

CAN I STAY WHERE I AM?

BY THE
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CAN I STAY WHERE I AM?

AN INQUIRY ADDRESSED TO "ANGLO-CATHOLICS"
IN DOUBT

BY THE REV. HUGH POPE, O.P.

"My soul, wait thou only upon God,
For my expectation is from Him.
Trust in Him at all times, ye people,
Pour out your heart before Him ;
God is a refuge for us."

Ps. lxi 6, 9.

THE title prefixed to these few pages will sound curious to some ; but those for whom they are primarily intended, and whom—it is hoped—they will help, will readily understand its meaning. For these pages are intended for those many souls in the Anglican communion whom recent events at Brighton have compelled to face the question: *Can I stay where I am?* And at the outset we will venture on the liberty of addressing ourselves to them personally.

What is your position? It is briefly this : For years, many years, you have been taught to believe a body of doctrines which were presented to you by faithful men of unimpeachable life who gave themselves out to be, and indeed believed they were, duly ordained ministers of the Catholic Church. And this claim of theirs you accepted. There was no contradiction between their lives and their teaching ; they practised what they taught and they taught with an earnestness

which was contagious. At first, it may be, their doctrines sounded to you strange; but little by little you fell under the sweet influences of Catholic devotions. The Blessed Sacrament was a reality to you, devotion to the Mother of God became wellnigh an instinct. And as years passed you felt within you the fruits of that teaching, you learned the "secret of God," you found that He was indeed "a strong tower against the face of the enemy," so that you said with the Psalmist: "This is my resting-place for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it."

It would be idle to say that doubts never troubled you, for who is always free from fears? There were many, doubtless, who scoffed. There were not a few who condemned outright. But your faith grew with opposition. There were perhaps times when that faith seemed almost dead, when its foundations seemed to melt into thin air, and you may have been tempted to say with Elijah, "It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers!" And yet even then there came the "still small voice" which you knew to be God's, and your faith revived and "your youth was renewed as the eagle's." And in these times of trouble it was your pastors, whom you had rightly learned to love and revere, who stood by you and with words of exhortation urged you to "cast your care upon the Lord"; it was to them you looked for help and counsel, and they never failed you.

Then came the shock! You had known of the Roman Church, from which, for reasons which were probably beyond your ken, your Church was separated. This separation was, you were assured, only for a time, and God in His own good time would heal the breach. You often heard that Church spoken

of. Many hated it, you did not; neither did your pastors. But it was not *your* Church. You were not, as so many were, brought up in it. Those who were brought up in it were, of course, loyal to it as you were loyal to yours. You heard, indeed, from time to time of some who left your Church and joined that other Church. Perhaps you thought them weak, perhaps you attributed to them various motives, either good or bad, to explain their taking a step which you could not understand. Possibly you at times felt an uneasy sense of envy of those who had taken this step, for they seemed to be in such perfect peace. But you felt that you could trust your pastors who stood firm, and who when such crises occurred were always full of kindness and sympathy, who never judged, however much they might deplore, such defections.

It was then, I say, the shock came. Some of those very pastors were guilty of the same defection! And many whom you knew went with them, for they said: We have always followed in their lead and where they feel secure, we can safely tread. And you heard them discussing the "claims" of Rome; you knew, too, that they prayed earnestly for light to do God's will; and you saw them one by one rise up and brave contempt and even hatred for conscience' sake. And perhaps you yourselves were at first inclined to follow. You had endured plenty of contradiction for your religion, a few more unpleasantnesses could hardly cost much. And you may have had talks with your friends on the subject. You may have borrowed books which told of Catholic doctrine, and you may have honestly set yourself to study the question: for you knew well that one of the principles laid down by those same

pastors, whose loss you were deploring, had always been—in Cardinal Newman's words: "Nothing but a simple, direct call of duty is a warrant for any one leaving our Church; no preference of another Church, no delight in its services, no hope of greater religious advancement in it, no indignation, no disgust, at the persons and things, among which we may find ourselves in the Church of England. The simple question is: Can *I* (it is personal, not whether another, but can *I*) be saved in the English Church? Am *I* in safety, were *I* to die to-night? Is it a mortal sin in *me*, not joining another communion?" (Letter of January 8, 1845, quoted in *Apologia*, p. 363, 1st edition). Therefore you faced the question sternly; you read, as far as you could, books written from the Roman Catholic standpoint.

But as you read, an awful thought dawned upon you, and it chilled you to the bone! The Roman Church teaches that the Orders of Anglican ministers are invalid. But if their Orders are invalid it follows that all the Sacraments they have ever administered—except Baptism—are invalid also! It follows, then (as you may have honestly, but too hastily, inferred), that I have never even been absolved from my sins! that all my past confessions have been so much waste of time and profited me nothing! And worse than all—it follows with inexorable logic that even my Communions have meant nothing, that I have never really received the Body of the Lord! And even this is not all. For does it not also follow—as far as I can understand the teaching of the Roman Church—that I have never been in a state of grace, that I have never had any grace at all? And then perhaps you have thrown the book aside in disgust. Such teaching

is too horrible! Rightly do men say that the Roman Church is hard, a veritable Juggernaut ruthlessly grinding men to powder beneath the wheels of her car! And as you pondered in a very agony of soul, the conviction came back to you that you were right. For your whole past seemed to give the lie to such conclusions as the perusal of these Roman books would seem to necessitate—if their teaching were true. For you felt an inner conviction that you had had the grace of God; that your sins had been forgiven over and over again; that you had learned in those churches and at the feet of these pastors, whom you so loved, to put away sin and lead a good life. Moreover, you were convinced—and felt that nothing would change your conviction—that you had grown in virtue under their guidance, that you were not now what you had been before—without God. And as for your Communion—why, you knew, with what appeared to you to be moral certainty, that you had received God Himself again and again, that you had gone away from the altar conscious of His Presence and with renewed strength for the day's work. No Church, no priest, no logic, so you felt, would ever avail to alter those convictions. And so, with renewed confidence of spirit you made up your mind *to stay where you were*, for you argued: If I have to acknowledge that I have never hitherto received any Sacraments since my Baptism, and that I have never received post-baptismal grace, I shall lose my reason. I shall not only lose my faith in Sacraments of any kind, but even in God Himself. For what have all my past experiences been worth? What has been the value of those innermost convictions if they have all been built upon a delusion?

And yet it has been a heart-rending experience. For

even in resolving to make no change and to stay where you are, you cannot quite banish a sense of insecurity. For the thought is ever presenting itself: My own clergy took the step, and it must have cost them far more than it would cost me. If I have received no Sacraments, I at least have never led others into thinking that I could absolve them and could communicate to them the Body of the Lord. I never have the appalling sense—which must be to them a veritable nightmare—that I have been a priest only in name all these years, that I have stood at the altar day after day and yet was no priest at all! And then the thought has come to you again and again: What they have had the courage to face I also can face. Why should I not do as they have done? But once again the thought of the delusion of those past years—if what the Roman Church says be true—came back with renewed force, and you have felt perhaps that you could not face it, but would go on quietly as you were. And to those who questioned you on the point, to those who perhaps were as anxious as yourself, you have said: No, I have decided *to remain where I am*, for to change would be to give the lie to my whole past life, I should lose my faith in God as well as in grace and Sacraments.

Who could fail to sympathize with souls whose agony is so great? And yet who does not envy them in a very real sense? For they are but proving in their own persons the truth of the words of Paul and Barnabas “that through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God”; and when such tribulations come they furnish the best proof that those whose lot it is to experience them, are among God’s chosen ones. They must take to themselves the words of the Son of

Sirach : " Take all that shall be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience. For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation " (*Ecclesiasticus* ii. 4-5).

But while fully-sympathizing with those whose heartfelt cry is so bitter, we must ask whether all that they say, is true. Is there not a good deal of misconception about it? Have they really painted the Roman Church in her true colours? Is she so stern a taskmistress? Are not their fears rather the voice of the tempter saying : " There is a lion in the path " ? And is their picture of Almighty God quite a just one? After all, even though mistaken, they have served Him these many years—is it likely that He will cast them off now? " For according to His greatness, so also is His mercy with Him " (*Ecclesiasticus* ii. 23).

In order to clear the way we will begin by laying down certain essential and elementary points of doctrine.

Faith is defined as a gift of God by which we firmly believe those things to be true which He has revealed. It concerns both mind and will, endowing them severally with light and strength ; and this through no merits of our own, but as a free gift from Him. The object upon which that light falls, and to which our grace-strengthened wills adhere, is, not truth ascertainable by reason, but revealed truth. God's revelation is the first object of faith just as God's truthfulness is its motive. How can we tell what is God's revelation? Just as the light of the sun is necessary if we would direct our powers of vision to the various objects around us, so in order that our faculty of divine faith may be directed

towards God, we need some means to assure us what we are to believe about Him. In other words, we must be told by some duly-accredited authority (since God does not ordinarily deal with us directly) what He has revealed about Himself for us to believe. This is the office of the Church, the Guardian of all revealed truth and the Dispenser of it to us men. When our faith is thus directed by the Church of God towards revealed truth, we are said to have not only divine faith, but divine Catholic faith.

Grace is another free gift of God. It is divided into actual grace—or a divine impulse to do good, and habitual grace—or an indwelling quality of the soul bestowed by God and making us—in a sort—partakers in the divine Nature, according to the Apostle's phrase (*2 Peter* i. 4). This habitual grace is also called sanctifying grace, since it is that which renders us pleasing in God's sight.

Merits and Rewards.—Merit is the deserving character of our acts, *i.e.*, a meritorious act is one which deserves a reward. There can, however, be no real proportion between any merely human acts and a reward bestowed by God. Hence until God elevates our nature by His grace, and so in a sense establishes a certain proportion between Himself and us, no acts of ours can be meritorious of eternal life which is the possession of God. Since, then, grace is the very starting-point of merit, it will be clear that we can never merit the first grace at the outset of our spiritual life, nor the first grace necessary to begin again if we have fallen into mortal sin and so lost God's friendship. Similarly, the possession of grace to-day gives us no claim, absolutely-speaking, to its continued possession. Further, just as the first grace is in God's

gift and cannot be merited by us, so also the last gráce, or the crowning act of a good life—namely, dying in the love of God—is also in His hands and we can never claim any absolute right to it. In other words, the end of our probation being already determined and our tenure of grace (since our wills are free) precarious, God does not *guarantee* that our death shall coincide with our being in His friendship, and we cannot deserve that it should, *as a right*. We can, however, in the strictest sense merit from God regular increase in grace ; and in the same way, too, we can merit eternal life, *i.e.*, we can, by His grace, perform acts which deserve eternal life. But that we should continue to do so to the end we cannot, absolutely-speaking, merit.

So far we have spoken of merit in its strictest sense. But though there is much, as we have seen, which we cannot strictly-speaking merit, we must remember that, when we have the grace of God, we are His friends and there are many things which, while they do not fall within the category of things which can be merited as rights, do yet fall within the category of those things which we can *fittingly expect* from God our Friend. For example : we cannot claim eternal life in the sense of being able to claim *in justice* that we shall not die except in a state of grace, but we can say that it is *fitting* that God should give us this final perseverance. Similarly, when we pray for ourselves or others, while we can never absolutely merit to be heard in their favour or in our own, we have always a fitting claim to be heard. Thus St. Thomas Aquinas says : “A man can merit for another—as being fittingly due (to him who prays)—the first grace (towards leading a good life). And

the reason is that since a man who is in a state of grace is doing the will of God, it is fitting that, by a certain proportion due to friendship, God should fulfil that man's will when he prays for another's salvation, though," he is careful to add, "there may always be some impediment on the part of him whose salvation we pray for."

Sacraments are outward signs to which is attached an inward grace communicated by this means to our souls. They were instituted by Jesus Christ as the ordinary channels by which He bestows sanctifying grace upon us. These Sacraments confer the grace of which they are the channels much as the pen and ink are the channels by which intelligible words and sentences are communicated to paper. The reception of Sacraments is thus not merely an outward act on our part, by which we give external signs of our good dispositions and are rewarded by the bestowal of a degree of grace proportionate to those same dispositions. But, further, those Sacraments convey the particular grace to us for which they were instituted—on condition that we are in good dispositions at the time we receive them. Thus it is not the dispositions which *cause* the inflow of grace, though these dispositions are a necessary *condition* in order that the Sacraments may be efficacious. How precious and how powerful dispositions are, may be seen from the doctrine touching Spiritual Communion, by which we mean the desire to receive our Blessed Lord sacramentally when we are, as a matter of fact, prevented from actually approaching the altar. According to the intensity of our desire will be the degree of grace received, even though we do not receive the Author of grace Himself, but only desire to do so. The same doctrine holds

good of every Sacrament ; they all act or produce grace of themselves, but it is possible for us to render their action void by the want of due dispositions, with which we approach them. And the converse proposition will hold good, viz., that when for adequate reasons we are unable to receive the actual Sacrament, the earnest wish to do so will supply, to some extent, for what is wanting, viz., the reception of the Sacrament. We must not be understood as implying that the actual Sacraments are more or less immaterial ; far from it, they themselves are holy and contain the grace they bestow. And when we speak of the Sacrament of Sacraments, *i.e.*, the Holy Eucharist, we must remember that we are speaking of That towards which all the other Sacraments are directed, of That which contains not merely grace but the Author of grace. Hence there is a very great difference between a Spiritual Communion and an actual Communion ; in the one we receive grace, and that more or less abundantly, according to our dispositions, but in the other we receive not only grace but the Author of grace, and vast opportunities of spiritual benefit implied in His actual Presence. How earnestly the Church has always insisted on the above doctrine may be gathered from Her teaching regarding Baptism. Our Lord taught that unless a man were baptized in water and the Holy Ghost, he could not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Yet the Church has always insisted on the validity of Baptism *by desire*, *i.e.*, where a man has no one to baptize him, but realizes its necessity and does what in him lies to obtain it. When such a desire has been conceived in those circumstances sanctifying grace takes possession of the soul.

These points of doctrine are elementary and known

to all. Yet, if they are fully grasped, they seem to change the outlook of those to whom we have addressed ourselves in these pages. And now, if once more you will permit us to address ourselves to you personally, we would put to you the following questions :

1. Before these troubles arose had you faith? That is to say, did you believe in divine truths because they were taught by God? You will, of course, answer, and with truth, that you had solid faith.

2. Was that faith "Catholic"—*i.e.*, did you believe that God had revealed those truths because those whom you took to be His accredited ministers told you He had so revealed them? Again you will answer in the affirmative, and we are not disposed to quarrel with your conviction. You believed in God's revelation on the authority, as you thought, of God's Church. But, since as a matter of fact you did neither the one nor the other, it would be well to consider how the case really stands: (a) the ministers who taught you that Catholic faith were *not* duly accredited ministers of the Catholic Church—though they honestly believed that they were so and you yourselves accepted them as such; (b) the truths of the Catholic faith were *not* put before you in their entirety—the teaching, for instance, which you received regarding the Church was defective—though that, again, was unintentional both on your part and on theirs; (c) some of that teaching was absolutely erroneous, *e.g.*, the "Branch" theory—or any similar theory—of the Church's constitution. These are points which it would be wrong for us to gloss over. But what you have to consider is not so much the deficiencies in your faith, nor the very subtle and per-

plexing question as to how far such unintentional deficiencies might derogate from the solid character of your faith ; it is not so much this, that you have to reflect upon, as the fact that all this was unintentional. What you have to dwell upon—with a deep sense of thankfulness—is the fact that you can honestly say, that you were doing your best. Now theologians—when treating of God's relations to the human soul—lay it down as an axiom, that *to him who honestly does what in him lies, God will not refuse His grace.* Hence no matter what uneasiness you may feel about your state up to the present time, you can always say with St. Paul : " But I received the mercy of God because I did it ignorantly " (1 *Tim.* i. 13).

And here we must draw your attention to a point which we only indicated above You will have noticed that we imagined you saying a few pages back : " If their Orders are invalid, it follows that all the Sacraments they have ever administered, *except Baptism*, are invalid also." Now, you were right to except Baptism because it is the doctrine of the Church that anybody can validly baptize *provided* he employ the rite appointed by the Church and intend to do what the Church intends when She confers this Sacrament. Thus the rite of Baptism is duly administered when the person who baptizes pours the water over the head of the person to be baptized, with due intention, at the same time pronouncing the words : " I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It is unfortunately true that Baptism, especially in days past, was often carelessly administered by non-Catholics. Hence, when there is a reasonable doubt as to the validity of their previous baptism, the Church insists that converts be re-baptized

conditionally ; *i.e.*, the priest intends to baptize them *only* if the previous baptism was invalidly administered. But, if that baptism was valid, the repetition of the rite has no effect, since the intention of the priest is absent. Nowadays the non-Catholic clergy have become far more careful in the administration of this Sacrament, and you yourselves have, probably, no reason to doubt the reality of your baptism ; in which case, of course, it would not be right to repeat the Sacrament. But note how far-reaching are the consequences. For if you were validly baptized you then received the infused gift of divine faith. And, as you know well, a man cannot lose this infused virtue of faith except by a deliberate mortal sin against faith—a sin which there is very little reason for thinking that you have ever committed. But further still, though a supernatural infused virtue does not give us of itself any facility in the practice of virtuous acts—this facility comes only with practice, *i.e.*, from the acquired virtue due to the repetition of such acts—yet these infused virtues do give a particular inclination and attraction towards the true object of virtue, and they do inspire the soul to strive to attain it, even in spite of difficulties in the way. This will explain to you the longing you have always experienced for the possession of the true faith. It will explain, too, any uneasiness of which you may have, from time to time, felt conscious. And it will explain, too, another fact which probably has often puzzled you in the past, namely, that those who, after much anguish of soul, have at last taken their courage in their hands and given in their submission to the Church of Rome, seem to experience such profound peace. You have often been told, perhaps, that this is merely because they were people who needed the

help of authority and who could not stand by themselves. There is some truth in this, for in the things of faith no one is meant to stand alone. But the real explanation is that their divinely infused faith has at last found its proper object, that, namely, which, in practice, is the most fundamental of all dogmas, viz., that the Roman, Catholic, Apostolic, Church is the True Church of Christ, that she and she alone is "the pillar and ground of truth" (1 *Tim.* iii. 15).

And here we must explain what we mean by being in "good faith." Persons are said to be in "good faith" when they mean to do right but actually do wrong through ignorance; thus Jacob was in "good faith" when he married Leah—he really thought she was Rachel; hence though what he did was in itself sinful, it was not so in the eyes of God, who, for His own inscrutable purposes, allowed the mistake on Jacob's part. Similarly a person is "in good faith" when he makes a false statement fully believing it to be true. It is plain that, though he has said what was in itself false, he is yet not guilty of a lie in the sight of God. To take another instance, which is more to the point: supposing that through some mistake the Host at Benediction happened not to have been consecrated; those who adored it would not be guilty of idolatry in the eyes of God, though they were really worshipping what was after all only bread. Their "good faith" and their good dispositions would serve in His eyes to counteract the material error.

3. With regard to the reception of grace: you cannot doubt but that you have had God's actual graces in abundance. By His "actual graces" I mean those impulses to do good which are so frequent and which are the immediate cause of all our good works. But have

you any reason to suppose that you have not also had habitual or sanctifying grace in abundance? Certainly nothing in Catholic teaching can justify such a supposition. For you have believed in God, you have loved God and hoped in Him, and when you have fallen into sin, you have repented, not merely from fear of hell, but from love of God. But what is all that but contrition? And the moment an act of contrition is made, *i.e.*, an act of sorrow for sin because by it you have offended God, the Infinite Good, who has loved you so much, the moment such an act is made, sanctifying grace flows into the soul and dwells there until it is expelled by another mortal sin. Hence you have no reason to fear lest you should all these years have been without the grace of God or in a state of unforgiven sin.

4. What about your numerous Confessions? You are perhaps afraid that they have been so much waste time, and that they have done nothing for your soul? Yet nothing could be further from the truth. For what is the Catholic doctrine? Simply this. If a man falls into mortal sin, he must repent; and the moment he does so repent, *i.e.*, conceive real sorrow for what he has done to offend God, grace is restored to his soul. But even though thus forgiven, he must go to confession; he must declare his guilt and submit his sin to the power of the keys. And this is, perhaps, where your difficulty comes in. Your minister was not rightly ordained and hence could not have the "power of the keys"; he could not absolve you. This is perfectly true, but you did your duty and proved your good faith, and no failure on the part of the minister will destroy the value of the acts of contrition which you had made; your forgiveness was due to them. Have

I never had absolution, then, you will ask? You have never had priestly absolution, but you have had absolution from the great High Priest who knows the hearts of all men. But then, perhaps, you will object again: I am not at all sure that I had real contrition, it may have been only attrition after all. I know I have a dread of going to hell; it may have been only fear I had and not love of God? And if that is true, then—according to the Roman Catholic doctrine—my sins are not forgiven, for attrition alone is insufficient and needs the supplementary Sacrament of Penance. That is a serious objection, but I think it will vanish if you examine it carefully. Let us suppose that you have often fallen into mortal sin and have, only through fear of hell, gone to confession, feeling that though your love of God was not strong enough to inspire an act of contrition, if only you could get absolution, your attrition would be sufficient. Now, if you did this and really got absolution from a validly ordained priest you would be in a good state, for the effect of absolution would be the infusion of sanctifying grace into your soul together with faith, hope, and charity—all additional helps towards making an act of contrition. But supposing that, as in your case, you could not—through no fault of yours—get absolution owing to the fact that you confessed to some one who was not a priest, you would still have been acting in good faith. Can you believe that God would leave you in that case without sanctifying grace? Can you not trust that your repeated acts of attrition—which you, through no fault of your own, thought to be sufficient since you thought you had access to a genuine Sacrament—would win for you from God the grace to make an act of contrition and so gain sanctifying grace? We should surely have very

hard and unworthy ideas of God's goodness were we to question this !

And here again the doctrine of the Church comes to your assistance. For the Church teaches that the Sacrament of Penance is necessary for the remission of mortal sin committed after Baptism. But she also teaches that the Sacrament of Penance is thus necessary either as actually received or as received in desire, *i.e.*, when it itself cannot actually be had. But you, when you approached what you mistakenly thought to be the true Sacrament of Penance, had at least the desire though you had not the actuality—and this, as we have so often said, through no fault of your own. And though it is true that for a perfectly efficacious desire of a Sacrament real contrition is necessary, yet, as we have said above, God undoubtedly rewarded your good faith and your good will by perfecting your sorrow, for imperfect love leads to perfect, and, as St. Thomas Aquinas expresses it : “ Hope leads to love ; and so a man by hoping that he will obtain some good thing from God is at length brought to love God for His own sake.”

5. And what about your Communion ? It is here, perhaps, that you feel your trouble most acutely. And if you ask me : have I ever received the Body of Christ ? I am bound to answer in the negative. For the minister had not the power of consecrating. Yet he acted in perfectly good faith, and so did you ; for he thought he was properly ordained, and you accepted his ministrations, thinking that he was a validly ordained priest of the Catholic Church. But you have no right to conclude that all those Communion have been valueless. For you came to what you really believed to be a true Sacrament in order to receive its

precise effect, viz., the grace of union with Christ. Since the Sacrament was not there you clearly did not receive the grace of union with Christ through the medium of the Sacrament. But your desire of union with Christ was a supernatural one, and therefore from God. Can you believe that He gives desires only to frustrate them? No, you thought you received the true Body of Christ and you wanted to receive That and That only. It was no fault of yours that there was a fatal flaw. And can you believe that Christ denied you the union you so earnestly desired? He must have united Himself to you in some very real mystical manner, though not through the medium of the Sacrament—which was absent. He came to you as He comes to those who make a Spiritual Communion; and we may surely venture to say that He came to you with all the more love in that He knew that you were deceived accidentally. And your whole lives since you began to frequent those Sacraments—or what you took for such—has been one long proof of the truth of what we are saying, for you profited by your Communions, and no power on earth will make you believe that you did not do so.

And now perhaps you will ask me these pertinent questions: Have we been all these years in the wrong path? And I shall answer you: Most emphatically not! It would be more correct to say that you have been just off the right path—and that through no fault of your own. The path on which you have been travelling was precisely that through which God intended ultimately to lead you “into all truth.” You have nothing to regret, rather a great deal to be thankful for.

And you may be inclined to ask: Then perhaps,

after all, we may as well *stay where we are?* But this, too, must be answered in the negative. For to stay where you are would be to forfeit all claim to be considered in "good faith"; hitherto you have not known all the truth, now your eyes are opened; remember what our Lord said to the Pharisees: "If you were blind you would not have sin: but now you say, We see,—your sin remaineth" (*St. John ix. 41*).

And lastly, with a feeling perhaps akin to despair, you will say: Then have we got to begin all over again, after all these years? Once more we answer you in the negative. For you are well on the way, you have little or nothing to unlearn. Catholic truths are familiar to you, and you will find that you have little or nothing to change. You are in a far better position than the most of those who become Catholics. They, as a rule, find themselves in a new world with everything to learn. They literally do have to begin all over again. Not so you.

One last word ere we part. You know that where you now are, John Henry Cardinal Newman, the greatest man of the nineteenth century, once stood—at the parting of the ways. The story of his doubts and fears is told in the familiar pages of his *Apologia*. Listen to words from a letter he wrote in 1841:—

"I think you will give me the credit of not undervaluing the strength of the feelings which draw one (to Rome), and yet I am (I trust) quite clear about my duty *to remain where I am*; indeed, much clearer than I was some time since. If it is not presumptuous to say so, I have . . . a much more definite view of the promised inward Presence of Christ with us in the Sacraments now that the outward notes of it are being removed. And I am content to be with Moses in the

desert, or with Elijah excommunicated from the Temple. I say this, putting things at their strongest.”¹

Do not these words echo your own sentiments? But now, listen to these other words which he penned in 1843:—

“May 4, 1843. . . . At present I fear, as far as I can analyze my own convictions, I consider the Roman Catholic Communion to be the Church of the Apostles, and that what grace is among us (which, through God’s mercy, is not little) is extraordinary, and from the overflowings of His dispensation.”²

Do you not see that he has now come to regard the graces, which he knew full well that he had received in the Anglican Church, just in the same way as we have tried to set them before you?

And we feel assured that you can make your own the pathetic words of his sermon on “Divine Calls” which he wrote soon after reading, in the August of 1840, Wiseman’s article in the *Dublin Review* for that month on the “Anglican Claim”:—

“O that we could take that simple view of things, as to feel that the one thing which lies before us, is to please God! What gain is it to please the world, to please the great—nay, even to please those whom we love, compared with this? What gain is it to be applauded, admired, courted, followed, compared with this one aim, of ‘not being disobedient to a heavenly vision’? What can this world offer comparable with that insight into spiritual things, that keen faith, that heavenly peace, that high sanctity, that everlasting righteousness, that hope of glory which they have, who in sincerity love and follow our Lord Jesus

¹ *Apologia*, p. 264, ed. 1864 (*italics ours*).

² *Ibid.*, p. 335.

Christ? Let us beg and pray Him day by day to reveal Himself to our souls more fully, to quicken our senses, to give us sight and hearing, taste and touch of the world to come; so to work within us, that we may sincerely say, 'Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsels, and after that receive me with glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'"¹

And as we have spoken above about the meaning of "being in good faith," so now we must add a few words on "the state of doubt." Doubt is uncertainty. It is that state of mind which consists in an inability to decide upon one course of action rather than another, because we are uncertain as to which is the correct one. We are not called upon to solve every doubt which presents itself to us; doubts, for instance, regarding certain purely theoretical questions of science. But doubts concerning the practical conduct of life must be solved. We cannot act rightly without *knowing* what is right. And the most practical question in our lives is: Am I in the path which can alone lead to heaven? As long as I am in doubt on that point I am not at liberty to rest. I cannot acquiesce in any spirit of compromise such as the world loves: "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day" (*Ecclesiasticus* v. 8). We would never enter into a commercial transaction with a practical doubt as to its soundness, yet here it is the very Kingdom of Heaven which is at stake!

But how am I to settle my doubts? If it were a commercial speculation about which you were anxious,

¹ *Apologia*, p. 213.

what would you do? Would you go and dispute about it with a number of people who were in the same state of anxiety as yourself? Probably not, but you would go to the best-informed man on the subject. And so also in these doubts about your chances of salvation. After all, it is a question between your own soul and Almighty God. It is to Him you must go, and not to a multitude of doubtful counsellors: "But above all things, pray to the Most High that He may direct thy way in truth" (*Ecclesiasticus* xxxvii. 19). And such humble prayer does not preclude us from having recourse to such as we know can instruct us; indeed, we pray that we may find wise counsel, thus the passage just quoted from *Ecclesiasticus* goes on to say: "In all thy works let the true word go before thee, and steady counsel before every action."

To sum up: doubts on such a vital question must be solved without delay; useless controversy should be avoided; trustful prayer will bring us light and will show us where to seek counsel and instruction. "There is nothing better," says the wise man, "than the fear of God . . . there is nothing sweeter than to have regard to the commandments of the Lord. It is a great glory to follow the Lord, for length of days shall be received from Him" (*Ecclesiasticus* xxiii. 37-8).

We have had occasion to quote Cardinal Newman very often, hence there is a certain fittingness in concluding these simple pages with the beautiful words with which he himself in 1845 closed his great work, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*:—

"Such were the thoughts concerning the 'Blessed Vision of Peace,' of one whose long-continued petition

had been that the Most Merciful would not despise the works of His own Hands, nor leave him to himself, while yet his eyes were dim and his breast laden, and he could but employ Reason in the things of Faith. And now, dear reader, time is short, eternity is long. Put not from you what you have here found ; regard it not as mere matter of present controversy ; set not out resolved to refute it, and looking about for the best way of doing so ; seduce not yourself with the imagination that it comes of disappointment, or disgust, or restlessness, or wounded feeling, or undue sensibility, or other weakness. Wrap not yourself round in the associations of years past ; nor determine that to be truth which you wish to be so, nor make an idol of cherished anticipations. Time is short, eternity is long."

March, 1911.

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