

863664

Treacy, Gerald C.
-What is the Church?
ADX 5615

What Is The Church?



By

GERALD C. TREACY, S.J.

Fourth Printing (Revised)

(Formerly: "The School of Christ")

THE AMERICA PRESS

New York, N. Y.

1937

This is the Age of Quick Action

UNLESS a man is ready at the critical moment he does not count. Are you able to hold your own as a Catholic on the great issues and current controversies of the times?

CATHOLIC MIND

A periodical published on the eighth and twenty-second of the month. Each number contains several papers of permanent value, on questions of the day, written in a popular style. These articles are taken from the best sources. This bright little fortnightly contains:

- Best statements of Catholic doctrine.
- Surest results of historical research.
- Latest word on subjects in dispute.
- Important addresses at Catholic Congresses.
- Papal Encyclicals.
- Pastoral letters of more than local interest.
- Occasional sermons of special merit.
- Reading lists for Catholics, etc.

Subscription: U. S. A., \$1.00; Foreign, \$1.25
Single Copies, 5 cents each

THE AMERICA PRESS

461 Eighth Avenue

New York, N. Y.

Imprimi Potest:

Nihil Obstat:

Imprimatur:

April, 1926.

LAWRENCE J. KELLY, S.J.
Provincial Maryland-New York.

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.,
Censor Librorum.

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL HAYES,
Archbishop of New York.

I. What Is the Church?

THE Church of Christ is set in the world of men to teach all truth and to lead men to salvation. It does not deal so much with theories as with facts. Every school handles a great many theories for it is dealing with science, philosophy, literature, art, and all these subjects admit of theories. The Church deals with Divine Truth. It is sure of its subject for God has made it sure. It is positive in its statements for Christ its Founder never wavered in His statements. Its doctrine is the same today as it was when it began. Theories change, facts remain. The Church of God and Divine Truth are facts.

The strange thing is that, though in every branch of knowledge we are willing to admit that we need a teacher, in the knowledge of Divine Truth, people think they can learn enough without a teacher. Some say that they only have to turn to the Bible to find out anything they want. But the Great Teacher never said that. No. There was no book in the year 33 on the first Ascension Thursday. But what the Great Teacher said was: "Go and teach men everything that I have taught you." And they went. The story of their going is a long one; for it is the story of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church then is God's own Church, set down in the midst of the earth. Its charter is from Heaven; its seal the Blood of the Lamb. Over its gates there hangs a sign, "World-University." That is what Catholic means. Its Founder is the only one of all the great educators who plainly stated that there was no phase of truth that was not thoroughly treated and explained by Him. Some since His day claimed that they could teach one branch of truth from A to Z. But no educator that I know of has ever been rash enough to say: "Come to Me; I am the Truth." No one will ever say it again. But He could not say anything different, for He is God. Many subjects others have tried to teach fall under the scope of His teaching. For instance, the people of the twentieth century have been much interested in the subject of peace. It is a rather important topic, too, for the nation as well as for the individual. A well-intentioned man (but remember he was only a man) realized this strongly one day, and having a great deal of gold, he changed a few carloads of glittering coin into a marble palace and called it the Temple of Peace. The representatives of the nations met there, and made speeches and signed agreements and gave out prizes. "The science of Peace is taught," they said, "and War has

gone a-begging." The nations went to the Hague school to learn peace and, when the test came, the nations failed; their failure is written in blood. What was the matter? Simply this. The great Peace-Teacher was not there. There was no room for Him.

So it really seems that we've got to go to Him if we want to learn peace or in fact any subject. For what He teaches embraces every other branch of knowledge, correcting and coordinating all the arts and sciences. We can't stretch out our hands and put knowledge of any kind into our minds but we need a teacher. If that is true of any truth, how much more true is it of All Truth?

So Christ founded a teaching body, a living course of instruction, which He calls His Church, and there we must go to learn. Did you ever hear of people getting knowledge without some kind of instruction? The Church teaches all without distinction of race or color, social standing or mental equipment. It is international in the true sense of the word, and democratic, too, in a very literal way, for it is for the people and all the people. An important entrance requirement is good will. Smart men and women sometimes cannot qualify at all. For they generally know so much about so many things that they know little about anything. They are usually stumped by the first question: "Can you become a little child?" And in the history of this Church, those who have ranked highest in human knowledge always were aware of their ignorance. They knew so much that they were athirst for Divine Truth.

"God has given us apostles, prophets, evangelists, doctors in order that we may not be as children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine by the malice and cunning of men who sow error around us." That was the way St. Paul made clear to the Ephesians the need they had of a Divine Teacher. And long before St. Paul, Plato after casting about a whole lifetime in search of truth, threw up his hands one day in despair and uttered one of his best truths: "It is necessary for a master to descend from heaven to instruct humanity."

II. How the Church Began

The Church began in this way. Christ one day asked this question: "Whom do men say that I am?" The Twelve began to look at each other, and then Simon looked away, as a fisherman looks out toward the sea if you ask him a big question, and

turning his gaze back again toward the Questioner, he said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." That was a good speech, and well rewarded. "You have given a perfect answer, Simon," he was told by Eternal Truth, "and in reward I will change your name." Jewish teachers did that when a pupil had given an exceptionally good recitation. "You are Peter the Rock, and upon this Rock I will build My Church, and against it the gates of hell shall never prevail." That was the beginning.

It has been called "the great confession and the great promise." It is really much more. We might call it Peter's perfect tribute, and the seal of Heaven on a good act of Faith. It is not hard, however, to realize that a test-question was put to the Twelve; one gave the right answer. He was singled out and blessed as the foundation-stone of the Church. It was to be built on solid rock. Christ centered everything around the son of Jonas, but not until after He had changed his name to Peter, the Rock. Once He had determined upon the foundation He made it clear what was to stand thereon: "I will build My Church." That was it. one solid rock foundation for one building. My Church, not My churches or any church.

There was good reason for a rock foundation, too, as the Church was to withstand solidly any attack however violent; even the battle-hosts of hell which were strong enough to shake the skies were not to prevail against the structure in which Peter was the rock-bracing element.

Why Simon's name was changed was made clear at the Last Supper in the Cenacle. The Founder showed that the change of name meant an office and a trust in the Church built on rock: "Simon, Simon behold Satan has longed to have you for his own, to sift you as wheat is sifted by the thresher. But I have prayed for you that your Faith fail not, and being once strengthened, may you make the others strong." That same night the Founder was condemned by the chief teachers of the Synagogue, and the next day was handed over to a Roman governor who put Him to death. It looked as if His plan was a failure, for when the first storm burst the Rock was badly shaken, and the Builder was laid away in a tomb. The first Catholics, too, were very much afraid and hid behind bolted doors.

They had forgotten a great many things that they had learned, but they did remember one thing, to stay together. Whether huddled in fear in the room of the Last Supper, or in an open

boat at sea, they stayed together. No one seemed to think he could do much by himself, even at fishing they followed the policy of united action. And one early dawn when they were together after a luckless night they were called ashore by a familiar Voice that bade them come and dine. Peter was spoken to and singled out again. Some months before he had made his act of Faith, now he was to seal it with an act of Love. His answer to his Saviour's: "Do you love Me?" was a simple statement: "You know that I do." And in replying our Lord gave the complete meaning to Peter's name and office. For he was told: "Shepherd My flock." Not part of the flock but all, the lambs and the sheep. A very plain commission in three words. One of the Twelve was made a shepherd, to rule and guide, to bring back the wandering; to restrain the unwary, to urge on the timid; the same who was the foundation-stone, for whom Christ prayed a special prayer that strength might be his to strengthen others. What the foundation-stone stands for in the towering building, the shepherd is to the flock, a steadying, controlling force. Indeed, the shepherd notion puts Peter's position very clearly, it is the complement, the development of the stone notion. If the first rock-title held a promise (and He said it did "I will build") the shepherd-office is its fulfilment.

So when I look around me today, some centuries later, I should be able to see a Church if it claims to be of Christ whose foundation-stone is Peter the Shepherd.

The Stone and the Shepherd, that is the twofold sign of God's Revelation. Where that sign is there is the Church Christ founded. There are many churches but only one that shows the sign of the stone and the Shepherd. It is in Rome, and Rome is everywhere for Rome is Catholic. And wherever Rome is there is Peter, "and where Peter is there is The Church."

Ancient Rome was not big enough for Peter. It was big enough for Cæsar who was ruling a world empire but not for Peter who was to rule the empire of God. So the empire-city disagreed with Peter and argued with him; the argument ended with iron nails and two cross beams. "That is the end," was Rome's verdict. But it was not the end. It was only the beginning. The end will be when earth meets sky at the great trumpet call, in one kingdom, one truth, one great fact eternal. Even then there will be one Rock and one Shepherd.

The Church makes much of Peter. She teaches her chil-

dren to honor him, and she follows a safe Guide in so doing. Because they honor him as the Stone and the Shepherd they are "no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner Stone."

III. The Church Without Mistakes

THE Church of Christ makes no mistakes. It is human to make mistakes. But the Church is Divine. Divine in its origin, its mission, its methods, its Founder. True enough it has its human side, for its members are men and women, but its Supreme Teacher is God. Now God could have made His dwelling upon earth permanent and visible. As He was in Nazareth centuries ago so could He be in Rome today. And when pilgrims journey to the Holy City they would say: "We are going to see Christ." And not as they say now: "We are going to see the Vicar of Christ." To make Himself visible to men God became Man. In Nazareth and Galilee it was not only a Voice that spoke but it was a Man. And when He spoke He did not say: "Perhaps you might follow Me, and you would be consoled." But He said: "Come unto Me, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. . . . Unless you believe you shall not have life." In a word He spoke with authority and His inspired biographer remarks that the people warmed to Him for that very reason. There was no "perhaps" to His teaching. It was direct, positive, authoritative. No faltering in His tone, no compromising in His style of address and so the "people heard Him gladly" for authority rang through every word He uttered.

Is it surprising then that the Church which He founded to continue His mission, should speak as He spoke, and not merely air opinions, Scribelike? Strong in the strength of her commission, she goes before the world today, as she has gone before it since Peter's day, and proclaims in no uncertain terms her right to a hearing:

"I speak with the lips of Eternal Truth and when I propose for the belief of men a God-given doctrine my words are infallibly true. I have no new religious theory wherewith to tickle the ears of a modern world, crying as the modern Athenian cried in the ears of Paul for 'something new.' But I bear with me the charter

of revelation that John sealed at Patmos, and to that body of revealed truths I call for your whole-hearted allegiance. I can neither increase nor diminish those saving dogmas. Nor can you reject one and accept another. It is all truth, for all men, not some truths for the chosen few."

We call the dogmas of salvation the Deposit of Faith, and we know that as the Son of Man came to teach not human wisdom but Divine Truth, and as the Church is His living Voice speaking to the centuries that have not seen Him in human form, that Church can make no mistake in what she teaches regarding Christ's revelation, nor can she blunder in telling men what she believes to be contained in that revelation. Grasping the full import of this truth which is conveyed to my mind by the single word "infallibility," the only task that is mine is to find out what the Church believes and teaches. When I do, Divine Truth is within my hand, and I cling to it on God's authority. Difficulties may come surging through my troubled mind, but they can in no wise weaken my loyal assent, for it is rock-riveted on God's un-failing Word. I know to whom I go, as Peter did in other days, and my reason is Peter's reason. The Church, God's living Voice, holds the words of Eternal Life. When that Voice spoke from human lips in Judea and Galilee what room was there for doubt that the message delivered was eternally true? Nineteen centuries later when that Voice speaks from the Fisherman's Throne, under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, whose coming was to be signaled by the teaching of "all truth," have I reasonable cause for doubt? The span of twenty centuries does not shake the bed-rock support of Catholic belief, which is grounded strong and firm on the infallible Word of Eternal Truth.

Now when we apply the word "infallible" to the Church that is Christ's living Voice we simply mean that she never makes a mistake, nor can she make a mistake in teaching and believing what is contained in her sacred Deposit. She cannot draw therefrom a counterfeit and expect it to pass currency among the children of the Kingdom. What the Church teaches, we Catholics must believe, or else cease being Catholics. Not part of the truth, but all truth and nothing but truth, "One body and one spirit—one Lord and one Faith," was Paul's concise and incisive way of putting it. Moreover, in holding this one Faith the members of Christ's Mystical Body cannot fall into error, under Divine guidance, or, as the schoolmen say, the Faithful are "pas-

sively infallible." Of the great body of believers there are some who hold the commission to teach all nations, namely the Bishops of the Church acting with the Supreme Bishop, or the Pope alone acting as supreme teacher in matters of Faith and morals. Inasmuch as this board of teachers cannot go wrong in spreading the good tidings we say the Church is "actively infallible." So infallibility falls upon the teacher for the good of the pupils who form a God-made society of believers.

Now the Church in speaking infallibly does not say: "Here is a very consoling doctrine, you may believe it." No. But she says: "This is truth and you are bound to believe it." The Church is different from all the other churches in this. For it is the boast of the other churches that religion is largely a matter of opinion. The Church speaking infallibly has passed beyond opinion and theory and is dealing out facts. The other churches are constantly varying in their opinions and rightly so, for they make no claim to infallibility. They openly admit error and teach that what is error today may be truth tomorrow. But the Church will not admit error. She is intolerant of error and for that reason unpopular, though she is tolerant of the erring and for that reason misunderstood. She is as intolerant as Christ was intolerant. As she is living His life and taking His place upon earth she speaks as He spoke. When her supreme pontiff speaks as Christ's Vicar his words are as binding as were Christ's words when He bade men eat His Flesh and drink His Blood or else take the consequences of losing their lives.

Now it may occur to you that an infallible teacher should possess great personal holiness. Well, that is entirely wrong, for a man who has reached a very low degree of sanctity may teach infallibly, if that man is teaching from Peter's throne, as the Supreme Teacher of Christendom, on a question of Faith or morals. Nor does it mean a special inspiration, or a new revelation, but what it means is the certain truth of the teaching given. This gift does not carry with it a guarantee that it will only come into action at the most opportune time and from motives most perfect; its one and only object is to give the children of the Church positive assurance that what is officially taught as revealed truth, really is revealed truth. And I know from the pages of history, that God in His loving Providence has guided His teachers in defining and condemning just as the needs of His Church called for the exercise of the great gift. "I am with you all days" has been

verified in the first centuries of the Church's history and in modern times.

To those who stand without the City of God the word "infallibility" spells intellectual bondage. It destroys freedom of thought. Of course it does, for it is truth. And in the face of any truth I am not free. I am not free to think that two and two make six or that the earth is hanging from the sky by a chain. If I have any difficulty in determining the truth of these matters I know where to go for an answer. So in matters of eternal import I should know where to go. As a citizen in a kingdom whose mission is to teach I should know to whom I may turn in this century as Peter knew in the first century when he cried out: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." That kingdom has a truth treasury. Is it unreasonable to think that God has given some special help to preserve this treasure of truth incorrupt? And what more simple means for safeguarding doctrine than infallibility as the Catholic Church explains it?

IV. The Church of Every Nation

IT has been the dream of all conquerors from Alexander to Napoleon to raise their standards the wide world over, so that the sun would never set on their dominions. Yet it was only a little army of Twelve that really succeeded in buiding an empire which girdled the world and that too without the flash of steel or the horrors of battle. Indeed when the standard of their King was flung to the air outside the walls of Jerusalem one Friday it pointed to the corners of the earth as if to proclaim the universal mission of the cause that was symbolized. "When I shall be lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to Me."

His message was not for Judea or for Rome, but for mankind. His was to be a world empire and so we call His Church Catholic. Prophet and seer had sung in varying harmony of the Messias to come, but one note they struck in unison: He was to be the expected of the Nations, not of any one nation. "The mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains and it shall be exalted above the mills and all nations shall flow into it." That was Isaias' vision of the Church to be, the world empire of hearts over which the Messias would reign. Gentiles would walk in its light and kings in the brightness of its rising. The voice of the Synagogue did not echo over the whole

earth, nor "its words go forth to the ends of the world"; for its protecting shadow hung over but one nation. The Church, however, was to shatter all national barriers and every creature was to hear the Gospel tidings, and hold a claim to the New Dispensation. The Messiah Himself showed that the picture drawn in prophetic lines was to mark with unmistakable seal His Church world-wide, catholic; for He bade His followers carry His truth to the "uttermost parts of the earth."

Did they do it? Yes, on the day of their first appearance in Jerusalem as God's ambassadors the catholic character of their missions was emphasized by the gift of tongues. And before the same Church had reached its first year of jubilee St. Paul in his letter to the congregation at Rome was grateful to God because the Faith was spoken of the world over. As early as the third century Tertullian could tell the proud emperor of Rome: "We Christians are of yesterday yet we fill all the places belonging to you, the camp, the senate, the forum. Your temples alone we leave empty." Without doubt the well built roads of the Roman Empire, its organization, its world language helped the rapid spread of the good tidings of salvation. But neither one nor all of these natural helps that were at hand caused the growth of the power that was to rule all hearts notwithstanding national prejudices and traditions. With the legions of Cæsar marched a literature of battle song and camp-fire tale. Where now are the songs and stories of Cæsar's army? Yet the Faith that was sacred to a scattered few of the imperial legionaries remained after the legions had filed into their graves, and remains today. For the Faith was Catholic with a divine catholicity.

Page after page in the long book of centuries tells the same tale. A Church of no nation but of all nations lifting her hymn of thanksgiving to the God of Jew and Gentile. "Thou hast redeemed us O Lord, to God in Thy Blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." As this Catholicity is the mark of the true Church so is its absence the brand of the counterfeit in any organization that claims to be a church. For as Christ died for all so He left His legacy of a Living Voice to sound in every ear and strike upon every heart. Or else His preaching was vain, and the Faith delivered to the Saints, vain.

It matters little how diverse may be the individual interests of the family of nations, their eternal interests are the same and there is no such thing as a superior race in the City of God. In that

commonwealth all are equal and citizenship therein is above all nationalities. The "Parliament of man, the Federation of the world" was the poet's dream of the era of peace. But the poet sang in England where the church of his nation was an isolated thing, standing apart from the great world-wide Church which was a parliament of man, an international body in his day as it had been from the day of its founding by Christ. And what to Tennyson was a dream of the distant future to his Catholic fellow citizens was an accomplished fact, ages old. The Church called Catholic today is the same that was Catholic in the days of imperial Rome and the twentieth century only repeats the tribute of the fifth century spoken by the great Augustine: "Among the many titles that hold me in the bosom of the Church is her glorious name 'Catholic.' Though all heretics wish to acquire that name, should a stranger ask, 'Where do the Catholics assemble?' the heretics will not dare to point to any of their places of meeting."

Some sixteen centuries after the Church had been launched on her world-wide mission a few of her unworthy children started a revolt and called it a reformation. They would preach a new gospel of freedom, and raise a man-made temple to rival the Temple not built by hands. The power of princes was on their side, in fact a king of a strong nation soon rallied to the support of the unholy cause. Since that evil day sects blown about by the wind of every doctrine have sprung up on every side. If you marshal them all before you on the map of the world, you will seek in vain for one that is not distinctly national or local in the appeal it makes to the human heart. More than that, add these discordant elements together and by a stretch of imagination credit them as being one church. You will find that imaginary church world-wide in only one thing, opposition; unanimous in only one thing, disagreement.

But did not the Reformation destroy the Catholicity of the Church? It did no such thing. If the Church in the sixteenth century was decimated in Europe at the same time thousands upon thousands from India, Japan and America entered her fold and the New World more than compensated for the losses registered in the Old. Indeed it is a striking fact in Catholic history that whenever other nations proved untrue to the Church that had mothered them, new peoples rushed to her arms that the title "Catholic" might never be challenged.

Try as you will you can find no natural explanation for the

world empire of Christ. What power can account for it? The greatest of modern empire builders in his lonely solitude at St. Helena realized the power that made possible the world empire of the Catholic Church. This was his explanation: "Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded great empires. But upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus Christ alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him. He asks for the human heart. He will have it entirely to Himself. He demands it unconditionally and forthwith His demand is granted. Wonderful! Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years Jesus Christ makes a demand that is beyond all others difficult to satisfy. And in defiance of time and space the soul of man with all its powers and faculties becomes an annexation to the Empire of Christ."

V. The Church and Unity

IF the existence of the world empire of Christ builded on love startled Napoleon to wonderment, what of the unity of that empire? For it is not only made up of many nations and all peoples but its members believe the same truths. The Faith is a fact with Catholics, and it is the same fact for every Catholic. Religion is a theory with everyone else. Years before Christ founded His Church Israel's seer declared: "One is my dove, my perfect one is but one." And whenever our Saviour in His days on earth spoke of His Church, whether He imagined it as a kingdom, a sheepfold, or a city set on a hill the idea He emphasized was unity of Faith and Government. Take the idea away and you may have any kind of a church but you will not have Christ's Church, as He outlined it, as the prophets before Him envisioned it, as it has stood in the world since its life began. Division may mark the latest school of modern thought and this division may be a sign of progress. But not in the Church of Christ. Where He is there cannot be disunion, His Kingdom must be undivided. For this it was He prayed when His life on earth was closing: "That they may be one, as Thou Father in Me and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us."

If that prayer was answered the passing of time should not have hidden the answer. And today we should be able to read the answer in every part of the world. Is the unity of the Catholic Church apparent, has it always been apparent?

Three centuries after Christ's prayer for the unity of His Church a Bishop in Asia Minor wrote: "Though spread over the whole world the Church preserves the Apostolic Faith with the utmost zeal as if she dwelt in one house. She believes as if she had but one mind and one heart, and with admirable accord she professes and teaches as if she had but one tongue. The languages of the world may differ but the Faith is everywhere the same." And many centuries later Robert Hugh Benson expressed the marvel of Catholic unity in a brief sentence: "When I was a student in the University of Cambridge I used often to find in one lecture room men of one nation and six religions; when I became a student in the University of Rome I found in one room men of six nations and one religion. Is it conceivable that it is merely a human power that makes such a thing possible?"

If the Catholic Church were a national institution, its unity would not be so astounding; but when we remember that it was given an international character at the very outset of its career and its doctrines were to be preached to all nations, we can appreciate the fact that its Founder's prayer was for unity of such a striking character that it would command the belief of unprejudiced minds. For Jesus Christ wished His Church to be one in such a unique fashion "that the world may believe." They were not to take this element of truth, and leave the other; but all peoples were to receive all truth; not one dogma of Catholic Faith was to be whittled down in deference to public opinion, whether of the tenth century or the twentieth.

It is not difficult to bring one nation into a common mold of thought, to give many minds in one country a common ground for action. A wave of patriotism can sweep over a land and accomplish that. It can make a nation one. It can change a peaceful civilian population into a fighting unit that counts the horrors of warfare mere incidents, and laughs in the face of ugly wounds and agonizing death. Yet patriotism is limited by the boundary line of a nation's frontier. Lift that line and you take the meaning out of the word and you find its force is spent. When great national issues are at stake in the crisis of a country's life patriotism will unify a people's action, but glance at the same people when the danger clouds have scattered and ordinary life is once more in full swing, and you will not find patriotism uniting all the voices in a legislative assembly, or unifying every deal in the stock market. In stress-and-strain periods patriotism can

weld separate interests into one; but it can never pierce so deeply into the fiber of the individual life that in the rights and duties of man towards man, there is but one great driving force setting in motion the wheels of common everyday life. If it could do that, it would be more than patriotism; for it would pass beyond the sphere of the natural.

And beyond the sphere of the natural you will find the secret of Church unity. First it is modeled on the exemplar of the most perfect unity conceivable, not the unity that is seen in the planets that circle through the skies, nor the unity that marks the human organism, but the unity of Eternal Father with Eternal Son. "As Thou Father in Me and I in Thee, that they may be one as We also are one." Clear in the light of that prayer I can read the answer to an otherwise unexplainable fact, the agreement of Slav and Teuton, Persian, Celt and Saxon on Divine Revelation, though on other questions owing to racial tradition or national viewpoint there is not a glimmer of unity. Some human mind might be clever enough to draw up a code of conduct or a body of truths that would appeal to different nations, but fancy mapping out a world program for the life and action of king and peasant, cultured and unlearned in the great family of nations! An English king tried to do it a few hundred years ago with an army at his back. On that one little island today, there are 220 Christian bodies contradicting each other on essential doctrines of faith.

Chesterton has summed up the situation in the Church of England in accounting for his conversion to Catholicity: "I always believed in the Catholic view of Christianity, at least I have believed it for twenty years. Unless the Church of England was a branch of the Catholic Church, I had no use for it. If it were a Protestant Church, I did not believe in it. In any case the question is whether the Church of England can claim to be in direct descent from the medieval Catholic Church. That is the question for every Anglo-Catholic or High Church man. . . .

"Among the people who have helped me to answer the question as to whether the Church of England was Catholic, are the chief Protestant leaders in the Church of England, for instance, Dr. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's, and Bishop Hensley Henson, Bishop of Durham. They have done me this good service and I wish to express my gratitude to them for it. They have done me the best service one man can do to another. I will give you examples.

“It appears to me quite clear that any church claiming to be an authoritative church must be quite definite when great questions of public morals are put. Can I go in for cannibalism or the murder of babies to reduce the population, or any other scientific and progressive reform? Any church with authority to teach must say whether it can be done. But the Protestant churches are in utter bewilderment on these moral questions.

“For example on birth control. When you have people and such sincere men as Dean Inge coming out publicly and definitely as champions for what I regard as a low and poisonous trick, not far removed from infanticide, you can see what I mean. On divorce, spiritualism and suicide also they fail to speak with certainty. It is perfectly true that there are in the Church of England and other Protestant bodies, many who would denounce these heathen vices as much as I can. Bishop Gore would speak about them as strongly as the Pope. But the point is the Church of England does not speak strongly. In short, it has no unity of action; it cannot give a common reply to people when they ask for authoritative views. I have no use for a church which is not a church militant, which cannot order battle and fall in line and march in the same direction.”

But we need not look across the seas, for religion in America outside the Catholic Church is as varied as the colors of the rainbow, no two sects agreeing on anything and no sect with all its members in agreement. Such an important and vital question as the Divinity of Christ could not be made the test of Faith for any one of the many Protestant denominations. “What think you of Christ?” was asked of Peter. His answer ages ago is the Catholic answer today.

There are more than 600,000 Catholics in Pittsburgh speaking seventeen different languages. In one parish alone in that diocese fifteen languages are spoken. But the Faith of that polyglot population is one. “Devout men out of every nation under heaven” dwell in union of Faith now as they did in the first days of the Church. “One body and one spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all.”

VI. The Church and Complete Truth

IF a religion has not the right to teach it has no rights worth speaking of at all. If a church has no doctrinal commission then it might as well become a club. It will do more good as a club, for then nobody will be deceived about its purpose. For many years after Luther began his revolution Protestantism laid claim to a teaching power. Today it is not so insistent on this power. It still believes it has something to say. But as Chesterton found out and before him Benson and before him Newman, all distinguished for their cleverness, Protestantism claimed no right to speak its belief, at least no exclusive right. And that is precisely the Catholic claim, the right to teach and the exclusive right at that.

Arrogant and intolerant? Such is the Church making this claim to many who look on religion as one of the incidentals of life and not an essential. If Christ in His attitude toward the world in which He lived was arrogant and intolerant then so is the Church. For she takes His attitude as she is His Voice. She is in truth Christ's Ambassador. And unless a church or an individual can prove this ambassadorship there is nothing to the message or doctrine of that church or that individual. For every ambassador stands or falls by his title. He must show his credentials if he hopes to gain a hearing.

"How shall they believe him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they be sent?" That was St. Paul's neat climax, at once a challenge and a test! The right of any man to teach religion is directly proportionate to two things, the importance of the office he assumes and the obligation on his hearers to heed his lesson. And the Catholic Church claims the right to teach and that this right to teach places an obligation on men to hear and heed.

"He who hears you hears Me." "If a man will not harken to the Church have nothing to do with him." These were our Saviour's words when He gave out credentials to the little group of Twelve. That their office was of paramount importance to the world at large no thinking man can gainsay. Now we do not entrust the mending of a shattered frame or the adjustment of shattered nerves to any man. We ask for evidence of medical skill, indeed nowadays we generally demand the qualifications of

a specialist. Why then should we allow spiritual quacks to handle the delicate something we call an immortal soul?

It is all very well to be thrilled by the magic of a powerful speaker, and marvel at the good accomplished in the cause of social uplift. But the vital question first to be determined is whether the uplifter on the platform bears a brief for the message he is delivering from the body commissioned by Christ to teach all nations in His name, to give His Sacraments, to do His work exactly as He would have it done. Can the man who calls me to lead a better life show me why I must do as he says? Can he go back to Apostolic days and prove that he is delivering the doctrine that was given on the first Ascension Thursday, and that by valid ordination through lawful succession he has the right to deliver it? Surely no man can take that honor to himself "only he who was called by God as Aaron was." Not only that, but as St. Paul tells us, even if an angel from heaven preached a gospel differing in one slight degree from that which was preached by the Apostles, our duty is to ignore him, even to look on him as a curse. The title to engage in soul-saving is not founded in a marble church or a wooden tabernacle, or the financial ability to flood the market with Bibles, but in this and this only, authorization from Christ, succession from Apostolic times, and identity of teaching and government with that of Christ. That is the triple seal and its stamp is genuine. Any other sign is the mark of the counterfeit.

What St. Paul said of Christ is true of His Church, and of His Truth, "the same yesterday, today, forever." There is no progress in Divine Truth. Everything else progresses but not the Truth of God. It cannot progress for it cannot improve. The outward garb of a Divine Truth, the verbal dress it wears, may be different in the twentieth century than in the first, but the Truth that rests within is the same. It has not lost, nor has it been added to since the Apostles on Olivet received the signal to go and deliver "all things whatsoever they were taught." Not to add to the truth nor to diminish it but to preach it as it was preached by Him who is Truth itself.

Progress! The word hinges on imperfection. We have progressed in many ways far ahead of the men and women of a hundred years ago. Our methods of business, our transit facilities, our everyday conveniences, the tube, the home, the radio, the auto—all stamp the ages that have rolled into history as imperfect in the light of our own. Carry the progress notion into the

realm of religious thought and what must we admit? That the Christians of the first century were not in possession of all that we possess, and that the command to preach everything that had been heard from the Jordan to the Cenacle had not been fulfilled. To glory in religious progress if we mean what the word means, is to glory in shame, to deny that our forefathers in the Faith had the same chance of salvation that is ours. As well say that twice three is six today but in a thousand years of progress it will be more than six as to hold that "I believe in God, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints" means more to the American Catholic in 1937, than it did to the Catholic in Rome in 37.

When twenty centuries ago, St. John sealed the deposit of Faith at death, the Church in her Divine Revelation had progressed to the full. She was really ultra-progressive, for she was able to propose "all things whatsoever," all of Revelation to her first children. She will propose nothing more to her last converts. "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word standeth firm in heaven, Thy Truth unto all generations."

VII. The Founder of the Church

THE picture of the Founder of the Church is in the Gospel pages. It is an unmistakable picture too if we would follow its separate lines. The first thing that strikes us is that our Lord has a *mission* from the Heavenly Father:

All things are delivered to Me from My Father: Matthew 11: 27.

All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth: Matthew 28: 18.

Whosoever shall receive Me receiveth not Me but Him that sent Me: Mark 9: 36.

He that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me: Luke 9: 48.

And I dispose to you as My Father hath disposed to Me, a kingdom: Luke 22: 29.

Our Lord teaches with authority:

He was teaching them as one having power and not as the scribes: Mark 1: 22.

Say to him: The Master saith: Matthew 26: 18.

Christ is the Son of God:

The High Priest said to Him: I adjure Thee by the Living God that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said to him: Thou has said it: Matthew 26: 63.

And no one knoweth the Son but the Father; neither doth anyone know the Father but the Son: Matthew 11: 27.

Jesus saith to them: But who 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: Matthew 16: 15.

And the devils went out crying . . . Thou art the Son of God: Luke 4: 41.

Our Lord vindicated and exercised divine power:

Son, thy sins are forgiven thee. And there were some of the scribes sitting there and thinking in their hearts. . . . Who can forgive sins but God only? Jesus said to them: Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy; Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say: Arise take up thy bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins. . . . Mark 2: 5.

Christ claimed the *right to judge* the world:

Watch ye therefore . . . that you may be accounted worthy . . . to stand before the Son of Man: Luke 21: 36.

Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: Luke 12: 37.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven . . . and He shall send His angels . . . and they shall gather His elect: Matthew 24: 30.

Christ is a spiritual Leader:

Come to Me all you that labor and are burdened: Matthew: 77: 28.

Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you . . . persecute you for My sake: Matthew 5: 11.

Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you . . . for the Son of Man's sake . . . your reward is great in heaven: Luke 6: 22.

He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me . . . and he that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me: Matthew 10: 37.

There are many other passages in Holy Scripture that are witness to the fact that our Lord made claims that no other prophet or teacher had made before Him. He vindicated these claims by miracles. He left after Him the Church which was to teach His doctrine, and lead men to salvation until time should be no more.

VIII. The Church in Holy Scripture

THE CHURCH IS ONE

OTHER sheep I have that are not of this Fold; them also I must bring and there shall be One Fold and One Shepherd. John 10: 16.

Holy Father keep them in Thy Name whom Thou has given Me: that they may be one as We also are. John 17: 11.

One body and one Spirit; as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all. Ephesians 4: 4-6.

THE CHURCH IS HOLY

Christ loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it . . . That He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the Word of Life . . . That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. Ephesians 5: 25-27.

Sanctify them in Truth. Thy Word is Truth . . . And for them do I sanctify Myself; that they also may be sanctified in Truth. John 17: 17-19.

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity. Ephesians 1: 4.

THE CHURCH IS CATHOLIC

This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world. Matthew 24: 14.

All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. . . . Going therefore teach ye all nations . . . Matthew 28: 18.

Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world. Romans 10: 13.

A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel . . . Matthew 5: 14, 15.

THE CHURCH IS APOSTOLIC

Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church. Matthew 16: 18.

You are fellow citizens with the Saints . . . built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner-Stone. Ephesians 2: 19, 20.

He gave some Apostles and some Prophets . . . For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ . . . Until we all meet in the unity of Faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God . . . Ephesians 4: 11.

THE CHURCH IS INFALLIBLE

I will ask the Father and He will give you another Paraclete that He may abide with you forever . . . The Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not nor knoweth Him; but you shall know Him because He shall abide with you and shall be in you. John 14: 16.

Behold I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world. Matthew 28: 20.

When He the Spirit of Truth is come He will teach you all truth. John 16: 13.

The Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of truth. 1 Timothy 3: 15.

And the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16: 18.

COMMUNISM

GROWS

ATHEISM

GROWS

The Menace of Atheism

By W. I. Lonergan, S.J.

Of substantive value.—(London)
Month.

The Menace of Atheism is the title of a ninety-page pamphlet by Father Lonergan, S.J. It aims to awaken an apparently indifferent populace to this growing peril, giving examples of its inroads, seeking its causes, pointing out its dangers, and indicating the remedy. Its appeal is to all believers alike.—*Franciscan Herald.*

A most readable and searching analysis of a real danger which confronts the American nation.—*Jesuit Missions.*

Very well and brightly written.—
Pax.

25 (by mail 28) cents each

10 or more copies, 20 cents each

100 or more copies, \$15.00 per hundred

(Postage Extra)

THE AMERICA PRESS

461 Eighth Avenue

New York, N. Y.

PROFESSORS

SCOFF

STUDENTS

QUESTION

For Adult Education

There is no better way to instruct adults in matters of faith than to tie down doctrinal truths to present-day occurrences.

AMERICA does this every week in a live, up-to-date, authoritative way.

Why not interest your study clubs in subscribing to AMERICA?

"To our people we recommend AMERICA. While it is an intellectual weekly review, the subjects discussed and the method of presentation are within the reach of the adolescent in high school. We feel that AMERICA has a special work to achieve in the building of true appreciations of culture in the hearts of American Catholics, and in the moulding of sound thought and sturdy Christian principles."—*Sunday Visitor*.

Write in for Special Club Offer

—◆—
THE AMERICA PRESS

461 Eighth Avenue

New York, N. Y.