



THE ROCK OF PETER

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CATHOLICISM AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION

THE problem of the nature of the religions of mankind and their relation to Christianity is far more than a theoretical study of scientific interest alone. It is a spiritual problem that confronts the reflective mind and deep-feeling heart, something that concerns both the human and the religious outlook of us all.

No doubt there are still men and women who regard every manifestation of religion outside Christianity as *ipso facto*, the work of the devil. They do not see things clearly, for our Christian faith in its truths and charity can sanction no such view. They would do well to make themselves acquainted with the various phases of the religious life of all mankind. "Judge on the evidence of fact instead of trusting preconceived opinions," was the rebuke administered years ago by St. Augustine to rash speculators. In the light and freedom of the Christian revelation it is possible to recognize frankly and to judge charitably the goodness to be found in any quarter without blinding ourselves to the defects of systems and individuals.

The Christian faith teaches that there is one God who is the Creator, Father and Redeemer of all men.¹ As Christians, we are not obliged to hold that all men who, merely by accident of birth, lived before the Christian era are for that reason to be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven and cast out by their Father, though for no fault of their own. It is impossible for us to believe that millions of men and women, indeed the vast majority of the human race, have been so completely forsaken by Him that their search for God and their worship of Him are a sheer illusion and their entire life in vain.

¹This idea is brilliantly expounded by the American Catholic philosopher, Bishop Fulton Sheen, in some of his latest works. Cf. "Love One Another" (especially Chap. I. "The Foundation of Love-God"); "The Seven Pillars of Peace."

Moreover, our religion teaches us that "God is able even of these stones to raise up children to Abraham," and that there is no error that does not contain an element of truth. It invites us to envisage the history of mankind as God's plan of education by which, for the individual and race alike, the imperfect gradually prepares the way for, and leads to, the perfect. Christianity is inspired by the conviction that it is not the failure but rather the fulfilment of God's dealing with man, the fullness of which is to be found in Catholicism alone.²

Viewed in the light of Christianity, the religion not only of the primitive races but also of the higher civilizations, for example, of the Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Chinese, Japanese and Polynesians, represent an imperfect apprehension of the religious principle, for no student of comparative religion will deny that, whether in their primitive or more developed stages, there are aspects both sublime and corrupt. Let us consider those races most closely related to ourselves.

When the Teutonic peoples first emerge clearly into the light of history, the Roman historian Tacitus concludes his enumeration of their deities with an observation which would do credit to a modern writer on the psychology of religion. "They consider it unworthy of the Divine Majesty," he says, "to enclose their gods in temples or to represent them in the likeness of men. They consecrate to them woods and groves and by the name of gods designate that mystery which they venerate with believing awe."³

The same Tacitus is quoted by Cardinal Faulhaber, undaunted champion of the Church in Germany, to show that whatever good is to be found in the religious conceptions of the primitive German tribes is only a dim flicker from the Light of the world, Christ, the Son of God.⁴

The study of prehistoric inscriptions has enabled us to penetrate further into the past of the Teutonic race. Calendars and runes which date back to the Stone Age bear witness to

²Cf. Karl Adam: "The Spirit of Catholicism" (Sheed and Ward, London), 1938. Chap. II, "Christ in the Church."

³Germania, c. ix.

⁴Cardinal Naulhaber: "Judaism, Christianity and Germany" (Burns, Oates, London), 1934.

the intellectual conception of the Deity of the ancient Aryans. It was preserved by the Teutons whose gods are divinities of light, whose names vary with clans and tribes. Worship of the bright sky, or rather of the divine mystery under the picture of the bright sky, must therefore be regarded as an inheritance from the Indo-Germanic pre-history. This is borne out too by their name of the sky-god—"Ziu," which became "Tiu" in English, "Diauspita" in the Sanscrit, "Zeus" in the Greek and "Jupiter" in the Latin, showing that at least 5000 years ago, before they had split into groups speaking Sanscrit, Teutonic, Greek or Italic, the parent stock of the Aryans had already devised the sublime expression "Heaven Father."⁵

The ancient Romans, in the opinion of Cicero, kept their vast empire in being by an insistence on *pietas* or the cultivation of the right attitude towards the gods. With the decline of religion, however, their greatness began to wane, and this fact should be a warning to all modern reformers who think they can build a better social order solely on a materialistic concept of life, ignoring the fundamental Gospel that "not in bread alone doth man live."

The ancient Greek, recognized as the creator of that culture which we call "classical," felt in the depth of his being how limited was his own capacity. Everything beyond, he attributed to the divine powers.

In Egypt, as elsewhere, the names of the gods change as political and popular vicissitudes determine the preference for a divine attribute, but a fundamental monotheism pierces through all these forms and names; the poets give many names to that which is but one.

In India, the Hindu is always disposed to a pessimistic view of the world and seeks flight from it; his ideal of perfection is the "Sadhu," the ascetic who has recognized the nothingness of things and draws the practical consequences. Throughout India there are thousands of these religious-minded men with naked chests, matted hair and ashes smeared on their bodies, wandering about the countryside and begging the scantiest of fare.

⁵Cf. Otto Karrer: "Religions of Mankind" (Sheed and Ward, London).

So, too, there is not one of China's sons who is not attached to the nature that bore him and is not reconciled to death by the thought that his body will be assimilated into the soil, once tilled by himself and soon to be cultivated by his descendants. Chinese folk-tales bear witness to the strength in the popular mind of the belief that a hidden bond links nature and humanity in such a relationship that nothing happens in either domain without a corresponding effect in the other.⁶

In China, not only ethics are based on religion, but even the observance of the traditional code of behaviour and social form is regarded as being essentially religious, religion being understood by the Chinese as "piety" in the old Roman sense of "order" or "sense of responsibility." The constant reiteration of this fundamental principle and the practical education of the people on these lines have kept the Chinese, on the whole, healthy, industrious and honest, as missionaries and scholars testify.

In Japan, the national religion is a cult of personified natural forces and ancestral spirits culminating in the worship of the Emperor. Japan has been from the beginning the land of the gods and "by the gods we understand the unfathomable beings of Yang and Yin," runs an Imperial edict of 1614. "Who will refuse to revere and worship the substance of all that is holy and spiritual? There is not a moment in which man is not dependent on heaven. On every side he is surrounded by the Deity and embraces it within him." But this veneration and reverence for the gods has begun to decline, due mainly to a closer contact with the materialism of the West. The educated class has introduced Western rationalism, though preserving up to the present time the old reverence and piety towards the organic society of the nation.

The Japanese soul has never risen to the worship of a personal God such as Christians adore, though possibly nowhere else, not even in China, are religion and life bound so closely to nature and nowhere else is man so conscious of nature as the mystic veil which hides a mysterious reality of a higher order. The man who has shown the most delicate and pen-

⁶ Cf. J. J. M. De Groot: "Religion in China."

etrating insight into the spirit of these people is the Frenchman Paul Claudel, poet and former Ambassador to Tokyo. Let me quote a few of his observations.

"Against a natural background," he writes, "whose changeful loveliness runs its course from the snows of January to the . . . scorching heat of autumn, these cottages and pagodas, apparently scattered at random, nestle beside winding creeks, in the covert of trees by gushing springs and amid forest-clad mountains. And the human beings, tiny and hard-working, also seem to nestle up to their mother and to share the life of her seasons, in their gay attire with the dignified smile that unceasingly . . . invests their faces in the restraint and the grace of their ordered movements. They seem always to be living in the presence of a nameless and visible power conscious of a mysterious being called the "Kami."⁷ It is a being pregnant with divine powers evoking veneration and awe, an attitude of reverence, humility and silence. Its token is to be seen . . . everywhere, the rope of straw which signifies that the object or place withdrawn from profane uses is holy. They bring to the temples the dead bodies of their domestic animals that the priest may pronounce his blessing over the corpse. Carpenters perform a solemn rite in honour of all the trees whose timbers they are obliged to use. All day long lines of devout worshippers crowd to the lofty pagodas by winding paths that the evil spirits may lose their track. What in the last resort do these men worship in the mysterious dwelling place of the Deity behind the curtain that is never raised?"

In this respect, Japan professes what you may find generally throughout Eastern Asia. Everywhere, through India, Burma, Siam, China, Korea, polytheism is the religion of the masses, and the external expression of religious feelings rivals the most solemn festivals to be seen in Europe. Everywhere there are temples and images, everywhere prayers and sacrifices, processions and ceremonies, penitents and pilgrims. Their religion is often corrupt and its outward form unworthy, but behind it all, in sharp contrast to the Western

⁷ The term denotes what writers on comparative religion call "tabu" or "Mana" and we find an equivalent in the Maori "tapu" or "mana."

trend towards spiritual bankruptcy and raw materialism there is a profound reverence for a suprasensible power.

We must bear in mind that everywhere behind the multiplicity of divinities, the worshipper is dimly conscious of one Supreme Being; that the gods are personifications, imperfect embodiments of the Ineffable Being that is ultimately the object of his adoration.

Africa There is no need to teach the African natives the existence of God, or the reality of a future life. That both these truths are already universally believed was the conclusion reached years ago by Livingstone.⁸ Among the Eskimaux, too, there is a spirit that is given a primacy over the rest, the highest and mightiest God without beginning and end.

A distinctive type of religion has been discovered unexpectedly among primitive people, formerly believed to be entirely devoid of religion. A German explorer, C. G. Jung,⁹ has related his experiences among a primitive tribe in the mountains in Africa. For weeks he failed to detect the least sign of religion, until one of the elders of the tribe informed him that every morning at sunrise "we go out of our huts, blow and spit upon our hands and hold them up to the sun."¹⁰ It was a symbolic form of morning prayer; the spittle was the substance which contained the vital force and the breath signified the spirit. The gesture meant "I offer my living soul to God."

Father Schebesta brought back a similar report from his study of the dwarfs of the Upper Congo. W. Koppers made like discoveries among the Yaman of Tierra del Fuego, where not only Darwin, in two visits made in 1832 and 1834, but also Anglican missionaries after fifty years on the island, had failed to detect a trace of religion. The Yaman have a secret knowledge of God disclosed only at initiation into the tribal brotherhood. He is "Watainea"—the Supreme Being who knows all things, who takes account of men's deeds to reward or punish them. Students of comparative religion had to

⁸The same idea is contained in the scholarly work of Dr. J. P. Thoonen: "Black Martyrs of Africa."

⁹C. G. Jung: "Seelenprobleme der Menschheit" (The Spiritual Problems of Mankind). Cf. Kessler op. cit. pp. 13, 97, 74 (1936 edition).

¹⁰Jung, op. cit.

reconsider their evolutionary theories conjured up to support the materialistic conception of the origin of life.

Even among those tribes where sexuality pervades the entire thought and where licence is permitted even to youths, as for example with the Incas of Peru, it would be unfair to brand all those who practise such things as completely devoid of morality. These practises are taught to the young in the ceremonies of initiation, when they are also introduced to the mysteries of the god-like life and ancestral laws of a lofty ethical character. What is of note is that the neophyte is initiated in the name of a god who is represented as good and willing the good. It shows a belief in the dualism of human nature so well expressed in the words of St. Paul: "The good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do,"¹¹ and its ultimate explanation is found only in the revolt of the first man against the majesty of God, the doctrine of primordial sin, vestiges of which are found in almost every mythology of native races. And yet this fundamental teaching of Christianity is so often brushed aside as pure fiction by the so-called progressives of the Western world.

Comparative religion bears out Bishop Fulton Sheen's observation: "A Godless universe cannot exist, for it cannot bear the sorrow of not knowing its author and its cause."¹²

This survey of the religious psychology of different races proves incontestably the truth of the famous dictum of the great Tertullian, one of the writers of the early Church—*anima naturaliter christiana*—a soul by its very nature Christian. It is related of Cardinal Lavigerie, the great modern missionary, that whenever, in his Algerian diocese, he passed a Mosque, he alighted from his carriage and walked. He did not do this in a spirit of false tolerance, but as an enlightened Christian he could not but entertain a respect and reverence for a faith different from his own. The fruits of study and insight are charity and understanding.

We Europeans who boast of a Christian civilization have often to beat our breasts for the greed, materialism and commercialism that so often proved an obstacle to the Gospel of Christ. If future historians have to depict what the German

¹¹Romans vii. 19.

¹²"Old Errors and New Labels," 1931 edition, p. 90.

philosopher Spengler calls *die Untergang des Abendlandes*—the “decline of the West”—they will set down as its dominant cause the growth of a crude materialism that ignored the essential religious and spiritual factors which alone can prevent the decay of races and the suicide of nations.

The dim notions of an Omnipotent Being existent among the non-Christian peoples become radiant beams of light in the supernatural revelation of Christianity, the fullness of which is found in Catholicism alone. All races, each with its special aptitudes, are her children and all bring their gifts to the sanctuary. The sense of law of the Romans combines with the reverence of the Chinese with the mysticism of the Indian, the ancestral piety of the Japanese with the practicality of the American. Whatever is good, moral and just finds its fullness and completion only in the Church that was founded by Christ upon the imperishable Rock of Peter, against which hostile tides and times batter in vain throughout the unfolding panorama of the changing centuries.

CATHOLICISM

In our chapter on Catholicism and Comparative Religion we stated that all that is good, moral or just in the various conceptions of the religion of mankind in *sensu naturali* are only mere fragments of the Truth, the fullness of which is to be found in Catholicism alone.

As we unfold the scroll of the centuries we find Catholicism placed in the unique position of being attacked from every conceivable angle.

Some find it too rational, others too irrational, yet in reality it combines divine revelation and human reason into a synthesis of perfect truth. It is assailed as being too conservative and too progressive, yet in reality it preserves what is good in the past and prepares the way for the harmonious development of genuine progress. Some complain that it is too intransigent, others too elastic, but in reality it maintains its unchangeable principles of faith and morals and applies them to the changing circumstances of the times. To the liberalist it seems too authoritarian, to the authoritarian too liberalistic, while in reality it stresses the fact that true liberty can flourish only under the laws of God and man, and

that authority without liberty degenerates into oppression. Catholicism does not over-emphasize one truth at the expense of another, but rather gives to everything its proper place in a well balanced order.

The great Chesterton summarized all the attacks in his customary lucid way. Four persons, built out of proportion, discuss in a railway carriage a person of normal stature. The fat one finds him too thin, the thin one too fat, the tall one too short, and the short one too tall. So it is with the opponents of the Church.

These critics, too, fail to make the distinction between the divine and the human elements in the Church. The divine element is the deposit of Faith and Morals given her by Christ to be kept intact against all-comers and throughout the vicissitudes of changing times. We have a divine guarantee that this body of doctrine and code of conduct is true and will remain unchanged until the end of the world, and that is why the authority of the Church has been maintained against every attack from within and without. Macauley, a Protestant if ever there was one, wrote: “The proudest royal houses are but of yesterday when compared to the line of Supreme Pontiffs. That line we trace back in an unbroken series from the Pope who crowned Napoleon in the 19th century to the Pope who crowned Pepin in the 8th and far beyond the time of Pepin the august dynasty extends until it is lost in the twilight of fable.”¹³

For the Catholic the twilight of fable vanishes in the historical scene near the sea of Galilee, with Jesus in the group of his chosen twelve asking, “But whom do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answers with a profession of faith in the divinity of Christ and as a reward receives the promise of the primacy in the rule of the Church and the infallible guardianship of the teachings of Christ.

Catholicism has never deviated from the doctrine of the first century, but like a jeweller has ever held it up for all to see like a diamond with its many facets and tints. The over-simplification of what is self-contradictorily called a dogmaless creed would empty it of its vital substance. Just as the rigid multiplication table safeguards the certitude of all

¹³ Essay on L. von Ranke's “History of the Popes.”

mathematical science, so the Church through her dogmas, logical conclusions derived from divinely given premises, has preserved the truth of human doctrine.

As a body of doctrine, Catholic truth has grown and developed as every healthy organism does; like the oak out of the acorn, or as a bud develops into the full fragrance of the rose. Throughout the centuries this doctrine has been the leaven of the world, causing a fermentation in the endeavour to keep all civilization healthy. At its very beginning that question of universality had to be solved. Was Christianity to be an enlarged Synagogue, a mere expansion of the Kingdom of Israel, or an international religion allowing no distinction between Jew and Gentile? In the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we read how St. Peter was given the divine solution to the problem. The Council of Jerusalem followed the lead given by Peter and the Church was catholic or international. "Peter's bark had cut the rope that bound it to port and was gaining the high seas where, without doubt, there awaited it storms but also a miraculous draught of fishes."¹⁴

A crisis came, too, with the fall of the Roman Empire. Citizens of Rome considered that their empire would last for all time; the fall of Rome was, to them, synonymous with the end of civilization, just as many people in Europe would consider that an Asiatic invasion would mean the end of all civilization today. The Roman Empire did fall, and was taken over by the barbarians. But the Church kept her vision clear—she came from God, there was no cause to despair—her truth must be given to these very invaders.

A whole list of saintly men and women devoted themselves to the almost superhuman task of building a Christian civilization on the ruins of a pagan empire. They rose above the petty considerations of nationality, caste or dynasty—St. Columbanus in France and Italy, Gregory the Great for the Anglo-Saxons, St. Remigius in Rheims, St. Willibrord in Holland, St. Boniface in Germany, Cyril and Methodius among the Slavonic peoples—saints and scholars, they made

¹⁴Godfrey Kurth. "The Church at the Turning Points of History." Trans. from 5th French Ed. by Mgr. V. Day (Naegele Printing Co., Helena, Montreal), p. 43.

true those words of Christ that even of the very stones of the street he could raise up the children to Abraham.

From a natural viewpoint, the obstacles were insurmountable; the stubbornness of kings, the hardness of pagan hearts, the pride of fallen human nature, heresy—it took three centuries to make barbarians Christians.

Later came further problems. The feudal system had become an integral part of society, a product of the times just as industrialism is today. The Church at that time was endowed with land, for to give to her was not only to contribute to the maintenance of worship but also to ensure a ready budget for charitable purposes and public instruction. But large donations and the privileges that belonged to the landowners became a danger to the Church. The Church lost her freedom and for years the Popes over and over again became nominees, and the Bishops tools, of the rulers of Germany. History has preserved the term "Lay-investiture" to describe this sad state of things.

But once again the Church emancipated herself. Pope Nicholas II, in 1059, instituted the College of Cardinals to preserve the election of the Sovereign Pontiffs from worldly interference. The majestic figure of St. Gregory VII putting an end to lay-investiture made the Church supreme once more in her own sphere.

Mediaeval Europe experienced the pressure of totalitarian power, of politics and economics divorced from the moral law, of subtle persecution. Philip the Fair of France was the protagonist in the struggle to dominate the Church. He was opposed to Pope Boniface VIII who was attacked and maligned to such a degree that Dante could say, "I see Christ imprisoned in His vicar, I see Him given over again to derision, I see Him again drenched with vinegar and gall, and crucified between two thieves."¹⁵

Later again, during the Renaissance, when great numbers of scholars found in the study of the literature, art and culture of the Greeks and Romans a beauty and liberalism that seemed to be the answer to the spirit of the times, the Church counselled moderation. She "did not enter the way in which Savonarola wished to draw her. In face of the great move-

¹⁵Kurth op. cit. p. 117.

ment of the Renaissance she remembered her eternal mission; she recalled not only that she is the religion of the people still in infancy, and of poor communities, but also that she is to lead to God the rich nations and enlightened civilizations. Far from cursing the riches of science and the opulence of arts (though she often saw them misused) she blessed them and wished to make them contribute to the glory of God and the salvation of souls."¹⁶

Those who were privileged, during the war, to admire the museums, the sculptures and paintings of Rome, saw for themselves what the world owes to the great Popes of the Renaissance. Catholicism does not oppose progressive ideas, as its enemies often claim, but guides them into the right course of true progress by upholding Christian ideas and principles. It keeps pace with any forward step of science, culture or art, as the present Pope has shown in his address to the Academy of Sciences, but it will never sacrifice one particle of divine truth or the moral law to suit any passing fad or false revolutionary movement.

The sixteenth century was one of revolt. No human power could have survived that revolution. Certainly a reformation was necessary to put an end to the many abuses that obscured the beauty of the spouse of Christ. No one is more conscious than the Catholic himself about that, for "the Church," as Cardinal Newman said, "is ever ailing and lingers on in weakness; always bearing about in her body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in her body."¹⁷

The divine life of grace is checked by human passions, by sin and vice. Even the primitive Church was never at any time without spot or wrinkle. Read the Epistles of St. Paul, of St. James and St. John, the writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian and it will be seen that the early Church for all its brilliant light had dark shadows also.

But the trend to reform is native to the being of the Church, and so it is still active, for as long as there is human nature to account for there will always be infirmities and shortcomings. Many historians have grossly exaggerated the

¹⁶ Kurth op. cit. pp. 150, 151.

¹⁷ "Via Media," London, 1877, vol. 1, pp. 354-5.

abuses in the Church at the time of the Reformation. "A reform in discipline, a recall to the living up to its teaching was necessary," says Cardinal Gasquet,¹⁸ "but a change in doctrine and faith was fatal as it destroyed the unity of faith and left a gaping wound from which Europe is still bleeding."

Men deny the teaching of the Church and start a trail of heresy and falsehood until someone more sincere perhaps than the others rediscovers the truth to find that the Church had never lost it. It happened in the French Revolution. Rationalists and naturalists who prepared the way for that great upheaval had to come to the realization that the Church's doctrine regarding original sin was sound. Reason they had said was to be the foundation of everything. The truths of Faith were out-moded. But they came to learn during the Terror that unless fallen human nature submits to the healing grace of Christ, a better world of liberty, equality and fraternity is merely a dream.

Every country has its special character and problems and our own age needs a social reorganization and a fairer distribution of the products of the earth. Catholicism gave the worker his charter in the great encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, reiterated by succeeding Pontiffs so that the present Pope could say to the thousands of working men and women at Vatican City "the Church is the advocate, patron and mother of the working people. Whoever would want to affirm the contrary and raise a dividing wall between the Church and the working people has to deny the facts of clear evidence."¹⁹

Whatever is good in the Communist programme for labour was already advocated in the Papal encyclicals. The words of Christ, "I have compassion on the multitude," animate the Catholic heart and yet the social teachings of the Popes remain for the majority of social reformers *terra incognita*.

Another typical attitude that is taken up by many towards Catholicism is to ignore the good it has accomplished throughout the ages or to exaggerate the evil of its human adherents. The Dark Ages are dragged up again and again to prove the obscurantism and intellectual oppression of the

¹⁸ "The Eve of the Reformation" (George Bell & Son, London), 1905, p. 35.

¹⁹ *Zealandia*, 25th October, 1945.

Church, yet to any honest enquirer that same period was an age of endless historical research and development of the fine arts.²⁰

Our Lord gave no guarantee that all his Vicars would be saints but he did say that as head of His Church their faith would never fail. It is safe to say that those who know anything about the few bad successors of St. Peter, know little or nothing about the many good ones. A partial truth about scandal often results in total error because the evil receives attention and the good is ignored. Rarely does the world get things in right proportion. How many who exploit the few bad Popes ever admit that out of two hundred and sixty-three, perhaps only half a dozen are open to genuine criticism? He who attacks such a long list of martyrs, saints and confessors must be certain of his own sinlessness to point his finger at the few who revealed the weakness of human nature. The graces of God are communicated through "frail vessels."²¹ Many reasons have been given by renegade Catholics for their lapse, but the world has yet to hear of the person who gave up his Faith to lead a more saintly life.

"Propaganda," though not considered quite the thing today, is thought to be a characteristic of these times but it is as old as man. Every revolutionary movement has used it and had it crystallized in some book for the benefit of its adherents. Rousseau's "Contrat Social" became the basis of the French Revolution. "Das Kapital" of Marx, the handbook for social reformers, Hitler wrote "Mein Kampf" as a new gospel for his German fanatics. The Protestant revolution in England in the days of Queen Elizabeth has Foxe's "Book of Martyrs" chained in every church for the benefit of the people. Catholics rightly called it "The Golden Book of Legends," for it contained a mass of lies and distortions against Catholicism. But Catholicism, though it lost its churches, survived the slander, and Cardinal Newman could outline a promising revival in his famous sermon, "The Second Spring."

... Canterbury has gone its way, York is gone, Durham gone and Winchester is gone. It was sore to part with them. We clung to the

²⁰ Cf. S. R. Maitland: "The Dark Ages", John Hodges, London, 1890.
²¹ II Cor. iv, 7.

vision of past greatness, and would not believe that it could come to nought, but the Church in England has died and the Church lives again. Westminster and Nottingham, Beverly and Hexham, Northampton and Shrewsbury, if the world lasts, shall be names as musical to the ear, as stirring to the heart as the glories we have lost. And saints shall rise out of them, if God so will, and doctors once again shall give the law to Israel, and preachers call to penance and to justice as at the beginning.²²

The Church has been liquidated so many times and she still lives on. She survives despite the flood of falsehood deliberate or otherwise that is levelled against her. The great Protestant scholar and historian of dogma, Adolf Harnack, remarked once, "I am convinced from constant experience of the fact that most students who leave our schools have the most disconnected and absurd ideas about ecclesiastical history. Some of them know something about Gnosticism, or about curious and, for them, worthless details, but of the Catholic Church, the greatest religious and political creation known to history they know nothing."²³

Apostates do not destroy its traditions, converts do not cause a revolution within; frictions, tensions are inevitable, but Catholicism continues safely on its road. Intellectuals attack its teachings, only to find that their science of today is false tomorrow and demonstrate more clearly than ever the maturity and experience of its doctrine and policy. False prophets of innumerable shades assail her altars in vain and disappear in the gloom of despair, stubborn autocrats and insurgent nations come to grief on the Rock of Peter. The French have a saying, "He who bites the Pope dies." History has certainly borne that out.

The finest calculations of its opponents about its future proved to be false, because what humanly seemed powerless in it was sustained by a divine power. Often Christ uses the weakness of human instruments to show forth more emphatically His divine power. The members of the Church may grow old with the ailments of old age, but her faith, grace and authority remain forever new. Every humble confession, every *peccavi*, every repentant sob of a Catholic who returns to the fold is a hymn of thanksgiving for her who

²² Daniel O'Connell, S.J.: "Favourite Newman Sermons" (Bruce, Milwaukee), p. 25.

²³ Aus Wissenschaft und Leben (Geisen), 1911, vol. 1, p. 99.

saved him. All the shortcomings and human failings of Catholics are in reality only a conclusive proof that Catholicism does not depend on its members but on its divine Founder. Had it to depend on its adherents alone it would have perished long ago as all man-made empires contain the germ of dissolution within themselves.

Catholicism does not depend on current opinions and passing fads, because it is guided by a power that transcends this earth, a power which makes that which is sublime and spiritual in man glow as a light in a lamp. Catholic doctrine can heal the ache of every human heart and satisfy the aspirations of all. Francis Thompson gives the answer to the strongly-felt but oft unspoken fear of many a convert:

All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home;
Rise, clasp My hand and come!

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