

Why You Should be a Catholic

FOREWORD

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The growing interest throughout Australia in regard to the Catholic Faith will mean a great increase in the number of questions put to our Catholic citizens concerning it. More and more they will be called upon to give a reason justifying the faith that is in them. This rapid survey of the grounds of our belief should, therefore, come at a fitting time. The arguments given in this booklet are not new; they are arguments that have been developed by the greatest minds through nineteen centuries; and each has had volumes written concerning it. Here they have, therefore, received a merely superficial treatment. For the object of this survey is not to show the full value of any one proof, but to enable the reader to see at a glance the collective or cumulative force of the evidences justifying the faith that is in the mind and heart of every Catholic.

May the little work deepen their appreciation of the faith in the case of those who are already Catholics, and, at the same time, lead many who have not received that great grace to the peace that surpasses all understanding.

RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF CHRISTENDOM.

CHRIST “There will arise false Christs and false prophets to seduce, if possible, even the elect.”—Mk. xiii., 22.

“But I am with you even to the end of the world.”—Matt. xxviii., 20.

ST. PETER: “The unlearned and unstable wrest Scripture to their own destruction”—II. Pet. iii., 16.

ST. PAUL: “Some have made shipwreck of the faith . . . whom I have delivered to Satan.”—I. Tim. i., 19.

ST. JOHN: “That which thou hast, hold fast till I come.”—Apoc. ii., 25.

No wonder Cardinal Newman wrote: “I became a Catholic, because if the Roman Catholic Church is not the Church of Christ, there never was a Church founded by Him.” And: “To be deeply read in history’ is to cease to be a Protestant.”

I

PREPARATORY NOTIONS

THE MYSTERIES IN RELIGION

There are many things which we believe to be true without fully understanding them. These are called mysteries.

Thus in nature we have the mysteries of electricity and wireless transmission, together with many others. We know these things to be facts; we understand how to use them, but we know very little concerning the inner nature of the forces employed. Now, religion, also, has many mysterious truths or facts which we are expected to believe without fully comprehending them. And, far from this being an argument against religion, it is rather its first recommendation. For, indeed:

A.—If in the natural order there are mysteries by thousands, with how much greater reason will there not be mysteries in that supernatural order with which religion is concerned?

B.—If there were no mysteries, God would no longer be God; for a God understood perfectly by a finite intelligence would be as small as the mind of a creature, and no God at all.

C.—Even from man’s point of view, a religion small enough for his intellectual capacity would not be nearly large enough for his spiritual needs. Man’s mind is created and finite, and a religion which could be fully understood would have to deal with created and finite things only. But man is made for God, and finds within himself aspirations which the possession of God can alone satisfy. If religion, then, would satisfy this spiritual need, it must link him with the Infinite and Uncreated God, the truth concerning Whom will necessarily baffle in many things his limited understanding.

D.—A religion depending upon the mental ability to understand it would place people heaven with intellectuals and hell with the dull-witted. Salvation must be as difficult for the intelligent as for the slow-minded, as easy for the simpleton as for

the genius.

E.—And, in any case, the idiocy of the fool in rejecting the discoveries of a scientist, because he cannot understand them, is nothing to that of the scientist who rejects truths known to be revealed by a Divine Intelligence because they surpass his comprehension.

NEED OF A REVELATION

Revelation, in general, is the manifestation of an unknown truth. It would be a merely natural revelation were one human being to manifest an ordinary everyday truth to another who had never known it before. But it would be a supernatural revelation were God to manifest to man certain truths which could never be discovered by reason alone. For example, God could thus reveal certain truths concerning His own inner Life, or concerning the life of men when death has separated them from the world of human experience.

There is no absolute necessity for God to reveal any truths directly to man. He could have left him to acquire what knowledge he might from his observations of the universe about him. But if God intends man to know truths beyond those which can be ascertained from the visible universe, then it is necessary that He should reveal or manifest them to him. But, furthermore, God has raised human nature to a supernatural state with a supernatural destiny (the Vision of God Himself); and to attain this end there is need of a supernatural revelation of supernatural truths. With the attaining of this supernatural destiny, or, in other words, Salvation, religion is concerned, and it follows that religion involves some kind of revelation which every man must accept on the same grounds, simply because God has given it. The intellectual man must be taught by God just as he expects the ignorant to be taught by himself. Take the need of revelation out of religion, make it all a matter of personal insight, and leisure and ability will have far greater chances of attaining the saving truth than the often far more meritorious disability of those who must work from daylight till dark.

But, as a matter of fact, the need of revelation for the most intelligent of men, as well as for the more ignorant, is evident from the fact that the more the so-called great thinkers have forgotten revealed truth, the more they have manifested an incredible forgetfulness of their own nature, and exemplified the almost infinite capacity of human thought for going astray.

THE TESTS OF REVELATION

So deeply has the need of a revealed religion been felt, that many who have not received revelations from God experienced the need to invent them. Thus, hundreds of revelations have been claimed. Now, it is quite certain that God in His infinite wisdom, and knowing all this, would give certain characteristics to His true revelation by which it might be distinguished from all spurious teachings.

The conceivable tests are many. There could be internal tests by which a man could recognize a revelation as being from God, because of its perfect expression of his own ideals concerning all that is noble, lofty, and sublime. In this case he would “feel” it to be true; that it must have a heavenly origin, and no other. On the other hand, there can be external tests drawn from the circumstances surrounding the revelation, as, for example, from the character of the person teaching the revealed doctrine, or the extraordinary events such as miracles and prophecies connected with the new manifestation.

It is evident that the external tests would be better than the internal or subjective tests since they are better suited to every intelligence. Not everyone has sufficient education or taste to appreciate the sublime, and, even among those who consider themselves able to judge, there are as many opinions as there are men. External and extraordinary events, however, can be appreciated by all, and, since miracles and prophecies are possible to God, and to God alone, Who could not be conceived as performing or inspiring them in favour of a false doctrine, where we find true miracles and genuine prophecies there we have revealed truth.

And this is evident from the conduct of the enemies of the Christian religion. Knowing that the admission of miracles and prophecies implies the divinity of the religion connected with them, they attempt to undermine these guarantees by denying to God the power to produce them, as if He did not know all things, past, present, and future, or were limited in

His power. However if miracles and prophecies have occurred in fact, all speculation as to their possibility is waste of time. We shall see what history has to say on this question.

PLAN OF THE WORK

It is certain that where many teachings exist, each denying what the others affirm, one only can be true, if, indeed, truth is to be found in their midst. Now, using the tests above described, we prove that Christianity is a true revelation from God, and thereby disprove all non-Christian religions that are in open conflict with its teachings. Then we go on to prove that Catholicity is true Christianity, thus disposing of the claims made by the non-Catholic sects, which are in open conflict with the Catholic Church. For it is quite certain that if they teach positively what the Catholic Church absolutely denies, both cannot be right. If they are right, the Catholic Church is certainly wrong; if the Catholic Church is right, all the non-Catholic Christian sects are simply hot-beds of error. As it is impossible in so small a compass to prove that the Catholic Church is the true form of Christianity by a detailed refutation of each of over four hundred disputants taken singly, we must attack the problem positively rather than negatively, by a direct demonstration of the truth of Catholicity.

Finally, we must point out the road to conviction and Catholic Faith, the best of all God's gifts to men.

II

THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST

METHOD OF TREATMENT

A close examination concerning the Message itself of Christ, the Person of Christ, and the circumstances belonging to the history of His religion, will show conclusively that Christianity is from God, and that God alone can be its Author. This examination will bring to light a set of evidences which can be called the fourteen greater justifications for being a Christian. The treatment of each will be very summary, and much more could be said on behalf of the evidences than can be given here. But the object is that all may be viewed together. It is conceivable that some of them, taken separately, might not convince a man of the credibility of Christianity. But to view them all, taken together, with all their differences, and all pointing to the one truth, is to experience an extraordinary effect. A man who could break each of fourteen wooden rods across his knee would find it a very different matter were he to try to break the fourteen tied in one bundle. Not, of course, that any of the evidences for Christianity is as fragile as one of the single sticks, but the analogy at least brings out the additional value of cumulative force. And, indeed, the arguments to be given are so closely knit together that each succeeding proof intensifies a hundredfold the general effect, and leaves no doubt whatever concerning the rational grounds for the Christian and Catholic Faith.

FIRST GREAT JUSTIFICATION

—CHRIST'S COMING FORETOLD

Over a thousand years before the coming of Christ Moses wrote of some single great benefactor of the human race, declaring that "He shall be the expectation of the nations" (Gen. xlix, 10). Not only among the Jews, but even among pagans, there has ever been a tradition that better days would come for humanity by means of a deliverer. Plato, over three hundred years before Christ, wrote: "Wait patiently till one come to teach us what should be our bearing towards God and man" (Aleibiades ii). Plutarch, Virgil Cicero and others bear witness to the presence among the nations of the same expectation. Now, scattered through the Old Testament, the prophetic books of which even adversaries must admit were written at least three hundred years before Christ, although most of them appeared centuries earlier, We find an exact description of the expected one. Clearly and distinctly we find prophesied the family from which He would come, the circumstances surrounding His birth; His character as King, Priest, and Prophet; His life of preaching and miracles; a passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. And all fit only one Man who has ever appeared in history—Jesus Christ. Indeed, if a man sat down after the death of Christ to record his impressions of the last days of Our Lord and His conduct during them, he would find that he had unwittingly written the 21st Psalm and the 53rd chapter of Isaias, although these

descriptions were composed so many hundreds of years earlier.

But there are three prophecies which show that the expected Deliverer must have come precisely at the time Christ appeared, and it is quite certain that of all the historical characters of those days, Christ is the only one to whom the whole set of predictions would possibly apply.

In Gen. xlix., 10, we are told that he will appear when the Jews no longer enjoy self-government, and at the time Christ appeared they were already subject to the Romans.

The prophet Daniel (ix, 25) predicted the exact number of years that would elapse from the edict to rebuild Jerusalem until the coming of Christ the Prince, a time that had elapsed precisely when Jesus appeared.

A third prophet, Aggeus (ii, 8-10), declared that the desired of all nations should come, and that the glory of the second temple at Jerusalem would be greater than the first. The second temple has been destroyed, and never once did it rival the first temple in material majesty and grandeur. The only way it excelled the first could be by the fact that some special agent or manifestation of God appeared within it which did not appear in the first. Jesus Christ taught in that temple, that temple which has now gone, yet to which we must look for the promised one of God.

FORCE OF THIS EVIDENCE

The realization of a multitude of prophetic utterances by different men taken collectively is impossible unless they be from God. If, without concerted action, many men carved different parts of a human figure, one a foot in New York, another a hand in London, and yet another a head in Capetown, etc., is there the least probability that when brought together they would fit into a perfect statue? The ten letters in “absolutely,” if thrown into the air promiscuously, have but one chance in over three million of falling in the same order as they are found in that word. The agreement in Christ of all these predictions by different men, of different places and times, and even to the least details, is a far more complicated affair.

The only possible solution is that there was one supreme Author Who knew the future, and Who guided each of the several secondary authors. There is only one such supreme Author—God. The prophecies, then, are His, and He Who fulfilled those prophecies is His legate, whom we are obliged to hear. And as Christ alone fulfilled them, whatever Christ has taught must be implicitly accepted and obeyed. No one save a Christian can give any explanation of all these remarkable historical events.

SECOND GREAT JUSTIFICATION —THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST PREPARATORY NOTE

The evidences that immediately follow are drawn from the Gospels. It is necessary, therefore, that they should be reliable historical documents. And that they are so is indisputable. It is impossible that any ordinary mind should invent the matter they contain. Socrates and Plato at their best never even approached the sublime ideas set forth by the Evangelists.

Moreover, the facts here related, from their very vividness and detail, bear the stamp of truth upon them. Nor could the authors hope for any worldly good in writing books that shattered all the temporal hopes of the people in whose midst they were. And if they were not telling the truth, they could hope for no eternal good, for their own doctrine is that God hates liars. They stood to gain neither way—if their writings did not contain the simple truth.

As a matter of fact, no documents in history have had such a thorough sifting. They have survived a deeper critical study, a more searching analysis, than any other writings have had to undergo; and that not only by men of good-will, but by the very enemies of Christianity. And they remain with undiminished authority.

CHRIST HISTORICAL

The person of Christ is, therefore, historical. No historical fact can be certain if this is not. The cause of a changed

world, of nineteen centuries of Christian rule, of Christian philosophies, of Christian morality, could not be a mythical, non-existent Christ. Indeed, the deadliest argument against Christianity would be to disprove His existence, but no one has ever successfully accomplished that.

THE PROOF

The character of Christ proves not only that Christ is from God, but that He is God.

Rousseau, in his “Emile,” felt compelled to write: “The life and death of Jesus are those of a God, for if any man could invent it, he would be more astounding than the hero himself.” Cardinal Wiseman, so great an authority on Oriental mentality, wrote these striking words: “The character of Christ not only differs from, but it expressly opposes, every type of moral perfection which they who wrote of it could possibly have *conceived*. We have in the writings of the Rabbis ample material wherewith to construct the model of a perfect Jewish teacher. Yet nothing could be more widely apart than their thoughts and principles of action and character and those of the Redeemer. How comes it that men, not even learned, contrived to represent a character every way departing from the national type, at variance with all those features which custom, education, patriotism and nature alike seem to have consecrated as of all most beautiful.... They must have copied from a living model!”

Let us consider, then, that living Model in Himself, and His relations to God and to His fellow-men.

In Himself, He could fearlessly ask His most bitter and clever enemies, who ever watched Him so closely, to convict Him of sin if they could. (Jn. viii, 46.) There is no class of humanity, no condition of time, place, or nation, which will not find in Him an absolutely perfect example in a heroic degree. In Him there is no weakness, no excess; absolute calm, and every good quality at its highest development. In relation to God, it was predicted of Him, “Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God.” And that is the summary of all His activities. He thought of God alone in all that He did, loving and speaking of Him with the utmost tenderness. Not a moment of His life was passed save in absolute self-forgetfulness and complete devotion to His Father’s business. The will and glory of God the Father was His very food. (Jn. iv, 34.) Nothing could deter Him in His zeal for His Father not calumnies, nor hate not persecution. He was absolutely faithful to a service at the most dreadful of costs.

In relation to men, how universal was His love! He excluded no one, and was particularly devoted to the poor, the despised, and even the unfriendly. No one ever carried out the precept, “Love your enemies,” as did He. Ever it was the same story, “Jesus of Nazareth, Who went about doing good.” (Acts x, 38.) He was loved by little ones—a great test; inexplicably patient, even with His very betrayer, and He died in a last attempt to excuse His murderers, whom, after all He was doing His utmost to redeem. Not a very profound experience of human nature is required to force the conclusion that such holiness, without a single defect and altogether ideal, exceeds all merely human powers. If Christ were not God Himself, we would have to admit that such virtue in an ordinary man would be a miracle in the moral order, demanding the special influence of God. When, therefore, Christ claimed to be the Legate of Almighty God, sent into this world, we cannot admit that one so virtuous would tell a deliberate untruth, or that God would endow with such superhuman holiness one whose life, in the most fundamental thing of all, was but a blasphemous pretence. The life of Christ is explained, if the religion He taught is divine; but without this key it is an insoluble mystery.

THIRD GREAT JUSTIFICATION

—THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST

Leaving the Person of Christ, we turn to His doctrine and ask ourselves, “Does it look like a revelation from God?”

At once we see that, theoretically, it teaches the most sublime truths concerning God, man, and the world: truths, many of which are merely natural, but must be supernatural, and which every healthy reason must approve, even whilst acknowledging them to be above its own native powers.

Practically, it offers precepts of the highest holiness for every state in life, supplying the necessary help or means of grace, and strong motives permitting no one to halt in the path to perfection.

Compared with other systems, Christian teaching excels theirs as the day excels night. What philosophy has ever consoled a heart deprived of everything, or wiped away a single tear? Philosophers may plead and persuade; they dare not attempt to impose even their least teachings as an obligation on others. Yet Christians, wretched from a worldly point of view, are supremely happy in their religion. How different is Christianity from the Buddhistic type of religion, the spirit of which is merely to escape temporal miseries rather than attain the spiritual delight of that eternal and beatific vision of God promised by Christ! How different from the Mahometan type, which would promise an eternal inheritance of bodily pleasure!

Moreover, the absolute confidence of Christian teaching is its own guarantee. It fears no genuine enquiry, and, after twenty centuries of futile opposition and attack, knowing there can be no conflict between reason and revealed truth, it still lives to incite its adherents to the work of reconciling the teachings of philosophy and science with its own sublime doctrines.

Finally, in practice, no one ever abandons Christianity for a more noble doctrine or a better life; all converts come inspired by a desire for a loftier ideal than can be found elsewhere. No one leaves to become holier; no genuine convert comes for any other reason.

There is an explanation for this also, if the religion is from God; not otherwise.

TRANSITIONAL NOTE

These first three proofs have dealt with history prior to Christ, the Person of Christ, and the nature of His message. The following evidences are all drawn from the circumstances surrounding the establishment and subsequent history of Christianity. We shall see that the establishing of this religion was accompanied by unmistakably divine signs, and that its whole subsequent history proves it to be of God.

FOURTH GREAT JUSTIFICATION—CHRIST'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING HIMSELF

Again and again, in public and in private, before constituted authority and surging crowds, Christ asserted that He was God. (cf. Mark xiv, 61-64; Matthew xxvi, 63-66; xvi, 13-17; Luke x, 22; John x, 30-33; v, 17-21, etc.) Now, Christ either was really God or He was not. If He was not God, He either knew it and deliberately lied; or else He did not realize that He was not God, and therefore was insane.

Did Christ lie? His character forbids it. Such a life as His could only be by the special intervention of God, Who could not sanction a lie. And Christ never boasted that He was God. A bounden sense of duty alone compelled Him to assert the simple truth, which He did dispassionately, and then died rather than unsay it.

Then was He insane? His sublime doctrines, His restoration of the human race prove Him to have been the wisest of men. All that is good, holy, and enduring is not the work of a madman.

Christ, then, being neither a liar nor insane, must have been what He claimed to be—God. No other solution is possible. And, being God, with all the authority of the Creator and Supreme Lord of the human race, He has the right to impose His religion, and we have the corresponding duty to embrace it.

FIFTH GREAT JUSTIFICATION —CHRIST'S PROPHECIES

Christ clearly and minutely predicted many things that were fulfilled to the very letter:

(1) About Himself, "Knowing all things that should come upon Him" (Jn. xviii, 4). His passion He predicted, and death; His betrayal by Judas, the flight of the disciples, Peter's denial, His Own resurrection and ascension, etc.

(2) About His followers. The persecutions they would meet with; even that so small a thing as Mary's anointing Him would ever be remembered in the Church, etc.

(3) About the Church: Its propagation, persecution, and preservation to the end of the world.

(4) About the Jews: Their dispersion, and especially the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple. St. John

Chrysostom beautifully says: “Christ built what no one has destroyed—the Church; He destroyed what no one has rebuilt—the temple.”

Again, these things are explained—if Christ be indeed the God He claimed to be, and His religion the true revelation.

SIXTH GREAT JUSTIFICATION.

—CHRIST’S MIRACLES

THEY REALLY HAPPENED

The Gospels are true history. According to their account, Christ’s very enemies who witnessed His miracles ascribed them to the devil, but did not deny them. Unbelievers are absolutely powerless to prove that these words did not occur.

THEY WERE TRUE MIRACLES

They are as far above natural powers today as ever they were. Even were we to grant that they were due to natural forces, and that Christ were not God, we would have the greater and still more inexplicable miracle of a carpenter’s son knowing more of nature’s laws two thousand years ago than the greatest of our modern scientists.

THEY WERE TO CONFIRM HIS DOCTRINE

It is conceivable that God in His goodness would work a miracle to relieve the necessities of some man of good-will yet still in error. Yet He could not do it explicitly to confirm an erroneous doctrine. And Christ appealed to His miracles as an explicit guarantee of His teachings. “Though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in the Father. The works I do in the name of my Father, they give testimony to me.” (Jn. x.)

CHRIST’S GREATEST MIRACLE—HIS RESURRECTION

A.—Christ Truly Died: That He did not is (1) historically false; the disciples, Jews and Romans were quite certain of it. (2) Physically impossible. He was brutally scourged, crucified, drained of His Blood, and His death was tested by a final spear-thrust. (3) Morally impossible. After His resurrection He said to His Apostles, “It behoved Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead.” (*Lk.* xxiv, 46.) The character of Christ merits credence, and He could never thus have intensified the convictions of the Apostles had He not been really put to death. Besides, had He not died, but crawled slowly and painfully from the tomb still covered with wounds, He would not have impressed His disciples, nor would it be possible to account for the astounding change in them.

B.—Christ Truly Rose: He appeared to many so suddenly and so perfectly restored as to change their whole character. His appearance to St. Paul left so indelible an impression that it seemed ever recurring to the Apostle’s mind. He mentions the resurrection twenty-one times in the epistles he has left us, all written within forty years of Christ’s death. A great lawyer once remarked, “If we had as much evidence for a murder as we have for Christ’s resurrection, it would be enough in modern law to hang a man twelve times over.”

A dead man arose, then, of his own power, walking and conversing with exactly the same personality as before.* The explanation of all this is impossible, if that man be not God.

SEVENTH GREAT JUSTIFICATION

—PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY

TRANSITIONAL NOTE

The full force of the following evidences can be claimed only for Catholicity, and comparisons will have to be made between Protestantism and Catholicism. The reason will be explained more fully in the third section of this pamphlet, but at present it will be sufficient to note that the whole history of Christianity subsequent to Christ is the history of the genuine Christian and Catholic Church, which began with Christ and the Apostles, and has continued her positive mission

through all the ages down to the present day. All separated claimants to Christianity are based on negation and protest, and have occupied only a section of Christian history, many having perished by the wayside, whilst none of those still with us are able to trace their lineage back as far as the centuries will go. Arguments for the preservation of Christianity from the days of Christ to the present time can apply strictly, therefore, only to the Catholic Church. The reason why non-Catholic Christian sects have been allowed to appear, those sects which have wished to retain the consolations of Christ's teaching without its obligations, must be sought ultimately in God's determination not to destroy that gift without repentance—the free will of man. He did not will that men should leave the Catholic Church. That is an evil, and God cannot will evil. However, He permitted it because He gave men freedom of will, and such freedom carries with it not only the power to accept His law, but also to reject it. He certainly could have prevented these rebellions against His Church, but only by depriving men of that free will which is a necessary condition of merit in such as faithfully serve Him. He, therefore, preferred to permit the evil of these sad divisions rather than withhold so great a gift. God offers the Catholic Church to the world; He gives sufficient grace to remain faithful to it, but He will force no man to remain steadfast.

THE FACT

Numerically and geographically, Christ's religion spread with miraculous rapidity, gripping rich and poor, ignorant and learned, alike. Mommsen, the great historian, admitted that he found his fourth volume on Roman history the most difficult, and that he scarcely knew how to deal historically with the well-nigh inexplicable fact that "Christianity had suddenly appeared in the world and spread all over it."

CIRCUMSTANCES

The internal obstacles to its propagation were tremendous. It was the doctrine of a despised and crucified Jew, hard to human nature, and sublime even to incomprehensibility. No less were the external obstacles. It had to meet an incredible corruption of morals, the derision of philosophers, studious vilification, violence, and the seductions of pleasure. Honours, even, were offered to those who refused to accept Christianity.

The means at the disposal of Christianity apart from God's grace, seemed very inadequate. There were a few disciples, destitute of all means for propaganda work, and without the qualities personally needed to gain the minds of others. They lacked philosophical training in the schools, nobility and reputation. Humanly speaking, the methods of a Mahomet were the road to success. Humanly speaking, Christ seems to have chosen the path to disaster.

THE FORCE OF THE PROOF

To unite the intellects and wills of men who have never agreed before, and of peoples perpetually antagonistic and contending about everything save the one Catholic Faith, is a work self-evidently divine. Monsignor Benson wrote that in Cambridge he met men, of one nation and ten religions; but that in Rome he met in one room men of ten nations and one religion. But this Catholic Christianity was not only propagated among such different types. It brought men to love the very things nature hates; and when we consider the difficulty of reforming even one corrupt man, where shall we find an adequate cause for so searching an influence? Whence came this innate power of gripping individuals and expanding through all the nations of the earth? No other parallel power can be found. Reflect upon the sterility of philosophic systems, and of those Protestant missions which abound in human means. To take one concrete case of the latter. In 1800, when the Dutch Government had charge of Ceylon, Protestantism was imposed as the State religion. There were 500,000 Protestants and but 50,000 Catholics. Ceylon passed to British rule, with no religion imposed, but all on an equal footing. In 1900 there were 100,000 Protestants and 300,000 Catholics. The inherent power of self-propagation that Christ placed in Christianity, and which remains in Catholicity, is an unexplained force, unless we admit the direct influence of Almighty God.

ST. AUGUSTINE'S DILEMMA

St. Augustine sums up this argument very briefly. The propagation of Christianity is either due to miracles or not. If due to miracles, the religion is divinely guaranteed. If not, then such propagation without miracles is the greatest of miracles itself. In either case the religion is divine and should be accepted.

EIGHTH GREAT JUSTIFICATION—THE MARTYRS

VAST NUMBERS

Under the most rigid historical criticism, and admitting the possibility of these having been some exaggeration in regard to the number of the martyrs, the fact remains that, at the very lowest estimate, vast multitudes gave their lives for this new doctrine. One tomb alone in the catacombs has this inscription, "Marcella et Martyres Christi CCCCL," Marcella and 550 martyrs of Christ. In the Roman martyrology 13,825 martyrs have been recorded for Rome alone. But it must be remembered that there were many local persecutions in the provinces. According to Sozomenus (Eccles. Hist., Bk. II, c. 14), more than 190,000 suffered in Persia and the East. Eusebius declares that under Marcus Aurelius, the martyrs throughout the then known world were innumerable. (Eccles. Hist., v, 1.)

EVERY CONDITION

Old men, soldiers, rich and poor, young boys and little girls willingly died for their supreme conviction.

FEARFUL TORMENT

There were physical tearings of the human body, wild beasts to be faced, burning or boiling in oil, whilst, on the other hand, every possible allurements was offered to renegades.

MIRACULOUS CONSTANCY

There was no fanaticism, but calm and smiling fortitude. Lactantius writes, "Where robbers and strong men shriek, boys and young girls endure with silence." St. Justin says the Christians confessed their Faith when asked, gloried when degraded, and were grateful when condemned.

MARVELLOUS EFFECTS

"The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians," Tertullian wrote to the authorities: "crucify, torture, condemn. The more you torture us, the more converts we get. The onlookers see our martyrs and enquire as to their beliefs; they enquire and become Christians; they become Christians and desire to become martyrs in thanksgiving for their Faith." (Apology, c. 50.)

FORCE OF THE ARGUMENT

As G. K. Chesterton remarks, that a man should die for his belief does not prove that belief to be true. It only proves that the man really believes it. But here we do not speak of one man or even of several dying for a doctrine, but of thousands, of every condition of strength and frailty, undergoing extreme torture. To see mere children, with all physical comfort destroyed, smiling and blessing God whilst being racked, burnt, or eaten by wild beasts certainly suggests more than natural strength. These martyrs were drawing upon some power specially strong to support them; and it could only be what the martyrs themselves said it was—the grace of God. They, at least, should know. The whole extraordinary episode of the Christian martyrs demands that the religion be of God.

NINTH GREAT JUSTIFICATION

—THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD BEFORE CHRISTIANITY

Pagan society was rotten to the core. Women and children were inferior beings. Thousands of slaves led a miserable

existence. Josephus, in his book on the Jewish war, relates that Titus held gladiatorial games in which 3000 captives were put to death on one day. Under the Emperor Trajan, during four months, 10,000 gladiators met in mortal combat to provide sport for the populace. And philosophy could maintain with Metrodorus that “all good has reference to the stomach.”

AFTER CHRISTIANITY

The world was reformed intellectually, morally and socially. The virtues of humility, chastity, patience and love of enemies came into existence. Consider the vast series of saints through all ages. They hated lying, they loved sincerity and virtue. Their great holiness and utter unselfish devotion to God render the thought impossible that He should have withheld the truth from them.

If it be said that the modern Christian world is anything but transformed, we simply have to reiterate that the argument is claimed to have application to true Christianity. In the beginning, when all Christians were subject to the Catholic Church, the transformation was evident. Protestantism, in breaking with the Church, lost the power of true transformation, and is concerned more with external respectability than internal spirituality. But, in spite of rebellion against the Church, whatever is good in Protestant Christianity *is* due to Christian principles held in common with, and drawn from, the Catholic Church. The evils that are current are due to its infidelity to all those other principles in the Catholic Church which is renounced. And within the Catholic Church the transformation still continues, as is evident to those who have eyes to see. The argument derives its greatest force from the work of Christianity in those first barbaric centuries, but still has tremendous value from the work of the Catholic Church today, which demonstrates the same inherent strength. Nor can any reasonable explanation be found if Christianity be not of God.

TENTH GREAT JUSTIFICATION —PRESERVATION OF CHRISTIANITY

Quite apart from its extraordinary transforming power, the preservation of Christianity constitutes a further and distinct miracle. In the latter centuries this refers again particularly to the Catholic Church, which has retained not only the convenient doctrines of Christianity, but those also which are inconvenient to human nature. Non-Catholic Christianity, which rejected the uncomfortable doctrines and obligations, has already failed, whilst the Catholic Church has scarcely ever been in a stronger position. The promises of Christ, however, were made not to systems scarcely any longer Christian, but to the true Church.

NUMBER OF ENEMIES

Jews, Gentiles, heretics, schismatics, Mahometans, unbelievers, secret societies and politicians in every age, from the cradle of Christianity till the present day, have done all in their power to destroy the Church.

EXTENT OF ATTACK

No teaching, rite, institution, or precept of the Church has escaped.

METHOD

Power, knowledge, fraud, calumny, corruption, treachery and secret machinations have all been employed. Adversaries have used the most efficacious means of every description, and the main defence of the Church has ever been patience and prayer.

RESULT OF ATTACK

We have but to look round about us. Ever mourning the destruction of innumerable children, as in Mexico today, the Church yet stands with constantly renewed vitality, repairing the ruins in one region by conquests in another. Every day she sees buried another of her persecutors, politician, lawyer, litterateur. She marches on deathlessly; they, a memory; she,

a fact.

Lacordaire writes, “Why should God be prodigal of miracles to those who do not see the Miracle? Why show a stone from the quarry when the Church is built? The monument of God is standing; every power has touched it; every science has scrutinized it; every blasphemy has cursed it. Examine it well—it is there before you.”

It all leaves the irresistible conclusion that Catholicity, the true Christianity, is indeed from God.

ELEVENTH GREAT JUSTIFICATION

—ECCLESIASTICAL MIRACLES

THE FACT

Miracles have continued to occur in the Catholic Church right through the ages, and still occur. They have been witnessed to by numbers of men whose sanctity of life and soundness of doctrine demand belief, especially when they say that they have seen what they describe. The facts are not secret, but public, and open to any investigation; nor can they be denied without calling into question the value of all our historical documents.

In the Acts of the Apostles, numerous miracles are recorded as having been wrought by St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Stephen, and others. St. Irenaeus declared in the third century that already it was impossible to enumerate all the signs and miracles wrought by the Church by the power of God in her efforts to convert the nations. And so it has been through all the ages. It is sufficient to study the lives of the saints in the collected accounts by the Bollandists and other historians to realize how faithful God has been to His promise that He would supplement the teaching of the Church with signs and wonders. If men doubt the truth of these continuous miracles, we reply that the Church has put them to so severe and rigid a test that at least those which she officially recognizes are beyond all doubt. Daubenton, in his “Life of St. Francis Regis,” narrates that an English Protestant visiting Rome asked to see an account of some miracles brought forward on behalf of a saint’s canonization. Having studied them, he remarked: “If all the miracles accepted by the Roman Church have proofs as evident and authentic as these, there can be no room for doubt.” “But,” replied the prelate who was entertaining him, “these miracles of which you feel so sure have been rejected by the Congregation of Rites for want of sufficient evidence.” Today, at Lourdes, miracles still occur in our own era. Since the shrine was established in 1858, over three thousand genuine miracles have been registered. Neurotic cases do not account for one-third of the cures there obtained, and are seldom accepted for registration. Seventeen cases of cancer have been registered as miraculously cured, 164 cures of tumour, 464 of physical brain troubles, 48 from total blindness, 31 deaf and dumb. Every facility is given to medical men, Catholic or otherwise, who wish to sift the evidence for themselves. The charge of autosuggestion fails in the presence of so many cures instantaneously from organic diseases and bodily deformities. “If these things are the result of suggestion,” observes Belloc, “why cannot men in similar numbers suggest themselves into health in Pimlico or the Isle of Man?” But auto-suggestion fails completely in the case of a child who has not yet attained the age of reason, such as Yvonne Auinaitre, who, in 1896, was suddenly cured of a double club-foot, although she was but 23 months old.

RELATIVE NUMBERS

We admit, as we have said above, that the numbers of miracles today are less than in the first years of the Church. Of their very nature, miracles can never become the ordinary law. They are necessarily extraordinary and singular events.

But that they are relatively less today affords no difficulty. The Apostles had no natural means to assist them, and the first Christians had to contend with difficulties of persecution which demanded a very vivid confirmation of their faith. Moreover, with our modern facility of publicity, the evidence of one miracle today can be made known to millions, whilst the early miracles had to be multiplied in many places, each reaching only a local audience.

Further, the state of a Church growing and expanding is vastly different from that of a Church fully grown and which, on account of the holiness of its members and universality, can win confidence without the aid of numerous miracles. The constant occurrence of a few evident miracles is sufficient to manifest God’s approval of the Church already built.

THE ARGUMENT

The same signs are to be found in the Catholic Church today as are known to have occurred in the Christian Church of the early centuries. If, then, as non-Catholics concede, the early Church was the true Christianity, so, too, must be Catholicity. The Catholic Church says, "I am the only true Church of Jesus Christ." All other Churches deny this assertion. The simplest way out would be to ask God Himself to testify to the truth. Now, He grants a privilege of miracles of the Catholic Church which is wanting to all other forms of religion. Although God will not prevent men from joining an erroneous Church, yet, surely, if the Catholic Church is false, He could not give those signs in her favour which would positively induce men to submit to her. We are forced to conclude that the Catholic Church is of God, unless we wish to violate our reason.

TWELFTH GREAT JUSTIFICATION

—HUMAN NEEDS

The following analysis is taken from the "Apologia" of Cardinal Newman, and contains profound truth:— We find in the world a hopeless state of alienation, random achievements, impotence, greatness and littleness, defeat of good and success of evil, hopeless irreligion and profound misery.

The solution is either that there is no God, or man is at variance with God and implicated in some terrible original calamity.

The first solution is out of the question. In the second solution, God, being God, would try to make the best of the wreckage, not by a book, which would be useless, but by a concrete living representative to maintain knowledge of Him, and restrain reason when it attempted further suicidal excess. Moreover, the initial doctrine of this representative would have to be an emphatic protest against the existing state of mankind.

Now, knowing and experiencing the evils, we are impelled to look for the remedy, and for such a one as we have described. We have not far to look. There it stands, just as it should be, as real a fact as our own existence—the Catholic Church. She spends her time denouncing the existing state of mankind, and the cause of it. She does not say that human nature is irreclaimable, else why should she be sent! But she teaches that it must be extricated from the debris, purified and restored. Thus, she exists, a super-eminent, prodigious power, sent upon earth to encounter a great evil.

Such an institution, then, as the Catholic Church bears so unmistakably upon it the stamp of truth that it can only be regarded as the accredited ambassador of Almighty God. She is the direct and only answer to man's experienced needs.

THIRTEENTH GREAT JUSTIFICATION

—BY COMPARISON

An exhaustive study shows that every other religion is inferior to Christianity, and that every non-Catholic form of Christianity is inferior to Catholicity in its Author, Doctrine, Practice, and Method of Propagation.

Whatever other religions have that is good and true is to be found in Catholicity. Whatever is false is exclusively their own. Catholicity alone fully satisfies all legitimate aspirations of body and soul, the aspiration for a perfect code of morality and the craving to solve the problem of life. No other religion has ever done this; and that Catholicity should do so guarantees it to be no man-made religion, but of God.

FOURTEENTH GREAT JUSTIFICATION

—HATRED AND LOVE OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

There is a universal, extraordinary and irrational hatred for Christ, a hatred which is directed in a peculiar way against the Catholic Church alone. Nero left a detestable memory behind him, yet no one writes bitter books about him. Is Christ hated because He founded a new religion? So did Zoroaster and Mahomet; but, with all their faults, they are not hated. The infernal hatred against Christ, Who had no faults, can be explained only by the rebellious principle of evil which abominates God and excites men to the same hatred. Why should men's eyes smoulder with hardly suppressed passion

when they hear the name of Christ?

Zoroaster and Mahomet are names not thus treated. It remains to the beautiful Name of Christ alone to have significance as a curse.

LOVE

Yet side by side with this unreasonable hatred we find an overwhelming love for Christ—a love that no man, however illustrious, has ever won for himself. And if any man ever did win a great love, it has died with those who knew him personally. Caesar is not loved; a deep glow of love comes to nobody's eyes at the mention of the name of Napoleon. Not so is it with Christ. He alone could and did say, "Love not even your very parents as you love Me," and He said it with all the authority of God. That love Christ obtained, and that love Christ has retained with extraordinary intensity through all the centuries. Can we imagine anyone drawing to himself the devoted love of the thousands of religious of both sexes to be found in the Catholic Church were He merely man? Ask the nun, ask the priest, ask the martyrs, ask young children practising virtue, or those giving alms; go through the ages and ask: "Why do you do these things?" "The answer will always be the same—"Because I love Jesus Christ."

There is one only explanation of this phenomenon. It is that Christ is God and His religion divine, that religion which is identified with Catholicity.

ASSESSMENT OF THE EVIDENCE

Each argument given is good in itself, and sufficient justification for becoming a Christian and a Catholic. Each has innumerable converts to its credit, with the help of God's grace. But the full strength of the truly Christian position increases immeasurably when we take not any one or two or three of them, but all together. It is impossible, as Fr. Faber points out, that so many considerations should converge upon one point, should combine in one cumulus, and yet the conclusion from them be untrue. Experience shows that they exclude all prudent doubt, for they have been urged by thousands of the most learned and scientific of men, who cannot be accused of want of reason or careless examination. Richard of St. Victor wrote these striking words: "If I err, I have been deceived by God, for the doctrine has characteristics that can only be from Him."

III

THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST'S CLAIM

The only Christianity Christ can recognize as His own is the Christianity He founded. No substitute religion can have any value in His eyes. And again and again it has been suggested in the preceding evidences that true Christianity is identical with Catholicity, that Catholicity which is in communion with the Bishop of Rome.

For, indeed, it is impossible to revise, reform, or change any doctrine in Christianity. Men may accept the doctrine Christ taught or reject it. But if they alter it, it ceases to be the Gospel of Christ. Humanity must conform to God's teachings, not adjust those teachings to suit itself. The Church grieves that so many who should still be Catholics are not. But, to win them, she cannot change the doctrines Christ committed to her keeping. It is useless to convert people to a faith that has changed; to a faith that is completely Christian no longer, and to which the promises of God were never made.

In the meantime, the unyielding Catholic Church, and that Church alone, still stands with the evidence of God stamped upon her. Hers is a wonderful unity of doctrine and practice, a great power of enkindling holiness, a regular descent through the ages from the Apostles and from Christ Himself, a world-wide appeal to all nations. And she alone, coming from the beginning, and being the lineal descendant of the Apostles, inherits the promise of prevailing till the end of time. A glance at the chart facing page one gives a vision of history which is quite startling to those who have never before fully adverted to the facts.

And is it not striking that none but the Roman, Catholic and Apostolic Church claims to be the exclusive ambassador

of God, behaving, moving and speaking as if conscious of divinity?

The claims of Christ to mankind's allegiance have been made very manifest by the evidences given in this book. But He is far from claiming merely nominal adherence, or any half-hearted Christianity. The fullness of His claim is that every man should embrace all His doctrines in theory and practice. And it is only by allegiance and whole-hearted devotion to the Catholic Church that man can completely satisfy the legitimate claims of Christ.

Hear the words of a famous French thinker and writer, a one-time unbeliever, who died May 22nd, 1856: "I am a historian, a tired rationalist, who submits himself to the Church. I see the facts; I perceive in history the manifest need of an Authority, Divine and Visible, if the life of mankind is to grow and thrive. Now, all that exists outside the Catholic Church is of no authority. The sects are nothing but an oblivion, disregard and contempt of history. Therefore, the Catholic Church is the authority I was looking for, and to her I yield. I believe what she teaches; I accept her credo." So spoke Augustine Thierry.

IV YOUR CONVICTIONS WHERE EACH MAN STANDS

The evidences put forward in the preceding pages prove that the Catholic claim is not unreasonable. They justify those who submit to the Catholic Church, and supply that rational groundwork which protects the Catholic from all charges of folly. Credulity has nothing to do with Catholicity. All that has been said is demonstrable by reason alone.

But, whilst a man might agree with what has been written, he might still refuse to join the Catholic Church. For faith goes beyond the mere admission that Christ has justified His claims. It accepts those claims. A man in England might be quite ready to admit from the books he has studied that Australia is a very fine country. That is merely a mental admission. But it might be a very different thing were he asked to go overseas and live in that country. A decision of his will is here required that he might not be ready to make.

So, too, there is a vast difference between admitting the value of the evidence in these pages and deciding to become a Catholic. This latter step implies the will to accept the authority of the Catholic Church because she is guaranteed by God, and this guarantee of God is in turn accepted because He knows all things and could not possibly deceive us. The grounds, therefore, undergo a change. A man may prove the claims of the Catholic Church by reason; he accepts them by making an act of faith in God. He is capable of the merely speculative assent to the evidences by his own natural powers; but actual faith in practice is the gift of God. It must be so. Christ Himself assures us that a supernatural destiny depends upon faith. "He that believes shall be saved." (Mark xvi, 16.) Our natural powers are not proportionate to a supernatural effect. Faith, then, must be a supernatural gift of God, which no natural efforts can merit, earn, or purchase. Thus, Christ adds, "No man can come to me except the Father draw him." (John vi, 44.)

It follows that this free gift of God is a very great grace to be prayed for rather than discussed.

If a man is willing, asks God's help and mean it, not all the arguments of men can prove him unreasonable or prevent him from choosing to believe.

The consequences are tremendous and eternal. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned." (Mark xvi, 16.) This belief involves in practice submission to the Catholic Church. "If any man will not hear the Church, let him be as the heathen." (Matt. xviii, 17.)

The choice is a personal matter, resting with each individual. God could not condemn a man for unbelief if man were not himself responsible for that unbelief. This in no way conflicts with the statement that faith is the free gift of God. For, whilst nothing we can do could possibly earn it, yet God gives it to all those who have had the truth put before them and who have the goodwill to accept it. Christ sent His Church to teach all nations, and this implies that, as fast as the various nations are taught, He is prepared to give the grace of faith to all who have the goodwill to accept it. If the truth, then, is put before us, and we have perceived the value of its reasonable justification, then lack of faith is due to want of goodwill, and sincere prayer for this gift of God.

One of the surest signs that a man is in good dispositions is present when he honestly asks, “Is Catholicity true?” and not, “Can I possibly prove it false?”

Once a man has come into contact with the Catholic Church, therefore, and has been able fully to appreciate the position, whatever state he remains in is his own choice; and he will be responsible to God for whatever state he dies in. When Christ gave the Catholic Church authority to teach all nations, He laid upon all nations and all individuals the obligation of being taught by her, as soon as she presented herself to them. Hence the force of His words, “He that believes not shall be condemned.” (Mark xvi.)

This truth is given not to intimidate, but as a simple fact, just as one would state the equally certain physical law that bodies left to themselves fall to the ground.

CHRIST’S INVITATION TO YOU

If you are a Catholic, Christ our Lord desires you to seize every opportunity of strengthening your conviction, and multiplying the reasons for the faith that is in you. He desires you to appreciate it ever more deeply, and to be better able to give an account to others of the great grace that has come your way.

If you are not a Catholic, the invitation for you is pressing and earnest. Christ and His Church claim a place amongst your dearest convictions. You have, perhaps, read much of what has gone before in this booklet with wistful eyes; and in your heart God’s grace has awakened new and strange desires. Then, if you love the good and true; if purity and generosity and nobility of soul, and great holiness, have any appeal for you; if you would like to love One more worthy of your love than any created being; if you wish to love Him in a way that you have never yet been able to do, then “ask, and it shall be given to you.” (Luke xi, 9.)

Long years ago, Jesus Himself, sitting on the well of Jacob, before the wondering eyes of that poor woman of Samaria, spoke from a full heart those burning words, “If thou didst know the gift of God.” Pray earnestly that you, too, may come to know this gift, simply and sincerely that; and before long you will rejoice with a joy full and pressed down and running over, to find yourself in the Church Christ founded—the Catholic Church, which gives Christ. The Church with which He has promised to remain all days, even to the consummation of the world.

Nihil obstat:
F. MOYNIHAN,
Censor Deputatus.

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