

Cath. Church - Apologetics

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FIND THE CHURCH



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FIND THE CHURCH.

"SEEK AND YOU SHALL FIND."—(S. Matth. VII. 7.)

AN AID TO THE INQUIRER.

- I. WHERE DOES THE NAME "CHURCH OF CHRIST" BELONG?
 - II. HOW SHALL WE GET THE DOCTRINES TAUGHT BY CHRIST?
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FIND THE CHURCH.

AN AID TO THE INQUIRER.

This aid is intended to meet a special need of many who profess Christianity. They have their own special difficulty which arises from a fact that is plain to the eyes of the world.

They recognize the divinity of Christ.

They recognize that Christ established a Religious Society which is called a Church.

They recognize that Christ left certain truths or doctrines to that Society or Church.

They recognize that the profession of Christ's teaching or doctrine is a condition for membership in His Church.

They recognize, finally, that the acceptance of His doctrines on His word is the bond which unites the members into one Society, one Church, one Institution founded by Him.

But here arises their difficulty. It comes from a broad fact which they cannot help seeing. They behold around them hundreds of distinct Institutions, each one of which claims the right to be called the Church of Christ. They see, moreover, that

each one of these distinct Institutions holds a doctrine which it puts forward as the doctrine of Christ, but which disagrees with the doctrine held by any other one of all the Institutions.

So that the difficulty which besets the inquirer is a twofold difficulty. He asks himself:

1. Where does the name "Church of Christ" really belong?
2. How are men, to-day, to get the exact doctrines taught by Christ?

I.

WHERE DOES THE NAME "CHURCH OF CHRIST" BELONG ?

Christ did not establish several Churches, giving to each a distinct set of doctrines at variance with the doctrines given to each of the other Churches.

Christ gave one set of doctrines. It is precisely the profession of this set of doctrines which has to bind all the members into one society, one Church, His Church.

Hence, if two distinct Institutions hold themselves to be distinct precisely because they have distinct sets of doctrine, they cannot both claim to be rightly named "The Church of Christ."

Likewise, several hundred distinct Institutions holding as many distinct and opposite sets of doctrine cannot all claim for themselves the name of "The Church of Christ."

Yet, here is the very fact which the inquirer has to deal with. He finds several hundred Institutions claiming the name "Church of Christ;" and he finds that they make this claim on the strength of their opposing doctrines.

This puts the inquirer in a very unsatisfactory position. The object of his inquiry is, in a way, twofold. He wishes to find the Institution which has a valid title to the name "Church of Christ;" and he wishes to determine the exact set of doctrines left

by Christ. He knows that if he finds the precise Institution or Church, he may be satisfied that it has the exact doctrine. He knows that if he discovers the exact doctrine he will be enabled to locate the Institution.

But as his difficulty has this twofold character, it may be useful for him to make also a twofold inquiry. He may, first consider the Institutions simply as societies; then he may consider the doctrine—not each particular point of doctrine, but a possible way of getting at the entire doctrine. When he finds the now existing society which is identical with the Institution founded by Christ, and which thus has full and only claim to the name “Church of Christ,” and when he finds, moreover, that this one claimant has preserved from the beginning an absolutely accurate method for the transmission of the doctrines left by Christ, he will be far advanced on the way towards the solution of the whole difficulty.

The first question, then, is that of an identical Institution. Let us suppose a certain society to have been founded fifty years ago. What would be done to determine whether a given society existing to-day is the identical society that was founded fifty years ago? We should have to find out whether the society existing to-day could be traced back through a continuous unbroken existence to the society of fifty years ago. In like manner, to find the Church of Christ, the Institution that was really established by Christ, and therefore has still a right to the name, we must find a Church with a clear title, a Church whose continuous and unbroken existence can be

traced back to a Church about whose right to the name there is and can be no dispute.

Among many hundred claimants, then, to the name, "Church of Christ," there must be found one Institution which has a clear title to the name. There must be found existing to-day a Church which is the identical Church founded by Christ. There must be found a Church, a Society, an Institution, whose continuous existence can be traced back through regular succession until it is seen to be identical with a true, undoubted, undisputed, rightful possessor of the title. This Society will have a clear title to the name. There cannot be two clear titles.

How far back will it be necessary to go?

There can be no doubt about the fact that the Church of the Apostles was the Church founded by Christ.

Which one of the many claimants existing to-day can be traced back to the Church of the Apostles, so as to be seen to come from it by an unbroken succession? This one Institution will be identical with the Church of the Apostles. It will be seen to be the Church of Christ and will have a clear title to the name.

There can be but one such claimant among the many hundreds. No one of the other claimants will be the Institution established by Christ. No one of the other claimants will have any title to the name.

But will not this be an endless work? Where shall an inquirer begin? Which claimant shall have first place in the investigation? Which one

shall have second, third, fourth, five hundredth place?

The process of investigation will not be so very long if it be pursued systematically, according to methods which are universally recognized as absolutely final in all civil matters of the same character.

In the first place the whole Christian era may be divided into its nineteen centuries :

1	—	100
100	—	200
200	—	300
——	—	——
1400	—	1500
1500	—	1600
1600	—	1700
1700	—	1800
1800	—	1900

We take the period between 1800 and 1900. It is clear that an Institution which began as an Institution between the years 1800 and 1900 cannot be an Institution which was founded by Christ more than 1800 years ago.

Now, it is a very notable fact that very many of the Institutions which claim to be the Church of Christ, came into existence within the century which has just gone by. Hence, in investigating the right to the name, it is lawful to put aside all the Institutions which began to exist after the year 1800.

Following the same law of investigation we can reject all Societies which began as Societies in the century preceding, that is after the year 1700. And

we can, likewise, reject all that began as Societies, or Institutions after the year 1600.

The Church of Christ has not at any time ceased to exist. There has always been a true holder of the name. Whenever a society ceases to exist, the same identical society never re-exists. It may have a successor with the same purpose; but this new successor is not the same identical society; it is a new society. If any one were to say that the Church of Christ could cease to exist, it could not re-exist as a new society without being re-established by Christ Himself, or by some one evidently commissioned by Christ to effect the re-establishment. But the Church of Christ has not ceased to exist, nor has it been re-established. It has always existed from its first foundation, and has always been in rightful possession of its title to the name.

There was, therefore, a true claimant to the title between the years 1500 and 1600.

Not to go too far back we may stop here. We may consider the claimants now existing and which are found midway between 1500 and 1600, that is in the year 1550. The many hundred claimants of to-day have really arisen by secession from the ranks of the claimants that existed in the year 1550. So that a true claimant must be found in the year 1550.

Those who have not considered this matter in its true historical aspect will be surprised, upon examination, to see how few of the present existing religious societies claimed to be the Church of Christ, or had even an existence in the year 1550, that is three hundred and fifty years ago.

They may be surprised to find that in the year 1550 there were but five Institutions in the enlightened world that claimed the name, "Church of Christ." These five Institutions, to put them in alphabetical order, were: the Anglican, the Calvinist, the Catholic, the Greek, the Lutheran.

The present Methodist Institution grew out of some religious conferences which John Wesley began to hold with three or four of his friends in the year 1729.

The Kirk of Scotland took its rise from a movement which John Knox first set on foot in 1557, when, at his advice, some of the nobles formed themselves into a covenanted body which they called "the Lords of the Congregation." The Kirk was established by act of the Scottish parliament which assembled at Edinburgh in 1560; and the first meeting of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was held on the twentieth of December of the same year.

The Society of Friends originated in the year 1647.

The Baptists were not an Institution until the 17th century. There were Ana-baptists in 1550; but they have disappeared; and the Baptists do not claim succession from them.

We may, therefore, rightly limit our investigations to the five institutions which existed in 1550 and exist to-day. Hence, the true claimant must be found amongst the five. Which one of these five Institutions of 1550 was the Church established by Christ through the Apostles?

The Anglican Church was established in 1534 by

edict of King Henry VIII. of England,—an edict which is known as the “Act of Supremacy.”

The Lutheran Church first took some definite form in the year 1530, when the schedule drawn up by Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon, and known as the “Augsburg Confession,” was presented at the Diet of Augsburg.

The earliest date that can be assigned to Calvinism, as an Institution, is 1541, when the “Institutes” of John Calvin were accepted at Geneva. Even before the year 1600 there were at least twenty variations of Calvinism. Its general idea is found to-day in the Kirk of Scotland, in the Dutch Reformed Church, in Congregationalism and in American Presbyterianism.

Now, if we go back another century, that is, to 1450, we find no record of the Lutheran Church nor of the Anglican Church nor of Calvinism. Martin Luther was born in 1483; King Henry was born in 1491, and John Calvin was born in 1509.

Thus, in 1450, we find only the Catholic Church and the Greek Church. Rather, it would be more correct to say that in 1450 the Catholic Church alone is found of all the claimants that exist to-day. The present Greek Church really dates from the year 1453, when Constantinople was taken by the Turks, and Gregory Scholarius was appointed Patriarch of Constantinople by command of the Sultan, Mahomet II. From the days of Photius (867) the Greeks had been, off and on, separating from and rejoining the Catholic communion. From 1054 they remained separated for 220 years. In 1274 they re-united at the

Council of Lyons. Six years later they separated again. Another re-union was effected at Florence in 1439. This union was rejected four years later, in 1443, by the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. The Patriarch of Constantinople adhered to the union. But he was deposed and Scholarius was appointed in his place by the Turkish Sultan in 1453. Thus the Greek Church came into existence in the ninth century. It ceased to exist several times in the course of six hundred years, so that no one of the succeeding establishments was an identical Institution with its predecessor. The present Greek Institution was really founded by the Sultan, in 1453, and it absorbed all the other Greek dissenters.

It is hardly necessary to go into details about the Russian Church. It came out of the Greek Church of Constantinople. The present Institution of the Russian Church dates from the year 1721, when it was made entirely dependent on the Czar.

There remains, then, but one claimant: the Catholic Church. It exists to-day. It existed in the time of Martin Luther and John Calvin and King Henry VIII. They went out from it. It existed through all that period during which the Greeks were going out from it and coming back to it. It existed before that time through the first nine centuries: and of all the many hundred claimants that rose up against it in those first nine centuries, few names are even known amongst us.

The succession of the Catholic Church from the Church of the Apostles to the present day, as an identical Institution, is complete without an interruption.

The organization of the Catholic Church has not varied in all that time. The central seat of its administration is found to-day where it was 1800 years ago. The line of its Chief Pastors, the Popes, has come down in regular succession from Peter who was appointed by Christ.

To what Institution, then, does the name "Church of Christ" truly belong?

What would the jury say?

II.

HOW SHALL WE GET THE DOCTRINES
TAUGHT BY CHRIST?

Christ established a Church.

He chose twelve Apostles and taught them His doctrine.

The doctrine taught by Christ to his Apostles was made a complete body of revelation on the day of Pentecost, that is to say, fifty days after the Resurrection and ten days after the Ascension of Christ to the Father.

A Church with a complete and definite revelation of truth was then finally established in the Apostles.

Christ established a Church not merely for the days of the Apostles, but for all time.

He said to his Apostles, "Going, therefore, teach all nations" (Matth. 28, 20) and "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." (Matth. 28, 20.)

Christ established a Church with a definite and fixed doctrine; and that doctrine was to come down through a continuous Church without addition or diminution unto the day when He, Himself, was to

come again to judge all men upon their acceptance and observance of that doctrine according to the measure of the opportunity which had been accorded to them to become acquainted with it.

Christ taught a fixed and definite doctrine. He did not teach contradictory doctrines, telling to some persons that there is a Trinity, and to other persons, that there is not a Trinity. He did not teach to some that there is a Sacrament of Penance for the forgiveness of sins, and to others, that there is no such Sacrament. He did not teach to some that He is really present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and to others, that He is not really present.

How is it that to-day we find separate classes of individuals asserting different and contradictory doctrines, and yet each class asserting for itself that it is the Church of Christ?

When Christ had established a Church and taught it a doctrine, He certainly did not leave things in such a condition that it should be impossible ever after for mankind to find the Church and the doctrine.

To-day we behold many distinct Institutions, each of which claims to be the Church of Christ. Yet each one differs from all the others as to which are the doctrines of Christ. Is it not more than clear that each and every one of the Institutions cannot be the Church of Christ? The Church established by Christ was *an* Institution with *a* doctrine. But here we find *many distinct* Institutions, and each one *takes care* to distinguish itself from all the others precisely by a *difference* of doctrine.

For the same reason, no two of these Institutions

can claim to be the Church of Christ, since Christ taught one fixed doctrine: and there are no two of these Institutions that hold the same doctrine.

How are we to discover which is the doctrine taught by Christ? If we find that doctrine, we can safely say that the Institution which holds that doctrine entire, without addition or diminution, is the real Church of Christ.

We cannot admit that the doctrine has been divided by Christ amongst the Institutions, some of it to be held by one, and some of it by another; and that all the Institutions taken together will form the Church of Christ. Christ did not establish that kind of a Church, a Church built up of contradictions, formed by uniting the affirmation and denial of the same truth.

The Church of Christ must be one Church—a Church possessing the entire doctrine taught by Christ. There can be but one such Church. Two Churches holding precisely the same doctrine would not be two Churches, but one Church.

We must, therefore, affirm that there is one Church which holds the precise doctrines taught by Christ, and that it holds these doctrines in their entirety, without increase or diminution.

Where shall we find the entire doctrine? How shall we discover the Institution which possesses the doctrine of Christ, entire and intact?

There is one way of setting about this investigation. We must go back to the beginning and try to learn what were the means which Christ, Himself, established for the safe transmission of His doctrine,

and what Institution has employed this secure means of transmission established by Christ.

We want to know, therefore, the means which Christ established to have His doctrine transmitted, through the ages, complete and unchanged.

In the first place, let us remember that the doctrine was to be transmitted to human society. This being the case, the means must be one which men would be apt to recognize. Common sense will not let us suppose that for the purpose of handing down, of keeping, and of making known His doctrine, Christ chose a means which would be calculated to hide the doctrine rather than to manifest it.

Looking at the matter, then, with human eyes, and taking account of what we know of human nature, and considering humanity to be such as we know it to be, what does our reason suggest to us as the means which Christ might, perhaps, have chosen for the transmission of His doctrine? We must presume that the means which Christ adopted must have been one with which man could become acquainted; one adapted to the manifestation of the doctrine; one which an inquirer would be apt to look for and apt to find; one which, when employed, would always lead to the same doctrine, entire and unchanged. We cannot presume that Christ chose a means in itself calculated to hide the doctrine or to make men believe in contradictions and accept each other's contradictions as the doctrines of Christ.

If we look into the matter seriously, carefully, leisurely and without prejudice, we shall find that all the possible methods which might appeal to an

inquirer as obvious and worthy of consideration, are reducible to three. In saying this we are not making judgments upon the ways of Divine Providence and on the eternal wisdom. But we are simply limiting and fixing the inquiry by doing what one in search of the doctrine would most naturally do, that is by first determining the ways in which he might deem it possible for that doctrine to have been transmitted. Upon due reflection, we shall find three ways and three only.

One way would be that every person who should come, in some manner, to recognize the divinity of Christ, should receive personally a special revelation of the sum total of the doctrines taught by Christ. This method would not be impossible to Almighty God.

A *second* way which we might conceive would be that Christ had written down His entire doctrine; that He had had this writing publicly authenticated; and that He had left definite instructions according to which copies of the writing might be publicly and unmistakably authenticated throughout all time. This would also be a possible and sure method.

We can conceive of a *third* method of transmission. Christ might have taught His Apostles and given them a special aid so that they could not fail to possess His doctrine. In this third case it would be necessary that amongst their lawful and accredited successors in the office of teaching, He should have established some court of appeal supported also by divine assistance to guard His Church against error that might be put forward by false teachers. There

would have to be, at least, one person amongst the successors of the Apostles, throughout time, who would be divinely empowered and guided to decide in every dispute and to condemn every error concerning the doctrines taught by Christ. This power would, of course, have to be a supernatural power. It could not be a natural power: for, this person, as a mere human being, would necessarily be exposed to error, just as any other human being judging by his own light. It would have to be made impossible for this person to speak error or to decide incorrectly when speaking in his character of universal teacher and guardian of the truth. He might err in any other matter, as might any other human being, but his lips would have to be sealed by God against the pronouncement of error whensoever he should speak officially on Christ's doctrine. Moreover, this person would have to be recognized, throughout time, as the divinely appointed guardian of the entire doctrine and as the sole court of final appeal.

We have, here, three obvious methods of transmission, each of them being a possibility to God in the important work of the handing down the true doctrine. They are obvious ways. If one is looking for the doctrines of Christ, and wishes, first, to certify those doctrines by assuring himself of the correctness and legality of a method of transmission, it stands to reason that the method of transmission must be one adapted to human comprehension, something that can be recognized, and not a method so secret and hidden that it cannot be found.

Let us turn, now, to compare the methods with what we know to be the facts.

To determine whether the first method has been the one employed, we have but to ask ourselves the question, "Has Christ made a personal, separate revelation to each one of us?" We have to trust to the testimony of our own memory and consciousness for an answer. We are not conscious, we have no memory of such revelation. This ends the question. We can dismiss this method as not being carried out by the facts.

What about the second method? Did Christ leave a written and authenticated statement of His doctrines? Our answer must be: we do not know that Christ left any writing. There is no record of any writing of His. There is no record in history or in story of any copy of any writing of His.

What about the Scripture, the New Testament, the four Gospels? Christ did not write the Gospels. St. Matthew wrote his Gospel about six years after the Ascension of Christ. This Gospel of St. Matthew is the earliest written work containing the doctrines of Christ. The entire New Testament was written after the Ascension or departure of Christ from earth. The New Testament, in its entirety, is made up of twenty-seven distinct writings composed about as follows:

The Gospel according to St. Matthew written not earlier than 6 years after the Ascension.

The Gospel according to St. Mark written not earlier than 10 years after the Ascension.

The Gospel according to St. Luke written not earlier than 24 years after the Ascension.

The Gospel according to St. John written not earlier than 63 years after the Ascension.

The Acts of the Apostles written not earlier than 30 years after the Ascension.

The Letters of the Apostles (21 Letters) written at least 20 to 30 years after the Ascension.

One of these Letters (the first of St. John) written about 66 years after the Ascension.

The Apocalypse of St. John written about 64 years after the Ascension.

The writers of the different parts of the New Testament make no reference to any writing left by Christ.

The New Testament could not have been the means established by Christ by which all men were to become acquainted with His doctrines. The first piece of the New Testament was not written until six years after the Church had been established and had been in possession of the doctrines of Christ. The last Gospel, that of St. John, was written about sixty years after the establishment of the Church. Hence the Church was for six years without any Scripture at all, and for sixty years without the complete Scripture. So that if the doctrine had to reach every person by means of a writing, it was sixty years before anyone could have a chance to possess the doctrine.

Besides this, the Letters of the Apostles were for the most part written to individuals or to the inhabitants of certain towns or provinces. These letters were not copied out and scattered broadcast, and put into the hands of everyone who would be a Christian.

Anyone who might have heard of a certain letter and who wished to possess a copy, was obliged to have it written out by hand.

Besides the twenty-seven writings mentioned above, there were in the first centuries many other writings about Christ. But there was no one of the writings that was in the hands of every Christian. After the lapse of four hundred years the twenty-seven writings, put together in the form in which we now have them, were authentically declared to be the written revelation of the New Testament, and all the other writings were rejected as not being of divine revelation.

Hence, for six years there was no writing. It was sixty years before the writings were completed. It was four hundred years before they were gathered into one book written by hand and recognized universally as the written revelation of the New Testament.

Now, the question is, if every person had to learn the doctrines of Christ from a book, where was the Church during four hundred years? The Church certainly existed, and it existed without any writing left by Christ. It was established without any writing made by Him, and without any writing upon which He had put His personal seal of approval. It existed for six years before the first of the writings was made by St. Matthew. It existed for sixty years before the last of the writings was made by St. John. It existed for four hundred years before the writings were put together and were universally recognized to be a record of some of the truths divinely revealed as

distinguished from other writings which were then universally recognized not to be a part of the revelation. And during these four hundred years the people did not and could not possess the writings, and after the writings were gathered together the people could not possess a copy of them without having them written out by hand. Still, the Church had been established and continued to exist, and the doctrines of Christ were known, and were accepted by faith.

All this being so, there is one thing evident, and it is this: the one means which Christ chose to have His doctrine handed down was not a writing; it was not the Scripture. The doctrine was being handed down before there was a Scripture; and when there was a Scripture, everybody could not get a copy.

Now, we singled out three methods by which we might suppose it possible for the doctrines of Christ to have been kept and to have been transmitted.

The first method, we said, would be a personal revelation made to each individual. We know that this method does not agree with the facts; we are not conscious of having received such a revelation.

The second method would be by a writing made by Christ or authenticated by Christ and put into the hands of all. But neither does this method agree with the facts, as we see from the history of the Scriptures.

We have, therefore, to go to the third method: namely, that Christ left in His Church an authority to be the guardian of the revelation which He left to His Apostles. The Apostles received the whole

doctrine on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost taught them all truth. There must have existed in the Apostles an authority to decide what was the doctrine left by Christ. This authority, then, would have to come down through the Church for all time. How?

Just as Christ died without leaving any writing to the Apostles, so also did the Apostles die without leaving any writing which they declared officially to contain the sum total of the doctrines of Christ. Still, the doctrine had to continue intact. There had to be the possibility of an appeal for true and complete doctrine. And as there was no official complete writing, and as there was no personal revelation of the entire doctrine made to each individual, we are obliged to say that there would have to be a continuous authority existing in the Church. How could that authority continue? Some person or persons would have to be invested by Christ with that authority. It would have to be a special divinely given power, a supernatural power. It could not be a natural power by which one man after another would in virtue of his own genius pass *final* and *unfailing* sentence upon what was the doctrine taught by Christ. Who, then, was to be invested by Christ with the authority? Who was to have the divine assistance to decide, with *unerring certainty*, when the occasion called for a decision, what was the exact doctrine taught by Christ?

Was this authority to be invested in the whole body of believers, young and old? Was it to be given to a committee of one hundred, or of two hundred?

Was there to be a committee of two persons? Was the possessor of this authority to be a single individual who would be publicly known, and who could be easily appealed to?

It certainly could not be the whole body of believers. In this supposition there would be no need of an authority, since each person would thus have his own personal aid (or revelation), a thing which we know is not a fact. And if we should have to certify to the universal agreement, it would be impossible to get the universal testimony.

Would it be a committee of one hundred? Why a committee of one hundred? As the members of a committee, divinely guided, would not and could not speak by their own natural knowledge, but could speak only according to the divine guidance, they would all have to speak the same thing. What, then, would be the advantage of having one hundred? It would be fully sufficient to have the testimony of any individual in the hundred. The solitary testimony of any one member would be as secure as the testimony of all.

Still further, as it would be of no advantage to have the word of the hundred, so it would be of no advantage to have the word of even two persons. These two separate persons in the committee of two would each have to speak by divine guidance. Hence, the testimony of one would be as secure as the testimony of both.

But could it not be that the testimony of one would be a check on the testimony of the other? Such a supposition could not be admitted since they

would both be speaking by divine assistance. Besides, the supposition that they could possibly give different testimony, would be an end to the recognition of an authority in the Church. For how would it ever be possible to tell which was the correct testimony?

Hence, in order to get a recognizable unfailing authority in the Church, we would always have to seek for that authority as existing in one person. Finding that authority in one person we would feel that there was no need of seeking any further. That person would be one who would need and who would have supernatural, divine, assistance, whenever he came to speak, *as the authority*, to the Church of Christ upon the doctrines left by Christ. It would have to be an impossibility for him to make a mistake when speaking, *as the authority*, to the Church. This would not be because he might be naturally a great genius or a learned man, or a man of very virtuous life; but it would be simply because he would be the person invested with the teaching authority, and God would make it impossible for him to write or speak other than the exact doctrine when giving decisions, *as the authority*, to the Church of Christ, upon the doctrines of Christ. So that even if he should come to be a bad man, and should wish to introduce false doctrines into the Church, God would make it impossible for him to speak those false doctrines. All of these things would be necessary in this third method—the only one left—in which the doctrines would be kept and transmitted by means of an authority always existing in the Church. Finally it would be necessary that this individual should

know that he possessed the authority, and it would be necessary that he should be known by others to possess it.

Now, has anything of this kind been recognized amongst those who have professed to believe in Christ? Yes. We have it to-day and we have had it from the beginning. Where? In the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church recognizes that it cannot obtain or safeguard the doctrines in any other way than by a living authority. This authority it has always recognized to exist in one man. Who is this one man? In the first place it was St. Peter. Since the death of St. Peter it has been his successors, the Popes, who are always the Bishops of Rome. More than two hundred and fifty of them have existed since the days of St. Peter, and they have always been recognized as possessing the authority; and they have always been appealed to in matters concerning the doctrines taught by Christ.

But do not Catholics hold that the Scriptures are a revelation and an authority, and that they contain the doctrines of Christ? Catholics hold that the Scriptures are a revelation, and that they contain doctrines taught by Christ. But Catholics go further and ask how it is that they hold the Scriptures to be a revelation and to contain doctrines taught by Christ. They find that for six years there was no writing, and yet that there was an authority in the Church. They find that it was sixty years before the last of the writings was made. In the meantime and afterwards there were a multitude of other writings made. After four hundred years twenty-seven writings were taken

from the whole number and were declared to be a revelation, and all the others were rejected as not being a revelation. Now, who did this? It must have been done by a recognized authority. The twenty-seven writings were accepted, and the others were rejected, universally. The decision was certainly made by an authority which was acknowledged to have power to decide upon what belonged to revelation, to decide that these twenty-seven writings which make what we call the New Testament contained a revelation and doctrines taught by Christ. From that time to this day, the successors in the authority have invariably given the same reply to all doubts arising as to what was to be regarded as the New Testament.

What did that authority decide in regard to the New Testament? Did it decide that the New Testament writings were the sole rule of faith and the whole rule of faith? No. That would be a strange thing, as the authority itself had to decide upon the Scriptures: nor do the Scriptures themselves anywhere refer to themselves as the sole rule of faith that is to be consulted by each individual so that he might try to make out the entire meaning for himself. Or did the authority say that when each man read the Scriptures he would receive a divine inspiration as to their meaning? The authority did not say either of these things. It simply declared the writings of the New Testament to be a revelation, to contain doctrines taught by Christ. It did not affirm that the Book contained all the doctrines. For the complete doctrine, therefore, we have still to go to the authority,

and we have to read the Book as it is interpreted by the authority.

To conclude, then, we have to get the doctrines of Christ either by a personal revelation which Christ makes to us—and this revelation we have not : or we have to get them from a writing which Christ left for us—and Christ left no writing : or we have to get them from an authority which Christ established and which continues. Such an authority we have. It has come down to us as recognized by the greatest scholars of the Christian era.





