

Cath. Church -
Apologetics

Joseph D. Gleason

BX
1790

EIGHTEENTH THOUSAND

WHY AM I A CATHOLIC?

BY

REV. S. M. BRANDI, S. J.

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN WOODSTOCK COLLEGE.

FROM THE *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, AUG. 1886.

WITH AN APPENDIX

Containing a short summary of what Christians
ought to Know and Believe.



WOODSTOCK COLLEGE

1888.

Sold at the College.—Single copies 5 cts.; 100 copies \$3.00.

BT
1012

AEQ 2506

EIGHTEENTH THOUSAND.

WHY AM I A CATHOLIC?

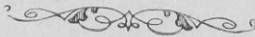
BY

REV. S. M. BRANDI, S. J.

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN WOODSTOCK COLLEGE.

FROM THE *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, AUG. 1886.

WITH AN APPENDIX
CONTAINING A SHORT SUMMARY OF WHAT CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO KNOW
AND BELIEVE.



WOODSTOCK COLLEGE

1888.

The article "Why am I a Catholic?" which appeared in the August number of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, is, at the request of friends, and with the authorization of the Editors of the Review, republished here in another form, and with some additions.

Imprimatur—

✠ JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS

ARCHBISHOP OF BALTIMORE.

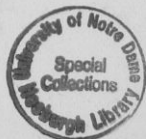
Baltimore, Sept. 17th, 1886.

WHY AM I A CATHOLIC?

It is clear that my answer to the question, "Why am I a Catholic?" must shape itself according to what I conceive to be the religious position of my interrogator. I cannot well state a case until I know what I may take for granted, nor can I begin a line of proof until I know how far back my demonstration is expected to go. This is indeed the chief difficulty which presents itself to one who undertakes to formulate, in a few pages of a review article, his reasons for the faith that is in him. Fortunately, however, in the present instance, I am freed from this embarrassment by the limits assigned by the editor. I am not supposed here to address myself to infidels, but to Christians, and while assuming "what is common to all—faith in the Christian revelation—briefly to explain the reasons why I chose to enter or preferred to remain in the Church to which I belong."

Supposing, therefore, the fact of revelation, I assume that whoever admits the existence of the Christian religion, and its importance, will, of course, admit that the profession of it, as taught and defined by Christ, is not a mere matter of choice. It stands to reason that religion, if once defined by the Supreme Legislator, is, as so defined by Him, of strict obligation. Hence it is not optional with believers in the Christian revelation to adopt any form of religion they please, or, to use the words of a well known Unitarian writer, "to make their own formula of belief or conviction, or to make none."

Christian revelation assures us that Jesus Christ taught but *one* religion, and that He made the belief and practice of it a divine law. In virtue of that supreme power which He had in heaven and upon earth, He gave to His Apostles, whom He specially called and chose from among the many disciples that surrounded Him, the divine mission He had received from His heavenly Father: "As the Father hath sent Me, so also I send you." He commanded them to go and preach *His Gospel* to all nations, to teach them "to observe *all* things whatsoever He had commanded them" (Matt. xxviii, 20). Nay, He made the belief in His Gospel, as *preached* by His Apostles, an essential condition for salvation, emphatically declaring that "he that believeth not shall be



condemned" (Mark xvi, 16). The doctrines, therefore, of this one religion taught us by Christ through His Apostles, are the objects of our belief; His precepts alone have power to bind our will.

Moreover, as Christ taught but *one* religion, so He established but *one* Church: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build *My Church*" (Matt. xvi, 18). He always speaks of "His Church," never of "His Churches;" and the different types employed by Him and His Apostles to denote the Church necessarily imply the same *oneness*. It is a "fold," a "kingdom," a "body," etc., not invisible, but *visible*: for it was founded for the express purpose of carrying out His own *visible mission* among all men to the end of time, and it was to be a "tribunal" for men, to which men should appeal, and whose decision they should obey (Matt. xviii, 17).

To this Church He committed the sacred trust of His religion (Matt. xxviii, 19, 20), and promised that in teaching His Gospel it should be directed by the Holy Ghost (John xiv, 16); that "the gates of hell should not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi, 18), because it should have His own divine assistance "all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii, 21). These words are addressed to the Apostles not merely as individuals; for, as such, they were not to live "all days, even to the consummation of the world;" but inasmuch as they, with their lawfully appointed successors, form one moral body instituted by Christ to perpetuate on earth His own divine mission; and because of this His own unfailling assistance, He could say to His *Church*: "He who heareth *you* heareth *Me*, and he who despiseth *you* despiseth *Me*" (Luke x, 16). "He who doth not hear the Church let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican" (Matt. xviii, 17). The Church, therefore, is His organ, His voice, His representative. Hence, as we are not free to embrace any religion we please, but must embrace His religion, so to this one Church which He established, and to no other, we must belong in order to be saved. The Church is the "body of Christ" (I Cor. xii, 27). Whoever, then, is not a member of this Church is not in union with Christ, the Head.

Hence, to the question proposed as the heading of this paper, "Why am I a Catholic?" my answer is plain: I am a Catholic because a careful examination of the nature and notes or characteristic marks of the religious society founded by Christ convinces me, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the Catholic Church is the one true Church established on earth by Jesus Christ.

There can be no doubt that if Jesus Christ obliges all men to "hear the Church" which He established, and, consequently, to obey her, and to be subject to her, He must have given all men the means to know her with certainty. He must have impressed upon her certain prominent character-

istics, by which she could be clearly recognized as the divinely authorized teacher of men, to lead them in the way of truth and salvation. His perfect justice required it, otherwise He would have given a command without making its fulfilment possible. As we admit, then, that He obliged us to hear His Church, we are bound to admit also that He gave His Church these distinctive notes or marks by which she can be recognized.

But what are these important marks by which all ages have infallibly recognized the true Church of Christ? They are well known. Thus the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, which are so peculiarly sacred to all Christians, and which "may be proved by the most certain warrant of Holy Scripture" (39 Articles of the Church of England, art. 8), expressly affirm the existence of these marks. They are four—Unity, Holiness, Catholicity, and Apostolicity. "*I believe in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.*" These four marks, therefore, when found together, manifest the Church which all ages have recognized as the true Church of Christ—the Church in which our forefathers believed.

Now all these marks I find nowhere except in the Catholic Church. Therefore, I must conclude that the Catholic Church is the only true Church of Christ.

A mere glance at the profession of faith of the Catholic Church, at her catechisms, theological treatises, at her books of instruction as they are published in various countries, will suffice to show that her members "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." And as they have but one Lord and one Baptism, so also they have but one Faith (Eph. iv, 3, 5). "They are," as Tertullian said of the primitive Christians, "each what all are, and all what each is." Catholics, however far apart in time and place, however separated by conflicting interests, inclinations or national prejudices, are all intimately united in religion, and constitute one great people, one fold, one kingdom, professing the same doctrines, and acknowledging one supreme authority, viz.: the authority of the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ, and the successor of St. Peter.

This twofold unity of faith and government is an essential property of the true Church of Christ. And, indeed, if the members of Christ's Church were not animated by the same faith, how could they be said to be "the body of Christ?" (I Cor. xii, 27.) How could their unity be compared to that of the Eternal Father and His Divine Son, and be a proof to the world of the divinity of Jesus Christ? (John xvii, 20, 21.) And if the Church were not one in government, how could it be said to be a kingdom? A kingdom necessarily conveys the idea of a society strictly one, and this implies one supreme authority. It is a fact, moreover, that our Lord ordained that His Church should

have one universal pastor. It was to Peter alone that He addressed these words: "Blessed art *thou*, Simon Bar-jona . . . and I say to *thee*, that *thou* art Peter (Cephas), and upon this rock (Cephas) I will build My Church . . . and I will give to *thee* the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever *thou* shalt bind upon earth it shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever *thou* shalt loose on earth it shall be loosed also in heaven"⁽¹⁾ (Matt. xvi, 18, 19).

That Peter is "the rock" is not only evident from the context and the common interpretation of the Fathers, but is also admitted by the most learned Protestant commentators. Thus Bloomfield (Comm. in loc.) testifies that this is the interpretation of "almost every modern [Protestant] expositor of any note."⁽²⁾ I cannot better explain the relation of Christ and Peter, as foundations of the Church, than in the words of St. Leq (A. D. 440): "As My Father has manifested My divinity to thee," he says, paraphrasing Christ's address to Peter, "I make known to thee thy excellences: for thou art Peter, that is, as I am the inviolable Rock, who maketh both one, I the foundation, other than which no one can lay; nevertheless, thou also art a rock, because thou art strengthened by My power, so that those things which belong to Me *by nature* are common to thee with Me *by participation*" (Serm. 4, de Assumpt.). And Christ fulfilled his promise, for, as St. John relates in the twenty-first chapter of his Gospel, our Saviour, after His resurrection, addressing the same Apostle, committed to him the care of His Church. "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep." St. Ambrose (A. D. 370) declares that Christ appointed Peter to feed the lambs and the sheep, "in order that He, who was the more perfect, might hold the government" (in Lucam 1. 10, n. 176). St. Jerome (A. D. 385) assigns the reason why our Lord constituted a head for His Church. "One is chosen amongst the twelve, that a head being established, the occasion of schism may be removed" (Ad Jovin. l. 1, n. 26); and St. Optatus (A. D. 368), addressing the Donatists, says that the episcopal chair in the city of Rome was bestowed first upon

⁽¹⁾ The keys, particularly among the Hebrew people, were an emblem of jurisdiction. Even among ourselves the presentation of the keys conveys the idea of authority. This statement is endorsed by eminent Protestant writers: vide Henderson, in loco, Parkhurst, in voc., Bloomfield, in Matt. xvi, Kuinoel, *ibid.*; and Arnold, "Fragments on the Church," pp. 35, 36, says: "To bind and to loose . . . express a legislative and judicial power . . . but such legislative and judicial power is a power of government; government, in fact, consisting mainly of these two great powers.

⁽²⁾ Dr. Marsh, a Protestant writer rightly remarks that "It seems a *desperate undertaking* to prove that our Saviour alluded to any other person than to St. Peter, for the words of the passage can indicate no one else" (Comparative View, app. n. D), and Rev. J. S. Thompson, another Protestant is not less explicit: "Protestants have betrayed unnecessary fears, and have, therefore, used all the *hardihood of lawless criticism* in their attempts to reason away the Catholic interpretation" (Monotessaron. p. 194, Baltimore, 1829).

Peter, "head of the Apostles, whence he was called Cephaz," and that "in communion with that chair, unity was to be preserved by all." The Catholic Church preserves this communion with the chair of Peter, the See of Rome, and this is the reason why it is commonly called "The Roman Catholic Church."

In the Catholic Church, again, I find that holiness that should characterize the true Church of Christ. By her doctrine and the administration of the Sacraments the true Church of Christ is to carry on the work of Christ, and so attain the end for which she was instituted — the sanctification of her members. And this is precisely what the Catholic Church does.

Let us take, for instance, her doctrine concerning the Sacraments, and it will clearly appear how, by her ministry, she sanctifies every stage and condition of life. She teaches that we are born in a state of sin (Rom. v, 12), and, therefore, that before we live the life of grace, we must be purified from our guilt — we must receive a spiritual birth (John iii, 5). And this she gives us by means of the Sacrament of Baptism (Matt. xxvii, 19). After being spiritually born our life of grace is but weak. We are, indeed, Christians, but we have to become strong and perfect Christians; and we are made such, she teaches us, by receiving from her the Sacrament of Confirmation (Acts viii, 15, 17). Furthermore, as in temporal life, so also in the spiritual, we stand in need of nourishment — our souls must be frequently fed with "the Bread of Life" (John vi, 48); and this she gives us in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, which as we know again from her divine teaching, is the true Body and Blood of Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine (John vi, 51, 52; Matt. xxvi, 26–28). But to be perfect is not human. We are liable to fall into sin and lose thereby the state of grace. We stand in need, therefore, of some healing remedy for sin. This necessary remedy she provides for us in the Sacrament of Penance, in which, by the priest's absolution, given to us by the authority of Christ delegated to him (John xx, 22, 23), joined with contrition, confession, and satisfaction, the sins which were committed after Baptism are forgiven. Again, the Church knows that it is at the time of our death that we are in the greatest spiritual need. Weakened by disease, we are less able to withstand the attacks of the enemy of our salvation. This special assistance which we need then she communicates to us in the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, the anointing of the sick mentioned by St. James (v, 14, 15). In religion, to sanctify ourselves we stand in need of spiritual teachers and guides — of men who are "ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (I Cor. iv, 1); and these are supplied, together with the powers and graces necessary for them, by the Sacrament of Holy Orders (II Tim.

i, 6). And, finally, she sanctifies the married state by the Sacrament of Matrimony, which she considers as the emblem of that sacred union which exists between Christ and His Church (Eph. v. 25, 32). This, she teaches us, has been instituted to give to married persons the graces required for the fulfilment of their duties and for the religious training of their children.

Assisted by the Holy Ghost, who gives efficacy to her ministry, the Catholic Church is ever gathering new members into her fold, and implanting in them the principle of supernatural life, and by the practices of devotion she inculcates, she fosters that life in all. And if some of her children are not actually saints, it is only because they do not live in accordance with their faith. In fact, in every age and in every land, she has been and is the fruitful mother of saints, and thousands of her sons and daughters renounce all worldly honors and enjoyments, in order to consecrate all that they have, and all that they are, to the service of God and of their fellow men, always ready to lay down their lives for them. Witness those heroic men who vowed to attend the lepers, and bear the awful consequences of their self-devotion; witness those who solemnly vowed to remain in slavery themselves, if they could not otherwise redeem the captives: witness those many priests and Sisters of Charity who lay down their lives in every epidemic. In a word, with an activity and zeal for souls which even her enemies are forced to admit, the Catholic Church leaves nothing undone for the conversion of sinners, for the instruction of the ignorant, and for the relief of the poor of Christ. Her many missions in every land, her schools of every degree for the rich and poor, her books of devotion in every tongue, her hospitals, asylums, and charitable institutions of every kind, are so many proofs of her untiring zeal in fulfilling her divine mission of bringing all to Christ.

The true Church of Christ has always been and must always be "Catholic" according to those words of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." Hence we find the term Catholic used by the Fathers as a distinctive mark of the true Church. St. Ignatius (A.D. 107), writing to the Church of Smyrna, says: "Where the bishop is, there let the multitude of believers be; even as where Jesus Christ is, there is the *Catholic* Church." This Catholicity of the true Church, instituted by Christ, is threefold — Catholicity of extension, "going teach *all nations*;" Catholicity of doctrine, "teaching them to observe *all things*;" Catholicity of duration, "I am with you *all days*, even to the consummation of the world." Catholicity, then, implies a multitude of members spread throughout the whole world, in all ages, and professing the same doctrines. Now this is exactly what I find in the Church to which I belong. Her members far out-

number all the other Christian denominations taken together. According to the London *Scientific Miscellany*, there are over 254,000,000 Catholics. These are spread all over the world, so that there is no civilized or savage country known where the Catholic Church is not actually established, and carrying out the work of Christ. "The Catholic Church is so called," says St. Augustine, "because it is diffused throughout the world" (Ep. 52, ad Sever. n. 1). Catholics can repeat to-day what Tertullian (A.D. 199) said of the Catholics of his time: "We have filled every place, cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camps, your tribes, companies, palaces, senate, forum! We leave you but your temples" (Apol. 22). And what is more important, the Church so diffused holds everywhere the same faith, has the same constitution, the same Sacraments, the same form of government. She is Catholic as she is One. To the question, then, "Why am I a Catholic?" I might well answer in the words of St. Augustine: "Many things retain me in the bosom of the Catholic Church. . . . The name itself of the Catholic Church keeps me—a name which, in the midst of so many heresies, this Church alone has not without cause, so held possession of, that while all heretics would fain have themselves called Catholics, yet, to the query of any stranger, 'Where is the meeting of the Catholic Church held?' they would not dare to point out their own basilica or house" (C. Ep. Fund. c. 4).

By "Apostolic Church" is meant the Church which Christ established by means of His Apostles, whom, as the Gospels tell us, He selected, instructed, ordained, and commissioned to perpetuate among men to the end of time His divine mission. The Church, then, to be Apostolic, must be *the Church* established by the Apostles—that is, it must have an *Apostolic origin*, it must teach the *same doctrine* which the Apostles taught, and her ministers must derive their authority from those same Apostles.

That the Catholic Church has an Apostolic origin is a fact which cannot be questioned. Dr. Lardner, a Protestant writer, speaking of the foundation of the Church of Rome by St. Peter, assures us that "this is the general, uncontradicted, disinterested testimony of ancient writers in the several parts of the world," and he adds, "it is not for our honor, nor for our interests, either as Christians or Protestants, to deny the truth of events ascertained by early and well-attested tradition" (Works, vol. 6, p. 253, London, 1838). "It is the universal testimony of tradition," says Dr. T. Schaff, "that Peter labored last in Rome" ("Hist. of the Ap. Church," p. 362, N. Y., 1853). And Dr. Whiston, another Protestant, speaking of the same subject, expresses himself in a still stronger way. "This is so clear," he says, "in Christian antiquity, that it is a shame for a Protestant to confess that it has ever been denied by Protestants" ("Memoirs," London, 1750). It

will suffice, then, to cite a few testimonies from the early doctors of the Church. Thus St. Cyprian calls the Roman See the "See of Peter" (Ep. 55, n. 14). St. Jerome calls Pope Damasus "the Successor of the Fisherman," and his chair "the chair of Peter" (Ep. 15, n. 2). And St. Augustine calls Linus, the Roman bishop, "the Successor of St. Peter" (Ep. 53, n. 2).

A careful examination, moreover, of the doctrines of the Catholic Church will prove clearly to any unprejudiced mind that she teaches *whole and entire* the very same doctrines that were taught by the Apostles. This I find to be admitted by Protestants themselves, at least as far as it concerns those points which they call "fundamental" or "the original elements of the Gospel." Thus Dr. Hopkins says: "that the Church of Rome still retained all the original elements of the Gospel we have never denied" ("End of Controversy Controverted," let. 19); and Dr. Hodge in his "Systematic Theology" assures his readers that "Romanism retains the supernatural element of Christianity throughout. Indeed it is a matter of devout thankfulness to God, that underneath the numerous grievous and destructive errors of the Romish⁽¹⁾ Church, *the great truths of the Gospel are preserved*. The Trinity, the true divinity of Christ, the true doctrine concerning his person as God and man in two distinct natures, and one person forever; salvation through his blood, regeneration and sanctification through the almighty power of the spirit, the resurrection of the body, and eternal life, are doctrines on which *the people of God in that Communion* live, and which have produced such saintly men as St. Bernard, Fenelon, and doubtless thousands of others who are of the number of God's elect" (p. 3, c. 17, § 3).

What they try in vain to prove is that the Catholic Church, together with those doctrines, has taught many errors; that she has added many new points of doctrine to the original deposit of faith. I have diligently examined each and every one of these points, and the result of this study has been to convince me the more, that the so called additions are not new points of faith, but only *authoritative declarations* of the teaching Church that the doctrines in question had been re-

⁽¹⁾ Dr. Hodge, I hope, will profit by the following remark of one of his Protestant brethren: "The reproachful epithets of 'Romanist,' 'Popish,' 'Romish,' etc., are no longer applied to Catholics by any gentleman or scholar" (Rev. J. Nightingale, author of "A Portraiture of Methodism"). Among the "errors" which Dr. Hodge, through ignorance, I presume, ascribes to the Church, there are doctrines which she never taught. An "Indulgence," for example, is not "a license to commit sin," but only a releasing of *temporal punishment* which often remains due to sin, after the *guilt* has been remitted. Catholics do not *adore* the B. V. Mary or the Saints, and they are taught to honor relics, crucifixes, and holy pictures, not *absolutely*, but as they relate to Christ and His Saints, and are *memorials* of them.

vealed to the Apostles, and had come down to us either by Scripture or Tradition.⁽¹⁾

The last condition required for the Apostolic Church is an apostolic ministry—that is, ministers who derive their powers from the Apostles, and are in communion with the centre of unity which Christ established, and from which they derive their mission. The necessity of this communion with the centre of unity is evident from the few remarks already made on the unity of the Church. In confirmation of this, it will be enough to quote here two of the many authorities I have examined on this subject. St. Optatus, speaking of “the chair of Rome, in which Peter sat,” tells us that “in communion with this chair unity is to be preserved by all.” And that great saint and doctor of the Church, St. Jerome, thus addresses the Bishop of Rome, Pope Damasus: “I speak with the Successor of the Fisherman, and the Disciple of the Cross. Following no chief but Christ, I am joined in communion with your beatitude—that is, with the chair of Peter. On that rock I know that the Church was built. Whosoever shall eat the Lamb outside that house is profane. Whosoever does not gather with *you*, scattereth” (Ep. 15, n. 2).

It is an historical fact, which no scholar has ever denied, that the priests and bishops of the Catholic Church can trace their lineage back to an apostolic origin. This is clearly demonstrated by following the succession of Pontiffs from St. Peter to Leo XIII in the Apostolic See of Rome, with which centre of unity no other priesthood but that of the Catholic Church is in communion. I may add also, that those denominations which lay any claim to apostolicity of orders, as, for instance, the Church of England, and its daughter, the Episcopal Church in the United States, found this their claim on the fact of having received these orders from bishops that had been in Communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Again, therefore, with St. Augustine, I answer that I am a Catholic because “in the Catholic Church . . . the succession of priests from the See itself of the Apostle Peter [Rome] even to the present episcopate, holds me” (Contr. Ep. Man. n. 2).

But, once more, if I consider the express will and purpose of Christ in establishing His Church on earth, I find that she shall continue, to the end of time, unchanged in her internal and external constitution, and possessing all the very same gifts, marks, etc., with which she was endowed by her divine Founder. For the mission of the Church is the mission of Christ, “to save souls.” She must last, therefore, as long as there are souls to save. She is built on a rock, and “the gates of hell shall never prevail against her.” Hence it is

⁽¹⁾ I may be allowed here to refer the reader to “*The True Faith of our Forefathers*” (American News Company, N. Y. 1882), where he will find the result of this investigation.

impossible for her ever to become corrupt in her faith, in her Sacraments, or in her government. For the moment she should fail in any of these, that moment the gates of hell would have prevailed against her. To assert that at any time the Church of Christ failed is to deny the truth of Christ's promise to His Church: "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." "There are some," St. Augustine tells us, "who say: 'She that was the Church of all nations is already no more; she has perished.' This say they who are not in her. The impudent assertion!" (Ps. 101, serm. 2, n. 8.) If, therefore, the Church cannot fail or become corrupt, there can be no reason for any reformation in her faith, her Sacraments or government. Every attempt at such reformation is an explicit denial of her indestructibility.

But if the true Church of Christ was to last the same "all days," even to the end of the world, then it has always been in existence from the days of the Apostles to our own. It existed, therefore, when Luther and Calvin and Henry VIII raised the standard of revolt against the Catholic Church, in which they were baptized and educated; it existed when each established a separate and independent Church of his own. And if it existed, it could be no other than the Catholic Church. For it is a fact that, at the time, there existed no other Church distinct from her, and recognized by the Reformers as the true Church of Christ.

It is evident, therefore, that the "Reformers" and consequently those who have followed in their footsteps, have no divine authority to preach, to administer the Sacraments, and to govern Christ's mystical body. They certainly did not receive it from the Catholic Church, from which they were separated, and by which they were condemned. Luther was a priest, but never a bishop. Calvin was a simple cleric, and never received the order of priesthood. Henry VIII, "the spiritual head" of the Church of England, was a layman. By whom, then, were they sent? And "how can they preach unless they be sent?" (Rom. x, 15.) Did they receive an extraordinary mission from God Himself? But where are their credentials, where their proofs? No account of these has ever come to light. And it seems plain enough, to me, at least, that they all could not have been sent by the same God to preach contradictory doctrines and vilify each other. Henry VIII wrote against Luther, Luther against Calvin, and Calvin against both.

As this subject is of vital importance, I shall consider my position, as stated above, from another point of view, briefly touching on a point of doctrine characteristic of the Catholic Church.

My reason for being a Catholic is drawn from the fact that the Catholic Church, i. e., the Church in communion with

the successor of St. Peter, the Bishop of Rome, is the true Church of Christ. This I briefly proved by showing that she possessed all the notes, which must, according to the intention of Christ, characterize His Church, and distinguish it from every other society. I now add, that since I am obliged to be a Christian in order to be saved, and since the choice is only between Catholicity and Protestantism, if I were not a Christian Catholic, I ought to be a Christian Protestant. Now is it proved that Christian Protestants constitute the Church of Christ? This should be *one* in faith and government; its members should be so united as to be one body, one kingdom, one fold. In vain do I look for this unity among Protestants. They do not constitute one Church, but many independent Churches. They have not "one faith" or creed, but many creeds. And no wonder, for there no unity of faith can be found where the only principle of this unity is denied, and a principle is set up in its place which necessarily causes dissension. This false principle is their rule of faith. As long as they are told that every man has the right and duty to interpret the Scriptures for himself, as long as the private interpretation of the Bible is to settle all religious controversies, so long will religious division be perpetuated, not only among different denominations, but even among the members of the same denomination.⁽¹⁾ If Washington and his colleagues in promulgating the Constitution of this republic had said: "Let each one read this Constitution for himself, explain it for himself, and follow out in practice his own interpretation of it," we certainly should not be "known and read of all men" as one united nation. In its stead, we should have had a thousand different political sections and petty governments. How did these great statesmen guard against this danger? They framed the Constitution, and at the same time established a supreme tribunal, and an authoritative power, which should interpret its meaning ultimately and definitively, by whose decision all, without exception, are bound to abide.

The true rule of faith is the living and infallible authority of the Church of Christ. This; and no other, is the supreme tribunal, and the supreme judge in matters of faith. This is the source and safeguard of unity. In acknowledging the Church to be the supreme tribunal in matters of faith, Catholics do not put the Church of God above the written

⁽¹⁾ The learned Dr. Walton, a Protestant Bishop, in the Preface to his Polyglot, acknowledges this to be one of the causes of the want of unity among Protestants—"Aristarchus," he says, "heretofore could scarcely find seven wise men in Greece: but among us so many idiots can with difficulty be found. For all are *Doctors*, all are divinely learned, there is not so much as the meanest fanatic, or jack-pudding who does not give *his own dreams* for the word of God—... These have filled our cities, villages, camps, houses, nay, our churches and pulpits too, and lead the poor deluded people with them to the pit of perdition" (Polyglot, London, 1657).

Word of God, any more than Americans put the Supreme Court of the United States above its Constitution. We Catholics unfeignedly venerate the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God. But to guard against the dangers of being "tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Eph. iv, 14), and knowing that "there are things in them hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest to their own perdition" (II Pet. iii, 16), we hold that they are to be understood conformably to the explanation and teaching of the Church of Christ.

I have already shown that Christ our Lord, established in His Church an authority to whose teaching the faithful must submit. While it is nowhere said in the Scriptures that Christ gave to His Apostles, who then constituted the Church, a mission to *write*, we find it expressly stated in the last verses of St. Matthew's Gospel that He committed to His Church the mission of *teaching* all nations. We know also that He made submission to this teaching a condition of salvation (Mark xvi, 16), assuring us that he who hears the Church hears Him. Because He is always with his teaching Church, and the Spirit of truth, the Paraclete, abides with her forever⁽¹⁾ (John xiv, 16). How could Christ make obedience to this teaching authority a condition for salvation, and declare that in hearing the Church, I should hear Him; that the gates of hell should never prevail against it; that the Spirit of truth is the Spirit of His Church, if that Church had no divine authority to teach, or were fallible in teaching?

Those who deny this authoritative and infallible teaching of the Church, if consistent, must give up all divine faith. "I should not believe the Gospel," says St. Augustine, "unless the authority of the Church moved me thereto" (C. Ep. Fund., c. 5). The Bible, without this living and infallible authority, leaves men necessarily in a state of doubt. For before they can believe any article of faith on the sole authority of the Bible as the Word of God, they must first be infallibly sure that the Book in which they find that article *is* the Word of God, and not the word of man; just as before we accept any statement as an article of the Constitution of the United States, we must first be certain that the Constitution spoken of is really the Constitution of the United States. How can Protestants settle that question? *i. e.*, how can they,

⁽¹⁾ We Catholics hold that in the Church of Christ there is a teaching authority divinely established, which by the supernatural *assistance* of the Holy Ghost is kept free from error in defining matters of *faith and morals*. This infallibility resides both in the whole teaching body of the Church, *i. e.*, the Bishops united with the Pope, and in the Pope alone, when, in his office of Pastor and Teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his Supreme apostolical authority, he *defines* a doctrine regarding faith and morals, to be held by the universal Church. It is needless to say that the gift of *infallibility in teaching* is not to be confounded with that of *impeccability in acting*, and does not imply a *new revelation*. By these definitions the object of our faith is evolved and declared, not changed or added to.

without the authority of the Catholic Church, be infallibly certain that the Bible is the Word of God? That the Bible, as they have it, containing so many books, and chapters, and verses, is a work of inspiration? This evidence is not found in the Bible itself, and even if it were there, the question would still remain, how do you know that this assertion is itself authentic? How do you know that this assertion is of God? They may believe that Book to be the Word of God, because they think so, or because they fancy that the Spirit bears witness within them, or because this is the opinion of learned men, or even because their own denomination tells them so. But are they infallibly sure that they are correct? All those learned men are fallible; they acknowledge it themselves; their own denomination or Church professes to be not infallible, and consequently to be liable to err.

Moreover, this fallible authority is *human* authority. Will they believe on *human fallible authority* that the Bible is the Word of God? They may, if they choose, but then let them be logical, and believe *whatever* is in the Bible on the *same* authority — in other words, let them give up *divine* faith. "Prove to me," says Rousseau, "the necessity of authority in religion, and to-morrow I will be a Catholic." That this authority is absolutely necessary is evident from the fact that without it the unity of the Church of Christ cannot subsist; without it the Church of Christ is a purely human institution; without it in religion we are lost in doubt. This divine and infallible authority I find in the Catholic Church, and nowhere outside of it; for the different denominations that have sprung up since the time of the "Reformation" positively reject it.

These, then, are some of the reasons "why I am a Catholic." I remain in the Church to which I belong because, to use St. Augustine's words, "This is the Holy Church, the One Church, the True Church, the Catholic Church, which fights against all errors. She may be attacked, but cannot be overcome. All errors have gone far from her . . . but she remains unsevered from her own root, in her own vine, in her own charity. The gates of hell shall not prevail against her" ("De Symbolo," n. 14).



APPENDIX.

What Christians ought to Know and Believe.

1. The mystery of the Blessed Trinity : that is, that there is but One God, Creator of heaven and earth, and that in God there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Who are all one and the same God.

2. The mystery of the Incarnation ; that is, that the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, became man, was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, therefore, is truly the Mother of God.

3. The mystery of Redemption ; that is, that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and died upon the Cross for our sins.—“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (I John ii, 2).

4. That the soul is endowed with understanding, and free will, and is immortal, that is to say, it can never die.

5. That God will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. And that He who created them without their free co-operation will not save them without it.

6. That it is appointed to all men once to die, and that at the moment of our death we shall receive from God a reward, or punishment, according to our works, and that we shall rise again with the same bodies on the day of judgment.

7. That the good shall live forever happy in Heaven, and that the wicked shall be punished forever in Hell.

8. That without the help of God's grace, we can do nothing meritorious of eternal life, and that the graces necessary for salvation He refuses to none.

9. That there are seven Sacraments, and all of them have power, from Christ's precious Blood, to give grace, if no obstacle is put to it.

10. That in the Sacrament of Penance by the Priest's absolution, given to truly *repentant* sinners, by the authority of Christ delegated to him, the sins which were committed after Baptism are forgiven.

11. That the Holy Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine.

12. That there is a Purgatory, that is, a place distinct from Heaven, and from Hell, wherein are *for a time* detained, the souls of those who, dying in God's friendship, did not fully satisfy His justice for former transgressions, and that these souls can be helped by the prayers of the living.

13. That an Indulgence is not a license to commit sin, but is a releasing of *temporal punishment*, which often remains due to sin, after the *guilt* has been remitted by the Sacrament of Penance.

14. That we are to honor relics, crucifixes, and holy pictures, not absolutely, but as they relate to Christ and His Saints, and are *memorials* of them.

15. That the books of the Old, and the New Testament, as they are authoritatively proposed to us by the Church, are sacred and canonical, and must, therefore, be accepted and revered as the inspired Word of God.

16. That the Church of Christ is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. That there is in the Church of God an infallible teaching authority, so that “he who hears the *Church*, hears *Christ*.” That there is in the same, a communion of all holy persons in all holy things ; that we communicate with the Saints and Angels in Heaven as our fellow-members, and can ask for, and be helped by their prayers, as by our brethren on earth.

17. We should also know the Lord's Prayer, and Hail Mary ; the Apostles' Creed ; the Commandments of God and of the Church ; the Sacraments ; and the Acts of Faith, Hope, Love, and Contrition.

