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MISUNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH

by

Duane G. Hunt



Misunderstanding The Church

by

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DEVOTION TO MARY

Address delivered on June 7, 1936

The Catholic religion has many appeals to the human soul. There is the appeal of authority, for instance. There is the appeal of infallibility. There is the appeal of unity, and of universality. These are factors of strength, and they make the Catholic Church a bulwark against the forces of destruction. But were these to sum up the Catholic religion it would appear one-sided. Human nature needs something besides authority, power, strength. It needs kindness, gentleness, love, and beauty. We have emotions as well as intellects; we have sentiments as well as wills. We have a sense of beauty as well as a sense of logic. This gentler side of human nature is touched by the Church with a ministry of kindness; with a ministry of beauty; with a ministry of sympathy; with the gentle caress of a mother.

I am quite well aware that to many listeners the Catholic devotion to Mary, the Mother of our Lord, appears strange and perhaps even objectionable. This is so only because it is not understood. When understood, it is most attractive and inviting.

Nothing is more natural than the giving of honor to great persons. We Americans honor Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and other great men of our country's history; and we do so for excellent reasons. We honor Washington, for instance, because of the service which he rendered our country, because of his leadership, because of the principles with which he identified his commanding personality. By honoring him we teach the youth of the land to imitate

his example. So we name cities for him, dedicate monuments and statues to him, and set aside his birthday each year as a national holiday.

In somewhat the same way we Catholics honor the heroes of Christian history. These are the saints, the very close friends of God. We believe that in honoring them we honor God Himself. Moreover, we preserve the principles with which they identified their personalities, and we teach the young people of our Church to imitate their examples. We believe that all of this is good for us, for the Church, and for the whole world.

Among all of the saints Mary comes first. By her wholly unique position as the Mother of our Lord she stands first among all mere human beings. We may well imagine God planning the redemption of the race, planning to send His divine Son as the Redeemer, planning that He should come to earth as an infant and that Mary should be His mother. And we may imagine, too, God's pausing in this plan to ask and wait for the very necessary consent of Mary. So it was indeed an awful moment in the history of the race when the angel announced to Mary that God had chosen her to become the Mother of the Lord and Saviour. The redemption of mankind waited for her answer: "Be it done unto me according to thy word."

Perfect cooperation with the will of God is the outstanding mark of her character. It was rewarded with most extraordinary privileges. From before her birth until after her death, from the Immaculate Conception by which she was preserved free from original sin to her Assumption into heaven, she was the object of special manifestations of God's favor.

Most important of all, she was the Virgin Mother of our Lord, Christ, her son, was the Son of God. He was not the Son of any man. By and through the infinite power of the Holy Ghost, Mary, a Virgin, conceived and gave birth to a Son. Incidentally, the fact of the Virgin birth is taught most clearly in the Bible, not merely in the prophecies of the Old Testament, but in the narratives of the New Testament, and in the Apostles' Creed.

Out of such facts has grown the Catholic devotion to Mary, proper, normal, and inevitable. We name cities and colleges for her; we erect statues, churches and basilicas; we paint pictures; write poetry; compose music; dedicate shrines; all in her honor. We set aside different days throughout the year as holy days especially dedicated to her. And we name children for her: (certainly no name is more common among Christian people than the name of Mary). In addition to this, we pray to her, asking her to present our prayers to God.

A criticism is sometimes urged that it is wrong to pray to Mary. The criticism arises out of a misunderstanding of prayer. The word "prayer" may refer, as a matter of course, to the adoration and worship of God; it may refer to giving thanks to God for His infinite blessings; it may refer to a petition for the forgiveness of sins. Such prayers, involving as they do the worship of God, can be directed to Him only. But the word "prayer" may refer also to the petition of one human being to another. You may have heard such requests often. They are heard in the non-Catholic churches as well as in the Catholic Church. Lay persons very frequently say to one another: "I wish you would

say some prayers for me;" or "I need your prayers;" or "please pray for me". In so doing they surely are not attributing to each other any power that is more than human. Such petitions imply honor and respect; they imply that the prayers of one person may be more deserving than the prayers of another; but that is all. They certainly do not confuse God with man.

Back of such prayers is very good authority in the Bible. St. Paul, in writing to the Romans, uses these words: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. . . that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." To the Thessalonians he writes these simple words: "Brethren, pray for us." And in the letter to the Hebrew he makes the same request. There are other indications in the Bible which show that the Apostles of Christ endorsed such prayers. Now, if it is proper for us to ask a friend on earth to pray for us, why can we not do the same after he has left this world and gone to heaven? This would seem to be particularly true in the case of those Christians who have shown by their lives that they were especially close to God.

In our prayers to Mary we ask her to pray for us. Note, if you will, the last phrase of the "Hail Mary", the prayer which is so frequently said: "pray for us. . . now and at the hour of our death." This is typical of all prayers addressed to Mary.

That God Himself has approved this devotion to Mary is indicated in the events narrated in the Bible. It was with no ordinary words that the angel of God spoke to Mary when he announced the coming of the Saviour: "Hail, full of grace!

The Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." Let it be remembered that these words are written in St. Luke's Gospel, and are a part of the inspired and sacred Scriptures. And notice; Mary is described as full of grace; she is informed that the Lord is with her, and that she is blessed among women. In the same chapter it is recorded that St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist, addressed to Mary these extraordinary words: "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?"

More remarkable still is the prophecy which Mary herself spoke: "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Surely, in light of this declaration, it is not merely permissible for us to pay honor and devotion to Mary, it is our duty to do so. If I say that we Catholics feel a singular responsibility in this respect I do not indulge in any criticism. I appreciate that if many Christians are neglectful of the claims of Mary, it is not through a positive intention of being disrespectful; it is rather because the facts and the reasons have not been sufficiently impressed upon their minds. We Catholics, however, should demonstrate to our neighbors that the devotion to Mary is a blessing to us and to the whole world. Our lives can be eloquent testimony to this fact.

I now call your attention to some of the benefits which come from the devotion to Mary; first of all, to the natural benefits. As you grasp at once, there is excellent psychology back of the devotion. We all tend toward our ideals. Unfortunately we may fall far short of them, but we never go beyond them. No

greater curse can be imagined for us than to have low ideals; they would be as a millstone around our necks against which we could not rise. On the other hand, it is an immeasurable blessing to have perfect ideals, to have before us those ideal lives that have won the approbation of God Himself.

The Catholic Church, in holding Mary as an ideal before her people, has fixed a goal for perfect spiritual attainment, Mary is the ideal of purity. Her mind, her heart, and her conscience were always pure. It was her privilege to combine in one person all of the idealism and all of the sentiments which we feel toward a pure and holy woman. Mary centered in herself all of the sentiments and idealism associated both with a pure virgin and a saintly mother.

One of the greatest benefits from the devotion is its influence upon the status of woman. In no other respect is the change from paganism to Christianity so marked as in the status of woman. Wherever the Church has gone she has found woman more or less degraded. She has found her in all stages of inferiority to man. She has found her on the level with slaves; as a hireling; as a menial servant. The Church has transformed woman's position, and she has done so by virtue of the devotion to Mary. Teach men to say prayers to the Mother of our Lord, to idealize her as a virgin and mother, and you have rooted out of their lives disrespect and dishonor for other women.

The uplifting of woman could not have been accomplished by mere laws; it could not have been done by the commands of any ruler or any parliament. As civilization develops it becomes more and

more clear that principles are not established in that way. They come through impressions, through idealism, through gentle persuasion; and that is the way that the Church has lifted woman from a state of subjection and made her a queen in the Christian home.

From the devotion to Mary flow the greatest of supernatural blessings. God is pleased to reward those who honor Mary. He grants favors to us in answer to petitions presented to Him by and through her, a fact of which every Catholic is conscious. Such petitions are always rewarded by God's grace. Furthermore, to refer to tangible results, similar petitions are often rewarded by miracles. The shrine at Lourdes in southern France, for instance, of which you have all heard and which is typical of many others, is the scene each year of carefully tested and demonstrated miracles; all performed in answer to prayer to Mary.

In closing I quote a few lines from a poem of Longfellow. Though not a Catholic, he summed up one phase of the devotion to Mary most admirably:

“And even as children, who have much offended
A too indulgent father, in great shame,
Penitent, and yet not daring unattended
To go into his presence, at the gate
Speak with their sister, and confiding wait
Till she goes in before and intercedes;
So men, repenting of their evil deeds,
And yet not venturing rashly to draw near
With their requests an angry Father's ear
Offer to her their prayers and their confession.
And she for them in Heaven makes intercession.”

FAITH AND REASON

Address delivered on June 14, 1936

Does the Christian religion, I ask, require you to be unreasonable? In order to exercise your Christian faith is it necessary for you to lose your faculty of thinking? In other words, is there a conflict between faith and reason?

The answers to these questions cannot be fully developed or stated, of course, in a brief discourse such as this must be. Too many different subjects would have to be considered. If attention is limited to one phase of the relationship of faith and reason, a point of view may be indicated and a clear light thrown on the problem. To this limited subject, I invite your attention this afternoon.

The impression that Christianity is unreasonable has done incalculable harm. Being widespread throughout our society it has drawn millions of persons away from religion. Perhaps more than any other one factor, it is responsible for the notable lack of religion among college students, graduates, and teachers. And the reason is clear. Once a thinking person becomes convinced that the Christian religion is unreasonable he is sure to turn from it. God has given each of us an intellect. He expects us to think and reason and to form judgments. And unless a proposition appears reasonable; whether it be about religion or science or anything else, it cannot be accepted. If Christian doctrines, then, can not be presented in a reasonable way, if they can not be supported by logic and evidence, they are sure to be rejected by thinking persons.

It is very probable that some of you who are reading this article have lost your enthusiasm for the Christian religion, an enthusiasm which you once felt, as the result of being convinced that some of the doctrines of Christianity were unreasonable. If you are like so many others in our country, your experience in religion has been somewhat as follows. You were raised in a religious home by God-fearing parents. In youth you were taken to Sunday school and to church services; you were taught to pray and to take part in religious devotions; for many years you went to church faithfully. As you grew to maturity, however, you came in contact with critical and sceptical ideas. Teachers or books or both gave you the impression that your beliefs in religion were unreasonable and unscientific. Under such influences you gradually pushed your former beliefs from your life, assuring yourself as you did so that you were being emancipated from some sort of mental bondage. By now you have come to accept the fiction that religion, while good for children and for the masses of the unthinking crowd, can have no hold over the analytical and logical mind.

Since this is the process by which millions of the American people have slipped away from the practice of religion it is only reasonable that I should be interested in it. It is only reasonable that I should do what I can to oppose it, as well as every other process by which religion is undermined.

At this point it is evident that we are touching upon a peculiar misunderstanding. Christian scholars stand before the world and insist that the doctrines of Christianity are reasonable. And yet others protest against these same doctrines as un-

reasonable. What is the explanation? It is not that the minds of one group function differently from the minds of the other. Logic is the same with both; the principles of reason are the same. There must be something else. Evidently some false premise has been accepted by one group or the other, a premise which leads to a false conclusion.

I have given considerable thought to this problem. Over and over again I have wondered why it is that the same doctrines appear wholly reasonable to some of us and wholly unreasonable to others. And while for such a wide divergence of opinion no one factor is responsible, I think that I have discovered what is probably the most *important* factor. It is the confusion between what is natural and what is reasonable.

Let me illustrate. If a man comes to you and offers to sell you a machine which produces perpetual motion, you laugh at him. You say that such a machine is unreasonable. And why? Because it is contrary to nature; it is unnatural. If some one tells you that he saw water running up hill, you dismiss the report as absurd. Why? Because you know that it is contrary to nature. From your chemistry you know that water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen. If someone tells you that water can be made from hydrogen alone, you know that the claim is absurd. Again, it is contrary to nature and wholly unreasonable.

These are illustrations of good reasoning about nature. In the order of nature, what is natural is reasonable; what is unnatural is unreasonable. Now in our every day life, in business, in the school-room, in the home, in recreation, we deal constantly with

the forces of nature. And we have come to test every reported fact by the question: is it reasonable? But when we ask if it is reasonable, what we really mean to ask is if it is natural. In other words, we are guilty of using the words "natural" and "reasonable" as synonymous. And herein lies the mistake.

It is safe enough, obviously, to use them interchangeably when we limit ourselves to things in nature; but such is not true when we lift our thoughts to things above nature. And religion is above nature; it brings in the supernatural power of God. Concerning religion, therefore, to regard natural and reasonable as identical leads to error.

Let me illustrate. According to the powers of nature, a man once dead cannot be brought back to life again. And if someone reports such an event to you, you refuse to believe. You judge either that the man did not really die or that the reports of his being alive again are false. Why? Because you know that the resurrection of a dead man is contrary to nature. You say that it is impossible. And your conclusion is perfectly sound so long as you know that you are in the presence of natural forces only. It breaks down, however, if Almighty God should have decided to raise the dead man back to life again. And as to the possibility of His doing so, I need remind you merely that God is the creator of life in the first place; there should be no question, therefore, that He has the power to recreate or to restore life.

This illustration brings us to one of the doctrines of the Church which is often rejected. I refer, obviously, to the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. Without the slightest shadow of doubt His

resurrection was unnatural; it could not have been produced by the powers of nature. But it does not follow that it was unreasonable. Precisely to the contrary; there are excellent and commanding reasons for the resurrection. God wished to impress upon mankind that He could conquer death, for one thing. He wished to teach us not to fear death, for another. Moreover, He wished to prove that Christ was a true teacher and was to be accepted by all. In what better way could God accomplish these purposes than by raising Christ from the dead? You see what I mean, I am sure. The resurrection of Christ, though wholly unnatural, was perfectly reasonable.

This illustration, I believe, throws a significant light upon the problem which we are considering. Great masses of our people, because they regard natural and reasonable as synonymous, have come to reject as unreasonable every Christian doctrine that rises above nature. They close their minds to everything supernatural. And in so doing, please notice, they do the very thing which they themselves condemn, they act unreasonably.

It is for this reason that they reject the virgin birth of Christ. The virgin birth was unnatural, of course; but it does not follow that it was unreasonable. The fact is, when the purpose of God is understood, that the virgin birth of Christ was most reasonable. Nothing could be more so.

It was for a similar reason that the Star of Bethlehem was recently dismissed as a myth by a distinguished astronomer of one of our great universities. He satisfied himself that in the order of nature there could have been no such star. He reas-

oned that since such a star could not have been natural it was not possible. Do you not see that the man himself was reasoning incorrectly? If God wished to put a supernatural light in the sky to announce the birth of His Son, why could He not do so? Did He not create the earth and the stars and all the heavens? Once the purpose of God is understood, the special light known as the Star of Bethlehem becomes most reasonable.

It is for a similar reason that our neighbors all about us are more and more inclined to reject the inspiration of the Bible. They say that it is unreasonable that God should inspire men to write. They confuse unreasonable with unnatural. The inspiration of the Bible was unnatural, of course; it was above nature. It does not follow, however, that it was unreasonable. In fact, when the purpose of the Bible is understood, it appears most reasonable that God should have inspired certain men to write its pages.

It is for a similar reason that so many persons these days reject the divinity of Christ. It is wholly unreasonable, they say, that the Son of God should have come to earth and taken a human nature; unreasonable, that Christ was divine as well as human, God as well as man. But what do they mean by unreasonable? Examine their arguments and you will see that they mean merely "unnatural". The only thing that they prove in all of their arguments is that the union of the divine with a human nature goes beyond the powers of nature. And that is a conclusion that needs no proof. No one has ever questioned it. But when the critics conclude that the union of God and man in Christ is unreasonable they

go beyond their premises. And in consequence they are wholly wrong. What could be more reasonable than that God should wish to redeem the human race by the sufferings and death of His Son? What could be more reasonable than that He should wish to establish a religion and to select its officials? What could be more reasonable than that He should wish to teach men directly and most intimately the ways of salvation? And how could such purposes be attained more perfectly than by having His divine Son assume a human nature, live among men, teach them, and in the end die for them? As we examine the facts, we find that the divinity of Christ appears most reasonable.

It is for a similar reason that the infallibility of the Catholic Church is rejected. The accusation is that infallibility is unreasonable. All that is meant is that infallibility is unnatural. The latter is true, of course. Infallibility is not possible with mere human power. But it does not follow that infallibility is unreasonable. If God established a Church and commanded it to teach, if He guaranteed to all men that it would not teach error, and if He promised to be with it all days, it is most reasonable that by virtue of His supernatural power the Church is made infallible. As you can see at once, such a conclusion is logically inevitable.

Now it goes without saying that we should not accept every supernatural claim of every religion. To do so would be just as unreasonable as the mistake I have been discussing. For, as you know, the claims of the various religions conflict one with the other; and truth cannot be inconsistent. We have the right to challenge every religion and demand that

it present its proof. But that is a different story. All that I am asking is that we should not reject religious doctrines merely because they rise above nature. As a matter of fact, in religion we should expect truths that rise above nature; we should welcome them. And when they are proved, we should believe them. May I suggest, then, that you apply this distinction to your problems of religion? You may be surprised to find how many of them will be solved.

FINDING RELIGIOUS TRUTH

(Address delivered on June 21, 1936)

In these days of mental unrest and uncertainty, of change and disillusionment, it is only reasonable that men and women should look about for some solid philosophy of life to hold on to. And millions of them are doing so. They are looking for something that they do not now have, the lack of which they feel more and more keenly. Many of them, unfortunately however only a minority, are intently looking for the true religion. They wish to establish a contact between themselves and God; they wish to be a part of His kingdom on earth. Only by so doing, they are coming to see, will they learn the truths which He has revealed; only by so doing will they receive the supernatural help which they need. And so all about us there is a definite search for truth in religion.

In my discussion of this search, I wish to make some suggestions as to the method. Obviously, if a wrong method of inquiry is used the results are not likely to be satisfactory. If the correct method is used, however, the inquiry should lead to the desired goal. Generally speaking, there are two methods, two entirely different approaches. One is for the searcher for truth to find merely what pleases and appeals to him; to measure truth by his own opinions and judgment. The other is for him to find the source of truth, the divinely appointed teacher, and to accept its teachings.

As an illustration, I ask you to consider a parallel inquiry in a non-religious field. Suppose that some-

one should come to you, a stranger to our country and to our institutions; let him be the much imagined visitor from Mars. Suppose that he asks you to direct him to the highest and greatest court of law in the United States. Suppose that he informs you that he has been looking for that court and has been unable to find it. I ask you now to consider his difficulties and, also, the advice which you give. In these will be found, I believe, some helpful suggestions in the search which we are considering this afternoon, the search for truth in religion.

The stranger states his problem to you as follows: "It is the function of courts, my reason tells me, to administer justice. The more perfectly this is done the better is the court. It seems reasonable, therefore, that that court which is most perfectly just in all of its dealings is the highest court. It is the court which most certainly punishes the guilty and releases the innocent, which most certainly awards correct damages, and which most certainly enforces all contract obligations. But how can I find this court? Must I examine the records of all cases held in all courts?"

To this proposal you would reply: "My dear sir, you are undertaking an impossible task. You cannot possibly find out which is the most just court. There are courts in every city and in every county in this country; thousands in all. You cannot examine each case that comes and has come into each of these courts.

"Furthermore, how are you to know that the verdict in each particular case is just or unjust? How are you to know when a defendant is innocent or guilty? If you try to determine the justice of every

verdict, you must know all of the facts in all of the cases better than the juries do. You cannot possibly do so. Very probably you cannot get the facts in one single case as well as the jury does."

The stranger replies: "Well, then, I presume that I should examine the decisions of the judges. Judges are selected because of their knowledge of law. It is reasonable to presume, therefore, that the highest court in the land has the most scholarly judges. Their decisions, no doubt, are superior to all others. So I shall study the decisions of all of the judges in the country, and find those which reflect the greatest scholarship."

Again, you would protest: "There are two difficulties with that proposal. First of all, it is not necessarily true that the best judges are in the highest court. We may hope that they are; but we cannot be certain. It is easily possible that the most capable judges are in some of the lower courts.

"In the second place, how are you to know when you find the best statements of law? The teacher who corrects examination papers must know more than the pupils. So if you would sit in judgment upon all of the judges, you yourself must know more about the law than they do. And where did you get such knowledge?"

At the conclusion of such discussions you would finally say to the stranger: "You are approaching your inquiry from the wrong direction. You will never find the highest court by examining the courts themselves, by analyzing what they do and how they act. You must not start from yourself and trace the line up to the court. You must start from the

other direction. Start from above and trace the line down to the court.

“In the United States the people are the final authority, save only the authority of Almighty God. They have established their governments, a part of the machinery of which are the courts of justice. Among them are lower and higher courts, trial and appellate courts, state and federal courts.

“Now the way for you to find the highest court is to consult the intentions of the people of the country, as expressed in the various constitutions. You will find that the constitution of each state provides for a supreme court, which is above all other state courts. You will find, also, that the Constitution of the United States provides for a Supreme Court, which is above all other federal courts and above, also, the supreme courts of the states. This is the court for which you are looking.

“The Supreme Court of the United States was organized immediately after the adoption of the Federal Constitution, organized according to its provisions. As the original Justices died one by one, others were appointed to their places, so that it has been a continuous body. At no time since the beginning of our national existence have we been without Supreme Court Justices. The Court now sitting in Washington, therefore, by virtue of its appointment according to the Constitution, being the legal successor of the original Court, is the Supreme Court of this country.

“The Justices of this Court write the final legal opinions for the whole country, not because they may be the best students of law, but precisely because they are legally appointed to do that very

thing. Their decisions are to be respected, not because you may like them, but because they are law whether you like them or not. In a word, this is the highest Court because it has been made so by the American people."

Now, ladies and gentlemen, if in place of the Supreme Court of the United States is substituted the true religion established by God, you will understand the application that I make. The parallel between the Court and religion is not perfect, of course; but is close enough to permit the same type of reasoning. Suppose, then, that the stranger asks you to direct him to the true religion. He explains that he believes in God; and that he believes that God has placed some religion in the world for man's guidance. He adds, however, that he has been unable to find it.

"I took for granted at first," he continues, "that the true religion would be the one that impressed me most favorably. It would have the finest people for its members; it would have the most scholarly ministers and the most interesting services. It would be the religion that is most charitable and that does the most good. It would be the religion whose doctrines are the most reasonable.

"In looking for that religion, however, I have made no progress. As to membership, I find good and bad members in every religion. As to interesting services, I find that I like one feature of one religion and a different feature of another. And as to charity and general good, I cannot make any estimate.

"And when I consider doctrines, I become even more confused. I find that the spokesmen of a par-

ticular religion have plausible arguments for their doctrines, and that the spokesmen of other religions have plausible arguments for entirely different doctrines. I don't know which to believe.

"Another thing that disturbs me is that my neighbors do not agree with me. What some of them like in a religion, I dislike; and vice versa. So if they, following my example, look for the religion that they like, there would have to be many different religions. And I cannot believe that God has established more than one religion."

Very probably you would advise the stranger as follows: "Your method of approach is at fault. You have set up your own likes and dislikes as the criterion of religion. You are trying to measure religion by your tastes. And very possibly your tastes are wrong. You may like the preaching in a particular church, for instance; but that fact does not prove that the preacher is telling you the truth.

"Furthermore, how can you weigh theological doctrines? When you set yourself up as a judge you must know from some unique source of information which doctrines are true and which are false. You have no such source of information. God has not spoken to you in some special manner. He has not appointed you to sit in judgment over the doctrines of the various religions of the world.

"The fundamental difficulty is that you have started your inquiry from the wrong place. You are trying to trace a line from yourself up to the true religion. You must reverse your procedure. Go directly to God. Start with Him and find the religion which He established. From that the line down to yourself is evident.

“In the case of the Supreme Court you had to look above, to the authority which created it. So in the case of religion; you must look above, to the source of authority, to God Himself. Even here you will find conflicting claims, of course; you will find each of the different religions pointing to God as its author. And you will examine the evidence presented by each. Eventually, however, you will center your attention upon Christianity, because of the unique and solid evidence by which its divine origin is proved. You will learn that God Himself, Christ, our Lord, came on earth, that He took a human nature, and that He personally and directly founded Christianity. You will learn that He formed the Christian organization, selecting its officials, that He explained to them the constitution which they were to follow, and that He then sent them forth to convert the whole world. You will learn that He gave to the officials of the Christian organization all authority in matters of religion.

“As you inquire further, you will learn that Christ commanded the officials of His Church to do three things: to teach, govern, and sanctify, and that they should do so in all later ages. To that end, as you will learn, Christ commanded the first officials to choose successors, who in turn would choose other successors, and so on without break in continuity until the end of time. The religion which you seek, therefore, must be that one which nineteen centuries ago Christ placed in the world. It must be the one which has perpetuated and continued the original organization.

“Such a Church today has the very authority which Christ gave it in the beginning; authority,

therefore, to teach you and me, to govern us in religion, and to sanctify us. It may very readily be that we dislike some of its officials; we may not understand some of its doctrines. It may be that we should like to change it in certain respects. But it is clear that our opinions, and our likes and dislikes, have nothing to do with the authority of the Church. Precisely as our disapproval of the decisions of the United States Supreme Court cannot make it a lower court, so our disapproval of the Church cannot unmake it the Church. The divine character of the Church cannot be changed merely because men do not accept it. Neither can the doctrines be changed to please every passing opinion of every man. The Church cannot adjust herself to us. It is for us to adjust ourselves to the Church."

The end of our inquiry, then, is this. We find truth in the religion which God has established. We accept its authority. We follow its directions; we believe what it teaches. In its presence, we are humble. We have faith; faith in God, faith in Christ, and faith in His holy religion. And remember, my friends, it is by faith that we save our immortal souls.

THE CHURCH—AN UNERRING GUIDE

(Address delivered on June 28, 1936)

If the Church may be referred to as an unerring guide in matters of religion, as the title just announced indicates, it is only because she is able to teach truth with finality and certainty. If for a moment she leads mankind in the wrong direction, if in her doctrines there is a suggestion of error, she is not the safe and dependable guide which we all need. For in matters of religion, more so than in anything else, we need and must have certainty. The salvation of our immortal souls is at stake.

When we approach the spokesmen of religion, therefore, and ask what we should do to be saved, we cannot be put off with any doubtful advice, such as this: "You should follow the program of my religion because it is *probably* the best." When we ask what we are to believe, we are not satisfied to hear: "You should believe the doctrines of my church because I *think* that they are true." Nothing of the kind will do. We must have truth, taught with infallible certainty.

Such a conclusion will impress you as most reasonable, I am sure. And yet, as you no doubt know, whenever the subject of infallibility in religion is mentioned many persons begin to protest. They seem to be afraid of it. They insist that infallibility is not reasonable, that it is contrary to human experience and even impossible. You have heard such protests, I am sure. Perhaps some of you have been disturbed by them.

It is contended that in the life of each individual,

as well as in the history of the human race, mistakes are bound to occur. It is pointed out, for instance, that the scientists of today discover many shortcomings in the scientific opinions of a few years ago. And it is expected, as a matter of course, that some of the mistakes of today will be discovered by the scientists of a few years hence. It is claimed that for intellectual progress the existence of mistakes must be presumed. The Church's claim of infallibility, therefore, is declared to be unreasonable.

This argument, which is so frequently heard and which has done so much harm, is based on two misconceptions. It presumes, first of all, that infallibility is something quite unusual and extraordinary, whereas, precisely the contrary is true. It presumes, secondly, that the acceptance of truth infallibly taught discourages further thinking; whereas, again, the contrary is true.

When you stop to think about it, you will note that we all accept many truths as infallible. Is it not infallibly true that I am speaking and that you are listening at this moment? Is it not infallibly true that we lived yesterday? Do we not accept as infallibly true that the world war was begun in 1914? Do we not accept as infallibly true that Washington was our first president? There is no need to multiply illustrations; you see what I mean, I am sure.

Furthermore, to consider the second false assumption, the acceptance of such truths, far from being a hindrance, is a necessary aid to progress in thinking. Suppose for a moment that we raise doubts about having lived yesterday; suppose that we act as if we had not lived. Try the experiment,

if you wish; and see the hopeless confusion that results. Suppose that we deny the reality of the world war, as another instance. Think of all the facts which would have to be ruled out of our lives. On the other hand, if we act as reasonable persons, if we accept the fact of the war as infallibly true, we may then proceed to acquire further information. We may study the causes of the war, its effects, and its relation to other facts. That is the only way to advance in knowledge; from one truth to another.

Why should it be different with religion? Perhaps some one suggests that the doctrines of religion are quite different from ordinary facts, from the facts of history, for instance. Let us see about that. What about the life and death of Christ? They are historical facts. And what about His selecting His Apostles and founding the Church? Historical facts, also. What about the Virgin birth of our Lord, His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and the coming of the Holy Ghost? These, also, are historical facts. To be sure, they are supernatural, but they are none the less historical. And why should they not be declared to be infallibly true?

There are other doctrines of the Church, of course, which are more than merely historical; the existence of God, for instance, the immorality of the soul, and the existence of a future life of reward and punishment. These are fundamental facts of life and eternity, revealed by God and known to every reasonable person. And why should they not be taught as certainly and infallibly true? There are still other truths, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Eucharist, which are doctrines of

Christian revelation. And they, too, are taught with the guaranty of infallibility. But does it seem unreasonable that the Church is conscious of what God has revealed to her? A truth of revelation is a matter of fact. Why can it not be declared to be certainly true?

And so far as intellectual progress is concerned, the history of Christianity is a clear vindication. The definitions of doctrine which have followed each other through the course of nineteen centuries have contributed to the world's storehouse of truth, just as have the discoveries of science. They differ from the latter in that the discoveries of science have usually corrected errors previously held. With the definitions of doctrine, there has been no correction of errors; there have been none to correct. Each definition has merely stated clearly and explicitly what previously had been taught obscurely or implicitly. Being defined, however, with its truth infallibly guaranteed, it has served to lead the Church and the world to new fields of thought. Other truths have been found to rest upon it and be related to it. Every definition of doctrine for nineteen centuries has thus been a stimulation to intellectual activity, precisely as we should expect.

It is objected, however, that in defining doctrines of religion no one can be infallible. Applied directly to the Church, for it is the Church alone that we are concerned with, this objection may be and is often stated as follows: All human beings are liable to error: the Church is composed of human beings; therefore, the Church is liable to error.

At first thought the argument sounds convincing. It is true, naturally speaking, that all human beings

are liable to error; it is true that the Church is composed of human beings. The conclusion that the Church is liable to error, therefore, would seem to follow. And yet it does not follow. The fallacy is that the supernatural help of God is ignored. Human beings are liable to error if they depend solely on human and natural power, if the help of God is left out. But in religion the help of God must not be left out; it cannot be. Obviously, then, it is not true to say that all human beings are liable to error; some of them may be protected against error by the supernatural help of God. And with such persons, God would prevent human weakness from expressing itself in what He wished them to teach.

Concerning the power of God to protect men against error there really should be no doubt. Is not God greater than His human creatures? Can He not lead them, can He not instruct them, can He not check them? When God inspired certain chosen men to write the books of the holy Bible, He protected them against teaching false doctrines. Why, then, can He not protect certain other men of today against teaching false doctrines? I do not mean that the present day protection against error is the same thing as inspiration. I mean that for God it is no more difficult; I mean that if the one was possible so is the other.

Granting, then, that infallibility is reasonable and possible, it remains to be explained that, as a matter of fact, the Church is infallible. To point the way, I remind you that our divine Lord was infallible. The Gospel as He taught it must have been infallibly true; a fact which is recognized by all who believe in Him. Furthermore, the Gospel as taught

by His Apostles must have been infallibly true; a fact which is recognized by all who believe in the writings of the New Testament. But when the same infallibility is claimed for the Gospel as preached a century later, or nineteen centuries later, doubts are raised. But should there be doubts? Does not the latter infallibility follow from the former?

These questions take us to the intentions of Christ. From the very nature of His mission on earth, it is evident that He was just as much interested in His followers of the twentieth century as in those of the first century; that he expected to save men of all later centuries by identically the same truths by which He saved men in the first century. It would seem, therefore, that He must have made some provision that His Gospel would be taught infallibly throughout all ages, just as it was in the beginning.

And so it was that our Lord, in choosing His Apostles, commanded them to choose successors, who in turn would choose other successors, who generation after generation would be His official agents to teach the Gospel. He said to them: "Going, therefore, teach all nations;. . . Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

Christ knew the weakness of the human mind; He knew that without His help even His appointed spokesmen would fall into error. Furthermore, He knew that the world would not accept their teachings unless He guaranteed them to be true. It was for this reason that He announced publicly that He

would be with His teachers all days, even to the end.

On another occasion, to the same Apostles, He made this promise: "And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever. The Spirit of Truth, . . . He shall abide with you, and shall be in you." "He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." Here is a definite promise that the Spirit of Truth would be with the teachers of the Gospel at all times, in order to instruct them so that they in turn would be able to teach the world. If this is true are they not infallible?

On one other occasion, speaking to the chief of the Apostles, Christ said: "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." We are not concerned here with the meaning of the phrase, "upon this rock." We are concerned with Christ's guaranty that the gates of hell should not prevail against His Church. The statement implies that the forces of evil would constantly attack the Church and would try to lead it into error. Our Lord had in mind all of the difficulties to come throughout the many centuries of Christianity, the schisms, the heresies, the religious inventions of men, and every other agency of destruction. And He announced publicly and clearly that none of these things would prevail against His Church.

In defending her claim of infallibility, therefore, the Catholic Church stands on the clear promises of Christ. Believing that He is the divine Lord, believing that by His very nature He would infallibly

keep His promises, the Church is sure that He has protected her against teaching error. She presents her doctrines to the world as infallibly true, therefore, and trusts that through the compelling force of logic, aided by the grace of God, all men in the course of time will come to accept them.

It is clear to you, I hope, that the infallibility of the Catholic Church does not mean that the popes and bishops are perfect, or sinless. They are human beings and, therefore, are imperfect, which fact no one would be more quick to recognize than they themselves. The infallibility of the Church does not mean that the popes and bishops are infallible in their judgment on business, politics, science, or other non-religious subjects. On such subjects their judgment depends on their training and intellectual ability, as does the judgment of other men; and the same is true of their private opinions about doctrines. Infallibility does not mean that the authorities of the Church receive new revelation from God. There has been no public revelation since the time of the Apostles.

Infallibility means that the Catholic Church does not and cannot err when it teaches a doctrine of faith or morals. It means that when the pope and bishops, speaking officially as the teachers appointed by God, announce a doctrine of faith or morals, such an announcement is free from error; that it is certainly and unquestionably true; that from it are excluded all the effects of human frailty, thanks to the supernatural power of God. It is guaranteed to be true by God Himself. And it is offered to us for our salvation. As prudent and reasonable persons we should accept it.

VICAR OF CHRIST

(Address delivered on July 5, 1936)

One of the greatest advantages of the Catholic Church is its unity. While it is world-wide in extent, with officials and members in every country, it is held together around one center. This center is Rome; the head of the Church is the Pope.

That he is today, as was his predecessor in the beginning, the acknowledged head of the universal Church, calls for a supernatural explanation. It is more than natural. In fact, it seems to be contrary to nature. We know quite well how strong are the inclinations of human nature to defy central authority. Every empire set up by man has had to reckon with the centrifugal force by which its provinces have tended to break away; and every human empire in the course of time has had to yield to such pressure, and has had to concede to its provinces more and more local government, and this in spite of military power by which it might resist. The urge to break away from the center of things seems to be inevitable.

True in the realm of politics, it is true in the realm of religion, also. Assume for a moment that certain men, endowed with extraordinary qualities of leadership, were able to set up a religion for the whole world; assume that they were successful in converting all mankind to it; assume, further, that at first they were able to persuade all men to acknowledge the authority of one ruler. Even so, they would not be able for long to keep the organization together under this one head. The demand for local

control would quickly create problems. First one episode and then another would arise to make the people of the various provinces impatient with central control. One by one the sections would break away and set up their own governments.

With divisions in the organization, there would soon be differences in belief. No matter how perfectly unified might be the beliefs in the beginning, differences would surely follow the break from the central government. For unity in belief depends, in part at least, upon unity in organization. It depends upon the adherence of all people to a central authority competent to declare what is and what is not the meaning of the faith.

As I said, with such a human organization, no matter how perfectly formed it might be, disintegration into local and national groups would be inevitable. The formation of independent and separate divisions would come in the natural course of events. Yet this has not been the history of the Catholic Church; and here is a fact which is most significant.

To be sure, the Church has not been free from the pressure for separation. Over and over again local groups, for one reason or another, have sought to break from Rome and to establish their own religious sovereignty. And, as we know quite well, in a number of cases they have succeeded at least in setting up independent organizations, which in turn have promptly broken up into smaller groups. As a further result, confirming our reasoning of a moment ago, the groups once separated from Rome have developed a great variety of religious doctrines. But that is another story. What I wish to point out is that in spite of such defections, in spite of all

attempts to break up the Church into local and national parts, she has retained her unity. She remains today, as she was at the beginning, universal, extra-national, and unified. One in organization, her people are one in religious beliefs.

Such unity is to be discussed only in the language of religion. It is to be explained by reference to the intentions and to the help of God. It is pertinent for us to ask, then, about the plan of Christ, the author of Christianity. Did He provide for unity, unity of government and unity of belief? If so, what means did He choose? Thees and similar questions point out the path of inquiry.

Before answering let me ask what appears to be reasonable. What do you think Christ would have done? It seems only reasonable that He must have identified His religion with an organization. Otherwise, it could not have lived for even a few years. No cause carries over from one generation to the next without organization. And would not our Lord have appointed a head, or a president, for His Church? How could it have functioned without a head? How well would a headless government function, or a headless school system, or a headless business organization? Is it not reasonable to think, then, that Christ appointed some one official as the head of His Church?

Such reasoning brings us to the facts, that is to say, the facts of history. And we note at once that in all of the New Testament accounts of Christ's dealings with His followers one man comes first, St. Peter. There is no rival. In naming the Apostles, St. Matthew writes very explicitly: "The first, Simon who was called Peter;" after which he names

the others. The use of the word "first" is significant. It does not indicate a mere numerical order for, if so, St. Matthew would have continued with the other Apostles as second, third, fourth, etc. But there was no second, and no third. There was a first Apostle; there were the other eleven.

There are many incidents wherein St. Peter is shown to be first among the Apostles. It was from his ship that Christ preached to the crowd, standing near the shore. It was to St. Peter, the fisherman, that Christ said: "Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men." It was to St. Peter of all the Apostles that Christ first appeared after His resurrection. It was for St. Peter that Christ especially prayed; and it was St. Peter that Christ commanded to confirm the others: "But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: And thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren." Whenever anyone spoke for the Apostles and in their name it was always St. Peter. It was St. Peter who said to Christ: "Behold we have left all things, and have followed thee; what therefore shall we have?" When Christ asked the twelve if they would leave Him because of the doctrine of the Eucharist, it was St. Peter who answered for the group: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Explicit proof of the primacy of St. Peter is found in four statements. The first was after Christ had inquired of the Apostles whom men thought that He was. To their answer, He asked a second question: "But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering, said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; be-

cause flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

It may be asked to what Christ referred by the word "rock". It would seem that He referred to St. Peter. The word "Peter" means rock; it is merely the English spelling of the Latin word "rock". What Christ said to Peter was this: "You are a rock;" and then in the hearing of the other Apostles He added: "upon this rock I will build my church."

The second statement follows immediately in the discourse of Christ: "And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." The key is the symbol of authority; it has always been so. It was used in this way by the Jewish writers of the Old Testament. For God to give the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" to a man meant to give him supreme authority. And it was precisely such authority that Christ gave to St. Peter; he was to rule the kingdom of God on earth.

The third statement, a part of the same discourse, is this: "And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed in heaven." The phrase "to bind and to loose" was a Jewish expression, one which Christ's hearers readily understood. For an official "to bind" meant to declare that something was forbidden by law; for an official "to loose" meant to declare that something was permitted by law. The power, "to bind and to loose", when applied to Christ's kingdom on earth, meant the authority to make laws for the

Christian people and to interpret and apply these laws. This power, Christ explicitly gave to St. Peter.

The fourth statement was made on the occasion of our Lord's third appearance to the Apostles after His resurrection. He singled out St. Peter for the following conversation: "Simon son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him: Feed my lambs. He saith to him again: Simon son of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him; Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him: Feed my lambs. He saith to him the third time; Simon son of John, lovest thou me? . . . And he said to him: Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. He said to him: Feed my sheep."

It is unnecessary to point out to anyone who has read the New Testament how often Christ used the figure of the shepherd and the sheep. He referred to Himself as a shepherd, to His followers as sheep, and to the kingdom of God as a sheepfold. You thus readily understand what Christ meant in his three-fold command to St. Peter: "Feed my lambs;" "Feed my lambs;" "Feed my sheep." He entrusted to St. Peter the care of His entire flock, all of His followers, all Christians. St. Peter's authority thus was not limited to a particular group or a particular place. It was universal.

Further evidence of the primacy of St. Peter is furnished by the life of the early Church, by the testimony of the Apostles. They knew what Christ had said. And they recognized St. Peter as their head. Throughout the early years of Christianity

and during the lifetime of the Apostles, the supreme authority of St. Peter is attested in numerous events. I do not discuss them, for they need no discussion. I merely mention them. It was St. Peter, for instance, who presided at the meetings of the Apostles. It was he who announced that they should appoint a successor to Judas. It was he who preached the first sermon, on the great day of Pentecost. St. Peter performed the first miracle. St. Peter was miraculously delivered from prison. St. Peter went before the civil magistrates to speak for and defend the Christians who were arrested. St. Peter was selected by Almighty God, in a special and miraculous manner, to receive into the Church the first Gentile. At the first general Council of Christendom, the Council of Jerusalem, St. Peter delivered the important verdict. Such are the facts.

St. Peter went to Rome and there established his See. He was succeeded in office, following his martyrdom under Emperor Nero, by St. Linus, who thus became the second Bishop of Rome. To the latter was handed down the authority which had been possessed by St. Peter, the authority placed in the office by Christ Himself.

It is this latter fact that is to be noted in particular. Certain rights and powers pertain to the office; and the man who is placed in the office, the present Pope being the latest, acquires these rights and powers. He is the head of the universal Church.

Bishops throughout the world are appointed by him; the heads of religious orders are responsible to him. And under them are the pastors and priests, who come into close contact with the people.

The Pope is an extra-national figure. As the

ruler of the diminutive State of the Vatican City he is the subject of no civil government. He is a foreigner to no one. He belongs as much to the people of this country as to the people of any European country.

The Pope is thus the spokesman for Catholic people throughout the world. Whenever and wherever Catholics are persecuted for the faith, the Pope comes to their defense. His advice is not always followed unfortunately; we know only too well that civil rulers who undertake to crush the Church only snap back their defiance when the Pope protests. Nevertheless, as they learn in time, he does exert an influence. The Catholic people are encouraged when the Pope speaks. They appreciate that there is some one outside of their country, some one not subject to their rulers, who is fighting for them. Their patience under injustice is thus strengthened and they are more steadfast.

More than that, the Pope is called upon, by virtue of his unique position, to be the spokesman for all people who are everywhere interested in the cause of righteousness. Not only for members of the Catholic Church, but for all mankind, he speaks; not only purely Catholic interests, but the fundamental principles of morality which underlie all human relationships, he defends. He leads in the never-ending fight against sin. In whatever form it comes, new or disguised as it may be, he exposes it and declares it to be sin. At one time the besetting sin of society may be slavery; at another it may be intemperance; or it may be economic injustice, or divorce, or birth control, or communism. Whatever it is, the Pope condemns it and invites all men every-

where to join with him in the crusade against it. His leadership is thus a blessing to the world. And it comes, as do all blessings, as a gift from our divine Lord.

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CARDINAL HAYES STATES AIMS OF THE CATHOLIC HOUR

(Extract from his address at the inaugural program in the studio of the National Broadcasting Company, New York City, March 2, 1930.)

Our congratulations and our gratitude are extended to the National Council of Catholic Men and its officials, and to all who, by their financial support, have made it possible to use this offer of the National Broadcasting Company. The heavy expense of managing and financing a weekly program, its musical numbers, its speakers, the subsequent answering of inquiries, must be met. . . .

This radio hour is for all the people of the United States. To our fellow-citizens, in this word of dedication, we wish to express a cordial greeting and, indeed, congratulations. For this radio hour is one of service to America, which certainly will listen in interestedly, and even sympathetically, I am sure, to the voice of the ancient Church with its historic background of all the centuries of the Christian era, and with its own notable contribution to the discovery, exploration, foundation and growth of our glorious country. . . .

Thus to voice before a vast public the Catholic Church is no light task. Our prayers will be with those who have that task in hand. We feel certain that it will have both the good will and the good wishes of the great majority of our countrymen. Surely, there is no true lover of our Country who does not eagerly hope for a less worldly, a less material, and a more spiritual standard among our people.

With good will, with kindness and with Christ-like sympathy for all, this work is inaugurated. So may it continue. So may it be fulfilled. This word of dedication voices, therefore, the hope that this radio hour may serve to make known, to explain with the charity of Christ, our faith, which we love even as we love Christ Himself. May it serve to make better understood that faith as it really is—a light revealing the pathway to heaven: a strength, and a power divine through Christ: pardoning our sins, elevating, consecrating our common every-day duties and joys, bringing not only justice but gladness and peace to our searching and questioning hearts.

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