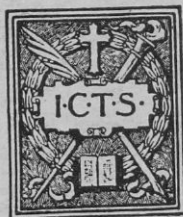


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HOW I BECAME A CATHOLIC

BY

DR. GEORGE J. BULL



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Introductory

For many years of my life I took no interest whatever in religious questions. I am aware that this was a misfortune: neither mind nor heart was satisfied.

Like a traveller lost in the wilderness, I suffered privations and was exposed to many dangers. Blinded by prejudice, I wandered far from the beaten path. Strangers whom I met gave me misleading information. At last I asked for help from on High, and was guided in the right way.

The story of the steps I took may be of service to some other traveller.

I. In Darkness

I was born at Hamilton, Canada. My parents were Irish Protestants, active members of the Low Church party in the Church of England.

Naturally I was brought up in the religion of my family. I can still remember myself at my mother's knee hearing stories from the Bible. She brought me up most carefully; and if as the years passed by I became less attached than she was to the Church of England, it was certainly not her fault.

As soon as I knew how to read I was given books which had a decidedly anti-Catholic tendency. I can remember in one of them finding Luther represented as a man without reproach, worthy of imitation. My school-books had a distinctly Protestant bias.

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At Sunday School I received instruction in the Catechism of the Church of England, which, I may say in passing, appeared to me the most uninteresting of books. I gained some knowledge of the Bible, especially of the Old Testament—whether it was my fault or that of my teachers I cannot say, but certainly I had little admiration for the book. I was taught that my religion was founded on the Bible, and that in the Bible could be found a formal condemnation of the Church of Rome.

I can still remember how I gazed with curious eyes at a text, written in large capitals, in the Book of Revelation, MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, &c., and when I asked the meaning of this my teachers told me it meant the Church of Rome, which indeed was no better than she ought to be. It was but natural that I should have felt something like hatred for the Church thus stigmatized by the Bible.¹

I went to church on Sunday with my family, but took little interest in the services.

It might never have occurred to me to question the truth of the religion I had been taught, but when I was fifteen or sixteen years of age my faith was somewhat shaken. I had gone to pass the holidays with one of my father's friends, a Protestant, a learned and distinguished man, for whom I had great respect and a certain admiration. In speaking with me one day he said that no enlightened man could believe the teaching of the Churches—that would do very well, he added, for women and children, but not for men like him. His words made a deep impression on me.

¹ I have learned later that the Protestant interpretation of this text is false. The unprejudiced person who examines the Protestant Bible in good faith will not find in its pages an argument against the Catholic Church. Prejudiced enemies of the Church have given a false meaning to the words of the prophets; and unreasoning men, who have not examined the question, go on propagating the untruth not knowing the evil that they do.

About this time, at the High School in Montreal, my schoolfellows lent me some immoral books, among them one published as the story of Maria Monk,¹ a woman who said she had escaped from a convent in Montreal, and pretended to expose the immorality of Catholic priests and nuns. The effect of such books is pernicious, even from the point of view of morality, but the object desired is reached—the mind of the reader is poisoned against the Catholic Church. A little later, when I became a medical student, I looked askance at the Catholic priests I met, and when I passed a convent I thought only of the iniquity of its inmates. Although I found little charm in my religion, I was quite disposed to take sides with the Protestant party. Several of my acquaintances had formed new anti-Catholic societies; others joined the Orange lodges. I do not know what prevented me, but happily I joined none of these bodies.

As I went on with my medical studies at McGill College, Montreal, I still went to church with my family on Sundays at the Protestant cathedral, with no greater spiritual advantage than before.

From time to time it happened that I heard free-thinkers and Unitarians enlarge upon their doctrines, and I sometimes questioned myself whether we were in possession of the truth. I became, little by little, persuaded that if I studied the foundations of the Church of England I should become a freethinker, and I wished to keep my faith. I remained a member of the Church of England, but without conviction.

I have practised medicine in the United States. After several years of active practice I was obliged to go

¹ This book is untrue from beginning to end. Its falsehoods have been exposed in a pamphlet published by the Catholic Truth Society; but, as Cardinal Newman pointed out in his *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England*, true testimony cannot remove the evil effects of misrepresentation and falsehood.

to the Rocky Mountains to regain my health, which had been impaired by overwork. Here I had more time for reflection, and occasionally spoke with others whose faith was quite as uncertain as my own. The Church of England, the only one with whose doctrines I was familiar, satisfied me less and less. I read much, and among the books which fell into my hands were several pamphlets by Felix Adler, of New York, founder of the Society for Ethical Culture, and by Salter, one of his disciples, director of the Chicago branch of that society. In one of his lectures Salter speaks of prayer as presumptuous and selfish. It is, said he, presumptuous in a mortal to address the Infinite; it is selfish to ask for favours which, perhaps, others may never have. I was pleased to find so high-sounding a reason for the abandonment of prayer. My faith, never firmly established, was not long in disappearing altogether.

In 1883 I went to live in New York to devote myself to the study of diseases of the eye. I stayed in that city for three years, during which I took much interest in the work of the Society for Ethical Culture. I learned that Felix Adler, son of a rabbi, had been sent to Germany to prepare himself to become the rabbi of the most important Jewish temple in New York. In Germany he lost faith in all revealed religion, and on his return to New York founded the Society for Ethical Culture. Every Sunday Adler gave a lecture in a public hall in New York on some moral subject. His audience was composed for the most part of Jews who had given up their religion. The society had established many philanthropic works, schools, orphan asylums, &c., from which all mention of the name of God was rigorously excluded. Adler denied any direct revelation of God to man. He would not himself be

held by any creed. One day, however, he said: "If you would know my creed it is this: I believe in the supreme excellence of righteousness. I believe that in maintaining and fulfilling the law of righteousness man is sanctified in the service of the unknown God."

Adler seldom allowed himself to use the word God. He preferred to employ such terms as the Infinite, the Perfect, to avoid the suggestion of any idea of personality in the Godhead. He did not admit that man could address himself to God in habitual prayer. At most, he said, one might pray in a moment of exaltation caused by some beautiful spectacle in nature, such as one might see from a mountain top. "Our conscience," said he, "tells us we must do what is just. If we have not faith in this moral law, our life on earth is without object, and the sufferings we endure are a cruel mockery. We must feel that there is a harmony between the order of nature and our moral instincts. Such a law is the essential basis of ethical religion."

I followed Adler's lectures with the greatest interest. He turned again and again to the thought that we must listen attentively to the voice of conscience and seek to make it more sensitive, instead of stifling it, as is commonly done. All the Churches, said he, make their morality depend on their religious dogmas. The very opposite should be the case. Religion should be the consequence of morality. When a man has spent his time in bettering the condition of the poor, when he has become the support of the widow and the orphan, when he has sought to perfect from the moral point of view his relations with his fellows, his good works have lifted him up. Then, like a traveller who has reached a certain height on a mountain side, he may leave at his feet the little things of life, and, looking on the distant scene, may conceive some faint idea of what

it is to hold communion with the Infinite. It is in this that religion consists, but it is accessible to but few mortals. What is necessary for all is the interior reform of each individual and, in consequence, the general amelioration of society. I had no hope of reaching the heights pointed out by Adler, but his eloquence charmed me; I was also attracted by his plans for the development of character and by the humanitarian side of his work. I joined the society and openly abandoned the Church of England.

Up to this time I had given little attention to moral questions, but now I studied them with interest; this was certainly a step in advance.

I became a friend of Adler. The conversations I had with him and the studies I made at this time were not without influence on my character, and I still feel grateful to him for the help he gave my troubled conscience. But to-day, by the light of the true faith, I easily perceive the imperfections in his moral system. However perfect may appear the morality preached by the reformers in natural religion, one may always discover egoism and pride hidden under a virtuous exterior. The Divine Master alone can teach humility, self-negation, true charity, and the other Christian virtues; for only He can give man the grace necessary to practice them.

In 1886 I came to Paris for the purposes of my profession. I naturally went to the Sorbonne, to the laboratory of ophthalmology, then under the direction of Dr. Javal, who received me kindly and soon offered me a place in his laboratory. Interesting studies, especially those connected with the construction of an optometer, led me to prolong my stay in the capital, and without having sought it I found myself presently the assistant of Dr. Javal in his private practice. Per-

sueded that I should find in France all facilities to perfect myself in my profession, happy and proud of the sympathy I met with among the French, I resolved to settle in Paris, there being no special reason why I should return to America. I passed the examinations at the school of medicine, obtained the diploma of doctor of medicine, and in 1889 began to practice on my own account.

For several years I was absorbed by study and the work of my profession. I felt, however, a certain void. The inspiration of Adler was wanting. I looked around me to find an interest in something equivalent to Adler's work, and with this object I examined the movement of the Positivists, but as all that they did seemed much less practical than our work in New York, I was little disposed to join them. I went to listen to Renan; he was wholly unsatisfactory. I was always at the same point. Sometimes I tried to spread Adler's ideas amongst the students. I flattered myself I might lead them to change their lives, but I must confess I had no success. One of them, urged by me to change his disordered life, replied: "I prefer my pleasure to the servitude of your moral code. By what authority would you impose it?" I looked in vain for arguments to convince him. In reconsidering the matter after this long lapse of time I recognize that, in fact, if we do not consider conscience as the voice of God its authority is null.

From time to time I went on Sunday to the Episcopal Church in the Avenue de l'Alma, in the hope of finding something to uplift me, but I never gained there any strength, any elevation of spirit. As in the old days, I left the church unhappy and discontented. But it never occurred to me to enter a Catholic church

in my search for what was wanting; the prejudices of my childhood and youth blinded me.

In the month of October, 1889, an American lady, a Protestant, who had been my patient, spoke to me on the subject of religion. I was led to tell her something of my state of mind. She told me she quite agreed with my ideas, but had had much satisfaction in reciting a prayer which she would recommend to me, for she was sure it would please me. I replied that my prejudices would prevent my following her advice, and I explained to her the objections to prayer which I had learned in the Society for Ethical Culture. She did not insist further, but before leaving Paris in November she gave me a little note-book, in which she had written the following prayer:

"Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy servants and kindle in them a fire of Thy love.

"Send forth Thy spirit and they shall be created, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth."

I found this prayer beautiful, and neither selfish nor presumptuous. Perhaps if it had contained the word God I should have rejected it, but although accepting Adler's ideas on the Infinite I had retained something of my early faith in a sovereign Spirit, to whom I saw no reason to refuse to address myself; and I promised to recite the prayer every day.

I should doubtless soon have forgotten my promise, but the recitation of this prayer acted upon me like a talisman; it gave me always a sensation of a certain elevation of spirit which did me good. I found myself saying the prayer many times a day, and every time its beneficent effect was felt; it drove away my gloom and raised me above the little things of life.

I had been reciting this prayer only a few weeks when I was invited by a medical man to pass the even-

ing at his house with some of his friends. To my great surprise I found myself at a sort of prayer-meeting. They began by singing a hymn, then a clergyman invited the company to kneel in prayer. I must confess I was annoyed: although reciting the invocation to the Holy Spirit, I still considered myself an agnostic, and I was displeased that my host should place me in a false position. However, after a moment's hesitation, I knelt with the others, but I did not pray. Before I could withdraw, the minister began to read a chapter from the Epistles of St. Paul. In spite of my ill-humour, the words of St. Paul appeared to me admirable: from a moral and humanitarian standpoint they were finer than anything ever said by Adler.

Next morning I wished to read the chapter in question in order to see whether it really merited the admiration with which it had inspired me. For this purpose I bought a Bible and looked through its pages to find the chapter; and although I did not find it, I was attracted at every moment by the beauty of other passages in the New Testament. Ever since my school-days I had entirely abandoned the reading of the Bible; for the first time in my life, and much to my surprise I was carried away by the reading of this book, which it seemed to me I had never seen. From that day I found myself often with the Bible in my hands. I made a more or less complete study of the New Testament, and discovered several important truths.

I had been familiar from my youth with the doctrine of the Unitarians, for whom Jesus Christ is only a man; later, I had been influenced by the writings of freethinkers, who pretend that the New Testament is but a collection of legends brought together in the interest of priestcraft. But as I advanced in my stud-

ies every page of the New Testament tore away the veil from before my eyes; I recognized the history as true. It is told in such a way as to leave no doubt as to the veracity of the story; one knows instinctively that eye-witnesses are speaking. The life of the Apostles transported me with admiration; their zeal, their devotion, the firmness which they manifested in their teachings, showed the Holy Spirit acting in them. In comparison with such men, all that I had admired in the pretended reformers seemed unworthy of attention.

It was obvious to me from the Bible that Jesus of Nazareth was God. This fundamental truth fixed itself in my mind with a force that admitted of no resistance; the prejudices due to Unitarians and free-thinkers disappeared for ever. I observed how, from the crowd which followed Him, Jesus had chosen and ordained His twelve Apostles to found a society, a Church. I should have, perhaps, remarked this important fact much less if I had not formerly been interested in the foundation of Adler's society. I had been a witness of certain divergencies of opinion between the chief and his collaborators, and I had seen the efforts of Adler to form teachers submissive to his doctrine.

I remarked then that the society founded by Jesus Christ was established to last for ever. I observed the care given by the Master in the instruction of the first pastors of His Church; how He took them apart to explain His doctrine, saying: "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."¹ He exacted from His disciples a most perfect faith, even when that faith seemed to be in opposition to reason. In his sixth chapter St. John records how after he had accomplished the miracle of the multiplication of the

¹ St. Matt. xiii. 11.

bread, Christ announced a nourishment still more marvellous: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." At these words they disputed among themselves and left him; the Gospel says expressly, "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him."¹ In order to keep them, human wisdom would have stopped and disguised the truth; but the Divine Master did not seek to keep those who would not believe.

I cannot say with certainty whether, at the time when I read this chapter, I fully understood its meaning; but to-day, instructed in the doctrine of the Eucharist, it is perfectly clear to me that the hearers of the words of Jesus Christ made no mistake as to their real sense. By these words, "The bread that I will give is My flesh,"² they perfectly understood that the Saviour did not speak figuratively but literally. It was that which they refused to believe: "How," said they, "can this man give us His flesh to eat?"³ Far from correcting them in this, our Lord employed expressions⁴ still more clear and more energetic, that there might remain no doubt as to the true sense of His words.

To be a member of the Church of Christ it was, then, necessary to believe all that Christ taught. No one had ever told me this; my Protestant instructors, on the contrary, boasted of the breadth of their views on doctrinal questions. Adler also gave full liberty to his followers.

If we admit the divinity of Jesus Christ, I said to myself, we must naturally accept His teachings: one is the logical consequence of the other.

¹ St. John vi. 66. ² St. John vi. 51. ³ *Ibid.* 52. ⁴ *Ibid.* 53-58.

From a practical point of view the insistence of the Divine Master on the unity of His Church seemed to me of absolute necessity. Without that, how could this Church according to the promise which He made to the Apostles, last until the end of the world?

The prayer of Jesus Christ after the last supper, at the most solemn moment of His life, throws so clear a light upon this doctrine that I must quote it here in part:

Lifting up his eyes to heaven Jesus said: "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee. . . . I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. . . . I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy word. . . . I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. . . . Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as We are. . . . As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world. . . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word. That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one of Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me."¹

This chapter and other similar passages produced a strong impression on my mind. I began to see that

¹ St. John xvii.

the Church founded by Jesus Christ must exist in our own days and bear through all the centuries the mark of a veritable unity; not a factitious or relative unity, but an absolute one, as real as that which exists between God the Father and God the Son.

Never in my youth had this thought been suggested to me. I had learned that Jesus Christ had come to redeem the world by His death; that He had given certain doctrines which each one might interpret as it pleased him; I had some vague idea of an apostolic succession in the Church of England; but never had I been shown Jesus Christ accomplishing the work of which He speaks in the chapter quoted—that is to say, founding His Church.¹

The Church, then, was a divine institution and must last for ever; such was the second capital truth which was borne in upon me. But where, after so many centuries, was this Church to be found? one in its belief, so little like that which I knew—the Church of England—which allows its ministers to hold different and contradictory doctrines and whose members make a boast of the elasticity of their belief?

Proceeding with the reading of the New Testament, I saw that Jesus after His resurrection completed the instruction of His Apostles, promising them His Spirit to confirm them in their faith. He charged them to teach all nations: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."²

The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles showed me a Church remaining united, in spite of innumera-

¹ *Ibid.* 4.

² St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

ble difficulties; and again the thought came to my mind: Where is that Church to-day?

Never did it occur to me to look for it among the Anglicans, the Methodists, or the Presbyterians, still less among the Unitarians. Could it be the Catholic Church, I said to myself—the Church of Rome? But on that side the wall of my former prejudices rose before me, and I went no further.

II. Towards the Light

It is well to remember that I was occupied by the work of my profession and by social obligations; from time to time only, in my rare moments of leisure, perhaps, I came back almost unconsciously to religious questions. I do not remember whether I read the Bible regularly, but I continued to recite the prayer, "Come, Holy Spirit," because it brought me a certain calm, a certain satisfaction. In this way two years were passed.

In the month of December, 1891, I met a Protestant acquaintance whom I had not seen for years. In the course of our conversation we spoke of the importance of frequently reading the works of the best writers of our language, so as to avoid the danger of falling into the English of the newspapers or the faulty language of the Anglo-French Colony. "For my part," said my friend, "I never travel without a copy of Newman's *University Sermons*;¹ they are the purest modern English I know."

The next day I received from my friend a copy of this book. In looking over it I found that the author had written these sermons when he was still a clergyman of the Church of England. I remarked, as had my friend, that the language was perfect—but I was soon more interested in the subjects treated. Most of

¹ Newman's *University Sermons*, Rivingtons, London, 1890.

these sermons speak of the relation between faith and reason. Newman shows that conscience is the essential principle and sanction of religion in the mind. "Conscience," said he, "implies a relation between the soul and a something exterior, and that, moreover, superior to itself; a relation to an excellence which it does not possess, and to a tribunal over which it has no power. . . . Moreover, since the inward law of conscience brings with it no proof of its truth, and commands attention to it on its own authority, all obedience to it is of the nature of Faith."¹ Newman points out how Natural Religion, such as the systems of heathen philosophers, failed in practical effect, and how Revealed Religion supplies the deficiency. He explains that a Revelation is needful for man, and that Faith working by love enables man to apprehend the truths of Revelation. Faith is regarded in Scripture as the chosen instrument connecting heaven and earth—as a principle of action most powerful in the influence which it exerts upon the heart. "Though Faith is the simple lifting of the mind to the Unseen God, without conscious reasoning or formal argument, still the mind may be allowably, nay, religiously engaged, in reflecting upon its own Faith; investigating the grounds and the Object of it, bringing it out into words, whether to defend, or recommend, or teach it to others."

He goes on to say that St. Peter tells us in the first of his Epistles: "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." In this text Peter "gives us a precept which implies, in order to its due fulfilment, a careful exercise of our reason, an exercise both

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 18, 19. Sermon on the influence of Natural and Revealed Religion respectively.

upon faith, considered as an act or habit of mind, and upon the object of it. We are not only to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, not only to prepare a shrine within us in which our Saviour Christ may dwell and where we may worship Him; but we are so to understand what we do, so to master our thoughts and feelings, so to recognize what we believe and how we believe, so to trace out our ideas and impressions and to contemplate the issue of them, that we may be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us an account of the hope that is in us."

"Though in all cases a reasonable process, faith is not necessarily founded on investigation, argument, or proof; these processes being but the explicit form which reasoning takes in the case of particular minds."

Newman speaks of faith as one of St. Peter's characteristics. "His faith was ardent, keen, watchful, and prompt. It dispensed with argument, calculation, deliberation, and delay, whenever it heard the voice of its Lord and Saviour: and it heard that voice even when its accents were low, or when it was unaided by the testimony of the other senses. . . . When Christ asked the Twelve whether they would leave Him as others did, St. Peter said: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.' . . . If ever faith forgot self, and was occupied with its Great Object, it was the faith of Peter. If in any one faith appears in contrast with what we commonly understand by reason, and with evidence, it so appears in the instance of Peter."

In another sermon Newman points out that our attitude towards the truths of faith depends upon our moral state. "A good and a bad man will think very

different things probable. In the judgment of a rightly disposed mind, objects are desirable and attainable which irreligious men will consider to be but fancies." The author quotes St. Paul as teaching that "a certain moral state, and not evidence, is made the means of gaining the truth and the beginning of spiritual perfection."

And as I learned from these sermons of Newman that faith is something different from what I had supposed, the thought came to me that I, too, might some day, after all, have the gift of faith.

Several friends to whom I had spoken of Newman's sermons told me of the beautiful hymn he had written before his conversion, which, familiar as it is, may be reprinted here:

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.
I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on.
I loved the garish day; and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.
So long Thy power has blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

I procured a copy of the hymn and committed it to memory. It touched my heart, and I recited it daily in connection with the prayer to the Holy Spirit. I was not aware of it at the time, but to-day I see clearly that I was taking, without suspecting it, the best means of obtaining faith: I was making a direct appeal to the Holy Spirit to obtain the gift.¹

¹ Newman's hymn is, in fact, the cry of a soul in distress. In 1833, when he wrote it, he was still a clergyman of the Church of England, perplexed by doubts, and wondering whether his Church was in the right way. In this hymn he implored the Holy Spirit to lead him on. And the light came to him: he did not "sin against the light," but finally entered the Catholic Church.

It was at this time, early in 1892, that I went again in search of spiritual help to the Episcopal Church in the Avenue de l'Alma, and added to my daily recitation the collect of the Communion Service: "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open; all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy holy Name, through Christ our Lord. Amen."¹

Up to this time I had never been attracted towards the Catholic Church: I knew this Church only by the evil which I had heard or read of it. But soon after I began to recite Newman's hymn I became aware that my thoughts were turning in a new direction; something independent of my will seemed to impel me to inquire into the doctrines of the Catholic Church.

This curious feeling returning to me again and again, I spoke of my state of mind to a lady, one of my Catholic friends, who at once sent me a Catholic Catechism. It seemed to me strange enough that she should give me a catechism—I had not forgotten the uninteresting catechism of my childhood; however, I read the book carefully, and to my surprise found myself able to accept most of its teaching. It is true that the doctrine with regard to punishment after death seemed to me objectionable; but I admitted at once that if these doctrines were formulated by the Church founded by Jesus Christ I was obliged to accept them.

It now appeared absolutely necessary to determine whether the Catholic Church is the Church founded by Jesus Christ. To learn something of this Church

¹ Many years later, in 1906, still marvelling at the beauty of this prayer, I made inquiries as to its history, and learned that it is one of the prayers of the celebrant in the Sarum rite, and is also found at the end of a York litany. It is, therefore, a pre-Reformation and Catholic prayer.

I went to Mass at the chapel of the Fathers of the Assumption in the Rue François I^{er}. It was a Low Mass, and I was disappointed in not hearing what the priest said. The better to understand the service I procured a missal, and with it I went three times to a Sunday Mass in the Convent of the Ladies of the Assumption in the Rue de Lubeck. I was deeply impressed by the ceremonies and by the devotion of the congregation.

A little later I went to the church of the English Passionist Fathers in the Avenue Hoche, and met Father Matthew, whom I asked to give me some books on Catholic doctrine. He gave me the story of the conversion of a bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States.¹ It seemed to me not exactly what I wanted; I was ill-disposed to listen to arguments; what I desired was to learn simply whether the Catholic Church merited admiration or whether she was the evil thing that I had been told of in my childhood. However, I read the book, and at once became interested in the questions of controversy that were treated in it. Father Matthew after this gave me several other books. I read them all with satisfaction; their tone was admirable; I had not in the least abandoned the critical spirit which is natural to me, but I found nothing to criticise in these books. The subjects of controversy were discussed in them with a frankness to which my Protestant reading had not accustomed me. Corresponding Protestant books misrepresent the doctrines that they desire to discredit; the Catholic authors which I have studied discuss these questions with frankness and without quibbling.

I discovered from my reading that the opinions which had spontaneously come to my mind while read-

¹ *The Trials of a Mind*, by Dr. Ives, formerly Bishop of the Episcopal Church of North Carolina.

ing the Bible were precisely the fundamental doctrines of the Catholic Church.

The Bible had shown me Jesus Christ founding a society, a body of which all the members must be in communion and in perfect unity of faith. This society was to have continued through all ages even to the end of the world. I had seen Jesus Christ choosing one of His Apostles to be the head of His Church, and now I found in the Church, the history of which I was studying, the marks indicated by the Bible. I beheld this Church teaching always, in all the centuries, with the authority which had been conferred upon her by Jesus Christ Himself; the bishops and priests exercising their ministry as the Apostles had done before them, and always above them all the Pope, recognized by them as the head of the Church. The writings of the Fathers of the Church and the decisions of the Councils were a proof of this; in spite of heresies and of attacks of all sorts, the Church has always maintained the supremacy of the Pope, successor of St. Peter: the rock, the safeguard of unity. And then came back to mind the words of Jesus Christ to him of the Apostles whom He established head of the early Church: "And I say also 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. 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."¹

My studies showed me later the Councils and the Pope explaining the sacred text under the direction of the Holy Spirit,² developing it sometimes in the form of dogma, without changing any of the funda-

¹ St. Matt. xvi. 18, 19.

² St. John xvi. 12, 13; xiv. 26.

mental beliefs taught by Christ, and making that Church sufficiently powerful to preserve it from what is called the spirit of the age. It was necessary to express explicitly certain truths deposited in germ by our Lord in the minds of the Apostles. The first Creed had shown the belief of the Church in these words: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." A little later, in the year 325, the Council of Nice considered it necessary to explain the statement more clearly, and they expressed themselves as follows: "I believe in the Church which is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic."

And in like manner during the course of the centuries the Church has continued to develop its doctrine.

My studies in history persuaded me that the Catholic Church was the one which Jesus Christ had founded, and my observations showed me clearly that my early prejudices were not founded on truth: I was by this time certain that the Catholic Church was calumniated by her enemies, for I discovered a Church holy not only in its doctrine but in its ministers and in its members.

III. In the Light of Faith

In the spring of the year 1892 I called again on Father Matthew, and asked him to prepare me to enter the Catholic Church. He gave me the necessary doctrinal instruction, and on July 25th I made my profession of faith in the church of the English Passionists, and was baptized conditionally.

Soon afterwards, my health having become impaired by lung disease, I travelled to the South of France. How glad I was now that I had been received into the Church! For weeks I was very ill, but when burning with fever, and utterly wretched from physical

discomfort, I had only to say "I am a Catholic," and instantly my spirits rose and I was comforted.

In September, 1892, I received my first Holy Communion in the church of the Rosary at Lourdes, and was confirmed by the Bishop of Nimes.

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It is now sixteen years since I became a Catholic, and every day I appreciate more and more the blessing of the true faith. The Catholic Church is not the enemy of progress that she is accused of being by her adversaries: she makes it a duty for all her children to grow daily in the knowledge of the truth. For my part it is a never-ending delight to study the doctrines of the Church.

It is not only on the study of her dogmas that the Church insists, she urges us also to make our lives better and purer every day. As a help towards this spiritual growth the Church makes daily prayer an obligation, and teaches us to meditate, in order to practise, the virtues of which Christ and the saints have left so glorious an example.

To sustain her children in the practice of virtue the Church puts at their disposal the Sacraments, admirable sources of grace, the effects of which can scarcely be appreciated by him who stands without her pale.

When I was a freethinker I could not grasp this truth, or understand the practical utility of certain fundamental virtues of Christianity. To illustrate my meaning I may mention that when I was living in the Rocky Mountains, and one of my friends gave me a copy of *The Imitation of Christ*, this beautiful book displeased me in many of its pages: what it said of humility had no meaning for me. It was the opposite frame of mind, that of pride, which seemed to help me most and keep me from certain faults.

When I think now of the temptations to which I was exposed, I shudder as I would if I saw a child on the brink of a precipice; for in those days I was like a sailor in a fragile bark without a rudder, tossed hither and thither in the darkness of an unknown sea. But like every practising Catholic, thank God, I have now a rudder; the sea may dash against my bark, but the Lord is always there to bid the waves be still.

Why, then, after receiving so many signs of His bounty, shall not I thank God for admitting me to His Church? In the words of St. Augustine I may say: "I have loved thee late, O beauty so ancient and yet so new! I have loved thee late!"

How exquisitely beautiful is this divine Church as compared with the human institution I knew in my early years! It is not the external pomp of worship which attracts me, nor the beauty of sights or sounds; for a simple prayer in a village church has the same effect as a visit to a cathedral: I feel that God is truly there, and never have I gone away without finding the consolation and the blessings I have sought.

In this short sketch I have only pointed out some of the steps I have taken before finding the right path; I have omitted many a detail. But the chief point to which I should like to call attention is the change that has taken place in me.

I shall give, I believe, an exact idea of my state of mind before my conversion, if I compare it with that which, alas! is to be found to-day in France in so many political men who strive to destroy the Catholic Church. They see in her the inveterate enemy of human reason and of liberty; hence their hatred. In the old days I felt very much as they do; but the Spirit of God, whom I called upon with simplicity and confidence, has made the light shine in my soul which

I was groping for everywhere in vain, and which He alone has given me. The light has penetrated my very soul, and I may truly say that for me *the face of the earth has been renewed*, so profoundly has my judgment on men, things, and events been modified. Thus, I am learning more and more to see in every man a soul destined for union with God. Again, I have learned the immense value of purity of intention and motive in conduct. In the Catholic Church the very child becomes familiar with these two important truths in the beginning of its spiritual career. In my case, alas! this knowledge came to me only later in life.

To all who desire the light I recommend the prayer, "Come, Holy Spirit," and the hymn, "Lead, kindly Light." The gift of faith is always accorded to him who seeks the truth, and asks for it with humility: "Ask, and it shall be given you," said our Lord, "Seek, and ye shall find."¹

Is it not reasonable then to attribute the change that has taken place in me to the prayer to the Holy Spirit which I recited before my conversion, without knowing that I was following in this a Catholic practice? The prayer I used is, in fact, a liturgical prayer, part of the Office for Whitsunday, and for ages it has been recited every day by thousands of the faithful before going to their work. It is to it I am indebted for all the joy I find in the service of God; it is the Holy Spirit who has led me to the Church of Christ so long unknown to me, and for which, to-day, if it were necessary, I would gladly give up my life.

¹ St. Matt. vii. 7.

