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The Church Supreme

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THE CHURCH SUPREME

Being a reply to a sermon delivered
on "the book supreme".



With ecclesiastical approbation

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THE CHURCH SUPREME

Our Lord Jesus Christ is referred to in the Bible as the "corner stone". A corner stone means something fundamentally important, the importance of which signifies authority, and the purpose for which the building is erected. Christ being the corner stone of His Church, invested the Church with His divine authority, and proclaimed the purpose for which the Church was to be founded. It was the divine plan that Christ should fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament. Matt. 5: 17. One of these prophecies is recorded in Isaias in which the prophet foretells the Church that was to be established: "And in the last days the mountains of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it." Isaias 2: 2. The prophet tells of the prominence and exaltation the Church would enjoy, of her Catholicity or universality, for all nations shall flow into it. "Going therefore, teach ye all nations". Matt. 28: 19.

The same prophet then goes on and proclaims the infallibility of the Church. "And a path and a way shall be there, and it shall be called the holy way; the unclean shall not pass over it, and this shall be unto you a straight way, so that fools shall not err therein". Isaias 35: 8. In accordance with these prophecies, our Lord founded His Church for the salvations of souls.

The prophet makes clear two distinguishing marks of the Church; namely, Holiness and catholicity. Therefore we pray in the Apostles Creed: "I

believe in the Holy Catholic Church". The "holy way" which the prophet describes is the supernatural character of the Church, the Institute, comprising the official prerogatives, the governing power and principle of authority vested in the priesthood, the teaching body of the Church. For, if Christ is a "priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec", He most certainly ordained priests for the ministry to be the "dispensers of the divine mysteries".

The institution took place on the eve of His passion when He, after performing the act of transubstantiation, commissioned the Apostles to perform the same divine mystery "do this", that is, perform this same act of consecration, "in commemoration of me". Here we have the Institution, the divine character of the Church. "The unclean shall not pass over it", that is, all those who are in the state of mortal sin.

Here again our Lord fulfilled the prophecy of the Old Testament by instituting the newer rite, which was intended to replace the sacrifice of the old law, according to the prophet Malachias 1: 10, 11. After stating the fact that the Lord would no longer accept the sacrifice of the old law, the prophet foretells the sacrificial worship of the new dispensation. "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice and there is offered to my name a clean oblation for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts". This prophecy has been fulfilled by the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops and priests of the Church. The clean oblation, the sacrifice of the Mass is offered up in all parts of the

world. In the Mass the sacrifice of our Lord on Calvary is continued in an unbloody manner by means of His Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist. By participating in the Mass the merits of Christ's passion is applied to our souls. That is why He offers Himself continually for our spiritual benefit. That is why He commanded the Apostles to repeat the act of transubstantiation.

Truth is a thought of the mind in conformity with reality. The passion of our Lord was a reality, and therefore our mind must be in conformity with Him in order to commemorate His life and death. The truth is manifest in the words of our Lord Himself: "This is my body", and "This is my blood". St. Luke 22: 19, 20.

St. Paul in writing to the Corinthians reminds them of their partaking of the body and blood of Christ in the sacred mysteries, and becoming thereby one mystical body with Christ. 1 Cor. 10: 16. We can readily perceive why the prophet calls the "way" a holy way. It is because Christ has sanctified it by His Real Presence. If the way is straight we cannot go astray in following it, . . . and if fools cannot err therein it must certainly be infallible. If Christ is the "way", then the only way to follow Him is in His Church, because He founded the Church for that very purpose; that we may have a sure and infallible guide, and not be "blown about by every wind of doctrine"; that we may not err in matters of faith and doctrine; that we may not chase after new and old heresies which have been and are being preached in the name of Christianity. The fact that so many heresies exist in the world, is because the wrong way has been followed. The revealed truth has been misinterpreted, because of an innovation of first

principles, due to the fact that the individual judgment has arrayed itself against the judgment of God.

We who believe that Christ is God, also believe that He is infallible, and that he delegated His infallibility to His Apostles, the teaching body of the Church, whom he had instructed in matters of faith and doctrine, for three years, and then said to them: "He who heareth you heareth me". If the Church is to endure for all time, then it stands to reason that the teaching body is likewise to be perpetuated. To deny the Apostolic succession is to call into question the divinity of Christ, for He said to them: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations, and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world". Matt. 28: 19, 20. If there were no Apostolic succession, if the infallible teaching body were not perpetuated, then Christ gave them a commission which they were unable to fulfill, because they could not live long enough to teach all nations. However, the Holy Scriptures bear testimony that the Apostles did appoint their successors to continue the work which was entrusted to them. They even appointed a successor to fill the vacancy of Judas. Acts. 1: 26.

Since the Apostles were ordained priests, because Christ is a priest, it follows that they ordained priests for the ministry. Hence, St. Paul wrote to Titus to "ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee". The priesthood, a sacrifice, and an altar, are so (united) that they cannot be set apart from each other, because they depend upon each other. All through the Old and New Testament they are united in thought, in sentiment and practice.

Now there is another prominent and important feature connected with the supernatural character

of the Church. I refer to the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth. When the Apostles were assembled on one occasion, our Lord made a promise to them, and this was made collectively while they were together; that He would send them the Spirit of Truth. "And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever. The spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him; but you shall know him; because he shall abide with you, and shall be in you". St. John 14: 16, 17; Acts 1: 8. This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when "they were all together in one place". Acts 2: 1-4.

The presence of the Holy Ghost in the Catholic Church is the source of its infallibility; the presence of the Holy Ghost in the soul is the source of its sanctification. These two operations of the same spirit are in perfect harmony. The test of the spiritual man is his conformity to the mind of the Church. The cooperation of the soul with the Church is the countersign that the work in our hearts is from the Divine, and not from the human or diabolical spirit, for "the devils also believe and tremble". St. James 2: 19.

Therefore it is not sufficient to believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ. We must also believe and live in accordance with what He taught, for He said: "if you love me keep my commandments", and again, "teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you". Matt. 28: 20.

The seven sacraments likewise belong to the supernatural order of the Church, because they are a part of the "holy way" which the prophet Isaias foretold. They are the spiritual channels through

which the Holy Ghost communicates the divine graces to the soul of man. Here again our Lord fulfilled the prophecy of the prophet Ezechiel, when He elevated the ceremonial baptism of the Israelites to the dignity of a sacrament. Christian baptism was clearly foretold by the prophet as follows: "And I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness, and I will cleanse you from all your idols". Ezechiel 36: 25. Clean water no doubt refers to holy water which has been blessed by the Church, and idols refer to their sinful habits.

There is a world of difference between a ceremonial baptism, such as the Israelites and St. John performed, and a sacramental baptism such as Christ ordered. While the former is but an external act symbolizing a cleansing, the other forgives sins and cleanses the soul from original sin, as well as all actual sins that adults may have committed. St. John made this clear when he said: "I indeed baptize you in water unto penance, but he that shall come after me, is mightier than I, for he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost." Matt. 3: 11. The institution took place when Christ commanded the Apostles to baptize in "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". Matt. 28: 19. Water is essential for the administration of baptism, but as our Lord did not mention how water is to be applied, it remained for the authority of the Church to determine its use. The "pouring" process which the prophet mentions, evidently indicates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for the remission of sins. This sacrament of Baptism which restores the soul to a state of sanctifying grace is absolutely necessary for membership in the Church, because Christ.

unmistakably demanded it. "Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God". John 3: 5.

The Catholic Church is composed of two distinguishing characteristics; namely, the supernatural character and corporal body. What the soul of man is to the body, the Holy Ghost is to the Church. Christ is the head of the Church, but Christ is in heaven. He is no longer amongst us in a visible form, and knowing that a visible Church requires a visible head for the sake of supremacy and uniformity, He chose one of His Apostles to represent Him on earth. He selected Simon for that purpose. When Our Lord first met Simon He said to him: "Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter". John 1: 42. The name Cephas in the Aramaic language which Our Lord used means a rock; hence, Peter was called a rock. When Peter made his profession of faith, Christ rewarded him by verifying His promise that he would be called a rock and thus addressed him in the Aramaic language: "Thou art Cephas (a rock) and upon this Cephas (rock) I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". Matt. 16: 18. By this promise Christ has made His Church infallible in matters of faith and doctrine.

Our Lord did not build His Church upon John the Baptist, nor upon any of the pseudo-reformers of the sixteenth century, much less upon any of the so-called modern reformers who have injected modernism into their Christianity. He built it upon St. Peter, the first Bishop of Rome, who established his Episcopal See there. Matt. 16: 18, 19. The granting of the keys, and to bind and loose upon earth, was an

official act of Our Lord, which created in Peter an office of authority and jurisdiction over the entire Church. This was confirmed in John 21: 16, 17; when Christ ordered Peter to feed His lambs and sheep, which included both clergy and laity. The bestowal of the keys was done in conformity with the prophecy in Isaias 22: 22: "And I will lay the key of the house of David upon his shoulder; and he will open and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open". Jesus said: "I am the door" and to Peter he gave the keys to open or close the door. John 10: 9 and Matt. 16: 18, 19. The power of forgiving or retaining sins is clearly indicated in John 20: 22, 23; it is likewise made manifest in Matt. 16: 19, in the matter of binding and loosing. Even after sins are forgiven there still remains the temporal punishment due to sin. To remove this impediment the power of the keys is applied, by granting certain indulgences which remit the punishment. The sinner having performed the necessary requirements and obtained a plenary indulgence is prepared to enter heaven; the door is open for him, and "none shall shut". On the other hand is the power of excommunication from the Church, the retaining of sins: "he shall shut and none shall open". To remove the impediment would require an official act.

It is obvious that the prerogatives which Christ conferred upon St. Peter must be exercised upon earth as indicated in Matt. 16: 19; not only because they are inherent in the office of authority and jurisdiction, but, because after death it would be too late.

Since the Church must endure for all time, it stands to reason that St. Peter must have a successor in office, in order to perform the duties of the office,

for we cannot have the Church without Peter, nor Peter without the Church. Without a visible head the Church could not endure; hence, Christ built His Church not only on the faith of Peter, but likewise on his personality. It follows therefore that the present Pope, being the lawful successor of Peter in the Apostolic See of Rome, is the key man, who now exercises the prerogatives vested in the office of the Church. Such is the economy of the keys, the divine plan to work out our salvation. He who has possession of the keys has control of the Church, the house of God.

If Christ was divine, then the Church which He established is divine, and teaches with divine authority. Because of the fact that Catholics realize the Church to be a divine institution, they "hear" and "obey" the Church. Matt. 18: 17, and Hebrew 11: 17. We cannot believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ and at the same time believe that the gates of hell have prevailed against the Church which He founded. That would be inconsistent with right reason and divine revelation. It would imply a contradiction and therefore involve a falsehood. To maintain that the Church was corrupted is to claim that Christ was not God; for, if He were God, His promises could not fail.

It is evident that there cannot be more than one divine institution, since there was but one Christ, and God cannot contradict Himself. And since, "other foundations no man can lay". 1 Cor. 3: 11, it is likewise obvious that those who are not in communion with the Apostolic See of Peter at Rome are without the Church. The Catholic Church is not merely one among other Christian Churches, she is *the* Church, the only Church which Jesus Christ built

upon the rock of Peter. All other so-called Churches are but human organizations, based upon human authority. They are all free Churches; they cannot compel obedience under pain of mortal sin, because they have no divine authority, and a Church without divine authority is no Church at all. The oldest of them is not more than four hundred years old. They went out from the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century, like the Gnostics in the first century. "They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have remained with us; but that they may be manifest, that they are not all of us". 1 John 2: 19.

The Apostle St. John makes it plain that all those who have gone out from the Holy Catholic Church have not the same Faith that the Apostles preached. A recent convert to the Catholic Church, who had been a Protestant all his life, describes the Protestant Churches as follows: "To most non-Catholics a 'Church' means, merely an aggregation of men and women who agree, somewhat, in their religious views. Just that, and no more". Christ said: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," which is surely true, and is all that any non-catholic sect amounts to: an aggregation of good Christians, men and women, gathered together in the name of Christ doing the best they can according to their limited knowledge". To such people the Bible means more to them than their "Church", because the Bible is the Word of God, and their so-called Churches have no divine authority to command obedience, therefore, going to Church is optional, and a non-attendance does not worry their conscience.

If the Protestant minister, in his sermon on "the

book supreme" referred to Protestant Churches only, he was quite within his rights, for the Bible is supreme to any and all man-made Churches. But this comparison cannot be applied to the Church which Christ founded. Catholics have the advantage over all other Christians; they have, in addition to the Bible, the infallible living voice of the Church, which is the living voice of Christ, to define the true meaning of the Written Word. Catholics therefore do not take any chances in reading the Bible. They base their interpretation on the Church's definition just as all good and loyal citizens accept the definition of our Constitution and Statute laws by the Supreme Court. To ignore the Supreme Court's decision would cause anarchy and a destruction of our governmental system. And this is what happened to Protestants when they ignored the divine authority of the Catholic Church and interpreted the Bible according to their own ideals. The result was a destruction of Christian unity among themselves. They took a desperate chance and assumed a dangerous responsibility. 2 Peter 1: 29 and 3: 16.

The Church is supreme, because it is the Church that saves, and not the Bible. The Bible cannot function; it cannot administer the sacraments; it cannot serve and explain the revealed truth. To understand the Bible correctly requires an infallible interpreter to give the right interpretation. The Catholic Church having given us the Bible, she is the only and rightful interpreter of her own formularies.

The Bible is not the sole Rule of Faith. How could it be? The New Testament was not completed until sixty years after the Resurrection. If the Bible was the means Christ left for our only guide, how

does it happen that the Church was in existence nearly four hundred years before we have the Bible as it exists today, compiled in book form? At that time there were many so-called gospels and epistles in existence. Much had been written by different individuals to Christians in different parts of the world, some inspired by the Holy Spirit, others not. People were in a quandary. "What is inspired, and what is not"? they asked. But to whom did they appeal? To the living teaching authority then in existence, as it had existed from the time of Christ! The Bishops of the Catholic Church, the successors of the Apostles. They met at Carthage in the year 397. The various writings were brought to them, hundreds of them, and submitted to their judgment. Out of so many they selected the few that now compose the New Testament, and these they declared to be the word of God. The others were rejected. Whether you are a Catholic or not, that is the only reason you have for saying that your Bible is inspired. That it is the Word of God. Because the Catholic Pope and the Catholic Bishops told you so 397 years after Christ. Millions of Christians and thousands of Martyrs lived and died in the Church who never saw the New Testament in its complete form as we now have it. The history of Christianity therefore proves that the living, teaching body of the Church, the lawful successors of the Apostles, was the first Rule of Faith, and is still the Rule of the vast majority of Christian believers at the present time. It was not until 1500 years after Christ's Resurrection, that a rebellious Christianity rejected the living teaching authority of the Church and substituted the Written Word as their only guide. We cannot consistently accept the Bible and at the same

time reject the authority which gave us the Bible. By what authority do Protestants accept the writings of Mark and Luke? They were not Apostles; and the epistles of St. Paul? None of these men were present on the day of Pentecost when the Apostles were inspired by the Holy Ghost. To accept their writings as the inspired Word of God on their own authority is ridiculous. They never claimed to be inspired. We have no alternative but to accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God on the authority of the Catholic Church. And such is the statement made by St. Augustine. Here is what he said: "I would not believe the Bible, except on the authority of the Catholic Church."

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, gave us a clear philosophy of life in bringing the divine message to us. He did not write it, but preached it. He chose the "holy way" which the prophet foretold, Isaias 35: 8, because it was not only the safest, but also the most comprehensive way. In order to perpetuate His teaching He organized a teaching body (the Apostles) and invested them with His divine authority when He said to them: "he who heareth you heareth me". He did not tell them to write the Gospel, but to preach it, the same as he did, for, "faith cometh by hearing" and not by reading. Therefore, "hear the Church", Matt. 18: 17, and "obey your prelates and be subject to them". Heb. 13: 17. To hear the Apostles preach was to hear Him; to obey them was to obey Him. Consequently, His living voice was perpetuated in the teaching body whom He had organized. In speaking of the other sheep not of His fold He said: "they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd". John 10: 16. Christ was referring to future generations, and if

they were to hear His voice, it must certainly be audible in order to be heard. Hence, St. Paul wrote to the Hebrews: "Today if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts". Heb. 4: 7. It is a well known adage, that an established authority remains in force until disestablished. Therefore, the living voice of Christ is still heard in His Church. It is verified in His own words when He said: "I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." Matt. 28: 20.

Jesus Christ, having laid the foundation of His Church by preaching, and having authorized His Apostles to do likewise, it follows that the unwritten Word was the first rule of Christianity, and when the writings of the New Testament were added later, this unwritten Word did not on that account lose its authority, which makes us receive with equal veneration all that was ever taught by the Apostles, whether by writing or by word of mouth. John 20: 30 and 2 Thess. 2: 14.

The Catholic respect for antiquity and for Church authority are matters quite beyond the comprehension of the average Protestant. The claim to a "Right of Private judgment" has done this, if it has done nothing else—it has produced an individualism which judges all things by its own standard and recognizes no court of appeal. Experience proves that each one finds in the Bible his or her own ideals. The exercise of free (interpretation of the Bible) leads to endless disputes, to doctrinal anarchy and eventually to a denial of all dogmas. These disputes, anarchy and denial, could not be according to the divine intention; hence, the necessity of a competent living authority to solve controversies and define the

true meaning of the Bible. To say that the Bible is perfectly clear and sufficiently intelligible to all is obviously a retort born of desperation, a defiance of experience and common sense. The Bible itself contradicts such an unwarranted assumption—2 Peter 1: 20 and 3: 16. To maintain that the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, gives each and everyone a sufficient amount of intelligence to interpret the Bible correctly, is likewise a reply born of hopelessness, because of so many conflicting and contradictory interpretations. Is the Holy Ghost divided? 1 Cor. 1: 13. The only safe way is to get back to first principles, and “preserve the spirit of unity”, Eph. 4: 3. Without divine authority the Church could not exercise and put into practice those prerogatives which Christ conferred upon the Apostles and their successors, the teaching body of the Church.

There are many ways of being wrong, but there is only one way of being right. To choose the wrong way may be the easy way but not the safe way. The Babylonians tried to get to heaven by choosing the wrong way and were disappointed. Perhaps the allegory may be applicable to all who have chosen the wrong way. They are as much bewildered as the Babylonians were in regard to the truths of divine revelation. There are people who talk of truth as they talk of light and heat. It seems to them that there are grades in everything, but there are no grades or degrees of truth. A thing is either true or false, and there is nothing between. Let us at least be sensible. There is no possibility of one religion being as good as another, unless we are prepared to lay aside for ever the fundamental principle of Human reasoning, the principle of logic, the principle of contradiction. “Teach me thy way, O Lord;

I will walk in thy truth; unite my heart to fear thy name." Psalm 85: 11.

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Ecclesiastical Approbation



