eyes, because of our Lord's warning about the offending eye. It has led still others to take up poisonous serpents and allow themselves to be bitten. It has influenced not a few persons to commit suicide. Did not our Lord say that His followers should give their lives for Him?

## *THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS*

For further illustrations I chose a few subjects which I anticipate, will be of special interest to Mormon and readers who are of a Baptist persuasion. Consider, first, the subject of infant baptism.

The Catholic Church declares, as a matter of history, that she baptized infants in the earliest days of the Christian era. Against her there have arisen in recent centuries a few groups of Christians who denounce infant baptism as unchristian. By way of argument they call attention to two texts from the New Testament. One is from the Acts of the Apostles in which it is stated that St. Peter exhorted his hearers to "repent and be baptized." Inasmuch as infants are incapable of repenting, the conclusion is drawn that baptism was not for them. The correct explanation, of course, is that St. Peter was addressing adults only and these, as he pointed out, were required to repent of their sins. There is no reference to infants.

A second text is that which describes our Lord's meeting with children. He urged that they be permitted to come to Him and declared that of such was the kingdom of heaven. There being no mention of the baptism of these children, the conclusion is drawn that they were not baptized. Certainly there is no mention in the written text; but neither is there a written record about the baptism of the Apostles. Would the critics declare that

they were not baptized? The explanation is that our Lord was praising the children for their innocence and humility. He was not discoursing about how to preach the Gospel and evangelise the world.

Here let me raise the same question that I proposed for similar subjects. Who is better qualified to understand what the Catholic Church did in the first century, the Church herself whose history includes the first century, or some group which has had only a brief modern history?

Let it be noted that the history of Christianity during Apostolic times is the Church's history; she made it. She is not reduced to looking in on the scene from the outside. Is not her testimony about her own doings, therefore, of far greater value than that of some group which has no memory of first-century Christianity?

Conclusive though this reason is, it need not stand alone. Our Lord Himself said: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). That these words refer to baptism and that they impose an obligation will not be doubted. Leaving aside the subject of baptism of desire, which would involve a theological discussion of little interest to most readers, I point out that our Lord's statement is universal. In the English translation the word man is used. But in the original Greek the word which is translated man is the universal term one or anyone. The Greek text reads: "Except anyone is born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." **Our Lord did not say that adults only should be baptized; He included everyone.**

It is pertinent to inquire how His instructions were understood by the Apostles. In other words, did they baptize infants? The answer is that on three occasions, as recorded in the New Testament, the members of a household or a family were baptized.

First, there was the woman named Lydia... "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household..." (Acts 16:14-15).

Second, there was the jailer who was converted in prison in the night. "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway" (Acts 16:33).

Third, in the words of St. Paul: "I baptized also the household of Stephanas...." (I Cor. 1:16). Does it seem reasonable, I ask, that there were no infants or young children in any of these three families?

Of equal significance is the testimony of Tradition. In the second century St. Irenaeus wrote: "He came to save all who through Him are born again unto God: infants and children, boys and youth, and elders." Such a statement from St. Irenaeus is of unusual value because he was a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of St. John, the Apostle.

In the third century, Origen wrote: "The Church received from the Apostles the tradition of giving baptism also to infants...necessary to cleanse infants from original sin."

A century later, St. Augustine was called upon to defend infant baptism against the Pelagians, who denied the reality of original sin. He wrote: "Infants are brought to church, and if they cannot go there on their own feet, they run with the feet of others...let no one among you therefore, murmur strange doctrines. This the Church always has held; this she received from the faith of our ancestors; this she feverishly guards even to the end."

Much is said by certain opponents of the Church about the innocence of infants and their freedom from sin, the inference being that they are in no need of baptism. Of actual sin, they are innocent, without doubt, but not of original sin. This is the unfortunate inheritance from the first parents shared by all members of the human family, except Mary, the Mother of our Lord. Catholics believe that the Virgin Mary was saved and preserved free from original sin, because of the foreseen merits of Christ, whom she was to bear as her son. The normal means designated by our Lord to give sanctifying grace and thus to remove original sin is baptism. But it may be asked, does not God in His mercy give grace to the infant, regardless of baptism? He could do so, of course, but there is no choice. In obedience to the divine command the Catholic Church baptizes infants; and she has always done so.

### *THE METHODS OF BAPTIZING*

The methods of baptizing, frequently called into question, permit another illustration. There are three methods, and I state them in the traditional order: immersing, pouring, and sprinkling. The Catholic Church teaches and has always taught that baptism may be validly administered by any one of the three methods. In sharp disapproval is the insistence by a few others that immersion is the only valid and approved method.

Again I ask: Who is best qualified to understand what the Catholic Church taught and did in the first century? Who is the better judge of a record than those who made the record?

The critics make much of the baptism of our Lord by St. John the Baptist. The text states that after being baptized our Lord came out of the water. Without doubt these words could indicate baptism by immersion, but they could indicate the method of pouring also. There is nothing conclusive for either.

As a matter of fact, the earliest Christians may have believed that our Lord was baptized by the method of pouring. At least they drew pictures of that method which are still preserved in the Catacombs. These show our Lord and St. John standing in the water, with St. John's hand over our Lord's head and pouring water. One of these representations goes back to within seventy-five years of the baptism.

In further references to the methods of baptism as known and used in the early Church, I quote a paragraph from a pamphlet published by the Rev. Matthew Poetzi, O.F.M.:  
“There are many representations of baptism left on monuments of various kinds, but not one of them indicates immersion. In mosaics of early churches, in ordinary pictures, on domestic objects such as dishes, immersion is never depicted. It is never sculptured or engraved on marble. Invariably the person being baptized is represented as standing, with his feet only in water, while water is poured on his head with the hand or a vase. Is it not strange, I ask, is it not wholly incomprehensible, if immersion were regarded as the only valid form in early Christianity, that all the early representations of baptism indicate the method of infusion?”

Let me pose a question to critics who would appraise such facts. Would you suggest that the Catholic Church commanded her people to paint pictures and draw sketches of early baptism in order to show the method of pouring? Is it reasonable to judge that the church forbade her people to represent baptism by immersion? The simple truth is that the representations of baptism were the spontaneous and undirected expressions of the beliefs of the Christian people.

It may be contended that this testimony, despite its universality, is not sufficient to establish that our Lord was baptized by pouring. Very well. But does it not establish something else equally important? Does it not demonstrate conclusively that the early Christians, all of them, believed that baptism by pouring was a valid and correct method? If they had known, as modern critics maintain, that there was only one method of baptizing, that by immersion, would they have indicated in every possible representation that our Lord was baptized by infusion? To accuse them of such distortion is to make them appear sacrilegious and contemptuous.

What becomes, I ask, of the claim that in recent centuries the Gospel of Christ has been restored to its original purity? If those persons who lived in the first years of the Christian era are disqualified from giving testimony, how are critics to learn the characteristics of the early Church? If, on the other hand, the testimony of early Christians is accepted, as it should be, then the doctrines of the Catholic Church are confirmed. Of this assurance, the methods of baptizing give one illustration.

A text from St. Paul is frequently quoted by critics of the Church, a text in which the Apostle compares baptism with our Lord's death and resurrection, stating that there is a burial in each. Does not this comparison refer to immersion? Obviously it does. The explanation is that immersion was a commonly used form of baptizing, the most commonly used, in fact. No doubt, many of St. Paul's readers had been baptized by immersion and so understood at once the figure of speech which he had used.

But, and here is the one pertinent fact, it does not follow that immersion was the only method of baptizing. In another text, the same writer, St. Paul, used another figure of speech about baptism, in which he indicated the method of sprinkling. In his Epistle to the Hebrews, he wrote: “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of Faith,

having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22). This latter statement refers to baptism no less than the former, and it indicates the method of sprinkling. The fact is that in each text St. Paul uses figurative language, referring to a method of baptizing with which his readers were familiar, in order to teach them a spiritual lesson.

All doubts about the subject are resolved by referring to a few events in early Church history. The narrative about the conversion of the first Gentiles, for instance, clearly implies that they were baptized either by pouring or sprinkling (The Acts 10:47). Then there was the baptism of three thousand persons in Jerusalem on Pentecost day. Can it be imagined that so many persons were immersed in one day in Jerusalem, where there was a notorious scarcity of water? Even more conclusive is St. Paul’s baptism of his jailer in prison in the middle of the night (The Acts 16:33).

I am advised that at least a few persons are ready to quarrel with me about the method of the jailer’s baptism. They believe, it would appear, that despite all the forbidding circumstances St. Paul and the jailer left the prison in the middle of the night and went outside for the presumed immersion. The conjecture is supposedly drawn from verse 30, which states that the jailer “brought them out (St. Paul and Silas), and said ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’”

There are three different places mentioned or referred to in the narrative. The first was the inner prison, where Paul and his companion were shackled and confined. This is mentioned in an earlier verse which reads that “the jailer having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison...”

Inasmuch as there was an “inner prison” there must have been an outer prison also. This was the second place referred to. It could not have been out of doors. For one thing, the jailer would not have been so careless in the performance of duty as to give the prisoners a golden opportunity to escape, such as the cover of darkness would afford. For another thing, the purpose for which the jailer brought out the prisoners was not to be baptized; rather, it was to receive instructions. For this purpose, out of doors would have been most unreasonable. The third place mentioned was the jailer’s house.

The sequence of events is clearly outlined. St. Paul and companion were put in the “inner prison”, verse 24. They were brought into the outer prison, verse 30, where they preached to the jailer and converted him, verses 31 and 32. Then, verse 33, the jailer “took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.” Finally, verse 34, “And when he had brought them into his house, he sat meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” Wherein, I ask, do the facts contain even the slightest hint of immersion? The only reasonable interpretation is that baptism was by sprinkling or pouring, which the presence of water, verse 33, made immediately possible.

If testimony of the various methods is asked for, I refer to the “Didache”, a document dating from near the year one hundred. It contains explicit instructions by the officials of

the Church for the guidance of clergy and laity. As evidence about the doctrines and practices of early Christianity, its value cannot be over-estimated. And it states explicitly that baptism can be administered by pouring.

Further from Tradition I quote two statements. In the third century St. Cyprian wrote: "Let no one be afraid that the sick do not acquire the grace of our Lord because they are seen to be sprinkled or infused, since the Sacred Scriptures say through the prophet Ezekial, 'I will pour upon you clean water.'" In the same century Tertullian described baptism as "a sprinkling with any kind of water."

Let me add that even if there were no documents to quote, the memory of the Church would give conclusive testimony. She knows in each generation what she did in the preceding one; in this century, what she did last century. In other words, at every moment of time the Church recalls what her practices and doctrines were in the preceding moment. She recalls what she had taught, day by day, from the beginning; and this is what she has received from the Apostles.

In the studied effort to discredit the Catholic Church in respect to her method of baptizing, a few critics have visited the baptisteries of venerable churches in Europe, looking for evidence and even taking pictures of what they saw. From these they have learned, and have publicised, that at one time the Catholic Church used immersion as a method of baptizing. They could have saved themselves the trouble merely by consulting a Catholic history book, from which they would have learned everything that their cameras disclosed and more. The Church has consistently stated that in the beginning of the Christian era and for several centuries she used immersion as the more common method of baptizing. Concerning this fact there is no dispute.

It is when the critics take their next step, and for them the all-important one, that a wholly unnecessary dispute is created. Their reasoning is: From the early practice of the Catholic Church, as well as from the testimony of the Scriptures, it is evident that immersion was originally accepted as a valid method of baptizing; therefore, it is the only method. Comment is hardly necessary.

Is it not true that the Catholic Church has made a change from one method to another? What the Catholic Church did was to discontinue immersion as the usual method of baptizing and to replace it by the method of pouring. This did not mean the slightest change in doctrine. The reasoning of the Church may be stated very briefly: Inasmuch as pouring is a valid method of baptizing, as demonstrated both in the Scriptures and the early history of Christianity, and inasmuch as it is more convenient and far more universally usable than immersion, it is adopted as the customary method. Let me add that at no time has the Church denied the validity of baptizing by immersion.

## CELIBACY

It may occur to the reader, inasmuch as the celibacy of Catholic priests is an ecclesiastical practice, being disciplinary in character rather than doctrinal, that it does not belong in a discussion of the continuity and constancy of Catholic teachings. Unfortunately, the opponents of the Church have elevated it to the status of a doctrine, and a wholly false one at that; they have thus made a reply necessary. As a matter of fact, in no other respect has the misunderstanding of the Church been more pronounced than with the subject of celibacy. Inasmuch, therefore, as it is offered as proof of the corruption of the Gospel and a departure from the intentions of our Lord, I am consistent with my declared purpose in defending it.

Before being ordained, the aspirants to the priesthood, assembled before the ordaining bishop, are warned that they must forsake the ordinary interests and pursuits of the world, including marriage and family, in order to give themselves wholly to the service of God and His Church. They may step back if they wish. But if they step forward and make the promise, they know that it will bind them in conscience for life. Although not a doctrine in the strictest sense, the practice of celibacy stems from the teachings of our Lord and His Apostles. It is the logical expression of New Testament ideals.

The condemnation of celibacy proceeds from two assumptions, first, that it is contrary to nature and, second, that it is contrary to divine revelation. Concerning nature, it is pointed out that the perpetuation of the human family depends upon the co-operation of men and women in their response to sex attractions. It is alleged that failure so to respond is an offence against nature.

Let me call attention to the difference between contrary to nature and rising above it. The direct taking of life, of one's own or that of another, is contrary to nature; so, likewise is the direct mutilation of the body; so is adultery, theft, falsehood. All these acts are rightly condemned. On the other hand, rising above nature is a commendable part of the daily lives of most of us. When you are tired and weary, nature beckons us to sleep. But because you have work which must be completed at the moment you refuse to retire. When you are hungry, the natural response is to satisfy yourself with food. But you may refuse to eat in order to feed a neighbor who is likely to starve. You deny yourself food on certain days as designated by your religion as a matter of unselfishness and penance. The soldier in battle, knowing that he may be killed at any moment, is tempted to run away. Yet he risks and gives his life because of patriotism and military obedience. A noteworthy illustration of what I mean was that of Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian political leader who went on hunger strike in order to attract publicity and sympathy for the political cause to which he was devoted. All such conduct is rising above nature.

It is similar with the aspirant to the priesthood. He wishes to serve God and the Church with all his energies and resources. This can best be done by his remaining unmarried. He is not acting contrary to nature; he is rising above it.

Concerning divine revelation, it is pointed out that God spoke to the first parents of the human family and told them to increase and multiply. The inference is drawn that God imposed a duty binding the conscience of every adult to marry and procreate. Need I remind the critics that God said the same to the birds and fishes who, obviously, have no consciences? Furthermore, if all adults were bound by a divine command to procreate, as alleged, every unmarried student in our colleges and universities is now living in sin. It is to such absurdities that the argument against celibacy is reduced.

The natural impulses and desires moving men and women to seek each other for procreation are so strong that no encouragement or command from God is needed. Precisely to the contrary, what is needed is constant restraint in the opposite direction. Men and women need all the protection which civilised society can build around them in order to remain chaste and pure; they need the daily help of God's grace. And yet, even in the best communities, note how often raw nature breaks through!

A second text of the Scriptures was quoted publicly a few years ago by a distinguished spokesman of a non-Catholic religious group. Although it was an isolated and wholly unprecedented reference it may have been taken seriously by some of the hearers. The words of St. Paul were quoted: "let the bishop be of one wife." The amazing interpretation was that St. Paul passed onto every priest and bishop a divine command to marry. The reply is simplicity itself. St. Paul, a bishop, was unmarried; not only that, but he advised others not to marry.

Is there any question about St. Paul's meaning? During the Apostolic generation many of the Christians were adult converts. Most of them were married. It was from these, as a matter of necessity, that the Church drew her bishops and priests. If and when a bishop's wife died and he was left a widower, he was instructed by St. Paul not to remarry. This is the only possible interpretation of the text; it has been so understood by Scripture scholars from the beginning. Far from being an argument in favor of compulsory marriage, it shows Apostolic approval of celibacy.

One more observation is called for. At least two of the Apostles of our Lord were unmarried, St. John and St. Paul. I am well aware that recently an official of a non-Catholic religious group made the incredible statement that St. Paul was married. He seems not to have read St. Paul's own words: "For I would that all men were as I myself...I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them to abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry" (1 Cor. 7:7-9). The meaning surely is obvious. Our blessed Lord even talked about men who became eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:12) and he also promised followers who gave up wife and family for his sake, a one hundred fold reward.

That most or all the other Apostles were married is no argument against celibacy. It proves that there was no law, natural or divine, requiring them to be celibates. The only argument can be based on the Apostles' record is precisely in the opposite direction. That two Apostles did not marry is proof that there was no natural or divine law compelling marriage. It follows from their example, therefore, that the Catholic Church is free to require celibacy of her priests.

Come back now to my statement that celibacy for ministers of the Gospel is the logical expression of the New Testament ideals. Adding textual proof to that already given, I quote again from St. Paul: "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife" (1 Cor. 7:32-33). Is there any other possible interpretation other than that St. Paul approved and encouraged the celibate life? This advice is paralleled for women, for those who would serve God in a special manner. Again from St. Paul, writing about a father and daughter: "So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better" (1 Cor. 7:38). And once more from the same Apostle: "There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit; but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband" (1 Cor. 7:34).

### *SUPPORT OF THE CLERGY*

Further confirmation of Catholic continuity, together with excellent illustrations of both the correct and the in-correct methods of interpreting the Scriptures, is afforded by the relatively unimportant subject of clergy support. Are Christian clergymen expected to give all their time and energy to their ministry? If so, they must look to the laity for support. Or, to the contrary, are they expected to be self-supporting and to work for their livelihood as laymen do?

As the reader is aware, most of the Catholic denominations as well as the Catholic Church, call upon their lay members to provide adequate support for their ministers. They expect the latter to give full time to their religious duties. On the other hand there are a few denominations which have erased the line between the clergy and laity in this respect, requiring their ministers to live as laymen and to provide their own livelihood.

The spokesmen for these denominations are not content merely to defend the practice for the enlightenment of their own members; some of them go further and complain about the different practice in other religious organisations. One Mormon writer went so far as to characterise as "professionals" those priests and ministers who receive salaries for their support, implying that they work for personal gain and not for the love of God. Only through self-support, it was argued, can the sincerity of clergymen be assured.

The reasoning behind this unusual practice deserves a comment. **It follows the pattern too often used in reading the Scriptures, that of looking for confirmation of a particular belief or practice which has already been decided upon.** One or two statements are isolated from the rest of the Scriptures and are held up as sufficient and conclusive, in seeming unawareness that the overwhelming force of the Gospel narrative points in exactly the opposite direction.

Come now to the Scripture text which is cited as evidence for the practice of self-supporting clergy. It was given innocently enough by St. Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles. In it he reminded the Corinthians that, while among them for at least a part of his stay, he worked at his former trade as tent maker, the conclusion is drawn that thereby he set a precedent which is binding upon Christian clergymen generally. The implication is that this supposed precedent reflects the intentions of the founder of Christianity.

Far be it from any Catholic to ignore even the slightest bit of testimony from the Apostolic generation which can indicate what our Lord's Apostles taught. Certainly the writings of St. Paul deserve the most careful reading and evaluation, among them the reference to his manner of supporting himself. But surely this one statement should not be detached from the rest of his Epistles as if it alone deserved attention. It should not be held out against everything else that St. Paul wrote and against the whole Gospel story.

A few very pertinent questions present themselves and must be pondered. Did St. Paul say that his supporting himself in Corinth was an example for others to follow? Did he say that he was obeying a mandate from our Lord? Or, to the contrary, did he not say that his choice of livelihood was exceptional and not required by Christian law? Before considering these questions, let me pass another, just in passing. If St. Paul's manner of living in Corinth be accepted as a precedent, binding upon others, what about his example of celibacy? The argument for the latter would have considerable merit in that St. Paul advised others to follow his example and not to marry.

What St. Paul taught about the subject in question is learned from his rather lengthy statements. Read his words to the Corinthians: "Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedth a flock and eateth not the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? Or saith not the law the same also?...If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless, we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ. Do you not know that they which minister about the holy things live of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the gospel. But I have used none of these things, that it should be done unto me..." (1 Cor. 9:6-15).

Another and equally significant statement by St. Paul: "Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself" (II Cor. 11:7-9).

Again from St. Paul: "For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome unto you?" (II Cor. 12:13). Evidently, in the other churches to which the Apostle referred he was supported by the faithful laity.

**Evidently, furthermore, these "other churches" were superior to the Church in Corinth in that they assumed the responsibility of supporting their clergy.** From this and the other texts quoted, it is evident that St. Paul's self-support did not set an example for other clergymen to follow; precisely the contrary.

The ideal for the Christian priesthood is conclusively stated by St. Paul in the first verse of his Epistle to the Romans: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God." This is precisely what our Lord expects from His Priests, separation from the world.

On this point our Lord's explicit commands to His Apostles tell the same story. The first Apostles had been fishermen. Our Lord called them: "Follow me," He said, "And I will make you fishers of men." It is recorded that "they straightway left their nets, and followed Him". As St. Peter was to testify later: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee: What shall we have, therefore?" (Matt. 19:27).

Further witness to the same conclusion is the choosing of deacons to minister to needy members of the early Christian community. Again the words of Scriptures deserve to be read: "Then the twelve called the multitude of disciples unto them, and said, 'It is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of word'" (The Acts 6:2, 3).

It follows that the practice of the Church of asking her people to support the clergy is an excellent illustration of her continuity. It goes back to the very first days of our Lord's ministry when he called the Apostles and when they left all things to follow Him. They were '**separated**' from the world and secular pursuits in order to give all their time to the cause of Christ and to His Church. The ideals for the priesthood, thus set by our Lord Himself, have been cherished through the intervening centuries even to this day.

To be sure, they are temporary and individual exceptions. Occasionally priests are assigned to groups of Catholics where the income is inadequate and where, as a matter of necessity, they must obtain supplementary support by engaging in work as laymen. But this sort of thing is unusual and, in the life, of the Church, purely temporary. As soon as circumstances permit, the originally intended plan is restored so that the priests can give all their time to the ministry.

Occasionally, too, there are exceptions in the opposite direction. As critics do not hesitate to point out, Catholic priests sometimes expect and obtain more financial help from their people than they need. Any such grasping and mercenary attitude is unfortunate and is to be deplored. Human nature being what it is, however, imperfections among the clergy are inevitable. These cannot justly be weighed against

the ideal which the Church holds, namely, that her priests should receive from their people sufficient income for decent living, enough so that their minds and energies are free from worldly cares.

## *COMPLETENESS OF REVELATION*

Further testimony about the constancy of the Gospel comes under the heading of revelation. It has always been the understanding of the Catholic Church that the revelation of doctrines came to a close with the Apostolic age, so much so that this understanding itself must be regarded as doctrine. This fact, I submit, is excellent proof that the Church has not added to the Gospel, as she has been accused of doing. Once having declared that the revelation of doctrines was originally complete, the Church certainly could not ask her people and the world to accept new doctrines as having been subsequently revealed.

Just here we touch an interesting contradiction in criticisms. On the one hand, there is the complaint against the Catholic Church that she does not recognise new or modern revelations. On the other hand, there is the complaint that the Church has added new doctrines to those of primitive Christianity. Obviously the two complaints point in opposite directions, a contradiction which is most extraordinary when both come from the same source.

It should be evident that if the Church were unfaithful to the Gospel, unfaithful enough to invent new doctrines, she would be ingenious enough, in attempted justification, to invent the theory of new and continuing revelations. That she has done neither is evidence that she has preserved the Gospel as it was originally entrusted to her.

Concerning the finality of revelations, there is ample testimony from the Scriptures. For instance, St. Paul wrote: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you that that which ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8,9).

Implying the same fact is this text from St. John: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book...(Rev. 22:18).

More conclusive is the testament given by St. Jude: "Beloved," he wrote, "it became necessary...for me to write to you exhorting you to struggle earnestly for the faith which was given once and for all to the Christians" (Jude 3). Here I used the literal translation from the Greek text, as the King James version is incomplete. It is important to note that the Greek word which is translated "once and for all" indicates finality. It means that nothing can be added to the faith which has been revealed. **It confirms the Catholic doctrine of closed public revelation.**

As in the Scriptures so it is also on Tradition. The first notable publicity about the completeness of revelations came in defence against the heresies of a group known as the Gnostics, in the second century. Their claim to be a favored class, with a special contact with God through which they obtained secret information and new revelations, was emphatically repudiated by the Fathers of the Church. Such historians as Tertullian and St. Irenaeus declared that “the full truth of revelation is contained in the doctrine of the Apostles which is preserved unfalsified through the uninterrupted succession of bishops” (Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 6).

Perhaps the Gnostics should be given credit for helping later generations – credit in reverse. By the attention which they attracted to their peculiar beliefs they drew from the Fathers of the Church public pronouncements about articles of faith, pronouncements which we can quote today in defending against the revival of Gnostic errors. On the other hand, all that they accomplished in their own day was to create heresies and weaken Christian unity.

Similar difficulties would arise today if the Church depended upon and expected further revelations. Suppose that she announced a new doctrine as a result of revelation. Immediately she would be challenged. How do you know that you had a revelation? How can you prove that you had? To such questions, there could be no convincing reply. It would not be sufficient for the Church to say that she recognised the revelation from internal evidence, such as her own inner awareness. Such testimony would not convince any reasonable person.

Furthermore, dissenters would promptly come on the scene and announce that they had had revelations, insisting that the Catholic Church had no monopoly on communications with God. They would claim to have received doctrines differing from those of the Church. Each dissenter would present his unique appeal to the world and win a few followers. Christianity would descend into a chaos of contradictions and confusion. There would be no certainty about the Christian creed and no way of attaining certainty.

Aside from deliberate counterfeiting, the prevalence of honest mistakes would be equally fatal. Under circumstances where devout persons had prayed earnestly for guidance in finding truth and where deep convictions had come to possess their souls, they would easily be tempted to judge that their prayers had been answered by revelations. The next step in the watering-down process would be to accept such humanly formed convictions as the sum and substance of revelation. Mere human honesty, with all its proneness to error, would thus be substituted for the divine assurance of truth.

Then there would be the baneful effect upon theological scholarship. If scholars were looking for new revelations to answer their questions, there would be no point in exploring Scriptures and Tradition, for the simple reason that these sources of faith would have been demoted to a secondary place. The Church would merely fold her hands and wait for a message from God. There would be no stimulation to study;

nothing to investigate. In the department of doctrines, the Church would be dormant and unprogressive.

All this is avoided in the constitution given to the Church by our divine Lord. The revelations from Him and the Holy Spirit make up a deposit or storehouse of truth which is infinitely deep and inexhaustible. When a question arises about an article of faith, the Church, not sluggishly waiting for new instructions from God, proceeds actively to look into the deposit entrusted to her, where she finds the answer. This she draws forth, defines explicitly, and proclaims to the world.

Thus to find a doctrine of faith the Church uses, first of all, the ordinary human processes of inquiry. The bishops of the Church, under the leadership of the Pope, and with the aid of the best scholars available, study the sources of revelation, the Scriptures and Tradition, with each problem accepted as a challenge to scholarship. There is nothing mysterious about the process and nothing to impose upon the credulity of seekers for truth. **When finally the Church, as a result of exhaustive studies, officially announces a definition, she is protected against error by the Holy Spirit, as promised by our Lord.** It is only then that she rises above the reach of human nature; and it is then that she brings each doctrine the guaranty of God.

Does this seem unreasonable? To the reader who is not convinced, let me pose this question: Do you believe in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures? If so, you believe also that God, by His supernatural wisdom, protected the writers against teaching false doctrines. **Is it more difficult, I ask, for God to protect His Church against error than it was to protect the writers of the Scriptures?**

### *THE VENERATION OF MARY*

For a final illustration of Catholic fidelity in preserving the Gospel of Christ I choose, from among many other subjects available, the devotion to the Mother of our Lord. That the devotion to Mary is important cannot be doubted. It is important not only because it is so highly appreciated by Catholics but also because it is so much depreciated by non-Catholics. With us Catholics it plays a constant part in our religious experiences; with many non-Catholics it seems to suggest idolatry.

Here let me observe in fairness to my neighbors in other churches, especially to those of the Protestant group with which I was formerly associated, that their indifference to the rightful claims of Mary is largely a matter of misunderstanding. I am well aware that they are as eager to conform to the spirit and letter of the Gospel as are we Catholics, and are as honest in their professions of faith. I am sure that they would join us in honoring Mary if they understood that it was correct for them to do so. It is my hope that at least a few of them will ponder seriously what I write.

The Catholic devotion to Mary flows logically from the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, wherein it is stated that she is the Virgin Mother of our Lord, who is the Son of God and

the savior of the world. To be thus chosen and set apart from all other women was most extraordinary distinction, a mark of God's special favor to her. The facts are to be found in both the Old and New Testament. For the former, I quote: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

From the New Testament there is the narrative of the Angel's visit to Mary. "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, " the angel said, "the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women...And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God" (Luke 1:28-30).

Then came Mary's reply. It is the Magnificat, part of which I quote: "...for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things" (Luke 1:48-49).

It is tempting, by way of supplementary evidence, to call in facts of history in order to point out the high esteem in which Mary and the devotion to her have been held by the Church and Catholic people during the past centuries. The facts are so voluminous, however, that selecting from among them for a brief comment is most difficult. Furthermore, if I can judge correctly, the non-Catholic reader is less likely to be interested in the testimony from history than in that from the Scriptures. This latter, I have already indicated, in part at least. I trust that it is sufficient.

When rightly understood, the devotion to Mary is seen to be most correct and attractive, reasonable and inevitable. It is natural for us as American citizens to show honor and reverence to the leaders and heroes of our country; to Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and others. In much the same way we Catholics honor the Christian heroes. They are the saints, men and women, who during their lives were close friends of God. Just as the people who praise a painting for its beauty are in reality giving honor to the artist, any honor given to Mary is given ultimately to God, her Creator. In honoring the saints we honor God himself. By keeping their names alive we help preserve the principles for which they lived and died; we stimulate ourselves to imitate their example. We believe that all this is good for us and for the Church and for the world.

Among the saints Mary comes first. Whatever may be said about the devotion to the saints in general must be said about the devotion to Mary in a superlative degree. To honor we have set aside certain days of the year, among them two holydays. In her honor we have special devotions during the entire month of May. To her we dedicate shrines, churches, basilicas, schools, colleges, and cathedrals. Artists honor her in pictures, in statuary, architecture, and music; no one else has been such an inspiration to art. Writers dedicate literature to her. We name children for her; certainly no name is more common among Christian peoples than that of Mary. And in every place of worship there is an altar or at least a statue in her honor, beautiful with flowers and burning lights.

The Protestant objection to the devotion to Mary stems from the fear or opinion that the Catholic Church has allowed mere veneration to creep up to the level of worship. Let it be said very frankly that if the Church were guilty of such a fault, if the Church taught her people to “worship” the Mother of our Lord, the devotion thus fostered would deserve unquestioned disapproval. Certainly it would be a mistake to put Mary, a creature, in the place of God, the Creator.

In support of their complaint, Protestants point out that we Catholics pray to Mary. In so doing, they ask, do we not express worship? Let me explain that the word “pray” is used with more than one meaning. We worship God, certainly, when we pray to Him, but we do not worship our fellow men when we ask them to pray for us. The attorney in court does not worship the judge when he “prays” to him to grant a favorable decision. Similarly, if here and now I should ask you, my readers, to pray for me, I assure you that I do not worship you. And when Catholic laymen come to me, as they frequently do, to ask me to pray for them, I am not deceived into thinking that they regard me as God.

Many times in Protestant services years ago I heard persons ask for the prayers of others in the congregation. If such requests are reasonable, as they surely are, then our requests to Mary that she pray for us are equally reasonable. And such, let me add, is the fullest expression of the Catholic devotion to Mary. The fact that such requests are referred to as prayers does not change their character. They are an indication of humility on the part of the petitioner, plus the confident expectation that Mary’s prayers to God, because of her superlative worthiness, have a superlative efficacy.

The prayer universally addressed to Mary by Catholics is the “Ave Maria,” the “Hail Mary.” It begins with the salutation of the angel to Mary, as quoted from St. Luke’s Gospel, and concludes with the simple petition, “pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.” This prayer is repeated many times in the Rosary, which is one of the principal devotions among Catholic people both in public and in private.

The prayer also used by Catholics, called the “Hail Holy Queen,” concludes with the petition, “pray for us that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.” Similarly, the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, recited by both laity and clergy, repeats the petition, “pray for us.”

It is suggested, however, that indiscriminating Catholics misunderstand the intentions of the Church and abuse the devotion to Mary by confusing it with the worship of God. I do not presume to pass judgement about the justice of such a complaint. **I say merely that the abuse of devotion does not condemn its correct use.** The only correction called for is that we Catholics take care to represent truthfully to our neighbors and to ourselves this and all other features of our religion.

It is pertinent to inquire what alternative to the Catholic devotion can be proposed. If, as the critics of the Church insist, the Catholic devotion is an unwarranted expression of the Gospel, I ask them to point out the correct expression. In so far as I can observe, in most of the non-Catholic Churches with which I am familiar, there is no special honor or

veneration shown to Mary. No hymns are sung to her; no pictures or statues recall her pre-eminence; no petitions are addressed to her. There is nothing to identify her as the exalted Mother of our Lord. Suppose now that the Catholic Church were to follow this pattern of neglect. Who, I inquire, would fulfil Mary's prediction about herself? Recall her words "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." The truth is that if the Catholic devotion to Mary were abandoned nothing would take its place. It appears to be easy for critics to complain about the Catholic devotion, but it is evidently difficult for them to propose anything which, even in their own opinion, is better. Christianity will have either the Catholic devotion to Mary or no devotion.

### *LIVES OF THE POPES*

Because much criticism is directed to the unworthy lives of a few popes, it is necessary to give attention to that subject, although by itself it is wholly irrelevant. The complaint is that at times the Papacy has been occupied by weak and sinful men, the conclusion being drawn that their unworthiness inflicted irreparable damage upon the Church. That a few popes, as rare exceptions to the general rule, caused scandal by their misconduct is regrettably true; five or perhaps six can be so accused. But what follows? Harm was done to the Church, without doubt. Discipline among the lower clergy was relaxed. Abuses crept into Church management. Moral conditions in Christian communities declined. Urgently needed reforms were postponed. All that is bad enough, but it proves nothing against the continuity of the Church.

The question is: Did the evil conduct of a few popes put an end to the Church? It seems ridiculous even to pose the question, and yet it may serve one good purpose. Its very absurdity throws light on the criticism. I propose this test: Let the critics select any one of the weak popes they wish; let them make as much as possible out of his misconduct. Then let him ask if the Church disappeared when this Pope passed away. The answer is obvious.

Let us inquire, however, if the influence of these unworthy popes did not destroy the soul of the Church. Did not their evil ways affect doctrines? Did they not change and corrupt the Gospel? Here we touch a most extraordinary phenomenon, one which would have been impossible if the Church were merely human. It is one from which the Catholic faithful can take renewed assurance of the infallibility of their Church.

**The fact is that not one of the unworthy popes taught doctrines different from those taught by the most saintly Popes.** Not one of them attempted to change one article of Christian faith. Not one of them can be accused of corrupting the Gospel. How explain this extraordinary fact? Only in supernatural terms; only by recalling that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, has been with the Church at all times to protect against teaching error. Without this divine and supernatural protection, the leadership of unworthy officials certainly would have left its baneful and permanent mark upon the doctrines of the Church. But there has been no such mark. **This fact alone distinguishes the Church from merely human institutions.**

## *TO MODERNISTS*

It may be taken for granted that liberal theologians, perhaps best identified as Modernists, would find in these pages of mine, if they take the trouble to read them, substantiation of their accusation that the Catholic Church is living in the past and is unwilling to adapt to conditions of the modern world. What is needed, they would say, is not the reaffirmation of doctrines nineteen centuries old but points of view and policies which are new, preferably with the absence of formal and precise creeds. Although this accusation is not pertinent to my present thesis, I conclude with a brief comment about it.

I have said and now repeat that there has been and can be no change in the essential features of the Gospel as taught by our divine Lord and His Apostles. But this fidelity does not mean that the Church is static and unresponsive to the changing needs of a changing world. To the contrary, the Church is always trying to adapt herself. She makes progress in two very important respects, first, in the application of the Gospel and second, in the improvement of definitions.

Day by day, as opportunity permits, the Church seeks to apply her treasury of faith to the ills and needs of mankind. Evidence of this adaptation can be seen all about us in this country and in other free countries, where under normal conditions progress is constant. In countries dominated by enemies, however, such as Communists, there is no opportunity for progress. All that the Church can do is exist, while she waits and prays.

Concerning the improvements of definitions of doctrines: These are made from time to time as demanded by new experiences. They testify both to constancy and improvement, constancy of beliefs and improvement in statement.

Let it be admitted frankly that there are Catholic communities in which the religious conditions are not satisfactory, there being inadequate education, worldliness, and low standards of conduct. To these faults may be added occasionally an attitude of indifference among the Catholic clergy, with failure to offer their people the uplifting leadership which is needed.

How are such facts to be correctly appraised? What do they mean relative to my subject, "Continuity of the Catholic Church"? They mean, first of all, that the clergy referred to are not performing their full duty and that they are blameworthy before God. They mean that progress in all worthy lines is retarded and that the Church herself is harmed. But what else? Do the facts mean that the Church has ceased to exist?

Let the critics select the most backward Catholic community, where conditions are the most notably weak, and even there they must acknowledge that the Church has not disappeared. The very fact that she is blamed for neglect is proof that she exists. Bishops continue to ordain priests and consecrate bishops; priests continue to say Mass, to hear confessions, to anoint the sick, and to preach to their people. In other

words, the organisation of the Church exists and although feebly and inadequately, continues to function. Moreover, the doctrines of the Church, the declarations of faith, are precisely the same as in the most perfect Catholic diocese in the most Catholic country. If it be asked how the doctrines can remain unaffected by poor management and by low conditions in society, the answer is that doctrines come from above, not below. They are defined by the universal Church which, as I have already pointed out, draws them from the Apostolic Tradition, doing so under the protection of the Holy Spirit.

Under the conditions referred to, however, is there not need for reform? Most certainly. There is always need for some reform; always somewhere the need is urgent. Here we touch one remarkable characteristic of the Church. She has within herself the impulse and means for reform. And she alone can respond to that impulse. No new organisation can do it for her, precisely because no other can make itself the continuance of the Apostolic Church.

The Catholic Church, for her part, needs only look into her constitution and her own ideals; she needs only draw upon her own spiritual resources to find the program of reform. She has done this very thing many times in the past, perhaps the greatest example for us of this country being that of the Council of Trent. There, reacting to the shock of the Protestant revolution and the expose' of mistakes in policy and looseness in conduct, the Catholic bishops undertook sweeping reforms. It is worthy of note that they did not change any doctrine; to the contrary, they reaffirmed all that had come to them from their predecessors. What they did was to eliminate abuses in administration, to put an end to irregular means of soliciting funds, and to compel a stiffening in discipline among laity and clergy. Had the reforms been made a century earlier there would have been no Protestantism.

## *TO CATHOLICS*

There is one final observation which I am tempted to make, even though it may not be pertinent to my thesis. I say "may not," rather than "is not," because the point is not to be pressed. I merely suggest that the never-ending opposition to the Church, in and by itself, may be additional proof for the continuity of the Church. Let me explain.

Have you ever stopped to think that most of the opposition to our Lord, when he lived among men nineteen hundred years ago, came from persons who were God-fearing and devoutly religious? There were a few others, of course, those who do not deserve these adjectives of praise, but they were the exception. Here is a fact, therefore, which cannot help challenge our attention. That the divine Lord, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, should arouse enmity from persons of good intentions is something worth thinking about. Opposition from the forces of evil was and is always to be expected. But how explain the opposition from the others?

From the pages of the New Testament, wherein the nature of the opposition to our Lord is clearly recorded, I select a few incidents as typical. Limited time does not permit even a mention of all the points of conflict, but the few I have chosen will suffice for my purpose.

As a first illustration, consider the incident where a paralytic was carried into the presence of our Lord, with the hope that he could be miraculously cured of his ailment. You recall that our Lord startled His hearers by saying to the sick man: "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." Do you recall the reaction of the bystanders? Some of them immediately protested. "Why does this man speak thus?" they asked. "He blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins, but God only?"

For a second illustration take the extraordinary promise of our Lord that He would give Himself to His followers as food and drink. "I am the bread of life," He said: "...and the Bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." Upon hearing this some of the bystanders protested. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked. Our Lord replied by emphasizing what He had said. He promised to leave Himself among His followers, to be really and truly present under the appearance of bread and wine. He commanded that His followers were to receive Him in Communion.

Once more there was a protest, this time from disciples. "This is a hard saying," they murmured. "Who can listen to it?" Then when our Lord once more repeated His statement to show beyond any doubt that He was speaking literally about His Real Presence, "many of His disciples," and I quote now from the Biblical narrative, "many of His disciples turned back and no longer went about with Him." For a last illustration I bring together two similar incidents in which our Lord testified about Himself. On one occasion, when speaking about Abraham, He made this statement: "...before Abraham was made, I am." His use of the present verb, "I am," when referring to past time was an unmistakable indication that He had existed from all eternity and, therefore, that He was divine. On another occasion He was asked to identify Himself. Was He really the Christ, the Son of God? As truth demanded, He replied in the affirmative, thereby giving further testimony to His divinity.

How was His testimony received? Passing over the Apostles and disciples who remained faithful, what about the others? They turned against Him. When He said, "before Abraham was, I am," His hearers threatened violence. When he declared that He was Son of God, His hearers demanded that He be arraigned before Pilate.

I ask you now to notice how the nature of the opposition had changed by the time our Lord was brought into the Roman court. It was no longer mere complaints about doctrines. A new grievance had to be found, one which would impress Pilate. Remember, Pilate was reluctant to condemn Christ. He could find no guilt in Him and, therefore, wished to set Him free. What was it, then, that made Him change his mind? It was the accusation that our Lord was in politics. Was He not from the royal family? Had He not been acclaimed as a King? Was He not, therefore, an enemy of Caesar and a menace to the unity of the Roman Empire?

We may well ask where, at this moment, were those good folk who had rebuked our Lord for presuming to forgive sins. Where were those who deserted Him because He promised His Real Presence? Where were those who condemned Him for asserting His divinity? A few of them, very probably, carried away by the frenzy of the crowd, were demanding that our Lord be crucified. The others were silent; no word from them. By force of their own unfortunate decisions, they had been lined up on the wrong side. Their plea in favor of our Lord, which all good persons should have made and which Pilate waited for, was never heard.

Perhaps we disclose here the crowning tragedy of Good Friday. Over and above the enmity of evil men, over and above the condemnation by Pilate, was the rebuke of our Lord by those persons who wished to be good and honorable. No wonder the earth quaked in protest, that rocks were rent, and the tombs were opened; no wonder that the curtain of the temple was torn in two; no wonder that there was darkness over the whole land. No wonder, too, that our Lord had said, while dying on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The parallels between this former opposition to our Lord and the present opposition to the Church are too close and too striking to be accidental. Think back in your own experience, about the criticisms of the Catholic Church you have heard, and you will note how closely they imitate the criticisms of our Lord. To illustrate: What criticism of the Church is more persistent than that which pertains to the confessional? After the example of our Lord, and depending upon the authority given in His own explicit words, the Church asserts that the priest in the confessional is the agent of God to hear confessions and to grant absolution. It would seem that this ministry of mercy would be welcomed and held up for the highest commendation. Yet, as you know, the church has been and is roundly rebuked for this ministry. Inasmuch as I once joined in this rebuke, in the days before I became Catholic, I can hardly doubt that it is often comes from honest persons.

It is similar with the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The Church teaches, and has always taught, that she is commanded to repeat the Last Supper; and that as she does so, as the priest pronounces over the elements of bread and wine the words used and commanded by our Lord, He comes really and truly present on the altar. There He is to be worshipped as truly as He was worshipped by His followers nineteen centuries ago; He is to be received in Communion as truly as He was received by the Apostles at the Last Supper.

Here, again, is a most marvelous blessing and privilege for mankind. Should it not be a strong magnet attracting to the Church? Yet, as you know full well, the Eucharist has been and is the object of sharp protest and censure. It is condemned by critics of the Church as a "hard saying," precisely as was our Lord's first mention of the subject.

Finally, there is the explicit claim of the Church to have divine attributes, a claim which is asserted in many different ways. Among them none seems to provoke more criticism

than the claim of infallibility in teaching. The Church teaches and has always taught, that by virtue of the presence of the Holy Ghost which was promised by our Lord, she is protected against falsely or incorrectly teaching the Gospel. The Church explains most clearly that her infallibility is not due to human wisdom or scholarship but is a gift of divine protection.

Here, once more, is a most singular blessing for mankind, the feeling of security about the truths of religion. Yet this very doctrine of infallibility is the occasion for more censure. "How can the Church be infallible?" it is asked. Is not the claim ridiculous? And in the very fact of making it, is not the Church shown to be a false teacher? Precisely as our Lord was rebuked for claiming to be divine, so the Church is rebuked for claiming to possess a divine attribute.

This opposition to the Church has continued down the centuries. It is one thing to read in history books about the persecutions of the early Church and her people by the Roman Emperors. It is quite another thing, and more painfully realistic, to read current reports about similar persecutions in China and in the countries of Eastern Europe. That fellow Christians are being tortured and murdered in our own day is something startling and nearly unbelievable; it is news for which we are not well prepared. And yet, now that we pause to reflect for a moment, there should be no surprise. There has always been hostility toward the Church; there always will be.

Even in our country, with all its commendable fair play in most other respects, the Catholic Church, more than any other churches, has been the object of abuse and discrimination. Not that the others have always escaped; I am quite well aware that at times censure and ridicule have been directed against some of them. But that sort of thing has proved to be temporary only; within a generation or two it passes and is forgotten.

A good illustration is seen in the experience of my neighbors, the Mormons. One hundred or even seventy five years ago they were generally disliked throughout the country; they were subjected to many indignities. By now all this has changed. The Mormons have won for themselves a respected place in the American scene; they have been accepted by their fellow citizens. Similar observations can be made about the members of other churches that have been notably unpopular.

In this respect the experience of the Catholic Church is unique. To be sure, the public expressions against her differ from time to time; the intensity of dislike varies. Opposition to the Church is now more dignified than it was formerly and more sophisticated. No longer are Catholics insulted by such groups as the Know Nothing Party or the A.P.A.; most of the time we are not bothered too much by the Ku Klux Klan. Certainly, too, there is no recurrence of physical violence, such as the destruction of property or the taking of life. In contrast with fellow Christians in other countries, we Catholics of the United States have very much for which to be thankful. Nevertheless, as we are not allowed to forget, there continues to be a singular opposition to our Church. Catholics who are tempted to complain about all this should recall a few

statements made by our Lord, statements addressed to His followers of all generations. "If any man will come after me," He said, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Also this: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you: ...and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." And this: "For they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you...And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake..."In the light of these and similar forecasts we must remind ourselves, we Catholics, that just as we take pride and assurance in our Lord's promises that our Church can never be destroyed and can never teach error, so we must expect to be the heirs of His further promises that we shall be persecuted for His name's sake. We must accept the fact that at every moment of time somewhere in the world our Church is carrying the cross of persecution and that at every moment our fellow Catholics somewhere are dying for the faith. There is no end.

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The publishers would like to translate this book into other major languages to help stem the invasion of Catholic countries by missionaries from the various sects and faiths opposed to the Catholic Church. Can you help us?

Published by Ecclesia Press (Bangor is y Coed)  
Whitchurch Road, Bangor is y Coed, Wrexham  
LL 13 OBB, United Kingdom

designed by Michael Real  
22 Surbiton Hill Park, Surbiton, Surrey KT5 8ET  
Tel: +44 (0) 181 399 1459, email 100660,3574@compuserve.com  
ISBN 1 901089 25 8

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